

# **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE DIGEST**

**Journal of Nigerian Library Association, Anambra State Chapter**

**Volume 16, SEPTEMBER, 2022**

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# ETHICAL ISSUES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF BOOK PUBLISHING FIRMS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The study investigated ethical issues and organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Population of the study consisted of 204 management staff of the 51 registered book publishing firms in Ibadan metropolis. The entire population was studied hence no sampling. Questionnaire was used for data collection. A response rate of 77% was achieved from the questionnaires distributed. Research question 1 was based on four point rating scale. While Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the research questions 2, 3 and 4. Findings revealed that there was a significant combined influence of ethical issues (authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) on organizational performance ( $\text{Adj.}R^2 = .676$ ,  $F_{(4, 153)} = 74.716$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Organizational performance positively correlated with authorship ( $r = .666$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), duplicate publication ( $r = -.163$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and plagiarism ( $r = -.572$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). More so, authorship was found to be the strongest predictor of organizational performance ( $\beta = .373$ ,  $t = 24.687$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), followed by plagiarism ( $\beta = .265$ ,  $t = 18.217$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and duplicate publication ( $\beta = .145$ ,  $t = 10.826$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Findings from the study also showed that piracy issues, authorship issues, marketing issues and infrastructural decadence were the most highly prevalent ethical issues in most publishing firms in Ibadan. It was recommended that book publishing firms should implement policies that could foster the development and satisfaction of authors. During economic hardship, book publishing firms should produce what the customer can afford as this will discourage piracy.

**Keywords:** *Book Publishing Ethics, Book Piracy, Plagiarism, Book Publishing Firms, Organizational Performance, Ibadan.*

## Introduction

The atmosphere surrounding contemporary book publishing firms in Nigeria has been very challenging and competitive due to interplay on many factors. Given the peculiarity of a book publishing firm as the gateway to knowledge acquisition and dissemination, producer of intellectual properties, and a source of direct and indirect income to a large number of people, the performance of such a key industry is sacrosanct.

Book publishing firms are involved in the process that include the acquisition of a manuscript, it's editing, designing of the book's final appearance and the actual manufacture into book form, the distribution of the book to booksellers and the book's ultimate purchase by readers (Okilagwe, 2001). It concerns the manufacturing, publication and distribution of books.

Performance of the book publishing firms in Nigeria is perceived to be on the decline. Information from the website of Nigerian book publishing firm revealed that major book publishers in the country have reported a significant loss in 2019 and 2020. Similarly, University Press, Nigeria's largest indigenous book publisher, witnessed a revenue decline of 66% from N95.9m in Q1 2019 to N32m in Q1 2020. Similarly, Academy Press Plc recorded a revenue decline of 60.5 percent from N423.4m in Q1 2019 to N167.1m in Q1 2020. The revenue of both book publishing firms were derived from sales of printed books in and outside Nigeria and the amount receivable for printing jobs done. The University Press, in its audited financial statement for the year ended March 31, 2020, declared that "the disruption of economic activities in Nigeria was due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and a sharp drop in the price of crude oil compounded the economic woes (Punch Newspaper, 2020).

An inherent source of the decline in the organizational performance of book publishing firms apart from the COVID 19 pandemic considered in this study, is the ethical issues, which are now of utmost concern to all stakeholders in the publishing industry. When organizations ethically carry out their daily business, there is a tendency that they will perform optimally (Rogers & Blenko, 2006). Ethical issues are issues relating to compliance with principles guiding ethical conduct in book publishing firms. Ethical conduct is about members of specific organization/industry demonstrating obedience to key moral principles established to guide the conduct of activities within the profession. Codes of ethics is being increasingly adopted in organizations worldwide, yet their effect on employee perceptions and behaviour seem not to have been thoroughly addressed (Donaldson, 2003). Several studies have been carried out in the organisational context to examine the level of compliance of employees to their organization's code of conduct, especially in the book publishing firm (Bowie, 2006; Sommer, 2011; Walumbwa, et al., 2017). The list of ethical issues in the book publishing firms is numerous. Prominent among them adopted are authorship issues, duplicate publication and plagiarism.

Authorship confers credit for the work that has been carried out to result in a publication. This has many important academic, social, and financial implications. It is implicit that authorship entails responsibility and accountability for the published work. An author should have contributed to the manuscript in at least one or more of the following ways: significant contributions to conception and/or design of the work, acquisition, analysis, and/or interpretation of data generated/collected during the work, drafting/editing the work or revising it critically and thus contributing important intellectual content for the individual to be conferred as author or co-author (Sirmon et al., 2007). When a book, research article or other categories of research output is authored by one person, it is implicit that all the research work related to that publication was essentially carried out by that person, and he/she bears all responsibilities. In multi-authored publications however, it becomes necessary to identify the contributions of each author so that their responsibilities can be defined. In such publications, all the authors however, have the following collective responsibilities: to be accountable for all aspects of the work to ensure that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work were appropriately investigated and resolved, and final approval of the version to be published, each author should be able to identify which co-authors are responsible for which specific part of the work.

