



Students' Exposure to Common Good Ethics and Democracy Outcomes

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Common good, ethics practice, democracy, university students.

Abstract

Following Professor Obiora Ike's view and in particular Obiora 2012, 2013, 2017 (see reference below), the more students are exposed to ethics practice, the greater their propensity and capability to seek for ethical living. This important assumption is worth close statistical scrutiny as the author shows. Through empirical researches and the stratified sampling approach, 435 university students are randomly selected to illustrate this claim. The method used is the "Perceived Role of Ethics and Democracy Outcome Scale" (PREDOS) and a survey questionnaire used to measure exposure to common good ethics among the respondents. Descriptive analysis – tables and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), are aimed at facilitating the analysis of the data collected in the study. In tandem with the conclusions drawn from extant literature and works of Professor Obiora Ike, the findings, as the author sees, show that exposure to common good ethics has a significant positive effect on students' ethics practice and democracy outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Nigeria is a country of a moral paradox: it is one of the most religious countries in the world (Akipu and Lenshi, 2014), yet one of the most corrupt.¹ This suggests that against all expectations religiosity has not improved or reduced citizens' propensity to engage in unethical practices. Corruption and unethical practices are a perennial challenge and politicians seek elective offices with the mantra or mandate to fight it with little or no significant positive results. Nigerian youths, who are the most populous in Africa (Nigeria Population, 2022)² remain the victims of corruption and unethical practices for the past four decades. They have been vulnerable to social vices and crimes occasioned by high level of unemployment and absence of access to social safety nets. What is unclear however, is the predisposition of these youths to maintain the status quo, that is, to sustain the trend of corruption instead or to attempt to reverse the trend should they be elected for leadership position. Nonetheless, it can be presumed 1) that youths have to some degrees *actively maintained* or preserved the corrupt status quo and 2) that, to some proportions, they have been disempowered to change it, since corruption and unethical practices have persisted all these years, but they *passively suffered* from this situation.³ Thus, this paper concerns itself with assessing the perception of youths that their training on ethics will benefit our emerging democracy for the common good of the citizenry, through the transmission and replication of ethical practices.

It is, however, intractable to predict the future leadership of the current batch of youths in Nigeria. Such study would require experiments performed over time, the compilation of huge resources, and the careful and precise analysis

¹ Lenshie, NE, Akipu IS, "Clash of religious civilisations in Nigeria: Understanding dynamics of religious violence", *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2014, 7, 47-60.

² Nigeria's population is 218,541,212 as of October 2022. See: Nigeria Macrotrends, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/NGA/nigeria/population>

³ Youths, in the time past – especially during the military era that tried to challenge the corrupt system were either violently subdued or were persuaded to change their beliefs.

of the data, including longitudinal data. Thus investigations need to first ascertain the baseline conditions for level of ethics – what choice of variables or their proxies are appropriate – and then over time the conditions and thresholds for descent into engagement in unethical praxis. The current generation of youths moreover unlike their predecessors were born in the digital era – where they have more access to information on the polity and economy and depending on their inclinations on, treatises on ethics for common good.

Youths utilize social media as an alternative to the regular print and electronic media as one major means to air and share their opinions. Social media freedom is indicative of democracy⁴ and the information exchange thereof is believed to shape students’ beliefs, consciousness and conscience for the common good and for the deepening of democracy in the context of just and equitable resource allocation. The question is twofold, 1) have students as a response to trending corruption also been exposed to structured lessons on ethics? 2) If this the case, or in case of absence of similar exposure, is it for the benefit and deepening of democracy for common good, with the view to curbing the scourge of unethical practices (or respectively did lack of exposure to ethics harmed democratic social tendencies) ?

With information garnered from the media and structured lessons, it is presumed that students possess beliefs or opinions about contributing to creating a just and egalitarian society. This paper therefore seeks at the basic level to assess the effect of exposure of students to common good ethics (which includes formal and structured training, and religious and secular exhortations) on their belief that it will improve democratic dividends despite the perennial challenge of corruption and unethical practices in Nigeria.

