

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (KNUST)

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE LEARNING



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR OF ACCOUNTANTS IN BRONG  
AHAFO REGION'S GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

BY

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the award of the Master of Science in Accounting and Finance and that, to my best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously by another person or any material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my lovely girl am expecting for being my source of joy and the reason to work harder to fulfill all her dreams.

# KNUST



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I thank the Almighty God for His guidance and protection throughout my life and education.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present world requires the accounting profession to endorse transparency and provide accurate financial reporting but the ethical behavior among accounting professionals to achieve this requirement is not assured. Past studies have examined the ethical behavior of accounting practitioners in companies and other organizations but limited studies have been done in the education sector. This study assesses the need for accounting professionals in the Ghana Education Service to uphold good ethical behavior to help the government to achieve the aim of improving the education sector. The study uses a population of 330 accountants from the Ghana Education Service in the Brong Ahafo Region and a Likert scale questionnaire was administered to assess the ethical behavior of accountants. The study revealed that the performance of the accounting duty is based on strict adherence to the IFAC Code of Ethics. The educational accountant can only perform his/her duties to the satisfaction of stakeholders when good ethical conduct is practice. It recommends Ghana Education Service encode the IFAC Code of Ethics into its organizational Code of Ethics for the practicing accountants to enhance their performance and organize more workshops for both the substantive accountants and subordinates on the need for the Ethical Code to help improve and enhance their work.

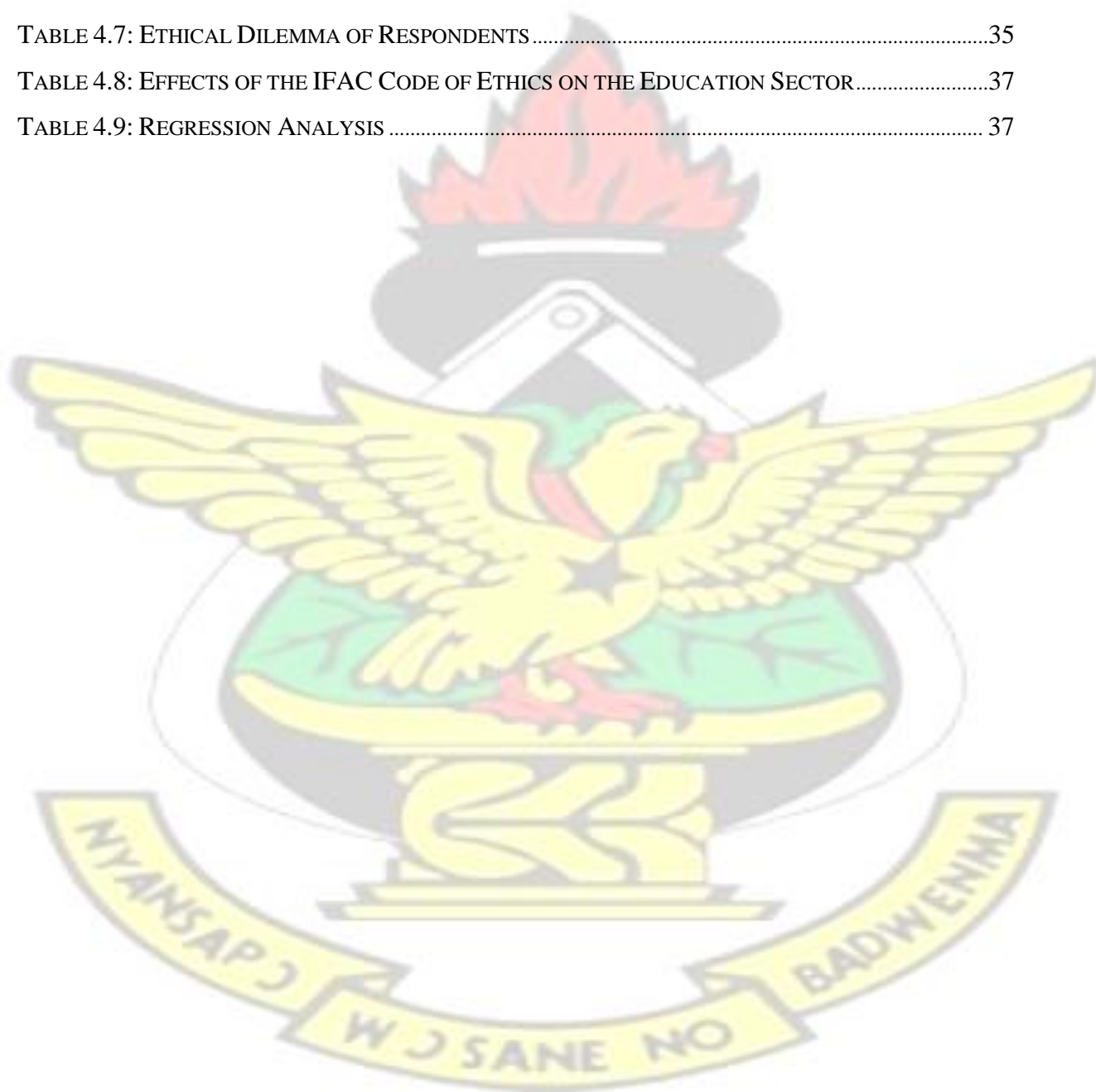
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS



