

Application of Ethical Practices as Correlate of Lecturers' Productivity in Rivers State Universities

Ekwere, Edu Mfon ¹ Wey-Amaewhule, Blessing PhD ²

^{1,2} Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt

ARTICLE INFO

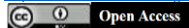
Keywords:
application of ethical practices,
lecturers' productivity,
accountability,
professional integrity.

Vol.01, No.04, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22721014>

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated application of ethical practices as correlate of lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities. Two objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational research survey design. The total population of the study was 2354 lecturers consisting of 1330 lecturers from Rivers State University and 1024 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size of study was 330 lecturers consisting of 240 lecturers from Rivers State University and 90 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The non-proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of the study. The instruments for the study were two sets of self-structured questionnaires titled: "Application of Ethical Practices Questionnaire (AEPQ)" and "Lecturers' Productivity Questionnaire (LPQ)". The instruments were face and content validated by 2 experts, 1 from the Department of Educational Management and 1 from the field of Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations respectively in Rivers State University. The Cronbach Alpha statistics was used for the reliability of the instruments which yielded cumulative reliability index of 0.84 for application of ethical practices and 0.82 for productivity of lecturers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used in answering the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-Transformation at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that application of accountability and application of professional integrity as ethical practices correlated with productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities. This correlation revealed a high, positive and significant relationship. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among others that; regular workshops and seminars on academic integrity should be organized to sensitize lecturers on ethical standards and other forms of misconduct so as to guide their conduct in teaching, research and interactions with students.

Introduction

Universities occupy a strategic position in the development of human capital, knowledge production and national transformation. According to Amie-Ogan and Epelle (2023), university education equips students with requisite knowledge, skills and abilities as well as rekindles such entrepreneurial spirit to aid them emerge as a force to reckon with in the world of work and self-reliance. The role of university education in advancing knowledge, fostering intellectual growth and producing quality graduates, places them at the centre of higher education delivery. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in her National Policy on Education outlined the goals of university education to: intensify and diversify its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation; making professional course contents reflect our national requirements; making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and Information Technology (IT), and making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities. These unique characteristics of university education have made it a crucial index for national development.

The effectiveness of any university in achieving these functions depends substantially on the quality, commitment and productivity of lecturers. Lecturers constitute a critical component of the university workforce because they are directly responsible for teaching, research, supervision, academic

mentoring, community service and other scholarly responsibilities. Dinger et al. (2015), stated that the provision of high-quality university education system depends on high quality lecturers. Similarly, Aondongu et al. (2024), posited that the primary responsibilities of lecturers are to teach and bring up the young generation of students to acquire skills and knowledge for growth and development. These overlapping tasks places lecturers at the central position in the university system. As purveyors of knowledge, lecturers are guided by ethical principles. They are expected to uphold ethical practices while providing knowledge, skills and attitude. Wey-Amaewhule and Ezeugo (2025), asserted that the dynamic nature of higher education today requires lecturers to work under ethical frameworks to enhance teaching and learning. When lecturers are seen upholding a sound professional conduct, it creates a high level of public confidence and trust in the education system. Consequently, the ability of lecturers to exhibit ethical practices in the university plays a significant role in determining their job productivity.

The importance of ethical behaviour in higher education has become more pronounced because universities are increasingly confronted with challenges relating to academic integrity, professional accountability, fairness, transparency and responsible conduct. Idhalama et al. (2023), observed that professional ethical standards among academic staff encompass important issues such as completion of course requirements, fair evaluation of students, avoidance of examination malpractice, prevention of plagiarism and protection of students from inappropriate conduct. These dimensions demonstrate that ethical practices in the university is not merely a question of personal morality but a fundamental component of effective academic administration. Similarly, Eke (2024), found that academic staff perceive workplace ethics as an important instrument for regulating behaviour and facilitating the achievement of university goals. This suggests that ethical practices can provide a behavioural framework through which lecturers align their job productivity with institutional expectations. The cost of allowing such standards to slip is visible in the historical account of how cultism took root in higher institutions across Rivers State and gradually eroded the conditions under which serious academic work can be carried on, which shows that a lapse in institutional conduct does not remain contained but spreads into the wider academic environment (Alikor & Orlunga, 2023a).

Lecturers' job productivity refers to the extent to which lecturers effectively and efficiently transforms their professional efforts and available resources into desirable academic outputs. It encompasses the quality and quantity of teaching, research and scholarly publications, student supervision, community service, academic administration and timely accomplishment of assigned responsibilities. Ladipo et al. (2022), defined lecturers' productivity as the extent to which lecturers effectively carry out these roles and generate measurable outputs such as scholarly publications, research grants, innovative teaching methods and community engagement initiatives. According to Aina (2021), lecturers' productivity is the extent to which academic staff efficiently and effectively perform their core responsibilities of teaching, research and community service, in alignment with institutional goals and societal expectations. Productivity therefore extends beyond mere presence at work; it concerns the actual contribution of lecturers to the achievement of university goals. In an increasingly competitive higher education environment, universities require lecturers who are not only academically competent but also committed, accountable and ethically responsible in the discharge of their duties. The productivity of lecturers is therefore not only dependent on professional competence but also strongly influenced by ethical values that guide their professional conduct.