The unpredictable nature of the economic climate under which Nigerian publishers operated often led to the shelving of publishing projects at various stages, causing the loss of funds already invested. An unstable and unpredictable economic system that depreciates available capital and income could lead to disrupting the publishing chain, leading to unnecessary waste of investment when projects are dropped or suspended. In addition, the capital-intensive nature of publishing makes it difficult to estimate, at the outset, exactly how much would be needed to execute a publishing project in an unstable economy. The publishing venture entails investment in manuscript development, various production processes and distribution over the usually long period (2-3 years) it takes to put a book on the

market. The inability to produce already developed projects at advanced stages of production dampens the enthusiasm with which manuscripts are generated and leads to limiting the manuscript development processes of planning, writing, assessment, consultation of experts, evaluation, testing, etc. by the author, to the implication for the quality and adequacy of book content.

Equally, many delayed projects in which publishers have committed themselves by contracts are bound to engender caution in the development of new manuscripts, as some disappointed authors take legal actions against publishers' "raw materials", constraints to the development of authorship and the sourcing of future "raw materials" input. In addition, the lack of funds and know-how for effective production and promotion of non-educational books restrict the development of this area whose expansion, unlike educational books, is not bound by curriculum or level. Under this situation, the publishers' time and investment are spent on educational publications through the production of new editions in response to curricular changes. Therefore, the publisher is somewhat restricted to fewer authors, most of whom are needed to revise/update books in the backlist. cursory observation reveals that Nigeria has one of the largest commercial publishing industries in sub-Saharan Africa, besides South Africa with all publishing skills available and well developed, but economic hardship has caused contraction and layoffs. Overall, Nigeria is endowed with authorship skills and resources at all levels. The major hindrances are a lack of investment finance, reliable markets, and good up-to-date libraries. The high cost of input materials is also a source of worry as most of the raw materials required for the industry have to be imported. The pool of skilled personnel has declined because trained staff leave publishing for more lucrative areas of endeavor.

Duplicate or redundant publication occurs when there is an overlap, without acknowledging it, between two papers in terms of their hypotheses, data, arguments or results. This could include overlap with other authors, their results or their samples. The most important cases involve a lack of acknowledging the sources. The following are

examples of republishing: publishing data which has been published before, reusing tables and figures in later publications, publishing larger papers using previous smaller papers, publishing the same data in two papers (one with a clinical focus and one with a theoretical focus), and publishing the same paper under two names, one being the real author in his or her own country and the other being a foreign author.

Duplicate publication is nevertheless, deceptive and involves three problems: it is unethical, it wastes resources and it has adverse impact on future clinical and research decisions. Editors and readers of a published report want to make sure that they are dealing with new and important data, and may wrongly be persuaded to think so, while this is not the case. A duplicate or redundant publication, mislead the readers and reduces the credibility of the publishing firm as well as their ability to attract good authors. The duplicate publication makes for wasting resources by wasting the time which should be allocated to other books or journal projects (Mayer & Steneck, 2012). One of the biggest threats to intellectual property in Nigeria is the phenomenon of photocopying. Photocopying, the reprographic reproduction of printed matters, has become so widespread that in several institutions of higher learning and establishments, photocopied materials have practically replaced printed texts and instructional materials that are protected under the Nigeria copyright law (Lakhotia, 2014).

Plagiarism is stealing part of a text and rephrasing it; is a severe problem in the humanities and literature where innovation in phrasing and eloquence are essential (Foudeh, 2009). Plagiarism is an issue of great concern amongst publishers and academics. It is a moral, ethical, and legal issue and has been in existence for centuries. However, the Internet and subsequent proliferation of information have made the problem more serious. Plagiarism has acquired new and different dimension compared to the past which in contemporary times undermine the performance of book publishing firms.

Sharp practices of some book publishing firms have been identified as unethical by researchers and the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA).

Although several studies have been conducted to examine the organizational performance of companies (Megat et al., 2015; Owell et al., 2016), but few studies seem to have examined the organizational performance of book publishing firms and how ethical issues affect them. Thus, this study examined the influence of ethical issues on the organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to fulfill the following objectives:

1. Identify prevailing ethical issues in the book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State.
2. Examine the relationship between ethical issues and organizational performance of publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State.
3. Investigate the combined influence of ethical issues on the organizational performance of publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State
4. Examine the relative influence of ethical issues on the organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are prevalent ethical issues in the book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State?
2. What is the relationship between ethical issues and organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State?
3. What is the joint contribution of ethical issues to the prediction of organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State?

