



INSTITUTIONAL ETHICAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING VALUE-BASED EDUCATION IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study examined institutional ethical leadership practices for enhancing value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all the 2,182 (73 administrative staff and 2,109 academic staff) from the Faculties of Education in the six federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Using simple random sampling technique, four universities were selected. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine a minimum sample size of 336; hence, a sample of 764 (26 administrative staff and 738 academic staff), which represents 35% of the population was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument that was used for data collection was a self-developed 17-item questionnaire entitled: "Institutional Ethical Leadership Practices for Enhancing Value-Based Education Questionnaire (IELPEVBEQ)." It was structured after the four-point modified Likert rating scale, and was duly validated by five experts. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistical method. Reliability coefficients of 0.85 and 0.82 were obtained for the various sections of the instrument respectively, which showed that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that institutional ethical leadership is practised to high extent in fostering value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that, lecturers should always transmit social values and norms by modelling ethical behaviour such as integrity, honesty, equity, fairness, respect, empathy, among others that will inspire students to see them as their role models.

Keywords: *institutional, ethical leadership, practices, value-based and education.*

Introduction

Value-based education has been attracting increasingly wide interest among the knowledge-based society due to various atrocities that are being perpetrated by youths. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2020) defined value-based education as a holistic approach to learning that emphasizes the development of not only academic knowledge but also good character and strong ethical principles. Pandey (2024) described value-based education as the deliberate effort to instill core values in learners such as integrity, empathy, respect and social responsibility in order to shape their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Otieno-Omutoko (2018) viewed value-based education as a holistic character development which instills desirable behaviours in students. Thus, value-based education underscores ethical behavioural standards, which centres on the affective domain. UNESCO (2015) asserted that value-based education aims to nurture and develop a whole individual by equipping him or her with the societal values, norms and moral compasses necessary to navigate the complexities of modern society. Adeniyi (2009, as cited in Nwaubani 2021); Nwogu and Adieme (2017) posited that values education is very critical in our society as most of the problems confronting Nigeria today are value-based.

In recognition of the pivotal roles values play in fostering responsible citizenship and maintaining law as well as order in a society, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) stipulated in her National Policy on Education that one of the goals of tertiary education shall be to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society. Through the integration of values into the curriculum, educational institutions strive to produce students that are academically, ethically and emotionally sound (Pandey, 2024). Nwogu and Adieme (2017) posited that the universities play crucial roles in this competitive world that is characterised by “get rich quick mentality” as they shape and reshape the attitudes of adolescents and integrate them into the society through the transmission of social values and norms that underlie ethical citizenship. Studies have shown that value-based education plays pivotal roles in fostering empathy, moral and ethical development which contribute greatly to the overall well-being of individuals and their communities (Ahmad et al., 2018; Varma & Sanghani, 2024), emotional intelligence skills in students (Dangmei & Singh, 2017; Dooshima, 2024), self-reflection, which guides a person into the discovery of himself or herself (Anupreet & Shobhna, 2024; Neves & Story, 2015) and peaceful co-existence with one another as it equips students with skills for constructive conflict resolution (Nwafor, 2022; Pandey, 2024). Consequently, value-based education requires ethical leaders that can model ethical behaviour and reinforce ethical standards.

Ethical leadership refers to a leader’s ability to model ethical behaviour that fosters strong moral principles and integrity that inspires followers to build trust and respect for him or her. Brown et al. (2005, as cited in Ahmad et al. 2018) defined ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships that promote two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making. Jia et al. (2022) defined ethical leadership as leadership approach that is driven by values, integrity, accountability, transparency, equity and fairness. Kalshoven et al. (2011) listed seven dimensions or components of ethical leadership, which are as follows: fairness, power sharing, role clarification, people-oriented, ethical guidance, societal sustainability and integrity. Institutional ethical leadership practices can be viewed as all the measures leaders adopt to maintain value-driven learning environments. Research has empirically proven that leaders’ behaviour has a direct impact on followers’ ethical or unethical behaviour in organisational settings (Ahmad, et al. 2018). A study by Lovat, et al. (2011) discovered that students who are taught by ethical leaders (lecturers) are empathetic and socially responsible individuals who addressed complex ethical challenges, leading to improved classroom behaviour and a positive school culture.

