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LECTURERS' AWARENESS OF RESEARCH ETHICS IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL), ASABA, DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated lecturers' awareness of research ethics in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State. Two research questions were raised and answered. Two null hypotheses were formulated in the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population comprised 374 lecturers in F. C. E. (T), Asaba. The sample consisted of 193 (83 males and 110 female) lecturers selected using simple random sampling technique of Taro Yamane of 1967 formula. Researchers' Awareness of Research Ethics Questionnaire (RAREQ) was the instrument of the study. The RAREQ was validated by two measurement and evaluation experts in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. The reliability coefficient was 0.72 using Cronbach alpha method. The data were analyzed using mean statistics while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that lecturers to a high extent are aware of research ethics, thus, the difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on awareness of research ethics is not significant. The finding also revealed that lecturers to high extent are aware of unethical research activities, thus, the difference between male and female lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities is not significant. Based on the findings, the recommended among others

that the higher institutions authorities should organize conference and seminars on research ethics for lecturers so as to update their knowledge on ethical conducts of research.

Keywords: Awareness, Ethics, Research Ethics, Unethical Activities

Introduction

Research is a conscious effort made through scientific process towards finding solutions to problems in any facets of human endeavours. Research is also a scientific investigation towards solving a problem. This activity may be finding solutions to problems in social sciences, pure sciences among others. To this end, there are ethical principles of research that guide researchers in their day to day conduct of research. Ethics is a principle of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group as a moral, value system or value orientation. It is also a system of moral principles or rules of conduct (Hornby in Abanobi, 2016).

Valance (2005) argued that research ethics is central to all forms of research, not merely going through the ritual of obtaining approval from the institutional research ethics committee. He defined research ethics as the guiding principles, based on values that safeguard the integrity of all persons involved in the research namely participants; gatekeepers; stakeholders; researchers and research consumers, to promote the good work of all without sacrificing the interest of any, so that the research outcomes represent a progress worthy of the time and resources expended. On the same note, Burke and Christensen (2001) referred to ethics as the principles and guidelines that help us uphold the things we value.

Research ethics therefore provides guidelines for the responsible conduct of research. In addition, it educates and monitors researchers conducting research to ensure a high ethical standard. It is the application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research findings. Research Ethics is a world-wide set of principles governing the way any research involving interaction between the researcher and other participants or data relating to participants. Research ethics ensures that the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of research participants

must at all times be considered, respected and safeguarded.

David (2015) outlined some ethical principles of research in science and education as honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, informed consent and among others. According to Davis, there are other unethical research activities which researchers neglect include publishing or submitting the same paper in two different journals without telling the editors, including a colleague as an author on a paper in return for a favor even though the colleague did not make a serious contribution to the paper, discussing with your colleagues confidential data from a paper that you are reviewing for a journal, using data, ideas, or methods you learn about while reviewing a grant or a papers without permission, using an inappropriate statistical technique in order to enhance the significance of your research, overworking, neglecting, or exploiting graduate or post-doctoral students, failing to keep good research records, sabotaging someone's work and among others.

There are several reasons postulated by David (2015) why it is important to adhere to research ethics. First, research ethics promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and minimize error. Secondly, since research often involves a great deal of cooperation and coordination among many different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness. For example, many ethical norms in research, such as guidelines for authorship, copyright and patenting policies, data sharing policies, and confidentiality rules in peer review, are designed to protect intellectual property interests while encouraging collaboration. Most researchers want to receive credit for their contributions and do not want to have their ideas stolen or disclosed prematurely.

The findings of various studies on research ethics show that researchers do not comply with all ethical principles of research. For example, Agu and Abanobi, (2014) found that higher education lecturers comply with all the

research ethics except informed consent and higher education lecturers' compliance with research ethics do not differ in terms of gender. Furthermore, Osungbade, Ogundiran, and Adebamowo (2014) found in their study on research ethics education among graduate students of the University of Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria that knowledge on research ethics was about average among the study participants, especially those belonging to the younger age group (<30 years old), female. The awareness of the respondents on the three aspects of ethics of research explored was high, but not all demonstrated good knowledge. Equally, the mean knowledge scores of research ethics issues were generally above average. Age was found to be a predictor of this knowledge, particularly research integrity. These findings seem to be supported by the observation that about half (53.2%) had not been exposed to research ethics training or instruction of any kind before registering for the current graduate programme. Male students generally recorded higher mean knowledge scores than their female counterparts on most of the areas of responsible conduct of research explored. Despite this finding, sex was not a predictor of knowledge in this study.

The urge to publish as many papers as possible because of 'publish or perish' syndrome seems to have thrown a lot of lecturers into paper publication frenzy with little or no regard for standards. Some lecturers (experience or less experience) in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta State, may not be aware about research ethical principles in their day to day conduct of research. This situation may have resulted in some of the lecturers publishing research papers without ethical principle standards. Some of the lecturers may even go to the extent of falsifying data, engaging in arm-chair research without necessarily collecting pertinent data from the field. Some lecturers even copy colleagues' work without permission or acknowledgement. Also, some lecturers put name(s) of colleague(s) who never participated in the study and collect money in return. The scenario above gives rise to a question whether these lecturers are aware of ethical principles of research, hence the need for the present study.