Ethical practices refer to standards of conduct, values and principles that guide individuals in the performance of their official responsibilities. According to Velasquez (2022), ethical practices involve the application of moral standards to guide behaviour within organizations and institutions in the discharge of their duties. Adegbeye and Oyekan (2022), defined ethical practices in the teaching profession to encompass adherence to professional standards, integrity, respect for students' rights and commitment to moral values that foster a conducive learning environment. Application of ethical practices is said to be the manner of behaviour(s) exhibited by an individual with regards to the professional ethics in the work environment. In the Nigerian higher education context, the promotion of ethical practices has become increasingly important due to growing concerns about accountability and quality assurance in universities. Ethical practices are moral principles which guide the knowledge of lecturers on what is right and wrong and also in determining what behaviours helps or harms the performance of their duties (Herminingsih et al., 2017). Within the university environment, application

of ethical practices is expressed through such behaviours as accountability, professional integrity, commitment to duty, punctuality, fairness in assessment, transparency in academic activities and discipline (Oparaji et al., 2021). These practices are particularly important because lecturers exercise considerable professional discretion in teaching, assessment, research supervision, publication, examination and interactions with students and colleagues. Where ethical standards are consistently observed, lecturers are more likely to demonstrate responsible professional behaviour, protect the credibility of academic processes and contribute meaningfully to institutional objectives. Conversely, unethical practices can undermine trust, weaken institutional discipline and adversely affect the quality and quantity of lecturers' productivity.

Application of accountability shows that lecturers take responsibility for assigned academic duties and outcomes. A lecturer who is accountable is expected to prepare adequately for lectures, assess students responsibly, complete academic assignments and account for institutional resources entrusted to him or her. According to Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2021), accountability fosters a culture of responsibility, where lecturers continuously assess their instructional methods, classroom management and interactions with students to achieve optimal learning outcomes. This commitment ensures that instructional delivery aligns with national educational goals and curriculum standards. In the university system, such commitment translates into improved teaching effectiveness, increased research productivity and stronger engagement in institutional activities. By being accountable, lecturers are encouraged to meet institutional standards, evaluate their performance and accept constructive feedback. One way lecturers' accountability improves their productivity is by fostering transparency in educational practices. Fullan (2020), suggests that when lecturers are accountable for students' performance, they tend to employ more innovative and student-centered teaching strategies, leading to improved engagement and academic achievement. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021), opined that application of lecturers' accountability in their professional roles help them maintain academic credibility, strengthen institutional governance and promote a culture of responsibility within the academic community. Similarly, Adeniran and Akanni (2015), asserted that accountability encourages lecturers to maintain high standards in their professional activities, thereby improving the overall performance of the institution. There is a clear connection between lecturers' accountability and students' academic achievement. When lecturers are accountable for their students' success, they are more likely to ensure that their students are meeting learning objectives (Ghai, 2023). Lecturers who uphold accountability in their professional activities demonstrate honesty in evaluating students, transparency in conducting research and fairness in interacting with colleagues and administrators. These practices strengthen the trust that students and society place in the university system.

Another area lecturers apply ethical practices is professional integrity. This has to do with consistent adherence to moral and professional standards such as honesty, truthfulness and responsibility in academic work. According to Greenfield (2019), application of professional integrity in teaching enhances credibility, which positively impacts students' motivation and classroom engagement. Lecturers are expected to exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions. This can be achieved by being trustworthy, honest, authentic, doing the right thing always and accepting one's mistakes without passing the blame on others. Professional integrity encourages lecturers to uphold academic standards, maintain honesty in teaching and research, and act as role models for students and colleagues (Anariochi, 2023). The presence of professional integrity among lecturers is therefore considered an essential factor in enhancing their productivity and overall institutional effectiveness. When lecturers demonstrate integrity in teaching, research and assessment, they build credibility and trust within the institution. Application of professional integrity promotes consistency in pedagogical practices, classroom management and disciplinary measures, reducing conflicts and fostering a harmonious school environment (Williams, 2022). In the same line, research by Johnson and Nelson (2021), highlights that lecturers who exhibit integrity tend to demonstrate higher levels of job commitment and effectiveness in classroom management. This, in turn, creates a structured and well-organized learning environment, where students benefit from clear expectations and equitable treatment. Kokab (2022), noted that integrity among university lecturers is closely associated with honesty in research practices, fairness in student evaluation and responsible fulfilment of academic duties. Lecturers who uphold professional integrity are more likely to avoid unethical behaviours such as

plagiarism, falsification of research data and biased assessment of students. Such ethical conduct enhances the credibility of academic work and contributes to improved scholarly productivity. When lecturers act with integrity, they are also more committed to maintaining high standards in teaching and research, which positively influences their overall professional performance and productivity. The presence of integrity on lecturers reinforces academic responsibilities. As a result, lecturers with high levels of integrity are more likely to demonstrate consistent productivity in their academic roles.

