

# Perception of Teachers on Confidentiality Practice as Part of Their Legal and Ethical Responsibilities in Secondary Schools in Kogi State

**Ohunene Florence Omuya**

Department of Educational Foundations, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State

**Motuntayo Oluwatosin Kachi**

Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State

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**Abstract:** *The paper assessed the perception of teachers on confidentiality practices as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State. The study has two objectives, among which is to examine the perception of teachers' understanding of confidentiality practice as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities. The research questions and hypotheses were formed in line with the study objectives. Survey descriptive research design was used for the study, and the population includes all the secondary school principals in all the six hundred and fifty (650) schools in Kogi State and six thousand nine hundred (6900) teachers, and three hundred (300) supervisors drawn from the Ministry of Education. Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample size of forty (40) principals across the three senatorial zones and three hundred and three (303) teachers and 30 supervisors from the inspectorate unit of the Ministry of Education, given a total sample size of three hundred and seventy-three (373). The instrument was structured questionnaire titled Perception of Teachers on Confidentiality Practices (POTCP), was developed and validated by experts in the field of education. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and 0.80 coefficient value was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, while the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding shows that teachers' perception of confidentiality practices as part of their legal responsibility is very low, though the opinion of respondents differs in their responses, as it was shown in the hypotheses. The study concludes that teachers should be fully armed with the knowledge of confidentiality practices as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities. The study recommends that teachers without teaching qualifications should not be allowed to teach as they lack the ethics of the teaching profession, which includes confidentiality practices.*

**Keywords:** assessment, perception, teacher, confidentiality, legal, ethical

## INTRODUCTION

When you think of educators especially teachers, one often consider whether they are ethical. Professional ethics and as well as the legal responsibilities of teachers are central in defining how students view their teachers. Ethics provide a foundation for what teachers should do in their roles and responsibilities as an educator. It is a framework that teachers can use to help make decisions about what is right or wrong in a given situation and also determine how the situation is confidential to the students, parents and the school management (Bello, 2022).

In accordance with state and federal laws, teachers shall disclose confidential information about individual only when a compelling professional purpose is served or when required by law. Teachers as an educator, which job involves interacting with students, school management and parents/guidance is not easy unless high professional ethics and confidentiality is developed. Teachers having knowledge of legal and ethical aspects of confidentiality will have moral consciousness which helps the teachers in the promotion of academical integrity. (Aashiq, 2017)

In educational system maintaining student confidentiality as become an ethical responsibility and a legal obligation. Educators are expected to manage sensitive information with professionalism and care. Mackenzie (2010) see ethics as the "study of what is right or good in conduct." He further assert that professionalism ethics in teaching is a multi-dimensional concept which includes:

- a) Honesty and sincerity.
- b) Transparency and Confidentiality.
- c) Respect towards students and society and high quality of teaching. (Aashiq, 2017)

However, Confidentiality is a principle in educational ethics and law especially when handling students record, behavioral reports and personal information. (Albert, 2021) In the same vein (Makerep, 2020) view Confidentiality in education as grounded in law and having a legal framework. Abubakar (2015) opines that ethically educators are expected to uphold trust and integrity at all times. Educators must protect students' information unless disclosure is required to prevent harm or comply with the law. In many countries including Nigeria, put in place a legislation acts that mandates strict procedure for information sharing.

Previous research shows that many branches of confidentiality and unintentional and stem from inadequate training of educators. (Smith, 2020) asserts that teachers who lack formal training were more likely to mishandle student information while Albert (2021) emphasized the need for regular professional development to keep up with changes in legal standards especially concerning digital records and online communication.

Ahmed and Kusi (2021) found that in schools, the absence of a clear protocol lead to confusion about what could or could not be shared with colleagues or parents which most often led to legal battle but

Brown (2022) argues that while digital learning tools offer convenience, they pose serious data security challenges if teachers are not properly trained in using them. Browns (2020) opines that educators should actively oppose academic dishonesty and creating and enforcing strong entrance academic integrity rules, Confidentiality in student information. All educators should be trained to uphold value of honesty and integrity ensuring fairness and equality. According to Eutychus (2023) conducted a research on ethical leadership in institutions of higher education and in his findings shows that ethical leadership is essential in higher education institutions because it establish a solid ethical foundation foster environment of integrity and Confidentiality that contribute to institution long term success and valubility. Despite history laws and policies, many educators are unaware of the appropriate management of confidential student information in secondary schools in Kogi State. This inadequate knowledge as lead to branches that affected students wellbeing, trust in school system and legal accountability, this the need for the studying on "Assignment of Perception of Teachers on Confidentiality Practices as Part of Their Legal and Ethical Responsibility in Secondary Schools in Kogi State".

