

## Attitude Towards Unethical Work Behaviour among Police Personnel: The Role of Emotions

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*While explaining the reasons for unethical behaviour among police personnel, with emphasis on training and education, the role of emotions is often neglected. This study clarifies the role of emotions in reducing unethical work behaviour by examining the influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical work behaviour among a sample of the Nigerian police personnel. The study adopts an ex-post facto research design to collect data from two hundred and twenty-five police personnel at Ogun State Police Headquarters, Elewera, Abeokuta. A questionnaire consisting of four sections, for measuring emotional intelligence, self-regulation, attitude towards unethical work behaviour and demographic variables, was the instrument of data collection. Two hypotheses were tested using the stepwise multiple regression analysis and 2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results revealed that emotional intelligence, self-regulation, age, educational qualification and gender were significant predictors of attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.66$ ;  $F(5, 219) = 5.66$ ;  $p < .001$ ) accounting for sixty-six percent of the variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour. The independent predictions also showed that emotional intelligence ( $\beta = -.44$ ;  $t = -5.9$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), self-regulation ( $\beta = -.27$ ;  $t = -2.3$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), age ( $\beta = -.16$ ;  $t = -2.2$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), educational qualification ( $\beta = -.15$ ;  $t = -2.2$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and gender ( $\beta = -.14$ ;  $t = -2.1$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) contributed significantly to variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour. Lastly, there was a significant influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $F(1, 221) = 18.40$ ;  $p < .001$ ). These findings have implications for personality assessment of police recruits in order to reduce unethical work behaviour.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, unethical behaviour, the Nigeria police force, self-regulation

### Introduction

The Nigerian police personnel are expected to exhibit professional and ethical behaviour. As law enforcement agents and an arm of the justice system, the Nigerian police force has a responsibility to demonstrate ethical behaviour, maintain a professional working environment and provide services with a benevolent and caring attitude. The code of conduct for the Nigeria Police Force is established by the Police Act (CAP 359) of 1943, which includes the duties of the police, special constabulary and traffic wardens. The code of conduct has also been included in their various training programmes to curtail personnel work behaviour. Different punitive measures are awarded to police personnel based on the nature of the offences committed. The consequences of these misconducts include dismissal, reduction in rank, withholding or deferment of increment, reprimand, fine, confinement

to barracks, and fatigues (Police Act, Part XVI).

According to Jones (1991), unethical work behaviour is illegal and morally unacceptable to the larger community. Unethical work behaviours include lying, cheating, stealing, interpersonal aggression etc. (Aquino and Reed, 2002). Among Nigerian police personnel, unethical work behaviour is much more serious; it involves bribery, falsification or removal of proofs, favouritism and nepotism, abuse of duty, racism, violence and torture (Newburn, 1999: 4-6).

Furthermore, Regulation 370 of the Police Act (CAP 359) particularly addressed unethical work behaviour. It stressed that 'a member of the force who commits any of the following acts shall be guilty of a punishable offence: absence from duty or being late for duty without leave or reasonable excuse, breach of confidence, corrupt practice, damage to clothing or other articles supplied to him, discreditable conduct,

disobedience to orders, drunkenness, drinking on duty, keeping a house for the sale of liquor in his own or in any other name, falsehood or prevarication, insubordinate or oppressive conduct, malingering; neglect of duty, improper conduct; shabby dressing and unlawful or excessive use of force.

Despite all that is required of them with regard to ethics and discipline, a critical observation of the conduct of some police officers in Nigeria has revealed a departure from this norm. This is evident in the scandals perpetrated by members of the police force which are often exposed to the public by the mass media, which blame them for corruption, extortion, improper use of force, brutality, indiscretion, unlawful detention and disruption of personal freedom of citizens, to mention but a few. Adebayo (2005) also contended that the quality of services rendered by the Nigerian police does not measure up to expectation. He stressed further that this is exemplified by the high level of insecurity in the society, occasioned by the rampant cases of armed robbery, gruesome murder and assassination and the poor response rate to distress calls from victims of violent crime. He said that these lapses in the police are best demonstrated by the police-citizen contact which often results in police brutalities, unlawful arrests, unjustifiable use of firearm, improper pullover of vehicles and extortion of money from motorists in cities and on highways.