Previous studies have empirically proven that institutions with strong ethical leadership produce students that are adjudged in character and learning (Nwogu & Adieme, 2017). Other empirical investigations have shown that ethical leadership positively influences students’ behaviours and attitudes (Huang, et al. 2024), increases compliance with institutional policies (Neves & Story, 2015), minimizes deviant behaviours among students (Oeschger et al., 2022) and encourages diversity and inclusivity (Pandey, 2024). Similarly, other studies that were conducted by Akangbou (2024); Maheshwari (2021) revealed that ethical leadership plays a critical role in shaping organizational or institutional culture. Research has also established that ethical leaders act with integrity and treat others with equity and fairness (Neves & Story, 2015). They make principle and fair choices, are trustworthy and honest, do not practice favoritism, and take responsibility for their own actions (Ahmad et al., 2018; Maheshwari, 2021). Kalshoven et al. (2011) found that what makes ethical leaders outstanding in organizations is involving employees in decision-making, which motivates them to be actively involved and abide by the rules. Thus, the existing literature has shown that ethical leadership practices in higher institutions can make students functional citizens in our society.

Institutional policies refer to guidelines or principles that are formulated and expected to be implemented in order to guide the behaviour of members for smooth running of organizations. Ahmad et al. (2018) defined ethical guidelines as set of rules, standards and codes of conduct, which foster ethical behaviour. Kalshoven et al. (2011) asserted that ethical guideline is a critical component in institutional ethical leadership. Ismail and Daud (2014) discovered that ethical leaders raise students’

awareness on what they need to know about the school culture through school policies, and they use rewards and punishments to hold them responsible for their actions. The findings of Akangbou (2024) revealed that institutional ethical leaders adopt values-based approaches to enhance campus safety and security which resulted in transparency, accountability and community engagement. In a related study, O'Donovan (2017) conducted a study which revealed that ethical leaders are transparent, and they engage their subordinates in open communication. In another study, Oeschger (2022) found that ethical leaders foster value-based education by providing clear expectations and modelling desirable behaviour. Similarly, extant research has empirically shown that ethical leaders foster value-based education by incorporating core values into the curriculum (Pandey (2024), protecting students' rights and dignity through enacting laws that prohibit bullying, discrimination, sexual abuse and child labour (Ohia and Adieme, 2018) and promoting open school climate where diversity and inclusivity are practised (Huang et al., 2024).

Integrity is another dimension of ethical leadership, and it centers on reinforcing ethical standards. Pandey (2024) defined integrity as the extent to which what one says is in line with what he or she does. Thus, integrity is simply living an exemplary life. Ismail and Daud (2014) discovered that ethical leaders with integrity act beyond self-interest, and they are empathetic in their dealings with others. Hence, in institutions, this can be referred to as academic integrity. Recent studies have shown that teachers who have academic integrity transmit social values and norms consciously and intentionally through communicating expectations, modelling attitudes, supportive learning environments, rewards and other classroom management practices (Oeschger et al., 2022). Huang et al. (2024) discovered that teachers who model academic integrity, positively and significantly influence students' behaviours. Jia et al. (2022) revealed that value-based education theories provide a foundation for teaching critical thinking, ethical decision-making and empathy, which enable students to become well-rounded individuals who can navigate an ever-changing world while adhering to ethical principles. Other empirical investigations revealed that institutional ethical leaders are role models who exhibit personality and appropriate behaviour to students (Oeschger et.al, 2024), positively impact students' affective outcomes (Lovat et al., 2011) and play a critical role in developing ethical values by imparting good morals in students (Ahmad, et al., 2018; Nguyen, et al, 2020).

However, the literature review underscores a dearth of research addressing institutional ethical leadership practices in fostering value-based education in universities, especially in Nigerian setting. This has created a knowledge gap, which this present study addresses.

Statement of the Problem

The rates at which young people perpetrate atrocities for “get rich quick mentality” in our society nowadays have become a global issue, and have sparked widespread concern among stakeholders. It is no longer news that undergraduates view education in Nigeria as a scam due to the rate at which some youths indulge in cybercrime otherwise known as yahoo-yahoo, kidnapping for ransom, organ harvesting, money rituals, armed robbery, among other heinous crimes to amass wealth and enjoy luxury lives. This is really worrisome as it appears our universities that are mandated to nurture and develop socially responsible individuals with core values that guide their choice of decisions whenever they face conflicting interests are not measuring up to societal expectations. It is pertinent to note that a brilliant student with unethical behaviour is a risk and not an asset to a nation. More worrisome is the fact that value degenerations among our youths have resulted in complex educational global issues such as insecurities, academic dishonesty, dropouts, poor academic performance, truancy, among other ethical dilemmas. Consequently, the researcher is bothered that if urgent attention is not given by fostering value-based education, anarchy will become the order of the day in our dear country, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine institutional ethical leadership practices for enhancing value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria; and
2. ascertain the extent to which academic integrity enhance value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does academic integrity enhance value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 alpha level:

- Ho₁ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria.
- Ho₂ There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which academic integrity enhances value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted cross-sectional descriptive survey research design as it involved collecting data from respondents simultaneously without manipulating the variables. The population of the study comprised all the 2,182 (73 administrative staff and 2,109 academic staff) from the Faculties of Education in the six federal universities in South-East, Nigeria (South-East Academic Reports of Universities, 2024). The universities are: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State; Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Imo State; Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike-Ikwo, Ebonyi State and Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State. Using simple random sampling technique, four universities (University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education and Alex Ekwueme Federal University), were selected. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine a minimum sample size of 336; hence, a sample of 764 (26 administrative staff and 738 academic staff), which represents 35% of the population was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

The instrument that was used for data collection was a self-developed 17-item questionnaire entitled: "Institutional Ethical Leadership Practices for Enhancing Value-Based Education Questionnaire (IELPEVBEQ)." The questionnaire was structured after the four-point modified Likert rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent with weights of: 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. It was validated by five experts in Departments of Educational Management and Test and Measurement in Faculty of Education, Federal University Oye-Ekiti. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability coefficient for IELPEVBEQ was 0.84. The subscale reliability for the extent to which institutional policies and academic integrity foster value-based education are 0.85 and 0.82 respectively; hence, they were adjudged to be reliable for the field study. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used to ascertain "High Extent" or "Low Extent". The decision rule therefore was that any mean score less than the criterion mean of 2.50 were tagged "Low Extent" while mean scores of 2.50 and above represented "High Extent." Analysed data therefore, with calculated z-values above the z-critical value of ± 1.96 were rejected and below ± 1.96 were accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on the Opinions of Administrative and Academic Staff on the Extent to Which Institutional Policies Foster Value-Based Education in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

S/N	The Extent Institutional Policies Foster Value-based Education	Administrative Staff			Academic Staff		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD ₁	Decision	$\bar{X}_2$	SD ₂	Decision
1.	To what extent do the students comply with the codes of conduct in your institution?	2.79	1.44	High Extent	2.68	0.27	High Extent
2.	To what extent does the school climate promote inclusivity, diversity, etc?	3.15	1.37	Very High Extent	3.01	0.26	Very High Extent
3.	To what extent do you adhere to ethical principles while dealing with students?	3.18	1.36	Very High Extent	3.16	0.25	Very High Extent
4.	To what extent does orientation raise students' awareness on school culture?	2.85	1.43		2.89	0.26	
5.	To what extent are students who violate the school policies disciplined in order to serve as deterrent to others?	3.09	1.38	Very High Extent	3.06	0.26	Very High Extent
6.	To what extent are students who are outstanding in character given award of recognition?	2.36	1.53	Low Extent	2.15	0.29	Low Extent
7.	To what extent do you adopt value-driven approaches that foster campus safety?	2.91	1.42	High Extent	2.78	0.27	High Extent
8.	To what extent are students involved in participating in decisions that concern them?	2.29	1.54	Low Extent	2.13	0.29	Low Extent
9.	To what extent do the school ethical guidelines promote desirable behaviour among students?	2.93	1.41	High Extent	2.87	0.26	High Extent
	Aggregate Mean/Standard Deviation	2.84	1.43	High Extent	2.75	0.27	High Extent

NB: Very High Extent = 3.00-3.50; High Extent = 2.50-2.99; Low Extent= 2.00-2.49; Very Low Extent = 0.00-1.99

Data on Table 1 reveal the mean responses of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Their responses indicate that the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education is high. This is evidenced in their aggregate mean scores of 2.84 and 2.75 respectively.

Research Question 2: To what extent does academic integrity enhance value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on the Opinions of Administrative and Academic Staff on the Extent to Which Academic Integrity Enhances Value-Based Education in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

S/ N	The Extent Academic Integrity Enhance Value-based Education	Administrative Staff			Academic Staff		
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD ₁	Decision	$\bar{X}_2$	SD ₂	Decision
10.	To what extent does implementing value-based education inculcate studiousness in students?	3.10	1.38	Very High Extent	3.14	0.25	Very High Extent
11.	To what extent do you model ethical behaviour among students?	3.25	1.35	Very High Extent	3.21	0.25	Very High Extent
12.	To what extent do you counsel students to desist from unethical behaviour?	3.13	1.37	Very High Extent	3.17	0.25	Very High Extent
13.	To what extent do you uphold integrity in performing your tasks?	3.28	1.34	Very High Extent	3.25	0.25	Very High Extent
14.	To what extent are you empathetic in dealing with students' matters?	2.94	1.41	High Extent	2.80	0.27	High Extent
15.	To what extent do you discourage bribe (sorting0 for higher marks among students?	3.18	1.36	Very High Extent	3.03	0.26	Very High Extent
16.	To what extent do you live by example in the way you dress to work?	3.29	1.34	Very High Extent	3.16	0.25	Very High Extent
17.	To what extent do you reinforce ethical standards by practicing fairness, equity, transparency, accountability, etc among students?	3.05	1.39	Very High Extent	3.12	0.25	Very High Extent
	Aggregate Mean/Standard Deviation	3.15	1.37	Very High Extent	3.11	0.25	Very High Extent