### **Objectives of The Study:**

The following objectives guides the study.

1. Examine the perception of teachers understanding on confidential practice as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State.
2. Evaluate principles: training practices on confidentiality among teachers in secondary school in Kogi State.

### **Research Questions:**

The following research questions guide the study:

1. How does teachers perceive the understanding of confidential practices as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State.
2. How often does principals organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary school in Kogi State.

### **Research Hypothesis:**

The following null hypothesis was formulated for the study.

**Ho1:** there is a sufficient difference between the responses of respondents on perception of teachers, understanding of confidentiality as part of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary school in Kogi State.

**Ho2:** there is no significant difference in the responses of the respondents on how often principals' organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary school in Kogi State.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population involve all secondary school principals in all the 650 schools in Kogi State, 6900 teachers and 300 school supervisors. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 40 principals from 40 secondary schools across 3

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senatorial zones in Kogi State, 303 teachers and 30 school inspectors from the Inspectorial unit of the Ministry of Education in Kogi State, giving a total sample size of 373. A structured questionnaire was designed for the study using the likert rating scale, the instrument title "Training Teachers On Legal And Ethical Responsibility"(TTOLAER) was validated by experts in Educational Foundation and reliability. Coefficient value of 0.80 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics means and standard deviation while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis of 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULT**

**Research Question 1:** Examine the perceptions of teachers' understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State.

**Table 1**

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I am aware of the laws that govern only responsibilities as a teacher.	3.201072	1.337949	High
2	I understand the legal consequences of students neglect.	3.219839	1.393122	High
3	Principals support teachers in upholding legal responsibilities.	1.756032	0.738348	Low
4	Principals and teachers maintain professional boundaries with students and parents.	3.2735	1.2423	High
5.	Principals and teachers maintain ethical behavior in and out of the classroom.	3.0294906	1.27915	High
6.	School has clear policies on ethical conduct for staff.	1.9839	0.8797	Low
<b>Grand mean and SD</b>		<b>2.743968</b>	<b>1.326848</b>	<b>Reject</b>

The result shows that the Grand mean 2.74 is less than the threshold mean of 3.00. This shows that Teachers' perception of understanding their legal and ethical responsibility is very low.

**Research Question 2:** Evaluate principals training practices on confidentiality among teachers in secondary schools in Kogi State.

**Table 2**

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
7.	Principals organize training specifically on confidential practices often.	2.319035	1.258343	Low
8.	Many teachers attend training sessions often focusing on Confidentiality practice.	2.922252	1.238653	Low
9.	Peer discussion are mostly used as a form of training among teachers on Confidential practice.	3.745308	1.304257	High
10.	Most times workshop is organized twice in a term on confidentiality practice for teachers and other staffs.	3.353887	1.507407	High
11.	Teachers are sent out to attend conferences to enhance their knowledge on Confidential practice.	3.206434	1.368918	High
12.	Training materials are given during seminars, workshop to support teachers in maintaining Confidentiality.	3.410188	1.299546	High
13.	Training has enhance teachers professional conduct.	3.487936	1.230434	High
14.	I uphold Confidentiality regarding student information after receiving training.	3.268097	1.400068	High
15.	Training received clearly define what is considered as confidential information.	3.5871314	1.3780326	High
16.		3.45308311	1.34846483	High
<b>Grand mean and SD</b>		<b>3.27533512</b>	<b>1.3880143</b>	<b>Accept</b>

The result indicates that the grand mean 3.28 is greater than the threshold mean of 3. This shows that it is accepted and indicates that principals organize training for teachers on confidentiality practices to help them have a better knowledge on equal and ethical responsibilities of teachers.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Ho1:** there is no significant difference in the opinion of response on perception of teachers understanding their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State.

Summary of analysis on variance on the opinion of response on teachers, perception of understanding legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State.

