

## **Professional Ethical Standard: A Tool for Optimal Job Performance of Office Managers in an Organization**

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### ***Abstract***

*Office manager plays a pivotal role towards the achievement of organizational goals. As a result, Office Managers are required to be honest, loyal, confidential, diplomatic, multi-tasking, and cooperative, according to the ethics that govern their work. Thus the need to study their professional ethical standard becomes indispensable. This paper therefore, examines professional ethical standard as a tool for optimal job performance of Office Managers in an organization using The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as the case study. The study was descriptive in nature and used a survey method to collect data through a questionnaire. The population comprised all Office Managers in the Institution. Using a basic random selection technique, a sample size of one hundred (100) Office Managers was randomly picked from the population. The instrument used to collect data for the study was constructed from two research questions and two hypotheses. The data acquired for the study was analyzed using the mean and standard deviation method, while the hypotheses were tested using linear correlation and regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the data gathered, it was observed that a professional ethical standard is required for maximum performance of Office Managers. Consequently, he researchers recommended, among others, that Office Managers should be updated on ethical norms demanded of them in carrying out their jobs in order to improve their performance.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Professional Ethics, Professional Ethical Standard, Office Manager, Job Performance*

### **Background to the study**

Businesses of all sizes employ Office Managers to help oversee the front office and handle administrative matters. These services substantially aid organizations in carrying out their primary functions in order to achieve their goals.

The Office Manager is a critical member of any organization's success and growth. He/she serves as an executive assistant in various organizations. In addition to shorthand and

computer word processing skills, he or she should be able to handle various forms of correspondence, office procedures, and give communication support. Furthermore, an Office Manager should also be able to handle other routine tasks with less supervision and display initiative within the boundaries of his or her responsibility. (Onifade, 2010 & Pat, 2021). In performing his/her functions, the Office Manager is expected to be honest, loyal, confidential, diplomatic, multi-tasking and co-operative which are parts of the ethics guiding the job performance of Office Management personnel.

The term "ethics" refers to a set of rules and guidelines that act as moral principles for any profession or organization (Adeyinka, 2014). It is also a reasonable investigation or theory of what constitutes right and wrong, good and evil in terms of character and behavior that should be accepted by a group of people. Ethics and morality are synonymous, according to Ikelegbe (2018) who posited that ethics should be an integral element of all corporate activities. To Braimoh (2017), knowing the difference between right and wrong and opting to do the right thing constitutes ethical behaviour. He emphasized the importance of workplace ethics, particularly in the secretarial profession, because ethical standard when adhered to, promotes corporate culture based on common values of integrity, commitment, transparency, and love. Furthermore, ethical standard improves teamwork, provides emotional stability, protects institutional property and enhances positive public image (Ikelegbe, 2021).

Professional ethics are rules and regulations bordering on what professionals should or should not do (Olugbemi, 2015). Ethics, according to Ede (2015), are principles that influence a person's or a group's behavior in a business context. Like values, professional ethics sets parameters on how a individual should interact with others. According to the Encyclopedia, professional ethics is concerned with the standards and moral conduct that govern a profession and its members. More specifically, professional ethics examines issues, problems and the social responsibility of a profession as a whole as well as its individual practitioners. Professional ethics is a rule of behavior that applies to a variety of professions and is established by knowledgeable members of those professions or professional organizations (Pat, 2021). The basic principle of professional ethics is to ensure that those doing such tasks adhere to good, standardized ethical conduct (Adebayo, 2012). The concept of professional ethics according to Braimoh (2017) includes everything a professional should and should not do in the workplace and professionals are expected to follow professional ethics by avoiding any form of conflict

of interest. As a result, professional ethics might be understood as professionally recognized standards of personal and business conduct, beliefs, and guiding principles. In the submission of Agholor & Agholor (2020), the professional ethics of Office Managers involve the moral standards related to their functions for which they will be held accountable.