The consequences of condoning unethical behaviour include citizen's undermining of the integrity of the police, distrust of police personnel, inhibition of amicable police/community relation and reduce productivity among the police. It is noteworthy that dissatisfaction with unethical behaviour among police personnel is not only expressed by members of the public who have had unfortunate experiences with the police, but their colleagues also express feelings of disappointment and frustration over their co-workers that engage in such shameful practices.

Abiding by professional ethics largely depends on the attitude of police personnel. Attitudes represent a cluster of beliefs, assessed feelings, and behavioural intentions towards an object (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). (McShane and VonGlinow, 2000). Thus, whether a police officer conducts himself in accordance with the ethics of his profession depends on his attitudes toward these ethical norms. This raises questions such as: Why would a police officer engage in unethical

work behaviour, despite having knowledge of the consequences? Why would a police officer ignore ethics that guide his profession?

In many cases, answers to these questions boil down to what scholars labelled 'emotions'. Goleman (1998), Sjoberg (2001) and Jones (2004), for instance, identified emotion as a major psychological factor that influences the behaviour and attitudes of individual workers in different organizations. Emotions are part of daily life; they determine an individual's reaction to events and situations (Fox and Spector, 1999). Emotions are closely related to attitude, which is a broader concept (McShane and VonGlinow, 2000). Despite their importance in organizational behaviour and attitude, the roles of emotions are not emphasized in police recruitment, selection, placement and assessment; instead, emphasis is placed on training, education and the recruitment of more women and younger people into the force (Adebayo, 2005).

Many studies have emphasized the influence of socio-demographic variables on unethical attitudes and behaviours (Peterson et al., 2002; Swaidan et al., 2003; Adebayo, 2005; Swaidan et al., 2006) than on emotional intelligence and self-regulation; yet emotion has impact on all of these (Fox and Spector, 1999).

Generally, emotional intelligence represents 'skills in empathy, cooperation, ability to reach a consensus, read people's feelings, control one's impulse and anger, calm oneself down, and maintain a positive attitude in the face of setbacks' (Goleman, 1998). Thus, it appears that all the academic knowledge in the world means little if a person has poor emotional intelligence. The fact that some police personnel are academically intelligent may not prevent them from engaging in unethical practices. This shows that emotional intelligence is crucial to the reduction of unethical work behaviour. In fact, the results of a study carried out by Gibbson and Barsade (1999) reveal that people who have low tolerance levels and are not able to read other people's feelings, no matter how talented or intelligent they may be, cannot be successful in their professions.

Another area of interest in this study is self-regulation, which is the ability to control or redirect emotional outbursts and other impulsive actions (McShane and Von Glinow, 2000). For example, a police officer may refrain from yelling at a suspect and manage to remain calm when he is provoked. Self-regulation includes the ability of individuals to suspend

judgment and think about the consequences of their behaviour rather than acting on impulse (McShane and Von Glinow, 2000).

The link between emotional intelligence, self-regulation and unethical work behaviour is implied in the general theory of crime, which explains criminal/unethical behaviours based on the theory of self-control (Gottfredson and Hirsch, 1990). The theory of self-control posits that developmental and environmental conditions, such as nurturing and limit-setting shape an individual's impulse, low tolerance and the need for immediate gratification. This means that an individual may consider the consequences his action might have in the future before satisfying his immediate needs. However, individuals with low emotional intelligence and self regulation are likely to have a poor history of nurturing, limit-setting and moral framework that promote spontaneity and frustration associated with criminal (or unethical behaviour) (Gottfredson and Hirsch, 1990). Thus, self-regulation is associated with unethical behaviour at work. Considering these submissions, the question of how emotional intelligence and self-regulation contribute to the prediction of attitude towards unethical work behaviour of the police personnel becomes important.