4. What is the relative contribution of ethical issues indicators to the prediction of organizational performance?

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a survey research design of correlation type. The design is considered suitable for the study because of the underlying assumption that the variables of the study have occurred and as such, they cannot be manipulated. Population of the study comprised the 204 management staff of the 51 book publishing firms registered with the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) and operating within Ibadan metropolis. This includes the managing directors, publishing managers, sales managers and finance managers of these book publishing firms. The study adopted total enumeration sampling technique because it provides complete statistical coverage of the book publishing firms in Ibadan. Hence the entire population was studied. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was structured into three sections (Sections A, B, C). Section A contains demographical information, section B focused on organizational performance as adapted from Kaplan and Norton' (1996). In the questionnaire, ethical issues scale was subdivided into two Section C1 and Section C2. Section C1 is a 10-item scale self-developed by the researcher to collect data on the ethical issues known and prevalent in the various book publishing firms. Research question 1 was based on 4-point rating scale. While Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the research questions 2-4.

## Result and Discussion

**Research question 1:** What are prevalent ethical issues in the book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State?

**Table 1: Showing Response of the Respondents on Ethical Issues Prevalent in the Book Publishing Firms**

S/N	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	Etiquette issues	2.20	1.02	Disagree
2.	Fraudulent publication issues	2.42	1.26	Disagree
3.	Duplicate publication issues	2.54	1.26	Agree
4.	Plagiarism issues	2.57	1.18	Agree
5.	Authorship issues	2.50	1.10	Agree
6.	Infrastructural decadence	2.41	1.23	Disagree
7.	Piracy issues	2.26	1.17	Disagree
8.	Printing consumables	2.00	1.00	Disagree
9.	Marketing issues	2.15	0.82	Disagree
10.	Copyright issues	2.27	1.10	Disagree

Analysis in Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that prevalent ethical issues in the publishing firms were duplicate publication issues, plagiarism issues and authorship issues. They received positive mean rating of 2.54, 2.57 and

2.50 respectively. Other items listed in the table received negative mean ratings below 2.50. This implies that most book publishing firms in Ibadan battle with piracy issues, authorship issues, and duplicate publication issues as ethical challenges.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between ethical issues (authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) and organizational performance?

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship Between Study Variables.**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3	4
<b>Organizational performance</b>	143.211	17.3488	1.000			
<b>Authorship</b>	0	6		1.000		
<b>Duplicate publication</b>	2.4013	.69669	.666**		1.000	
<b>Plagiarism</b>	1.1783	.61502	-.163*	-.089		1.000
	2.7134	.99390	-.572**	.208**	.426**	1.000

### Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 2 revealed the relationship of each ethical issues measures; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism with organizational performance. Organizational performance positively correlate with authorship ( $r = .666$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), duplicate publication ( $r = -.163$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and plagiarism ( $r = -.572$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This implies that the higher the

authorship, the higher the likelihood of experiencing the organizational performance. Duplicate publication and plagiarism were negatively correlated with organizational performance. This implies that an increase in duplicate publication and plagiarism will reduce organizational performance.

**Research Question 3:** What is the joint contribution of ethical issues (authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) to the prediction of organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State?

**Table 3: Summary of Regression for the Combined Influence of Independent Variables to the Prediction of Organizational Performance.**

<b>R =.688</b>					
<b>R Square =.577</b>					
<b>Adjusted R square =.676</b>					
<b>Std. Error =2.69270</b>					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Regression</b>	665.474	3	221.825	74.716	.000 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Residual</b>	1235.059	149	2.969	74.716	
<b>Total</b>	1900.533	153			

Table 3 reveals a significant joint contribution of the ethical issues; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) to the prediction of organizational performance. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions  $R = 0.688$  and multiple  $R\text{-square} = .577$ . This suggests that the three factors combined accounted for 67.6% ( $\text{Adj.}R^2 = .676$ )

variance in the prediction of organizational performance. The other factors accounting for the remaining variance were beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of ethical issues on the organizational performance,  $F_{(3, 153)} = 74.716$ ,  $P < 0.01$ .  $\eta^2 = 0.350$ .

**Research Question 4:** There will be no significant relative influence of ethical issues (authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) on the organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State.

**Table 4: Relative Influence of the Variables to the Prediction of Organizational Performance.**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
<b>1</b>	(Constant)	21.694	1.642		13.210	.000
	Authorship	9.382	.380	.373	24.687	.000
	Duplicate Publication	4.054	.374	-.145	10.826	.002
	Plagiarism	4.727	.259	-.265	18.217	.003

Table 4 shows that the three predictors (ethical issues; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) were potent predictors of organizational performance. The most potent factor was authorship ( $\text{Beta} = .373$ ,  $t = 24.687$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), followed by plagiarism ( $\text{Beta} = .265$ ,  $t = 18.217$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), and duplicate publication ( $\text{Beta} = .145$ ,  $t = 10.826$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ).