There are some requirements which are automatically expected from anyone occupying the position of an Office Manager. Among these are confidentiality, honesty, loyalty, reliability, responsibility, unsupervised work, multitasking, flexibility, commitment, teamwork, accountability, reliableness, strong character exhibition, and dedication to the job. (Segunda, 2019). This implies that adherence to professional ethics standard would assist Office Managers in the performance of their functions. This is accomplished by establishing anticipated behaviors in the form of professional ethics. According to Donaldson & Davis in Braimoh (2017), in any organization, a professional ethics program legitimizes managerial decisions, reinforces the cohesiveness and stability of the organization's culture, improves trust in interpersonal relationships, promotes consistency and transparency in product standards and quality, and fosters greater sensitivity to the firm's values and messages.

From the foregoing, it is evident that professional ethical standard has a vital impact on Office Managers' overall job performance and the achievement of corporate goals. However, the office manager faces numerous challenges as a result of the nature of his or her profession. For instance, some employers of labor have frequently complained of issues such as lack of professionalism among Office Managers, underperformance and failing to meet the ethical standards expected of them. It is against this background that the researchers tried to examine professional ethical standard as a tool for optimal job performance of Office Managers.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this research work was to examine Professional Ethical Standard as a tool for optimal job performance of Office Managers. The following were the precise goals:

1. To examine professional ethical standard expected of Office Managers for optimal job performance in an organization.
2. To evaluate the extent to which professional ethical standard contributes to job performance of Office Managers in an organization.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the professional ethical standards expected of Office Managers?
2. To what extent does professional ethical standard contribute to job performance of Office Managers in an organization?

## **Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: Professional ethical standard has no significant contribution to effective performance of Office Managers.

## **Methodology**

The study was descriptive in design and was carried out at Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, in Ogun State. The population comprised all Office Managers in the Institution. A sample size of one hundred (100) Office Managers was randomly selected from the population using simple random sampling technique. For the purpose of this study, two (2) research questions and two (2) hypotheses were developed. The main instrument used to gather data for the research work was questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts to determine the consistency of the instrument and its ability to answer the research questions. All the suggestions of the experts were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire that was used for data collection. Cronbach's Alpha technique was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.86. This indicated that the instrument was reliable in collecting data used in answering the research questions for the study. The instrument contained twenty-five (25) questions relating to the research questions. The items on the questionnaire were provided with four (4) options in Likert Rating Scale with a nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1. A minimum score of 2.5 was used to determine the acceptability of each research question. Any item that does not meet the criteria was rejected. A total of one hundred (100) questionnaires were printed and administered to respondents, while eighty-two (82) were duly completed and returned. The data for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation methods, while the null hypothesis was tested using linear correlation and regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviations of data from respondents on the professional ethical standard expected of office managers.**

<b>S/n</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1	Honesty and Loyalty to boss and organization	3.66	0.43	Accepted
2	Regularity and punctuality to work	3.46	0.53	Accepted
3	Keeping information private and confidential	3.61	0.47	Accepted
4	Maintaining cordial relationship with colleagues	3.60	0.66	Accepted
5	Being brave in dealing with critical situations	3.35	0.59	Accepted
6	Working without supervision	3.03	0.55	Accepted
7	Accepting responsibility for actions taken rather than shifting blame to colleagues.	3.56	0.70	Accepted
8	Strong character exhibition and dedication to the job.	3.65	0.73	Accepted
9	Having self-control and offering useful suggestions when needed	3.45	0.64	Accepted
10	Working cheerfully	3.07	0.85	Accepted
11	Respect for superiors, colleagues and subordinates	3.43	0.77	Accepted
12	Multi-task ability and flexibility	3.13	0.83	Accepted
13	Open mindedness,	3.70	0.68	Accepted
14	Reliability and promptness in task completion	3.71	0.71	Accepted
15	Team Spirit	3.56	0.67	Accepted
	<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>0.65</b>	Accepted

**Source: Field Survey 2021**

The table above revealed that majority of the respondents believed that the items mentioned as part of the professional ethical standard expected of Office Managers for effective work performance are valid. This was evident in the respondents' responses, which indicated a grand mean score of 3.47 with a standard deviation ranging from 0.43 to 0.85, signifying that the respondents' opinions are homogeneous.