Essentially, the foregoing generates the following research questions: Why do some police officers engage in unethical practices and others do not? Which police officer is likely to report a positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour?

Although the Nigerian police have an Act that regulates their behaviour, the high level of unethical behaviour of some police officers requires attention, especially on how emotions (that is, emotional intelligence and self-regulation) predict attitude towards unethical work behaviour among police personnel. This study, therefore, investigates the interactive and relative influences of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical work behaviour. The implications of the outcome of this study for personality assessment of applicants for the police profession during and after recruitment is a major contribution of the study.

Although the influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical work behaviour has not been investigated, the review of literature on organizational behaviour, industrial and organizational psychology and social psychology has

demonstrated the influence of personality factors on unethical work behaviour, counterproductive work behaviour, workplace aggression and violence. Kreitner et al. (2002) also revealed that individuals have unique combinations of personality characteristics, values, and moral principles, leaning towards or away from ethical behaviour. The authors further stated that the personal experience of being rewarded or reinforced for certain behaviours and punished for others shapes the individual's tendency to act ethically or unethically.

Numerous personality traits have also been examined for their association with counterproductive work behaviour. These include: anger (Domagalski and Steelman, 2004; Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Hepworth and Towler, 2004), negativity and affectivity (Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Hepworth and Towler, 2004), self control (Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Marcus and Schuler, 2004), emotional stability (Colbert et al., 2004; Salgado, 2002), narcissism (Penney and Spector, 2002), agreeableness (Skarlicki et al., 1999), self esteem (Harvey and Keashly, 2003), and anxiety (Fox and Spector, 1999). Marcus and Schuler (2004) has also measured self-control to explain unethical work behaviour.

The review of literature on the relationship between gender and unethical work behaviour has also revealed mixed results. Some studies found that females tend to be more concerned with ethical issues compared to their male counterparts (Ang et al., 1996). Others have failed to support this gender differences in ethical attitudes, behaviour and beliefs (Swaidan et al., 2003; Swaidan et al., 2006).

Empirical findings have included age in ethical reasoning. For example, Peterson et al. (2002) found age to be a significant predictor of ethical behaviour and that older people possess higher ethical standards (about work) than younger people. Miessing and Preble (1985) and Ruegger and King (1992) reported age differences in ethical reasoning; they discovered that older subjects possessed higher ethical values than the younger ones. Adebayo (2005) also reported that gender and age are significant predictors of unethical beliefs. The female and older police participants had more ethical values than their male and younger counterparts. In addition, age is discovered to be an important factor in explaining attitude towards ethical behaviour (in this case, unethical work behaviour). First (2000) found that relatively older persons were

more inclined towards ethical practice and attitudes than younger persons. However, Burton and Casey (cited in Adebayo, 2005) did not find a correlation between age and ethical beliefs.

Muncy and Vitell (1992) reported that less educated individuals tend to exhibit ethical characteristics compared to individuals with higher levels of education. Studies conducted by Dubinsky et al. (2005) and Swaidan et al. (2006), however, revealed that highly educated individuals have higher ethical values compared to their counterparts with low education level.

In conclusion, therefore, the review of literature generated two hypotheses: that emotional intelligence, self-regulation, age, educational qualification and gender would contribute significantly to attitude towards unethical work behaviour; and that there would be a significant interaction of influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitudes towards unethical work behaviour.