Statement of the Problem

Lecturers' job productivity is widely recognised as an important determinant of the effectiveness of universities because lecturers are primarily responsible for teaching, research, student supervision and other academic responsibilities. A productive lecturer is expected to utilise working time effectively, complete assigned academic duties, engage in research and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of institutional goals. Therefore, universities are expected to promote conditions that encourage lecturers to perform their responsibilities efficiently and responsibly.

In Rivers State Universities, lecturers are expected to maintain high standards of professional ethical practices while performing their teaching, research, supervision and other academic responsibilities. However, it has been observed that some lecturers exhibit unethical practices that negatively affect their productivity and the quality of education delivered to students. Lecturers exhibit low level of accountability in handling academic responsibilities such as record keeping, management of students' scores, use of institutional resources and execution of assigned duties. Furthermore, inconsistency in applying academic rules among some lecturers is manifested in lack of fairness in students' assessment, inadequate commitment to professional standard, questionable research practices and failure to maintain honesty and transparency in academic activities. These practices have the potential to erode professional commitment, weaken motivation and ultimately reduce lecturers' productivity. When lecturers compromise professional accountability and integrity, the consequences may extend beyond individual behaviour to their job productivity such as quality of teaching, credibility of assessment, research output, student supervision and the reputation of the university. The question now is, does application of ethical practices correlate lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities? Providing answers to this question is the problem of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between application of ethical practices and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities.
2. ascertain the relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities?
2. What is the relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities?

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of this study was 2354 lecturers consisting of 1330 lecturers from Rivers State University and 1024 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size of study was 330 lecturers consisting of 240 lecturers from Rivers State University and 90 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The non-proportionate sampling technique was adopted by the researchers to select 15 lecturers from each of the faculties in the two Universities. Two sets of questionnaires titled: "Application of Ethical Practices Questionnaire (AEPQ)" and "Lecturers' Productivity Questionnaire (LPQ)" were used as instruments

for data collection in this study. The instruments were structured on a 4-point modified rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instruments were subjected to face and content validity by three (3) experts, one from the Department of Educational Management and two from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Foundations respectively in Rivers State University. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha statistics which yielded reliability indexes of 0.86, 0.84 and 0.82. 330 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and retrieved on the spot, indicating 100% retrieval rate. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions. The relationship value of 0.1 – 0.4 was counted as “low correlation”, 0.5 denoted “moderate correlation” while 0.6 – 0.9 signified “high correlation”. The hypotheses were tested using t-Transformation at 0.05 level of significance with a critical t-value of 1.96. Analysed data therefore with t-calculated value above the t-critical value of 1.96 were rejected and below were accepted.

Analyses of Data and Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between Application of Accountability as an Ethical Practice and Lecturers’ Productivity in Rivers State Universities.

		Correlations**		
		Application of Accountability	Lecturers Productivity	Level of Correlation
Application of Accountability	Pearson Correlation	1	.832**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	330	330	High and
Lecturers Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.832**	1	Positive
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		Relationship
	N	330	330	

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

Source: Researchers’ SPSS Statistical Output (2026).

Data on Table 1 revealed a correlation value of $r = .832^{**}$. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities. This result implies that application of accountability as an ethical practice leads to improved productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers’ productivity in Rivers State Universities?

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between Application of Professional Integrity as an Ethical Practice and Lecturers’ Productivity in Rivers State Universities.

		Correlations**		
		Application of Professional Integrity	Lecturers Productivity	Level of Correlation
Application of Professional Integrity	Pearson Correlation	1	.727**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	330	330	High and
Lecturers Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.727**	1	Positive
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		Relationship
	N	330	330	

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

Source: Researchers’ SPSS Statistical Output (2026).

Data on Table 2 revealed a correlation value of $r = .727^{**}$. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities. This result implies that application of professional integrity as an ethical practice enhance productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities.

Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Table 3: Summary of t-Transformation on the Significant Relationship Between Application of Accountability as an Ethical Practice and Lecturers' Productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Variables	N	Df	r-value	t-Trans.	t-crit.	α	Decision
Application of Accountability	330						
		328	.812	27.17	1.96	0.05	Ho ₁ Rejected Significant Relationship Exist
Lecturers Productivity	330						

Source: Research's t-Transformation Analysis.