This study is ambitious –there is little or no research to the best of my knowledge that has mapped youths’ beliefs in common good ethics and predicted their propensity toward aggregate national morality especially in de-

⁴ Some repressive and undemocratic countries repress social media e.g. Uganda, Equatorial Guinea. The National Assembly of Nigeria once attempted to pass a bill to ban it or limit its operations.

veloping nations. Some of the national political leaders either serving or nominated are tried in the court for the “sins” of their past⁵ – the sins they allegedly committed during their student years. It is presumed nonetheless, that these former students undertook courses and lessons on common good ethics and leadership. It is also plausible, that as emerging leaders, they underwent or are undergoing various trainings in equity and efficiency of time and resource allocation; peace building and conflict resolution; on nation building and citizen orientation for common good of the citizenry. In any case, many of the current leaders are assumed to be graduates of universities whose motto is to graduate students “in character and in learning.” This suggests that their education would have been to the extent that, as leaders, they seek to deliver on good governance, equitable resource allocation and distribution as dividends of democracy borne of the ethics of common good. But ‘the common good’ is not very ‘common’ in Nigeria. The quality of ethics training may be open to question

Curricula have been modified or revised to respond to current issues. Different subjects now accommodate topics such as HIV/AIDS; sexuality and reproductive health; safety against terrorism and climate change (NERDC, 2003).⁶ As we shall see, ethics as a discipline rather *Common Good Ethics* (CGE), is an all-in-one subject that will encompass the aforementioned issues. CGE is subsumed in various subjects which include moral instructions, religious instructions, civic education and social studies. If it is taught by teachers with a moral disposition, students may exhort to selflessness and service; but a teacher with a significant welfare deficit is likely to be indisposed to promote ethical behavior – what one doesn’t possess one doesn’t give

⁵ Mr. Obiano, the former governor of Anambra state, and many other previous governors of Nigerian states are among many Nigerian politicians who have been alleged to be corrupt during their years in office. Some of the governors who were convicted had their jail sentences commuted because they belong to the ruling party.

⁶ NERDC, 2003. National Family Life and HIV Education Curriculum for Junior Secondary School in Nigeria.

(*nemo quod dat non habet*). Therefore, the quality of ethics training being delivered is pivotal.

As stated above, literature is scanty on empirical studies that investigated beliefs of students that their training on or exposure to common good ethics course will culminate equitable democratic outcomes. This paper is a novel research approach to apply randomized techniques to assess students’ propensity to leadership and egalitarianism based on their perception on the effect of common good ethics. The paper proxies students’ beliefs in ethics for common good as CGE because of the inclusiveness and freedom to participate in business and the business’ engagement in corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is the proxy for democratic outcomes because it is tool that promotes welfare and ease the burden of poverty of the people

Results show that while irrespective of academic status, training on CGE significantly influences youths’ belief that CGE will increase democratic outcomes in Nigeria. Gender is also a significant determinant of this perception, more females than males held this belief. The remaining part of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 is on the review of related literature, Section 3 is on the Methodology, Section 4 is on the Results of the study and Section 5 is on the Conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Exploring the Notion of Common Good

In other to evaluate the effect of students’ exposure to structural lessons on ethics, it would be useful to first consider what the curricula for ethics training would include. Common good ethics has a prominent position in the moral, social and political philosophy of the Greeks (Argandoña, 2011; Jaede, 2018).⁷ Aristotle (4th-century BC), the foremost philosopher on the notion

⁷ Argandoña, A. “The Stakeholder Theory and the Common Good”. *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, 1093–1102 (1998). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006075517423> ; Jaede, Maximilian. “The Concept of the Common Good.”. 2017. British Academy project, Working paper, University of Edinburgh.

of common good and whose idea of common good is relative to the good of the community notes, “it is [...] clear that any state that is truly so called and is not a state merely in name must pay attention to virtue; for otherwise the community becomes merely an alliance”, therefore, the object of the political community is good action, not only life in common (*Politics*, III, 9, 1280b-1281a).⁸

Thomas Aquinas followed the Aristotelian theory of common good and advanced that common good derives its meaning in governance. “To govern is to lead what is governed to its appropriate end” (Thomas Aquinas, *De regno*, I, 15, 103).⁹ John Rawls thought that the common good is at the heart of healthy moral, economic and political scheme. For him, common good is the “certain general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone’s advantage” (Rawls, 1971, p. 217)¹⁰. In a sense, common good is the same as equally shared social conditions such as liberty and fair economic opportunity that go with citizenship of states or communities. While perhaps the language of common good may have some implications in Aristotelian understanding of communities or rather cities, and what it takes to be fully human, Aquinas’ analysis of the law makes more explicit this relationship between the human beings, human laws, the common good and immutable ethical standards (*Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 92, 1). The common good is well nuanced on this line to mean public service, since both share the same ethical activity and has been contrasted with self-serving individuals in the corridors of power and pursuit of narrow self-interest (Jaede, 2018, op. cit.). It also implies issues of solidarity and expectations of the people for good governance (Ike, 2013), and has been associated with a virtuous character (Ike, 2017) or

⁸ Aristotle. *The Politics. Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1944. <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg035.perseus-eng1:3.1280b>

⁹ There are 26 occurrences of the terms “common good” in: Aquinas, Thomas. 1265. *De Regno. On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*, transl. by Gerald B. Phelan, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P. Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949.

