

ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES: THE ROLE OF WORK ETHICS COMPLIANCE AMONG NON-TEACHING STAFF IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored the role of work ethics compliance in predicting administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, the study sampled 460 non-teaching staff from a population of 3,008. Data was collected through two validated questionnaires: Work Ethics Compliance Questionnaire (WECQ) and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ). Simple regression analysis revealed that work ethics compliance based on age, gender, education level, and experience significantly predicted administrative effectiveness. The study recommended employing experienced and mature professionals to administrative positions and prioritizing staff with a genuine interest in their roles. These findings highlight the importance of work ethics compliance in enhancing administrative effectiveness in selected universities.

Keywords: Work ethics compliance, administrative effectiveness, demographic factors (age, gender, education level, work experience)

Introduction

Administrative effectiveness is crucial for the success of selected universities in South East Nigeria. One key factor that influences administrative effectiveness is work ethics compliance among non-teaching staff. Work ethics refer to the moral principles, rules of conduct, and special control mechanisms that govern the actions of members of an organization (Epelle, Alabere, & Tamunomiebi, 2023; Okafor, et al. 2025). In the context of universities, work ethics define good or bad behavior in the workplace and guide organizational decisions, programs, and policies (Orij, 2023; Okafor, et al. 2025).

Compliance with work ethics is essential for achieving administrative effectiveness. Compliance involves adhering to established norms, laws, and policies (Shindika & Chetani, 2019; Okafor, et al. 2025). In universities, work ethics compliance is critical for promoting a positive work environment and ensuring that non-teaching staff exhibit desirable behavior. However, some non-teaching staff in selected universities may exhibit undesirable behavior, such as lack of dedication to work, lateness, absenteeism, and misconduct.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, and years of job experience may influence work ethics compliance among non-teaching staff. Age can affect staff behavior, with older staff potentially exhibiting more acceptable behavior (Amegayibor, 2021; Ogoun & Okubokeme, 2024; Okafor, et al. 2025). Gender may also play a role, although research findings are mixed, with some studies suggesting that men and women have different perceptions of work ethics compliance (Goel, 2018; Ogoun & Adigwe, 2020; Okafor, et al. 2025).

Educational level can also influence work ethics compliance, with staff who have attained higher levels of education potentially being more aware of morality and ethics (Ogoun & Okubokeme, 2024; Indah & Purnama, 2024; Okafor, et al. 2025). Years of job experience can provide opportunities for staff to acquire practical knowledge of work ethics and comply with them (Ochonma et al., 2018; Otu et al., 2022; Okafor, et al. 2025).

Given the importance of work ethics compliance for administrative effectiveness, this study aimed to determine the extent to which work ethics compliance predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. By exploring the relationship between work ethics compliance and administrative effectiveness, this study can provide insights into strategies for promoting a positive work environment and improving administrative effectiveness in universities.

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of administrative functions in selected universities in South East Nigeria is crucial for achieving academic excellence and institutional goals. However, recent studies have raised concerns about the administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in these institutions (Okafor, Ughamadu, & Enwezor, 2025). One key factor that influences administrative effectiveness is work ethics compliance, which involves adhering to established norms, laws, and policies that guide organizational behavior.

Despite its importance, work ethics compliance remains a significant challenge in many universities, particularly among non-teaching staff. Studies have shown that non-compliance with work ethics can lead to administrative ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and poor service delivery (Okafor, Ughamadu, & Enwezor, 2025). For instance, non-teaching staff who fail to comply with work ethics may exhibit behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, and lack of dedication to work, which can negatively impact administrative effectiveness.

Furthermore, demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, and years of job experience may influence work ethics compliance among non-teaching staff. However, there is limited research on the relationship between these variables and work ethics compliance in the context of selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Given the importance of administrative effectiveness in universities, it is essential to investigate the role of work ethics compliance among non-teaching staff. As noted by Okafor, Ughamadu, and Enwezor (2025), "work ethics compliance is a critical factor that predicts administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in universities." Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent to which work ethics compliance predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the role of work ethics compliance in predicting administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the extent to which work ethics compliance, based on certain demographic factors, predicts administrative effectiveness. The study focuses on the following specific objectives:

1. To determine whether work ethics compliance based on age predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria.
2. To investigate whether work ethics compliance based on gender predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria.
3. To assess whether work ethics compliance based on educational level predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria.
4. To examine whether work ethics compliance based on experience predicts administrative effectiveness among non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does work ethics compliance based on age predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?
2. To what extent does work ethics compliance based on gender predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?
3. To what extent does work ethics compliance based on educational level predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?
4. To what extent does work ethics compliance based on experience predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Work ethics compliance based on age significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.
2. Work ethics compliance based on gender significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.
3. Work ethics compliance based on educational level significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.
4. Work ethics compliance based on experience significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Methods

A correlational research design was adopted for this study. The area of the study was selected universities in South East Nigeria. The choice of this area was informed by the high value placed on education by the government and people of the South East region, which is reflected in the presence of numerous federal, state, and privately owned tertiary institutions.