IFAC	-	International Federation of Accountants
ICAG	-	Institute of Chartered Accountants
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
PAC	-	Public Accounts Committee
BECAR	-	Body of Experts and Licensed Accountants of Romania
CFAR	-	Chamber of Financial Auditors of Romania
IESBA	-	International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants
CPA	-	Certified Public Accountants
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
AICPA	-	American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
CAGD	-	Controller and Accountant General's Department
IASPCPA	-	Iowa Society of Certified Public Accountants
GIFMIS	-	Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information Systems
IPSAS	-	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
AEA	-	Association of Educational Accountants
ACCA	-	Association of Certified Chartered Accountants
HND	-	Higher National Diploma
ECODE	-	Effects of Applying the IFAC Code of Ethics
EDEL	-	Ethical Dilemmas of Accountants
KIFAC	-	Knowledge of IFAC Code of ETHics

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The accountant's role is to provide measurable and qualitative reports relating to the resources, capital, and liability of a firm, and the auditor's role is to validate the information. Due to this role, it's important to put more attention on the accountant and auditor's ethics and morality. Ethics is referred to as standards or a system that strongly gives the conditions for differentiating between right from wrong. Ethical problems are mostly encountered in the workplace and in situations where a person needs to decide between two options. Manipulation of earnings, recording of expenses as assets, and hiding debts in the statement of financial position which collapsed Enron and World com at a blink of bankruptcy in the early 2000s led to the reexamination of ethics and its implication on business and institutions (Duska and Duska,2003). The respect for the accounting work has declined due to these scandals (Herron & Gilbertson,2004). These financial and accounting scandals happening in the world has called for much attention to be placed on the importance of strong ethical behavior on the part of accountants and auditors (Thomadakis,2019).Ghana has also had its share of these scandals and the worst that shook the nation was the banking sector which began in 2018 leading to the collapse of sixteen banks. This lead to the questioning of the ethics of the financial managers and the auditors of the banks. According to Appiah (2011), most of these banks suffered because of overtrading and this could have been avoided if the accountants and the auditors have acted ethically. Companies like Ghana Airways limited, Juapong Textiles ltd, Bonte GoldMines, Divine Sea Foods limited, Ghana Cooperative Bank Ltd, and Bank of Housing & Construction Ltd failed due to poor corporate governance and fiscal administration which all points to our behavior and ethics as individuals.

Investing in public companies depends on audited financial statements and is the role of the auditor and the accountant to determine the truthfulness and extensiveness of financial

information (Kane,2004). Due to the current financial catastrophes involving accounting fraud, questions have been raised about the integrity and objectivity of accountants. According to Mclean & Elkind (2003), is crucial to restoring investor confidence in the accounting and auditing professional's image when reporting financial data that reflects the company's true image by putting much attention on ethics. The public sector of Ghana is not an exception. The country recorded an amount of Gh¢818,654,958.00 and 5,196,081,899.94 as financial irregularities according to the Auditor General's Report for 2017 and 2018 respectively. These irregularities happen because of the failure to apply ethics in our dealings as accountants in the public sector.

The code of ethics for professional accountants was issued in 1992 by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) to replace the IFAC Directions on the accounting professionals' ethics (Neamtu et al,2012). The ethical code was developed to aid the accounting professionals both auditors and accountants in public practice. The values of the ethics code were made from the fact that accountants all over the world have a prime duty towards society and that is to serve the interest of the public in every activity. The perspective of the code reveals that the main aim of the accounting practitioner is to satisfy the expectations of the public regarding the fulfillment of a higher standard of professionalism. The IFAC code is globally recognized and the fundamental values of its content can be embraced by the accounting professionals in every country.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants Ghana (ICAG), is the body of experts that licenses accountants in Ghana in June 2006 embraced the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants which expects every practicing accountant in the country to comply and apply it in every aspect of their work. These ethics have become



compulsory for all practicing accountants after its adoption in Ghana. According to Shawver (200), these ethics will spell out issues linked to deceitful financial reporting, encourage professionals to report the true image of the company and to assist in restoring stakeholder's confidence in financial reports. Accounting professionals under the Ghana Education Service (GES) are no exception from the code of ethics. The issue of integrating ethics into the accounting professionals in education has become a great interest since the government is investing so much in the sector after the introduction of the Free Senior High School Policy in 2017.