¹⁰ Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. 1971. Rev. ed. 1999. Harvard: UP.

conditions that allow communities or social groups or individual members the opportunities to pursue their own fulfilment (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1966)¹¹. This strengthens Aristotle’s argument that the political community exists for the sake of the common good, in which it finds full justification and significance, the source of its inherent legitimacy (Deneulin, 2004).¹² As the *Document of the Second Vatican Council* reiterated, the common good encompasses the totality of the conditions of the social life, which provides that individuals – men, women, families, groups and associations more adequately and easily may attain their own perfection (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 26).¹³ Regardless of one’s understanding of common good, three salient elements may be obvious. First, there must foremost be a good, which is constituted or inherent in every individual member of a human society. The basis of common good is founded in part on *teleological dimension of human life* and purpose, the fact that individuals have inherent capacity to flourish –to fulfil their human purpose. The second and third: is that such good is constituted by participation to the community and by being part of a divine and collective dimension of the human life. We can again quote Aristotle, who argues that there is a greater value in the common good than in the individual good. Clearly, “even if the end is the same for a single man and for the state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete... though it is worthwhile to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike

¹¹ Ike, F. O. 2013 Catholic social teaching and the common good: challenges on governance and the common good of individuals in a polity. Source: obioraike.com

Ike, F. O. 2017. “Ethics in Higher Education as a tool for discovering our ultimate destiny”, in: *Ethics in Higher Education: Values-driven Leaders for the Future*, Divya Singh and Christoph Stückelberger (Eds.). Globethics.net Education Ethics Series No. 1, Geneva: Globethics.net.

¹² Deneulin, S. 2004. “Freedom and the common good. Which individual agency for development?” Paper presented at the 4th International Conference on the Capacity Approach: Enhancing Human Security, Pavia, 5-7 September

¹³ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium Spes* Promulgated by his Holiness, Pope Paul VI, Dec. 7, 1965.

to attain it for the nation or the city state” (Aristotle, *NE*, 1094b).¹⁴ The third element is that the good must be associated with a community. This harkens back the Aristotelian idea that the formation of a community requires a common good, since “the end of the city is living well... it is to be assumed, therefore, that the object of the political community is good actions, not only life in common” (*NE*, III, 9, 1280b-1281a). Indeed, as Hollenbach (2002) described it, the idea of common good is immanent within the relationships that bring this community or society into being. In the words of Dupre (2009), it is a good proper to, and attainable only by, the community yet individually shared by its members.¹⁵

The idea of common good, albeit as attractive as it seems, has also tended to generate growing skepticism among scholars who describe the idea of common good as confusing since there is hardly a common notion or conclusion about the concept. Indeed it has been described as a grand rhetoric not well articulated (Kadri, 2011), as merely an instrument to one’s personal fulfillment or group well-being (Finnis, 1980; Sen, 1982).¹⁶ Common good can be reduced to a utilitarian perspective since common good is determined by what the generality of the people have chosen (Nozick, 1974).¹⁷ In terms of power

¹⁴ Aristotle. 4th-century BC. *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. by W. D. Ross and ed. by L. Brown, 2009, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Dupré, L. 2009. “The Common Good and the Open Society”. *The Review of Politics*. 55 (04): 687. doi:10.1017/S0034670500018052. 555. doi:10.1017/S0963180111000296; Hollenbach, D. 2002. *The common good and Christian ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶ Kadri, Simm, “The Concepts of Common Good and Public Interest: From Plato to Biobanking”, *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 20 (4):554-562 (2011). Finnis, J. 2011. *Collected essays. Vol. III: Human Rights and the Common Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sen, A. 1982. “Rational fools. A critique of the behavioural foundations of economic theory”. In: Sen A. *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 84-106.