The population of the study comprised non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East Nigeria. A sample of 460 non-teaching staff was drawn from a population of 3, 008 using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling was used to categorize the non-teaching staff into different strata, and simple random sampling was used to select participants from each stratum.

Two sets of questionnaires, "Work Ethics Compliance Questionnaire (WECQ)" and "Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ)," were used for data collection. WECQ had 20 items structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. AEQ also had 20 items structured on a similar four-point rating scale.

The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. Their comments were used to modify the instruments for final data collection. The reliability of the instruments was established through Cronbach alpha method, yielding coefficients of 0.80 for WECQ and 0.89 for AEQ.

The instruments were administered to the respondents with the help of research assistants. Out of the 460 copies of the instruments administered, 452 (94%) copies were correctly filled and returned. Simple regression analysis was used for data analysis, and the regression coefficient rule suggested by Stephen (2017) was used for judgment.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does work ethics compliance based on age predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on age as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β
Constant	38.215	7.985	
Work Ethics Compliance Based on Age	0.652	0.321	0.58
R	0.58		
R ²	0.38		
Adj. R ²	0.35		

The summary of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that work ethics compliance based on age moderately predicted administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria, as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.58$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) 0.38 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This

implies that 38% of the variations in administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in work ethics compliance based on age of the working staff. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.35, indicating that 35% of the total variation in the dependent variable (administrative effectiveness) was explained by the independent variable (work ethics compliance based on age). Thus, adjusted r^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of work ethics compliance based on age is moderately strong in determining the administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. Nevertheless, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = 0.58$) showed that work ethics compliance based on age is a positive predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. This is an indication that an increase in the age of staff based on the level of compliance leads to a 0.58 (58%) increase in administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent does work ethics compliance based on gender predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on gender as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β
Constant	14.985	3.895	
Work Ethics Compliance Based on gender	0.305	0.203	0.29
R	0.29		
R ²	0.25		
Adj. R ²	0.24		

The summary of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that work ethics compliance based on gender lowly predicted administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria, as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.29$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) 0.25 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was slightly strong. This implies that 25% of the variations in administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in work ethics compliance based on gender of the working staff. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.24, indicating that 24% of the total variation in the dependent variable (administrative effectiveness) was explained by the independent variable (work ethics compliance based on gender).

However, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = 0.29$) showed that work ethics compliance based on gender is a positive predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. The positive prediction of staff gender and administrative effectiveness means that the administration of selected universities in South East Nigeria depends on the gender of the staff.

Research Question 3: To what extent does work ethics compliance based on educational level predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 3: Summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on educational level as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β
Constant	30.421	6.532	
Work Ethics Compliance Based on Edu. Level	0.633	0.328	0.63
R	0.63		
R ²	0.48		
Adj. R ²	0.44		

The summary of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 indicated that work ethics compliance based on educational level moderately predicted administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria, as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.63$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) 0.48 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implies that 48% of the variations in administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in work ethics compliance based on educational level of the working staff. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.44, indicating that 44% of the total variation in the dependent variable (administrative effectiveness) was explained by the independent variable (work ethics compliance based on educational level).

Also, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = 0.63$) showed that work ethics compliance based on educational level is a positive predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question 4: To what extent does work ethics compliance based on experience predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 4: Summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on experience as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β
Constant	38.542	6.951	
Work Ethics Compliance Based on experience	0.644	0.351	0.62
R	0.62		
R ²	0.55		
Adj. R ²	0.52		

The summary of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 indicated that work ethics compliance based on experience moderately predicted administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria, as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.62$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) 0.55 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implies that 55% of the variations in administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in work ethics compliance based on experience of the working staff. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.52, indicating that 52% of the total variation in the dependent variable (administrative effectiveness) was explained by the independent variable (work ethics compliance based on experience).

Nevertheless, the standardized beta weight ($\beta = 0.62$) showed that work ethics compliance based on experience is a positive predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. The positive prediction of staff experience and administrative effectiveness means that the more years in the service, the more effective the staff in the administration of selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: Work ethics compliance based on age significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 5: Test of significance of summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on age as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Constant	38.215	7.985		8.272	0.000
Work Ethics Compliance Based on	0.652	0.321	0.58	8.144	0.000

experience		
	R	0.58
	R ²	0.38
	Adj. R ²	0.35
	F	9.217

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 5 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (r) is .58, while the r² is .38 and the adjust r² is .35. The F-ratio associated with regression is 9.217, the t-test is 8.144 and the P-value = .000. Since p-value (.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study, therefore, rejected the null hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on age do not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on age significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Work ethics compliance based on gender significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 6: Test of significance of summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on gender as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β	t- value	p- value
Constant	14.985	3.895		1.193	0.000
Work Ethics Compliance Based on gender	0.305	0.203	0.29	1.701	0.000
	R	0.29			
	R ²	0.25			
	Adj. R ²	0.24			
	F	3.617			