Applying ethics in accounting helps make good decisions with the issue of what is wrong or right in practicing accounting daily. Ethics help reduce errors and fraud and can help understand what information is appropriate to share internally or externally. This study turns to look at the knowledge of accountants under Ghana Education Service on accounting ethics, the ethical issues being confronted with, and how they have applied it in their work to help the government achieve its aim of improving the education sector.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The current world obliges the accounting profession to advocate for transparency in providing truthful financial reporting. The accountant is bound both by the rules of their organization and by the professional standard of the accounting industry. Yet ethical conducts of accountants are mostly unassured. Due to this, institutions are now emphasizing ethics in the accounting profession with much attention given to training and developing individuals to help them build strong ethical values and conduct. Financial documents are very sensitive therefore accountants and auditors are required to apply professional ethics in the provision of financial reports. It has become difficult to ascertain the determinants of one's ethic and what pushes them to

uphold it in their behavior, it is best to be embedded within the organizational structure or in the individual's attitude (Jaijaram, 2017).

According to Saren et al. (2012), the accounting function will take great importance if much attention is given to honesty and clear principled values echoed in a prescribed code of conduct. Ethical competence is the capability to bond the gap between actual, desirable and certified behavior making this the gauge in predicting ethical behavior in the workplace (Neesham et al. 2018). Smith and Smith (2003) write that a renowned profession should have a high and reliable ethical standard to be able to stand the test of time. But interestingly, the lapses among public accountants call for the review of professional standards (Rist, 2002). Organizational structures and culture sometimes live loopholes that pose a good opportunity for accountants to exploit reporting and financial management. The current government is investing a lot of its revenue in the education sector and since these accountants are known to be the financial advisers to the principal officers in education offices and schools, there is the need to be morally ethical to give good judgments. Though many studies talk about how the sector can be improved, studies on the ethics of these accountants are limited. Therefore there is a need for this study which is to know their knowledge of these IFAC ethics, the ethical issues mostly faced with, and how these issues have been solved. This study will examine the need for good ethical values in the professional practice of educational accountants in the Bono, Ahafo, and Bono East regions of Ghana.

### **OBJECTIVES TO THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to assess the ethical behavior of accountants in the Ghana Education Service from the Brong Ahafo Region.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the knowledge of the accountant on the IFAC ethics.

2. To identify ethical issues encountered in their professional practice and their ethical capability to respond to them.
3. To assess if the ethical code of conduct can address every issue that borders on ethical practices.
4. To examine the implication of applying the code of ethics as accountants in the education sector.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions were posed to attain the above objectives of the study:

1. What knowledge do you have on the IFAC code of ethics?
2. What ethical issues do you encounter in practicing your profession and how has it being resolved?
3. Can the code of ethics address all the issues on their ethical practice?
4. What is the implication of applying ethics as accountants in the education sector?

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study will supplement the existing studies on accounting ethics and contribute new knowledge on how these ethics can be added to the organizational culture to impact the conduct of employees. It will also provide information on individual attitudes portrayed by educational accountants concerning ethical conduct and in making decisions as they accomplish their professional roles. The study will again identify significant and major factors related to the ethical motivation of accountants. The findings will be used by organizational managers thus Ghana Education Service in determining actions that can be taken to ensure adherence with ethical principles in performing their duties and in provision and presentation of financial facts.



Lastly, the literature of this study will be helpful to other researchers who wish to expand the study in this area in the future.

### **SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY**

The study embraced a quantitative descriptive research design. A survey method will be used to gather the primary data. A descriptive survey is perfect for this study because of its ability to fuse qualitative and quantitative data. The study will use primary data that will be collected through questionnaires. The population size is 330 accountants in the educational sector from the Brong Ahafo Region (Bono, Ahafo, and Bono East Regions). The study will also depend on journals that are linked to the topic. The study uses a cross-sectional design to collect data on important variables, one time only, from selected persons.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study emphasizes the response and opinions of educational accountants in the Brong Ahafo Region in relation to the accounting professional's ethics. The study also assesses the impact of ethics on practitioners' attitudes in decision making, judgments, and their devotion to professional conduct. The study only focuses on the assertions of educational accountants in the Brong Ahafo Region and thus does not consider that of the other regions in the country. Therefore the results from the study cannot be generalized but can be placed from the perspective of the area of study.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study suffers limitations just like other research. The time factor for submitting responses from respondents inhibits the expansion of the research. Again, some respondents withholding information deemed to be confidential which inhibits the objective of the research.