Data on Table 3 above shows a t-Transformation value of 27.17 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 328. Since the t-Transformation value of 27.17 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities is rejected and the alternative upheld which states that there is a significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities. This implies that there is a positive significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Ho₂ There is no significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Table 4: Summary of t-Transformation on the Significant Relationship Between Application of Professional Integrity as an Ethical Practice and Lecturers' Productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Variables	N	Df	r-value	t-Trans.	t-crit.	α	Decision
Application of Professional Integrity	330						
		328	.693	19.18	1.96	0.05	Ho ₂ Rejected Significant Relationship Exist
Lecturers Productivity	330						

Source: Research's t-Transformation Analysis.

Data on Table 4 above shows a t-Transformation value of 19.18 which is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 328. Since the t-Transformation value of 19.18 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities is rejected and the alternative upheld which states that there is a significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities. This implies that there is a positive significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on research question 1 on Table 1 revealed that there is high and positive relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities with a correlation value of $.832^{**}$. Hypothesis 1 on Table 3 showed that there was a significant relationship between application of accountability as an ethical practice and productivity of lecturers in Rivers State Universities with t-Transformation value of 27.17 which was greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. The finding is in line with Fullan (2020), who suggested that when lecturers are

accountable for students' performance, they tend to employ more innovative and student-centered teaching strategies, leading to improved engagement and academic achievement. The finding is also supported by Adeniran and Akanni (2015), who opined that accountability encourages lecturers to maintain high standards in their professional activities, thereby improving the overall performance of the institution. When lecturers are accountable for their professional responsibilities, they are more likely to prepare adequately for lectures, attend classes regularly, supervise students effectively and participate actively in research and scholarly publication. The institutional side of this relationship has been examined directly within the same setting, and the study of institutional management practices for administrative effectiveness in public universities in Rivers State found that the routine systems an institution operates are what carry its stated standards into daily practice rather than the standards doing that work on their own (Yellowe & Nwuke, 2024). What a lecturer is able to produce also depends on the working tools available, and the assessment of awareness and adoption of digital tools for enhanced job performance among educators in these same two universities found both to be uneven, which indicates that productivity rests on capability as much as on conduct (Taylor et al., 2025).

Findings on research question 2 on Table 2 revealed that a high and positive relationship exists between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities with a correlation value of .727^{**}. Hypothesis 2 on Table 4 showed that there was a significant relationship between application of professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities with t-Transformation value of 19.18 which was greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. This finding is in line with Williams (2022), who opined that integrity promotes consistency in pedagogical practices, classroom management and disciplinary measures, reducing conflicts and fostering a harmonious school environment. This finding is in consonance with research by Johnson and Nelson (2021), who highlighted that lecturers who exhibit integrity tend to demonstrate higher levels of job commitment and effectiveness in classroom management. This, in turn, creates a structured and well-organized learning environment, where students benefit from clear expectations and equitable treatment. Lecturers who demonstrate professional integrity are expected to uphold academic standards, maintain honesty in teaching and research, and act as role models for students and colleagues. Whether such standards hold in practice is a separate question from whether they are stated, and the wider Nigerian record is one in which provisions have repeatedly outrun the arrangements made for enforcing them, so that a written code of conduct binds only where something obliges the institution to apply it (Alikor & Orlunga, 2023b). The sensitisation that this study recommends has a demonstrated effect of its own, since continuous professional development programmes among teachers in Rivers State were found to shape the methods those teachers actually adopted (Wosu et al., 2024), and capacity building was similarly found to improve the job performance of staff in public universities in the state by equipping them for the particular demands their roles place on them (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024). The converse of this study's finding has also been observed in Rivers State, where social vices were found to depress the willingness of people to take an active part in the work of their organisations (Dokubo et al., 2021), which supports the view that where conduct is compromised the productive contribution of members falls away with it.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that a high, positive and significant relationship exists between application of accountability and professional integrity as an ethical practice and lecturers' productivity in Rivers State Universities. Where ethical standards are consistently observed, lecturers are more likely to demonstrate responsible professional behaviour, protect the credibility of academic processes and contribute meaningfully to institutional objectives. Conversely, unethical practices can undermine trust, weaken institutional discipline and adversely affect the quality and quantity of academic outputs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Institutions should establish clear frameworks such as regular performance evaluations and transparent reporting systems that require lecturers to document teaching activities, research outputs and student engagement in order to make lecturers answerable for their academic responsibilities.

2. Regular workshops and seminars on academic integrity should be organized to sensitize lecturers on ethical standards and other forms of misconduct so as to guide their conduct in teaching, research and interactions with students.

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