Statement of the Problem

The need to ensure that the practice of research within education as well as social science is anchored on sound ethical principles is not open to debate; such principles are essential so that the conclusions drawn from research are valid and that the integrity of the methodology used in arriving at these conclusions is beyond reproach (Gallagher, in Agu & Abanobi, 2014). The field of research is rapidly increasing global but one may wonder if researchers are conscious of research ethics in conduct of research. Some lecturers in Federal College of Education Technical Asaba, Delta State still may not be aware of ethical principles of research which has resulted to their inability to publish quality papers with ethical principles of research. There is need to investigate lecturers' awareness of research ethics in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate lecturers' awareness of research ethics in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State. The study specifically sought the following;

1. The extent lectures are aware of research ethics in F. C. E. (T), Asaba
2. The extent Lecturers are aware of unethical research activities in F. C. E. (T), Asaba
3. Whether there is a difference between male and female lecturers' awareness of research ethics in F. C. E. (T), Asaba
4. Whether there is difference between male and female lecturers' awareness of unethical research activities in F. C. E. (T)

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study;

1. To what extent are lectures aware of research ethics?
2. To what extent are lecturers aware of unethical research activities?

Hypotheses

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

1. The difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on

awareness of research ethics is not significant

2. The difference between male and female lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities is not significant

Method

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State. The population comprised 374 lecturers in F. C. E. (T), Asaba. The sample consisted of 193 (83 males and 110 female) lecturers selected using simple random sampling technique of Taro Yamane of 1967 formula. Researchers' Awareness of Research Ethics Questionnaire (RAREQ) was the instrument of the study. The RAREQ was validated by two measurement and evaluation experts in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. The reliability coefficient was 0.72 using Cronbach alpha method. The data were analyzed using mean statistics while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above implied awareness whereas any item with a mean score less than 2.50 was not aware.

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Results

Research Question 1:

To what extent are lectures aware of research ethics?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Responses on Lecturers Awareness of Research Ethics *(N=193)*

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Remark
1	Honesty: in reporting research data, results, methods and procedures,	86	87	16	4	3.32	Aware
2	Objectivity: avoiding bias in experimental research and every aspect of research.	76	77	19	21	3.08	Aware
3	Integrity: keeping promises and agreements; act with sincerity; strive for consistency of thought and action.	63	89	20	21	3.01	Aware
4	Carefulness: avoiding careless errors and negligence; carefully and critically examination of one's own work and work of peers.	81	71	24	17	3.12	Aware
5	Keeping good records of research activities such as data collection, research design, as well as correspondence with agencies or journals.	43	13	86	51	2.25	Not Aware
6	Openness: sharing research data, results, ideas, tools, resources and be open to criticism and new ideas.	21	12	61	99	1.77	Not Aware

7	Respect for intellectual property: giving proper acknowledgement or credit for all contributions to research and never plagiarize.	70	83	18	22	3.04	Aware
8	Confidentiality: protecting confidential communications, such as papers or grants submitted for publication	33	41	69	50	2.30	Not Aware
9	Responsible publication: publishing in order to advance research and scholarship, not to advance just your own career. Avoiding duplicative publication (publish or perish syndrome)	43	32	55	63	2.28	Not Aware
10	Responsible mentoring: helping to educate, mentor, and advise students. Promote their welfare and allow them to make their own decisions.	56	82	22	33	2.83	Aware
11	Respect for colleagues: respecting colleagues and treat them fairly.	72	69	23	29	2.95	Aware
12	Non-discrimination: avoiding discrimination against colleagues or students on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, or other factors not related to scientific competence and integrity.	47	79	39	28	2.75	Aware

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13	Competence: maintaining and improving one's own professional competence and expertise through lifelong education and learning; taking steps to promote competence in research as a whole.	81	52	43	17	3.02	Aware
14	Legality: knowing and obeying relevant laws of research and institutional and governmental policies.	50	77	27	39	2.72	Aware
15	Human subjects protection: minimizing harms and risks that may come from the research result especially precautions with vulnerable populations	64	83	21	25	2.96	Aware
16	Informed consent: obtaining consent from the respondents before carrying out my research	12	23	89	69	1.89	Not Aware
	Grand Mean					2.71	Aware

The analysis in Table 1 reveals that the respondents rated all items above a mean score of 2.50 and above except five items with mean scores less than 2.50. This implies that the lecturers are aware of ethical principles of research such as honesty, objectivity, carefulness, integrity and among others, whereas not aware of informed consent, openness, keeping records of research activities, responsible publication, confidentiality and among others. Furthermore, a grand mean score of 2.71 shows that lecturers to a high extent are aware of research ethics.