¹⁷ Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

relations, common good could even be articulated a means of subsuming individualities into a totalitarian system (Deneulin, 2006; Schmitz, 2019).¹⁸ In this perspective, common good is said to be incompatible with democracy and freedom of the people, sometimes a way of talking about a good–structural conditions—that are necessary for a good human life (Argandoña, 2011, op. cit.). Adam Smith (1776) in his *Wealth of Nations* thinks that self-interest and individual ambitions can serve the common good. In other words, “the universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people” eventually leads to the advancement of the common good.¹⁹ Nevertheless, while the purposes of the various notions of common good are diverse, most ideas of common good share a unified orientation toward it (Beerbohm, E. & Davis, R. W. (2017).²⁰ Since the idea of common good is “essentially contested” (Mansbridge, 2013) and often used interchangeably with public interest, common utility, public good, common weal, the ongoing discussion will use common good interchangeably with other related concepts.²¹

Exploring the Meaning of Democracy

Since democracy outcomes are a focal point of this paper, an examination of the term democracy is in order. The *word* democracy has appealed to philosophers, political scientists, and educators alike yet their notions of it are diverse. Gallie (1956), a British philosopher and social and political theorist, describes democracy as one of those examples of an “essentially contested”

¹⁸ Deneulin, S. 2006. “Amartya Sen’s capacity approach to development and Gaudium et Spes”, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 3, 2. Schmitz, M. 2019. Is China a model of the common good? *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, no.73.

¹⁹ Smith, Adam. 1776. *Wealth of Nations*. Penguin Classics; 1st edition (March 25, 1982).

²⁰ Beerbohm, E. and Davis, R.W. (2017), “The Common Good: A Buck-Passing Account”. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 25: e60-e79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12132>

²¹ Mansbridge, Jane. "The Common Good." *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. Ed. Hugh LaFollette, John Deigh, and Sarah Stroud. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

(p. 167) concept—an inherently controversial term that we can never agree to define, because each definition carries a different social, moral, or political agenda (Crick, 2002).²²

The modernizing and contemporary eras following the Industrial Revolution and the struggle for sovereignty among many nations which led to the establishment of various democratic forms of governments worldwide compounded the problem. Often, these new governments were not based on what democracy should be or could be, or on a specific interpretation of it, but on people’s varying experiences (Ugwuozor, 2020).²³ The concept of democracy was often put in parallel to the illiberal government of Mugabe of Zimbabwe or Buhari of Nigeria, yet these governments appropriated the concept of democracy to decorate their dictatorial regimes. Thus, democracy has become all things for all people and has been used as a synonym for equality, freedom, rights or justice, although its application in certain circumstances is invalid.

Despite the widely variant usage of the word democracy, it has a historical root, it is – from two Greek words—*demos*, “the people,” and *kratein*, “to rule.” *Demokratia* means rule by the people or by the masses. A deeper insight into this meaning reveals the word democracy arises from the fundamental fact that all humans are born free and equal and have a right to live in a free society. Abraham Lincoln underscores this in his age old conception of democracy as government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Pericles’ (431 B.C.) timeless qualification of democracy supports Lincoln’s notion:

Our constitution is called democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private

²² Gallie, W. B. 1956. Essentially contested concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56, 167–198. Crick, B. R. 2002. *Democracy: A very short introduction*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

²³ Ugwuozor, F.O. 2020. “Advancing ‘Nurturing pedagogy paradigm’ for democratic and economic growth in Nigeria”. *The Social Science*, 15: 172-185.10.364/sscience.2020.172.185

disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibilities, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability, which a man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty . . . we are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect. (Finley, 1954, op. cit. p. 145)

In the modern and contemporary eras, democracy is couched around two frameworks first, a representative framework whereby the political power is said to be acquired by means of competitive struggle for the people’s vote (Schumpeter 1975, p. 242).²⁴ The second is perhaps more than a competitive struggle for people’s vote or election. Although elections are essential to the democratic process, it requires a bill of rights that extends beyond the right to vote, to include equal opportunity for participation and discovering individuals’ preferences, as well as citizens’ final control of the political agenda (Held, 1987; Sorensen, 1998).²⁵ Whatever one’s understanding of democracy three essential points are highlighted. First, a sovereign nation that promotes a civil society in which every person enjoys membership via participation must be in place. By and large, this excludes any form of military dictatorships, illiberal government in which the people have no rights to participate in the political process. Second, the people (*demos*) must have the freedom to make their individual choices and collective decisions. This excludes any form of coercion or manipulation of citizens who by right have full membership of the nation state. Third, the environment needs to enable citizens to pursue their preferred goals for their good life (See Ugwuozor, 2020, op. cit.).