### Discussion of Findings

Data analysed on demographic issues shows that there were more males as a manager in book publishing firms than female. In terms of qualifications, most managers in book publishing firms possess B.Sc/HND. It is also found that most book publishing firms have spent over 21-30 years in the book publishing industry. However,

this relatively longer year of operation does not metamorphose into the optimum performance of most book publishing firms in Ibadan. The first research question focused on ethical issues prevalent in the book publishing firms in Ibadan, Oyo State. The findings revealed that piracy, authorship, marketing issues and infrastructural decadence were the most highly prevalent ethical issues in book publishing firms in Ibadan. This finding agrees with the inquiry undertaken by (Adegoke, 2011) which found that ethical issues were key determinant factors in the performance achievement of publishing firms. The study further found that piracy and authorship issues feature as prevalent ethical issues in book publishing firms. Infrastructural decadence was reported to be a key ethical issue in publishing



firms as most buildings and systems of publishing firms had assumed the same posture for a longer period than recommended (Carbo, 2016).

The second research question sought to determine if there is a relationship between ethical issues (authorship issues, duplicate publication and plagiarism) and organizational performance. The finding revealed that the relationship between ethical issues; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism and organizational performance was statistically significant. This corroborates the study of Owell et al. (2016) which reported that ethical issues were implicated in organizational performance.

The findings is in agreement with a study which reported that authorship complications were found to correlate significantly with low patronage of books which eventually influence the financial performance of publishing firms (Jeremy et al., 2007). Duplicate publication was also found to correlate significantly with organizational performance of publishing firms. This finding supports the findings of a study which reported that there was a significant influence of duplicate publication on book publishing firm's performance, the study further explained that high production costs resulting from the importation of the bulk of raw materials, (especially paper), and limited capacities in design, production, and printing have lured many publishers into duplicate publications which in the long run affect performance (Uwalaka, 2000). A significant relationship was also observed between plagiarism and organizational performance; the findings corroborate a study by Bowie (2012) which reports that plagiarism is significantly associated with the performance of publishing firms. The author posits that publishers need to address plagiarism-related issues in order to increase a firm's financial performance.

The third research question examined the joint contribution of ethical issues; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism as predictors of organizational performance. The result revealed that there was a significant combined effect of ethical issues; authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism on the prediction of organizational performance. Organizational performance was

then found to be significant. In agreement, a study was carried out by using data from publishing firms to compare those organizations that were keen on ethical conduct and those that do not. It was found that publishing firms who strive to address ethical issues outperformed those that do not (García-Manjón & Romero-Merino, 2012).

Result of the fourth research question revealed that each indicator of the ethical issue made a significant contribution to the prediction of organizational performance of book publishing firms in Ibadan metropolis. In terms of the magnitude of contribution, authorship made the most significant contribution. This is followed by plagiarism and duplicate publication in that order. This result is in tandem with the works of Yang and Huang (2005), which reported that for a book publishing firm to ensure it remains competitive in a dynamic environment and achieve its set objectives of profitability, sales volume and market share, it must make efforts to continually improve products to satisfy customer desires and needs that keep changing through the adoption of good ethical conducts.

Furthermore, plagiarism was found to predict organizational performance. This finding aligns with the study of Cainelli et al. (2006), which reported that almost 60% of the recorded revenue came from original publication with novel ideas. So, if a book is perceived to be plagiarized, the patronage will be scientifically reduced and the publishing firm could be sanctioned which led to the incidence of low organizational performance. Similarly, financial performance has held more or less steady over the past decade due to ethical issues such as duplicate publications. But performance growth in most publication firms due to double publication could be thwarted.

## Conclusion

In investigating the influence of ethical issues (authorship, duplicate publication and plagiarism) on organizational performance, it was found that authorship positively correlate with organizational performance while duplicate publication and plagiarism recorded a negative correlation. It was further found that authorship emerged as the best predictor of organizational performance of book publishing firms. By

implication, the threshold of a book publishing firm's organizational performance is dependent on increasing authorship-related issues and decreasing the influence of duplicate publication and plagiarism. The study concludes that the presence of duplicate publication and plagiarism is a criterion for low organizational performance in book publishing firms.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following were recommended;

1. Book publishing firms should implement policies that could foster the development and satisfaction of authors.
2. During economic hardship, book publishing firms should produce what the customer can afford as this will discourage piracy.
3. There should be a centralized body that will institute programmes and policies to discourage piracy; the general populace needs to be orientated on the negative effect of piracy to discourage them from patronizing pirated copies.
4. Ethical conducts should be instituted in the book publishing firms. There is need for a regulatory body that will see to the implementation of ethical conduct and prosecution of violators.
5. Ethical issues such as duplicate publication and plagiarism that could impede the optimum performance of book publishing firms should not only be known to industry players but also the general public through sensitization programmes.

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