### **Methodology**

This study is an ex-post facto survey, with attitudes towards unethical behaviour as a dependent variable and emotional intelligence and self-regulation as major independent variables. The study sample comprised two hundred and twenty five members of the Nigeria police force, randomly selected among the police of the Ogun State Police Command headquarters, Elewera, Abeokuta. The sample comprised 161 (72%) males and 64 (28%) females, with the age range of 20 - 56 years (and a mean score of 34.34 years and SD of 7.92). Also, 84 (37%) of the participants were single, while 141 (63%) were married. Their educational background also varied - 120 (60%) had WASC/GCE/SSCE, 69 (29.5%) had OND/NCE, 25 (7.5%) had BSc/HND, and the remaining 11 (1.5%) had postgraduate degrees. Regarding their religious affiliation, 104 (49.5%) were Christians, 109 (49.5%) were Muslims, while the remaining 12 (1%) were traditionalists. Their work experience in the police ranged from 1 to 28 years, with a mean score of 9.98 years and SD of 9.34.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument of data collection for this study is a questionnaire which is subdivided into four sections.

**Section A** focussed on demographic variables, such as age, gender, educational level, marital status etc., while

**Section B** measured emotional intelligence on a 33-item emotional intelligence scale (EIS) which was developed by Schutte et al. (1998). The scale measures the expression of emotions in self and others, regulates emotions in self and others, and the use of emotions in solving problems. The scale is based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Schutte et al. (1998) reported that EIS has demonstrated a high internal consistency with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranging from 0.87 to 0.90 and a two-week test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.78. The scale was revalidated in this study and the researcher obtained a coefficient alpha of 0.64 with Unequal Length Spearman Brown reliability coefficient of 0.62.

**Section C** measured self-regulation on a 10-item self-regulation scale (SRS) developed by Schwarzer et al. (1999). It was also based on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'not all true (1) to 'exactly true' (5). Schwarzer et al. (1999) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.76 and test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.62. A high score indicates high self-regulation while a low score means low self-regulation. The researcher obtained a coefficient alpha of 0.84 with Equal Length Spearman Brown reliability coefficient of 0.67.

**Section D** measured attitude towards unethical behaviour on a scale developed by Hyams (1990) to measure attitudes towards professional ethics. It contained 21 questions designed to differentiate attitudes towards corrupt behaviour, the use of unnecessary force or violence, accepting bribes as well as other ethical violations. The response pattern ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following items have reversed scores: 3, 15, and 20. The total measure of ethical attitudes was obtained by the addition of the scores for each item. Possible scores ranged from 21 to 105, high scores on scale reflect less ethical attitudes. Krekei et al. (1996) reported an alpha coefficient of 0.72 for the scale. Adebayo (2005) also reported a coefficient alpha of 0.89 for the scale. In this study, items on the scale were subjected to item total correlation analysis and the result ranged from 0.27 to 0.55. Items 3, 4, 15, 20 and 21 were not used for the final analysis because of low correlation coefficients. The final coefficient alpha was 0.76 for this present sample.

### Procedure

At the inception of this study, the researcher approached the commissioner of police, Ogun State Police Command, to obtain permission to carry out the study, after the purpose of the study had been explained to the authority. The researcher, with the assistance of some policemen, randomly administered the instrument for data collection to the participants who were willing and ready to complete it. While some of the instruments were collected immediately after completion, the rest could not be retrieved until about two weeks later. The nature of the respondents' job and the number of scales involved in the study, as well as the number of items contained in each of these scales, accounted for the delay in the completion and collection of the results. The researcher administered the questionnaire under the condition of anonymity. However, out of the three hundred copies of the questionnaire administered, only two hundred and twenty-five were adequately completed and returned. The completed copies were then scored, processed and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

### Analysis

The statistical tools employed in this study are Pearson's moment correlation; used to establish the relationship among the variables of a study and Stepwise Multiple Regression and 2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA). The reasons for the choice of these statistical tools were to isolate the independent variables that could yield optimal predictive equation of attitudes towards unethical work behaviour, and to test for the influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitudes towards unethical work behaviour.

### Results

The first analysis involved an inter-correlation of all the variables of study (table 1).