²⁴ Schumpeter, J. 1975. *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.

²⁵ Held, D. 1987. *Models of democracy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Sorensen, G. 1998. *Democracy and democratization: Processes and prospects in changing world*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Apart from the aforementioned elements, every member of the state should have the ability to participate in the democratic process. The term ability²⁶ is used here to mean more than the physical ability to vote. It embodies the mental ability to make informed decisions, to make a better judgment that is critical in determining the quality of any democratic process. In other words, a true democracy encourages every citizen to participate, namely: to cast votes; to freely make political choices and decisions; to freely pursue their preferences and goals toward the common good. All these elements are equally important, but they amount to nothing without the ability to participate in the democratic process –when this ability to participate is deficient in a society, such society becomes everything but democratic. Simply said, democracy becomes more responsive and responsible to the extent that its participants (i.e., the citizens) are equally and well informed and freely willing without coercion to engage in democratic politics (Ugwuozor, 2016).²⁷

Interestingly, scholars agree that some level of educational attainment is a basic lever or one of a complex set of conditions needed for democracy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2004; Culp, 2019; Dewey, 1938; Gramsci & Cornwell, 1997; Lipset, 1959; Ugwuozor, 2020).²⁸ While they disagree on the ideals of education needed for democratic growth they acceded that there are some basic common values that must be in place for a proper functioning of democracy. This does not suggest that these values are automatic, and will lead to democracy. However scholars agree that these values are endogenous

²⁶ Ability here implies mental ability to make informed choices and judgment.

²⁷ Ugwuozor, O. F. 2016. “Philosophical education toward democratization and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria”. *International Education Studies*, 9(9), 87–98.

²⁸ Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. 2004. *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Dewey, J. 1938. *Experience and education*. New York: Collier. Gramsci, R., & Cornwell, G. H. 1997. “Liberal education as intercultural praxis: Citizenship in diverse democracy”. In R. Gramsci & G. H. Cornwell (Eds.), *Democratic education in an age of difference; Redefining citizenship in higher education*, 159–170. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Lipset, S. M. 1959. “Some social requisites of democracy. Economic development and political legitimacy”. *American Political Science Review*, 53, 69–105.

and are most likely to foster the basics – what Tocqueville (1835/1994) called “habits of the heart” (p. 287)—the cognitive and affective dispositions necessary for democracy to work.²⁹ These dispositions or values—responsibility, integrity, justice, self-discipline, freedom, human rights, communal spirit, pursuit for a common goal or the common good to mention but a few are not innate human values –they are not given, they are learned. Thus, education on these values is imperative especially, on common good ethics with the hope to prepare Nigeria’s future democratic citizens.

The next sections of this study are organized as follows. In Section 3, I describe the methodology—the study area sampling techniques, and methods of data analyses. In Section 4, I present the results of the study and discuss them, and in section 4, state the limitations of the study. In Section 5, I provide my concluding remarks with suggestions for future studies.

3. Methodology

This section begins with a brief description of the study area, then description of the sampling techniques and methods of data analysis.

Study Area

The study was carried out in Enugu state in Nigeria. It is the capital of south-east Nigeria. People of all walks of life either reside and/or visit Enugu because of the relatively cool climate. Topographically, Enugu is hilly and hence has natural drainage. It is among the least flood-prone locales in Nigeria. Thus, there are many schools and businesses which include the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). Enugu is bounded by Kogi to the west, Benue to the north, Ebonyi to the east and Anambra to the south.

²⁹ Tocqueville, A. de. 1994. *Democracy in America*. New York: Century. (Original work published 1835)

Sampling and Data

The study is a case study of UNN. UNN is a federal university that has faculties and student distribution across all demographics. Thus, given the limitations of the study, it is a good setting to assess the perception of students from all over the country. A stratified sampling approach was used to select 435 of 2206 students proportionate to the size of each level of study. Students were first selected according to the area of their studies and then according to their level of study. They were asked to respond to the instrument titled “Perceived Role of Ethics and Democracy’s Outcome Scale” (PREDOS) for data collection.

Analytical Technique

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) is the major analytical tool. The dependent variable was the mean perception scores generated. The key independent variables are students’ gender and their exposure to (trainings on) CGE. The covariates – academic status were controlled for in order to avoid influence of their levels of study.