**Table 3**

Variables	Sum of square	D.F	Mean square	F. Ratio	Prob.	Critical value
Between groups	7434.88	3	3717.44	2042.54	0001	3.00
Within groups	674.13	370	1.82			
<b>Total</b>	<b>8109.01</b>	<b>373</b>				

From the F-Calculated is 2042.54 and is greater than 3.00 critical value at 0.05 level of significance set for the study. Therefore the null hypothesis was **rejected**. Consequently, it could be concluded that differences exists in the responses of respondents perceptions of teachers' understanding on legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State. To ascertain the differences in response of respondents Tuksy HSD Poshoc test was carried out to ascertain differences in opinion of respondents as shown in the table below.

**Table 4****Turkey HSD Summary Table**

Comparison	Mean of Group A	Mean of Group B	Mean Difference (A-B)	HSD critical value	Significant
Principal vs Teacher	120	180	-60	0.229	Yes
Principals vs Supervisors	120	73	47	0.229	Yes
Teachers vs Supervisors	180	73	107	0.229	Yes

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the opinions of respondents on how often principals' organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary schools in Kogi State.

Summary of Analysis of Variance on the opinions of respondents on principals organizing training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary schools in Kogi State.

**Table 5**

Variables	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F.ratio	Prob.	Critical value
Between groups	25,880.56	3	12,940.28	7268.10	<001	3.34
Within groups	657.37	370	1.78			
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,537.93</b>	<b>373</b>				

From the tables, the result shows that F calculated is 7268.10 and is greater than 3.34 critical value at 0.05 level of significance set for the study. This could be deduce that the null hypothesis is **rejected** and which shows that there is differences in the responses of the respondents on principals' organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary schools in Kogi State.

To further ascertain the result, Turkey HSD Poshoc test was conducted to know the level of difference as it is on the **table 6**.

**Table 6**

Comparison	Mean difference	Compare of HSD (0.414)	Significant
Teachers vs Principals	90-80=10	10>0.414	Yes
Supervisors vs Teachers	100-90=10	10>0.414	Yes
Supervisors vs Principals	100-80=20	20>0.414	Yes

## DISCUSSION

**Analysis on Research Question 1:** examine the perception of teachers' understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State has been assessed, analysed and the findings of the result shows that perception of teachers' understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities is very low as the grand mean of 2.74 is less than mean of 3.00.

Also, **Research Question 2** which is evaluate Principals' training practices on confidentiality among teachers in secondary schools, the result shows that principals organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice as a grand mean of 3.28 was obtained and is greater than the mean of 3.00.

The null hypothesis one sought the opinions of respondents on perceptions of teachers' understanding on legal and ethical responsibilities in secondary schools in Kogi State. Different views have been expressed by the respondents while the principals and teachers seems to agree that teachers have understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities, supervisors respectively disagreed that not all teachers have better understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities of teaching profession. This is in with the assertion of Stephen (2021) that teachers who lack understanding of what constitute legal and ethical responsibilities as it is stipulated in the code of conduct of teaching profession should not be allow to teach in any educational institution. Further stressed that teachers without teaching qualification should not be inducted into teaching profession. However, Bello (2020) in his research finding on

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Ethical Consideration of teaching profession assert that legal and ethical responsibilities of teachers are a framework that help teachers to make decision about what is right or wrong in a given situation.

The null hypothesis 2 that sought the opinion of respondents on how often principals organize training for teachers on confidentiality practice in secondary schools in Kogi State. The hypothesis was tested, and divergent views of opinions of respondents were obtained.

Teachers, Principals and Supervisors opinions were significantly different as the principals and teachers agreed that training inform of workshop and seminars are organized often by the principals to train teachers on how to be confidential in dealing with students, parents and other stakeholders but supervisors differs in opinion that the training is not done often as it is expected.

This is in view of Albert (2021) that there is need for regular Professional development for the teachers to keep them abreast on Confidentiality practices that involves students, the school, parents and all stakeholders in order to avoid any ethical or legal breach.

## **CONCLUSION**

To avoid any case of breach of confidence among teachers and students, teachers and parent including the management of the schools, there is need for teachers to be fully armed with their legal and ethical responsibilities towards the students' record, and all stakeholders. Confidentiality is utmost in teacher and student relation and as such constant training of teachers to upgrade their understanding is needed.

## **Recommendations**

The study recommends that teachers without teaching qualification should not be allowed to teach as they lack the ethics of teaching profession and those with teaching qualification should be well groomed. Constant training like workshop, seminars and conferences should be organized often to keep teachers abreast on how to maintain confidentiality.

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