Table 1. Correlation matrix showing the relationships between variables of study

Variables	N	X	SD	Age	Gen	Edu.	EI	SR	UWB
Age	225	34.34	7.92	-					
Gender	225	07.12	4.73	.07	-				
Educat. Qual.	225	30.67	7.18	.04	.06	-			
Emotional Int.	225	35.30	6.42	.19*	-.12*	.37**	-		
Self-regulation	225	28.84	6.60	.25**	-.16*	.21*	-.07	-	
UWB	225	41.65	9.71	-.24**	-.22**	-.29*	-.53***	-.43***	-

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### Key:

Gen = gender  
 Edu. = educational qualification  
 EI = emotional intelligence  
 SR = self-regulation  
 UWB = unethical work behaviour

Table 1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations and zero-order Pearson's correlations for the variables investigated in this study. Age was negatively related to attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $r = -.24$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Gender was also negatively related to attitudes towards unethical work behaviour ( $r = -.22$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, there was a significant negative relationship between educational qualification and attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $r = -.29$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), emotional intelligence and attitudes toward unethical work behaviour ( $r = -.53$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and lastly between self-regulation and attitude toward unprofessional behaviour ( $r = -.43$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ).

Stepwise multiple regression statistical analysis was used to test the independent variables that would yield an optimal predictive equation of attitudes towards unethical work behaviour among the police personnel. The independent variables selected were age, gender, educational qualification, emotional intelligence and self-regulation (table 2).

Table 2. Stepwise multiple regression analysis using emotional intelligence, self regulation, age, gender and educational qualification to predict attitude towards unethical work behaviour among police personnel

Predictors	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	β	t
Gender	0.57	0.57	-0.14	-2.1**
Educational qualification	0.60	0.03	-0.15	-2.2**
Age	0.62	0.02	-0.16	-2.2**
Self-regulation	0.64	0.02	-0.27	-2.3***
Emotional intelligence	0.66	0.02	-0.44	-5.9***

$f = 5.66$ ;  $df = 5, 219$ ;  $P < 0.001$

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

The result revealed that educational qualification, age, gender, self-regulation and emotional intelligence were significant predictors of attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.66$ ;  $F(5, 219) = 5.66$ ;  $p < .001$ ], explaining sixty-six percent (66%) of the variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour. This means that these variables are important in understanding attitude towards unethical work behaviour.

Moreover, the partial regression of each independent variable showed that emotional intelligence contributed more ( $\beta = -.44$ ;  $t = -5.9$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) to variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour and its contribution changed the percentage increase in  $R^2$  from 0.57 to 0.66. This means that those police personnel who scored high on emotional intelligence reported a negative attitude towards unethical work behaviour or those that scored low on emotional intelligence reported a positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour. This was followed by self-regulation, which contributed ( $\beta = -.27$ ;  $t = -2.3$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) to the variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour; it increased the percentage change  $R^2$  by 2%. In other words, those police personnel who scored high on self-regulation reported a negative attitude towards unethical work behaviour or those police personnel that scored low on self-regulation reported a positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour.

Furthermore, age of respondents contributed significantly to variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $\beta = -.16$ ;  $t = -2.2$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and this increased the percentage change in  $R^2$  from 0.57 to 0.67. This showed that younger police personnel reported a positive attitude towards unethical behaviour and older police personnel reported a negative attitude. Similarly, educational qualification contributed significantly to variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $\beta = -.15$ ;  $t = -2.2$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). It increased the percentage change in  $R^2$  by 3%. This means that police officers with low educational qualifications reported a positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour, while those with high educational qualifications reported a negative attitude towards unethical work behaviour. Lastly, gender contributed significantly to variance in attitude toward unethical work behaviour ( $\beta = -.14$ ;  $t = -2.1$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) though it was the least. Female police personnel reported a negative attitude towards unethical work behaviour while their male counterparts reported a positive attitude.