**Table 2: Relationship between Professional Ethical Standard and Job Performance of Office Managers in The Federal Polytechnic. Ilaro**

		Professional Ethical Standard	Job Performance
Professional Ethical Standard	Pearson Correlation	1	.283
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	23.560	8.360
	Covariance	.238	.084
	N	100	100
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	.283	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	8.360	37.160
	Covariance	.084	.375
	N	100	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 3 shows the relationship between professional ethical standard and job performance. It reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.283 and covariance of 0.084 with p-value of .004, which implies that the test is significant because p-value is less than the significance value of 5%. Hence, the alternative hypothesis is accepted hence the conclusion that there is significant relationship between professional ethical standard and job performance of Office Managers.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.979 <sup>a</sup>	.959	.958	.100	.959	2271.640	1	98	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Professional Ethical Standard

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b. Dependent Variable: Contribution of PE on Performance

The result of Table 3 shows a very strong relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. It was observed that 95% job performance of Office Managers is caused by the effect of the independent variables. The standard error of the estimate is 0.100

**Table 4: ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.806	1	22.806	2.272E3	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	.984	98	.010		
	Total	23.790	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Professional Ethical Standard

b. Dependent Variable: Contribution of PE on Performance

Table 4, gives adequacy of the model used. The p-value is 0.000, this indicates that the model used is a good model and adequately relate the relationship between the variables. The F-value is 2.272E3

From Table 5, the model shows that professional ethical standard contributes positively to job performance of Office Managers with coefficient of 0.984 and p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### Discussion of Results

The first research question sought to identify the professional ethical standard expected of professional Office Managers. It was observed from the data collected and analyzed that honesty, loyalty, perseverance and tact, neatness, diplomacy etc. are some of the professional ethical standard that aid Office Managers in the performance of their jobs. The finding of this study is therefore, in agreement with Olannye & Dickson (2020) who identified golden rules for workplace professionalism to include punctuality and regularity at work, sticking to meeting time, dressing appropriately, wasting time on social media, having good customers' relation, commitment to the job and accepting faults whenever it happens.

Table 5: **Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
	1 (Constant)	.065	.096				.673	.503		
Professional Ethical Standard	.984	.021	.979	47.662	.000	.979	.979	.979	1.000	1.000

Source: field survey

On the result of the second research question and the hypothesis which sought to determine the contributions and correlation between professional ethical standard and job performance of Office Managers. The result showed that there is a very strong relationship between the independent variables and office managers' performance with r-value of .979 and standard error of the estimate is 0.1 with adjusted  $R^2$  of .959 were obtained which implies that 95% of the variation in job performance was accounted for by the independent variable. This corroborate the view of Agholor & Agholor (2020) in a study titled "Influence of application

of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in Delta State Polytechnics”, that professional ethics enhances job effectiveness in supervision, organizing work schedules, and ensuring that all materials to accomplish a task are available. It also agreed with the view of ICC (2021) Center for Entrepreneurship Workshop that secretarial professional ethics allow Office Managers to set a baseline expectation for what is socially acceptable and how they should approach problems. It also helps Office Managers to work with honesty and integrity which are essential to the creation of a healthier work environment. The mean square of 22.806 and  $p = .00$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, professional ethics is a guideline for the exhibition of the right attitudes and behaviors in the discharge of professional duties, both inside and outside the office. It also supports growth in an organization hence proper attention should be given to it in the workplace. In view of the importance of Office Managers whom happen to be the alter ego of their principals as well as the first point of contact of clients in an organizations, all hands should be on deck towards ensuring that all Office Managers imbibe and adhere to the ethical standards which would enable them perform optimally in their various organizations. Towards this end, all the stakeholders in the training and development of Office Managers have one role or the other which they have to play with high sense of purpose bearing in mind that an organization can only succeed to the extent of the job performance level of the officer in charge of its day to day administration.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following are the recommendations of the researchers:

- Office Managers should be regularly updated with ethical standards required of them in carrying out their duties in order to enhance their performance.
- The relevant Professional Associations especially NIOAIM should ensure the adherence of their members to the professional ethical standards that will help enhance the job performance of their members.

- Organizations should develop effective ethical programs and ensure that excellent ethical behavior is rewarded while appropriate disciplinary action is taken against unethical activity by any employee.
- Managers should foster an ethical work environment for all employees, convey ethical problems, and serve as role models for employees.
- Workers generally should not be given unrealistic tasks or targets as this could lead to unethical practices in an effort to meet such unrealistic demands or expectations.

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