Students answered questions on the role of their perception of Ethics in Business as an example of ethics for the common good of the society. For this study, it is assumed that a successfully and ethically run business is for the common good of the society in terms of value addition, employment generation, increase in wealth and welfare (direct benefits). Also, it is assumed that successfully run businesses will engage in corporate social responsibilities as a tool for redistribution of income (indirect benefits). The indirect benefit is also driven by the payment of taxes by which the government generates revenue for infrastructure development [Harelimana, 2018]. This measurement approach was chosen because of some apparent apathy of the citizens toward government. Furthermore, in Nigeria, it is believed that the government focuses more on successful businesses more than on ordinary citizens.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings show that exposure to common good ethics has a significant positive effect on students’ perceptions of the linkage between ethics practice

and democracy outcomes. The distribution of students, with or without exposure to the training, suggests that they have a positive perception that CGE will influence positive democratic outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1: Between-Subject Factors

Variables	Value Label	N	%	
Exposure	1.00	Those who were exposed to business ethics courses	361	50.3%
	2.00	Those who were not exposed to business ethics courses	357	49.7%
Positive Perception		Students with positive perceptions	450	62.7%
		Students with negative perceptions	268	37.3%
Gender	1.00	Male	338	47.1%
	2.00	Female	380	52.9%
Academic Status	1.00	Freshmen	310	43.2%
	2.00	Final Year	250	34.8%
	3.00	Postgraduate	158	22.0%
Total	Total	718	100.0%	

In Table 2, exposure to CGE courses, despite controlling for academic status as a covariate, has significant effect on students’ perceptions of the linkage between ethics education and corporate social responsibility, $F(1,717) = 141.37; P = .000, \eta_p^2 = .94$.

Table 2: The ANCOVA Showing Effect of Common Good Ethics Education on Students' Perceptions of the Linkage between Ethics Education and Democratic Outcomes

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^b
Corrected Model	82.368 ^a	1	82.368	141.373	.000	.165	141.373	1.000
Intercept	7273.824	1	7273.824	12484.478	.000	.946	12484.478	1.000
Exposure	82.368	1	82.368	141.373	.000	.165	141.373	1.000
Academic Status	76.497	2	38.249	64.647	.060	.153	129.293	1.000
Error	417.163	716	.583					
Total	7782.207	718						
Corrected Total	499.531	717						

a. R Squared = .165 (Adjusted R Squared = .164), b. Computed using alpha = .05

Similarly, in Table 3, the finding that gender does not have significant effect on students' perceptions of the linkage between ethics education and corporate social responsibility is rejected, $F(1,717)=132.76; P=.000, \eta_p^2=.94$.

Table 3: The ANCOVA Showing the Effect of Gender on Students’ Perceptions of the Linkage between Common Good Ethics Education and Democracy Outcomes

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^b
Corrected Model	78.137 ^a	1	78.137	132.765	.000	.156	132.765	1.000
Intercept	7346.12	1	7346.126	12481.988	.000	.946	12481.988	1.000
Acad. Stat	76.497	2	38.249	64.647	.060	.153	129.293	1.000
Gender	78.137	1	78.137	132.765	.000	.156	132.765	1.000
Error	421.393	716	.589					
Total	7782.20	718						
Corrected Total	499.531	717						

a. R Squared=.156 (Adjusted R Squared=.155)

b. Computed using alpha=.05

Brief Discussion

The findings show that exposure to business ethics course as a proxy for CGE has a significant effect on students’ perceptions of the linkage between ethics practice and corporate social responsibility. Thus, students who have taken business ethics courses rank high in their perception of how ethics practice is linked to firms’ corporate social responsibility, the proxy measure for democratic outcomes. This means that with exposure to business ethics courses, individuals can recall how to observe the laws of ethics in discharging their

corporate responsibilities. This finding supports Murphy and Boatright (1994), who found that students who have taken business ethics courses ranked ethical issues differently than those who simply had taken a course in which targeted business ethics was just one component.³⁰ Also, the present finding is consistent with the assertion made by Ike (2017) and by Luthar and Karri (2005) that exposure to ethics in the curriculum had a significant impact on student perceptions of linkages between ethical practices and business outcomes.³¹ The current finding does not support studies that suggest that taking ethics classes has no effect (Tanner & Cudd, 1999).