Moreover, the influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation was further examined in this study using a 2x2 analysis of variance. The results revealed that there was a significant effect of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical behaviour among the police -  $f(1, 221)$

$= 18.40$ ;  $p < .001$ . That is, emotional intelligence and self-regulation both influence attitudes towards unethical work behaviour. The significant result from the analysis suggested a multiple comparison analysis. The protected t-test multiple comparison was also calculated. The results are presented in table 3.

**Table 3. Multiple comparison analysis of influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical behaviour**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	13 24
Low EI and Low SR	91	50	8	6.33***
Low EI and High SR	60	43	8	7.80*** 1.96*
High EI and Low SR	44	41	10	7.88*** 2.68** 0.89
High EI and High SR	30	40	6	-

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Note: High scores reflect favourable/positive attitude towards unethical work behaviour

The results revealed that police personnel who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation ( $m = 39.61$ ) reported a significantly favourable attitude towards unethical work behaviour ( $m = 49.62$ ) than those who scored low in emotional intelligence but highly in self-regulation ( $m = 43.23$ ), and those who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation ( $m = 40.88$ ), as well as police personnel who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation ( $m = 39.61$ ). In other words, police personnel who scored high on emotional intelligence and self-regulation possess higher ethical values than their colleagues.

Furthermore, police personnel who scored low in emotional intelligence but highly in self-regulation had a significantly favourable attitude towards unethical behaviour ( $m = 43.23$ ) than those who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation ( $m = 40.88$ ), as well as those who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation ( $m = 39.61$ ). This means that the police who scored low in emotional intelligence but highly in self-regulation had lower ethical values than those who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation and those who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation. There was, however, no marked difference in attitude towards unethical work behaviour in the police personnel who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation ( $m = 40.88$ ) and

those who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation ( $m=39.61$ ). But both have comparable mean scores in attitude towards unethical behaviour, which means they have high ethical values.

### Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis, it was revealed that emotional intelligence, self-regulation, age, gender and educational qualification contribute significantly to variance in attitude towards unethical work behaviour. These findings mean that emotional traits (emotional intelligence and self-regulation) and demographic variables (age, gender and educational qualification) are significant in explaining attitudes of police officers towards unethical work behaviour. The findings are in line with the assertion of Kreitner et al. (2002) who posited that an individual has a unique combination of characteristics, values, and moral principles, leaning towards or away from ethical behaviour. Furthermore, the findings are similar to those of previous studies in the areas of personality traits and work attitudes and behaviours (Domagalski and Steelman, 2004; Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Hepworth and Towler, 2004. A previous study by Marcus and Schuler (2004) also measured self-control to explain indecorous behaviours in the workplace. Thus, the significant influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical work behaviour found in this study is similar to the findings.

The findings also revealed a significant influence of age on attitude towards unethical work behaviour. The finding correlates with those of previous findings. For example, Peterson et al. (2002) found age to be a significant predictor of ethical work behaviour and that older people possessed higher ethical standards (about work) than younger people. Miessing and Preble (1985) and Ruegger and King (1992) also reported age differences in ethical reasoning; that older subjects tend to have higher ethical standards than younger ones. Adebayo (2005) reported that gender and age are significant predictors of unethical work behaviour; female and older police personnel possess more ethical standards than their male and younger counterparts.

Another important factor that explains attitude towards ethical work behaviour is age. First (2000) found that relatively older persons are more inclined toward ethical behaviour than younger persons. However, Burton and Casey (cited in Adebayo, 2005)

did not find a correlation between age and ethical behaviour. The findings of the current study support the significant influence of educational qualification on attitude towards unethical work behaviour. This corroborates the findings of Dubinsky et al. (2005), Swaidan et al. (2003), and Swaidan et al. (2006) who reported that highly educated individuals tend to have more ethical principles, compared to their counterparts with low levels of education. However, Muncy and Vitell (1992) reported that less educated individuals have higher ethical standards, compared to individuals with higher levels of education.