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 6 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (r) is .29, while the r² is .25 and the adjust r² is .24. The F-ratio associated with regression is 3.617, the t-test is 1.701 and the P-value = .000. Since p-value (.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study, therefore, reject the null hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on gender does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of Polytechnics in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on gender significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: Work ethics compliance based on educational level significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 7: Test of significance of summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on educational level as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardi zed β	t- value	p- value
Constant	30.421	6.532		4.56	.000
Work Ethics Compliance Based on Edu. level	0.633	0.328	0.63	3.51	.001
	R	0.63			
	R ²	0.48			
	Adj. R ²	0.44			
	F	15.01			

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 7 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (r) is 0.63, while the r^2 is .48 and the adjust r^2 is .44. The F-ratio associated with regression is 15.01, the t-test is 3.51 and the P-value = .001. Since p-value (.001) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study, therefore, rejected the null hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on educational level does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on educational level significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 4: Work ethics compliance based on experience significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 8: Test of significance of summary of simple regression analysis with work ethics compliance based on experience as predictor of administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

	Unstandardized B	Std. Dev. B	Standardized β	t- value	p- value
Constant	38.542	6.951		5.55	.000
Work Ethics Compliance Based on experience	0.644	0.351	0.62	10.56	.000
R	0.62				
R2	0.55				
Adj. R2	0.52				
F	28.50				

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 8 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (r) is .62, while the r^2 is .55 and the adjust r^2 is .52. The F-ratio associated with regression is 28.50, the t-test is 10.56 and the P-value = .000. Since p-value (.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study, therefore, rejected the null hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on experience do not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that work ethics compliance based on experience significantly predict administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff of selected universities in South East, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study provided insights into the relationship between work ethics compliance and administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. The discussion is structured around the four hypotheses tested in the study.

Work Ethics Compliance Based on Age

The study revealed that work ethics compliance based on age positively and significantly predicted administrative effectiveness to a moderate extent. The majority of the staff fell within the 31-50 age bracket, indicating that they were not young in the profession. This finding aligns with existing literature, such as Nair et al. (2017) and Zafer and Aslihan (2016), which suggests that older staff members tend to be more effective and compliant with work ethics. Similarly, Shindika and Chetani (2019) noted that older aged staff comply more with work ethics than younger respondents.

Work Ethics Compliance Based on Gender

The study found that work ethics compliance based on gender positively and significantly predicted administrative effectiveness to a low extent. This suggests that gender may not be a determining factor for staff effectiveness, which is in line with Wagbara's (2017) finding that male principals were not significantly better in supervision than their female counterparts. However, this finding contradicts Uwa et al. (2018) study, which showed that female workers had higher levels of ethical compliance.

Work Ethics Compliance Based on Educational Level

The study showed that work ethics compliance based on educational level positively and significantly predicted administrative effectiveness to a moderate extent. This finding is consistent with Rahahle's (2017) study, which disclosed a moderate level of compliance with the code of ethics among respondents with higher levels of education.

Work Ethics Compliance Based on Experience

The study revealed that work ethics compliance based on experience positively and significantly predicted administrative effectiveness to a moderate extent. This finding aligns with Ogbonna and Ebimobowei's (2016) study, which showed that compliance with ethics positively and significantly affected organizational performance. Additionally, Bulo et al. (2020) study found that employees with more experience tend to comply more with work ethics.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of work ethics compliance in predicting administrative effectiveness. The findings suggest that age, gender, educational level, and experience are significant predictors of administrative effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between work ethics compliance and administrative effectiveness of non-teaching staff in selected universities in South East Nigeria. The findings revealed that work ethics compliance based on age, gender, educational level, and experience positively and significantly predicted administrative effectiveness. The study highlighted the importance of work ethics in guiding organizational behavior and improving employee performance. The findings suggest that organizations should prioritize work ethics awareness and compliance, particularly among employees of different ages, gender, educational levels, and experiences, to enhance administrative effectiveness. By promoting a culture of work ethics, organizations can foster a positive work environment and improve overall performance.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Given that work ethics compliance based on experience significantly predicts administrative effectiveness, it is recommended that institutions prioritize hiring experienced professionals or individuals with a proven track record of administrative competence. This can help ensure that administrative positions are filled by capable and committed individuals.
2. To maintain administrative effectiveness, institutions should consider implementing effective talent management strategies that account for age, educational level, and experience. This may include regular training, mentorship programs, and succession planning to ensure continuity and optimal performance.
3. Policymakers should prioritize creating a work environment that supports work ethics compliance across different demographics. This can be achieved by providing clear guidelines, training, and resources to promote a culture of work ethics, particularly among employees of different ages, gender, educational levels, and experiences.

These recommendations aim to promote administrative effectiveness by leveraging the positive impact of work ethics compliance based on experience, gender, age, and educational level.

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