Research Question 2: To what extent are lecturers aware of unethical research activities?

Table 2: Mean Scores of Response on Lecturers Awareness of Unethical Research Activities *(N=193)*

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Remark
17	Publishing the same paper in two different journals without telling the editors	51	89	19	34	2.81	Aware
18	Submitting the same paper to different journals without telling the editors	73	69	28	23	2.99	Aware
19	Including a colleague as an author on a paper in return for a favor even though the colleague did not make a serious contribution to the paper	27	26	64	76	2.02	Not Aware
20	Discussing with your colleagues confidential data from a paper that you are reviewing for a journal	19	37	76	61	2.07	Not Aware
21	Using data, ideas, or methods you learn about while reviewing a grant or a papers without permission	24	40	81	48	2.21	Not Aware
22	Using an inappropriate statistical technique in order to enhance the significance of your research	27	29	76	61	2.11	Not Aware
23	Conducting a review of the	71	79	21	22	3.03	

	literature that fails to acknowledge the contributions of other people in the field or relevant prior work						Aware
24	Stretching the truth on a grant application in order to convince reviewers that your project will make a significant contribution to the field	23	31	66	73	2.02	Not Aware
25	Failing to keep good research records and maintain research data for a reasonable period of time	29	31	82	51	2.20	Not Aware
26	Sabotaging someone's work	69	81	20	23	3.02	Aware
27	Giving a student undeserved grade in research for material gratifications	84	61	24	24	3.06	Aware
	Grand Mean					**2.50**	**Aware**

Table 2 reveals that the respondents rated all items below a mean score of 2.50 except five items with mean scores above 2.50. Furthermore, a grand mean score of 2.50 reveals that lecturers are aware of unethical research activities. However, the lecturers are not aware of some unethical research activities such as discussing with your colleagues confidential data from a paper that you are reviewing for a journal, using data, ideas, or methods you learn about while reviewing a grant or a papers without permission and among others.

Hypothesis 1:
The difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on awareness of research ethics is not significant

Table 3: Difference in Mean Ratings of Male and Female Lecturers on Awareness of Unethical Research Activities

Lecturers	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	D.F	T-Cal.	T-Crit.	Decision
Male	34.1	14.1	83	191	1.46	1.960	Accept
Female	36.8	10.5	110				

Data analyzed in Table 3 shows that the null hypothesis was accepted at .05 given that the value of t-calculated is less than value of t-critical.

Hypothesis 2:
The difference between male and female lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities is not significant

Table 4: Difference in Mean Ratings of Male and Female Lecturers on Awareness of Research Ethics

Lecturers	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	D.F	T-Cal.	T-Crit.	Decision
Male	33.4	12.4	83	191	0.85	1.960	Accept
Female	34.9	11.7	110				

Analysis in Table 4 shows that the null hypothesis was accepted at .05 given that the value of t-calculated is less than value of t-critical.

Summary of Findings

1. Lecturers to a high extent are aware of research ethics
2. Lecturers to high extent are aware of unethical research activities
3. the difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on awareness of research ethics is not significant
4. the difference between male and female lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities is not significant

Discussion

The first finding of this study revealed that lecturers to a high extent are aware of research ethics, thus, the difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on awareness of research ethics is not significant. Lastly, the finding of this present study revealed that lecturers to high extent are aware of unethical research activities, thus, the difference between male and female lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities is not significant. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Agu and Abanobi, (2014) that higher education lecturers comply with all the research ethics except informed consent and higher education lecturers' compliance with research ethics do not differ in terms of gender. Furthermore, Osungbade, Ogundiran, and Adebamowo (2014) found in their study on research ethics education among graduate students of the University of Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria that knowledge on research ethics was about average among the study participants, especially those belonging to the younger age group (< 30 years old).

The awareness of the respondents on the three aspects of ethics of research explored was high, but not all demonstrated good knowledge. Equally, the mean knowledge scores of research ethics issues were generally above average. Age was found to be a predictor of this knowledge, particularly research integrity. These findings seem to be supported by the observation that about half (53.2%) had not been exposed to research ethics training or instruction of any kind before registering for the current graduate programme. Male students generally recorded higher mean knowledge scores than their female counterparts on most of the areas of responsible conduct of research explored. Despite this finding, sex was not a predictor of knowledge in this study.

Conclusion

The study concluded that male and female lecturers are aware of research ethics and unethical research activities. There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' mean ratings on awareness of research ethics and there is no significant difference between male and female

lecturers mean ratings on awareness of unethical research activities.

Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations;

1. higher institutions authorities should organize conference and seminars on research ethics for lecturers so as to update their knowledge on ethical conducts of research
2. lectures should strictly follow the rules and regulation of research ethics in their day to day research investigations
3. Lecturers should carefully in their conduct of research that might have negative social consequence on participants, e.g, experimental interventions that might deprive students of important parts of the standard curriculum.

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