A significant influence of gender on attitude towards unethical work behaviour was also revealed in this study. Although the findings of Swaidan et al. (2003) and Swaidan et al. (2006) did not support gender differences in ethical attitudes, behaviour and beliefs, the results obtained from this study, which are closely related to those of Adebayo (2005) and Ang et al. (1996), showed that females are more concerned with ethical issues than their male counterparts.

The findings of this study also emphasized a significant influence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation on attitude towards unethical behaviour. The findings clearly substantiate the author's original hypothesis that high levels of emotional intelligence and self-regulation enhance an individual's control of his behaviour. Thus, the findings showed that people who have high emotional intelligence and self-regulation know how to control their emotions. Emotional intelligence and self-regulation are qualities that every police officer should possess, so as to be able to deal efficiently with the public and their colleagues. This submission is in line with the general theory of crime, which explains criminal behaviours (or, by this study, unethical work behaviour) based on the concept of self-control (Gottfredson and Hirsch, 1990). This theory posits that developmental and environmental conditions, such as nurturing and limit-setting, shape individuals' impulsivity, low frustration tolerance and need for immediate gratification. This means that an individual may consider the long-term consequence of his action before satisfying an immediate need. Hence, individuals scoring low on emotional intelligence and self-regulation would have poor nurturing, limit-setting and moral abilities and these could lead to impulsive and frustration attitude towards criminal behaviour (unethical behaviour) (Gottfredson and Hirsch, 1990).

This self-control theory is in line with the African way of child training, a child is taught in Africa to delay gratification – for example, he is taught to wait until the end of a meal before he is given a piece of meat or fish; the adult members of the family first have their share of the food, including the meat/fish, before the young ones).

### Conclusion

This study found that emotional intelligence, self-regulation, age, gender and educational qualification contribute significantly to the variance in attitude towards unethical behaviour among police personnel. An independent examination of the variables showed that emotional intelligence contribute more to the variance in attitudes toward unethical work behaviour, followed by self-regulation, age, educational qualification and gender.

Furthermore, police personnel who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation had higher ethical standards than their counterparts. Police personnel who scored low in emotional intelligence but high in self-regulation had lower ethical values than those who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation and those who scored highly in emotional intelligence and self-regulation. However, no marked difference was recorded in attitude towards unethical work behaviour between police personnel who scored highly in emotional intelligence but low in self-regulation and those who scored highly in both emotional intelligence and self-regulation.

### Recommendations and Implication of Findings

The findings of this study have revealed the relevance of emotional intelligence and self-regulation, age, gender and educational qualification to attitude towards unethical work behaviour of police personnel. This has practical implications for the reviewing and updating of the Nigerian Police Act and training manuals, in relations to recruitment, placement, and training of police personnel. It is therefore suggested that the Nigerian police authority include emotional intelligence and self-regulation measures in its assessment tools during recruitment exercises.

Age, gender and educational qualifications were also found to influence attitude towards unethical behaviour. This has implications for the recruitment of a larger number of females and applicants with higher

educational qualifications into the police force. Moreover, police personnel, especially the new ones, should have a realistic view of the job. This will go a long way in containing inordinate behaviours among them.

Also, police education and training should be enhanced to include value analysis, with regard to ethical principles that may be unclear to police personnel, such as confidentiality, enforcement of law without fear, and obligations to engage in appropriate private conduct; and the analysis should include basic explanations of professional ethics. This will motivate the police to abide by their professional ethics. Furthermore, the police authority should always endeavour to employ qualified people for the job, using psychological and personality tests to weed off the qualified ones.

Finally, there should be followup studies to investigate other variables that are not examined in this study, such as the Big five personality traits. Moreover, how some members of the police perceive the unethical behaviour of their colleagues could be an interesting area of research. The followup studies should be conducted with a larger sample size, with data collection covering more than one location.

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