The findings also indicate that gender has a significant effect on students' perceptions of the linkage between ethics education and corporate social responsibility. This finding supports Luthar and Karri (2005), who noted gender differences in the perception of the link between ethics practices and business outcomes.

In addition, the findings of the study indicate that academic status does not have significant effect on students' perceptions of the linkage between ethics education and corporate social responsibility. Thus, freshmen, final-year, and postgraduate students have similar perceptions of this linkage. The present findings do not support Luthar and Karri (2005) and Borkowski and Ugras (1992, 1998), who claimed that older students are more ethical than younger

³⁰ Paul R. Murphy & John R. Boatright (1994) Assessing the Effectiveness of Instruction in Business Ethics: A Longitudinal Analysis, *Journal of Education for Business*, 69:6, 326-332, DOI: 10.1080/08832323.1994.10117708

³¹ Ike, F. O. 2017. "Ethics in Higher Education as a tool for discovering our ultimate destiny", in *Ethics in higher education: values-driven leaders for the future*, D. Singh and C. Stückelberger (Eds.). Globethics.net Education Ethics Series No. 1, Geneva: Globethics.net; Luthar, H.K., Karri, R. "Exposure to Ethics Education and the Perception of Linkage between Organizational Ethical Behavior and Business Outcomes". *J Bus Ethics* 61, 353–368. 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-005-1548-7>.

ones.³² The difference in the views between the previous studies and the current study could result from the addition of corporate social responsibility, which was not a variable of focus in the previous studies.

Based on the findings, there is need for the integration of CGE courses into the general curriculum of university in order to help to eliminate corrupt practices in the business sector of the society. This will increase students’ awareness of all the critical aspects of corporate social responsibility and consequences of unethical conduct for society. Again, based on the findings, the researchers reached a conclusion that in order to ensure and maintain high ethical conduct in business, students of tertiary institutions, who are the future business owners, managers, directors, politicians, and other professionals should be exposed to business ethics courses. Hence, there is need for future studies to establish educative business ethics programs that will enable individuals to acquire ethical principles and manifest ethical behaviour in business operations. It is worth noting that since Nigeria has the largest population of youths in the world, empowering such a sizeable group could well effect productive changes not only in Nigeria but possibly in neighboring countries as well.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has the following limitations:

1. Very little empirical literature exists for measuring ethics. Furthermore, the measures of CGE and democratic outcomes are proxy rather than direct measures. Thus it will be instructive to find out validated measures of common good and democratic outcomes.
2. A case study of University of Nigeria, Nsukka may not be representative of the views of all the students in Nigeria. A more omnibus study

³² Borkowski, S.C. and Ugras, Y.J. “The Ethical Attitudes of Students as a Function of Age, Sex and Experience”. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 11, 1992. 961-979. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00871962>; Borkowski, S.C., Ugras, Y.J. “Business Students and Ethics: A Meta-Analysis”. *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, 1998. 1117–1127. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005748725174>

would be preferable to account for regional and other demographic characteristics

3. More robust research will help assess the determinants of CGE in order to effect targeted training and intervention to change perception of students for the common good of the society.

5. Conclusion

This study is about identifying the impact of business ethics as a proxy for common good ethics on students' perception of the linkage between ethics practices and democracy outcomes. The simple assumption or thesis that sets off this research is that the more students are exposed to ethics practice, the greater their propensity or disposition to be ethical in their actions, which includes actions for common good. Although some theoretical writings of Professor Obiora (2012, 2013, 2017; op. cit.) give credence to the above assumption, my empirical research seeks to bolster that assumption. I used stratified sampling approach, randomly selected 435 students from the population of approximately 2,206 participants. I used the instruments namely "Perceived Role of Ethics and Democracy's Outcomes Scale (PREDOS) to collect data. To ensure that the results of my research were consistent, I used a survey questionnaire to measure exposure to common good ethics among the respondents –and I used Descriptive analysis –tables and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to analyze the data.

My findings are broad albeit largely in tandem with the conclusions found in the extant works of Professor Ike. In a sense, students' exposure to ethics practices increased their disposition to act and live for the common good, and increased their disposition for democratic living. Besides the limitations stated above, the paper concludes that students' in depth exposure to common good ethics is vital to ensure that future democratic citizens, political leaders, politicians, and other public office-holders, educators and education policy makers understand the importance of ethics practices and democracy outcomes in Nigeria and possibly beyond.

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