NB: Very High Extent = 3.00-3.50; High Extent = 2.50-2.99; Low Extent= 2.00-2.49; Very Low Extent = 0.00-1.99

Data on Table 2 show the mean responses of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which academic integrity enhances value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Their responses indicate that practising academic integrity enhances value-based education to a very high extent. This is evidenced in their aggregate mean scores of 3.17

Table 3: Summary of z-test on the Difference between the Mean Ratings of Administrative and Academic Staff on the Extent to Which Institutional Policies Foster Value-Based Education in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	z-cal	Critical Value	Remarks	Decision
Administrative Staff	26	2.84	1.43	762	0.32	± 1.96	Ho ₁ Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Academic Staff	738	2.75	0.27					

P < 0.05

Table 3 reveals the z-test analysis on the difference between the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. The result shows that z-calculated value of 0.32 is less than the critical value of ± 1.96 ; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 alpha level. Thus, there is no significant difference on the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of z-test on the Difference between the Mean Ratings of Administrative and Academic Staff on the Extent to Which Academic Integrity Enhances Value-Based Education in Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	z-cal	Critical Value	Remarks	Decision
Administrative Staff	26	3.15	1.37	762	0.15	± 1.96	Ho ₂ Not Significant	Failed to Reject
Academic Staff	738	3.11	0.25					

P < 0.05

Table 4 shows the z-test analysis on the difference between the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which academic integrity enhances value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. The result shows that z-calculated value of 0.15 is less than the critical value of ± 1.96 ; therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 alpha level. Thus, there is no significant difference on the mean ratings of administrative and academic staff on the extent to which academic integrity enhance value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that the extent to which institutional policies foster value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria is high. This implies that institutional ethical practices that are value-driven foster desirable behaviour among students. This finding agrees with Maheshwari (2021); Neves and Story (2015); Oeschger et al. (2024); Pandey (2024), who discovered in their studies that ethical leadership increases compliance with institutional policies, minimizes deviant behaviours among students and plays a critical role in shaping institutional culture. The finding is also in consonance with Ismail and Daud (2014), who found that ethical leaders raise students' awareness on what they need to know about the school expectations of them through school policies. The result corroborates with the findings of Akangbou (2024) that revealed that institutional ethical leaders adopt values-based approaches to enhance campus safety and security. The result of the hypothesis also agrees with Oeschger (2022); Ohia and Adieme (2018), who found that ethical leaders foster value-based education by providing clear expectations and modelling desirable behaviour.

Another finding of the study revealed that practising academic integrity enhances value-based education to a very high extent in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. The implication of this



study is that ethical leaders who reinforce ethical behaviour and standards transmit social values and norms that reshape students' behaviours, which compel them to make ethical decisions that make them socially responsible. This finding is in agreement with Ahmad et al (2018), found that leaders' behaviour has a direct impact on followers' ethical or unethical behaviour. It also aligns with Lovat et al. (2011), discovered that students who are taught by ethical leaders (lecturers) are empathetic and socially responsible individuals who addressed complex ethical challenges, leading to improved classroom behaviour and a positive school culture. The finding is in line with Huang et al. (2024); Pandey (2024), who observed that open school climate where diversity and inclusivity are practiced promote peaceful co-existence among lecturers and students. The results corroborate with Ismail and Daud (2014), discovered that ethical leaders with integrity act beyond self-interest, and they are empathetic in their dealings with others. The result of the hypothesis is also in agreement with Huang et al. (2024); Jia et al. (2022); Nguyen et al (2020); Oeschger et al. (2022), who revealed in their studies that teachers who have academic integrity transmit social values and norms consciously and intentionally through communicating expectations, modelling attitudes, supportive learning environments, rewards and other classroom management practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore concluded that institutional ethical leadership is practised to high extent in fostering value-based education in federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Thus, the study has empirically proven that higher institutions, particularly universities not only concentrate on cognitive abilities of learners but also their affective, which instills moral values and social norms in them. Consequently, ethical leadership is crucial for addressing all the value-based societal issues.

Recommendations

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

1. Institutional leaders should always endeavour to involve students in participating in decisions that concern their codes of conduct in order to foster value-driven learning environments.
2. Lecturers should always transmit social values and norms by modelling ethical behaviour such as integrity, honesty, equity, fairness, respect, empathy, among others that will inspire students to see them as their role models.

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