## **ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The study has been structured into five chapters. Chapter one which is the general introduction covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, summary of research methodology, scope of the study, limitations of the study, and organization of the study. A review of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature and conceptual framework is captured in chapter two. Chapter three looked at how the research will be conducted, which is the research methodology. The fourth chapter looked at the detailed analysis and review of the data captured. The summary of the findings, recommendations, conclusions, and areas for further studies are dealt with in chapter five. The references and the appendices will follow after the fifth chapter.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a review of related literature on the area of the study. The chapter is structured into four (4) main sections. Section 2.1 discusses the conceptual literature while Section 2.2 presents the theoretical literature review. Section 2.3 discusses the empirical literature and section 2.4 presents the conceptual framework of the topic.

#### **CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

The core drive of accounting ethics and ethical values is the keeping of professional and good behavior (Bukola et.al, 2013). Ethics according to Collin dictionary.com is defined as morals, beliefs, and rules about right and wrong. Ethics are the fundamental principles and concept of acceptable human demeanor. Brinkmann (2002), defined ethics as a discipline that involves the logical examination of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue, and vice. Ethics involves human deeds, ethical principles, and the act of distinguishing right from wrong.

Smith and Smith (2003) assert that ethical principles provide the foundation on which a cultured society exists. Ethical values act as an instrument that direct and control the actions of individuals so that the best true and fair practices are achieved (Bukola et.al, 2013). Gomez (2002) asserts that the major ethical issue in accounting is the conflict of interest.

Doolan (2009) writes that a person develops ethical values from religious principles, history, personal observations, and experience or some ethical guidelines or codes to which everyone can agree. Mpeani et al (2013) describe ethics as the way we behave towards each other in our community, to our clients, our country, and our regulator. Being ethical is about honesty, integrity, working within the epistle and the spirit of the law, and making the right decisions and professional choices. Professional ethics includes moral character and the sum of

obligations that pertain to the practice of a profession (Nyaaba,2014; Gula, 1996). Professional ethics are a set of ethical behaviors or concepts that describe a profession such as accounting. A mark of a distinguished accountancy profession means the recognition of the obligation to act in the public interest. Acting in the public interest means observing and complying with defined ethical requirements of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) Code of Ethics.

The IFAC Code of Ethics was designed by the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants which is part of IFAC. The code of ethics establishes the standard for accounting professional's conduct and showing the fundamental values accountants should embrace in fulfilling their objectives. The code offers an outline that accountants are to apply, recognize, assess, and address threats in compliance with core principles. The code of ethics represents what can be done as a replication of corporate ethics. It's built to primarily address the precisions of risky activities and built a mutual consensus for the professional and act as evidence for the acknowledgment of moral dimensions. The IFAC Code of Ethics consists of five major principles namely; integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behavior.

### **Integrity**

Integrity is being forthright, candid, and truthful in all professional and business associations. It signifies fair dealing with the customer's financial data. Integrity obliges accountants to desist from individual gains and avoid deliberate opportunity to mislead and manipulate financial information. It forbids accountants to knowingly or unknowingly believe materially false information, provided recklessly, contains omissions and obscure information that would be misleading. It requires accountants to provide reports that apply to existing accounting laws and reporting standards.



### **Objectivity**

Being an objective accountant means not compromising professional or business decisions due to bias, conflict of interest, or undue influence of others. This ethical value requires accountants to remain free from conflicts of interest and any questionable business affiliations when performing accounting services. It prohibits accountants to take activity with a circumstance that can unjustifiably impact the accountant's certified judgment regarding the activity. Not being objective as an accountant will affect the professional ability to make available truthful opinions about financial information.

### **Professional Competence and Due Care**

This ethical value means to uphold professional knowledge and skill at the level that can enable the client or organization to receive proficient services. Competence is mostly centered on the educational level of the individual and their experience. Due care obliges accountants to observe all technical or ethical accounting standards. Due care also entails senior professional to supervise and train their subordinates with little experience in the profession. Complying with this value of professional competence and due care means accountants should draw steps to guarantee that people working in the professional have the right training and supervision. Appropriately, the accountant should make the employer aware of the constraints essential in the provision of services in line of duty.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is valuing the secrecy of information retrieved from engaging in a professional and business relationship. This principle prohibits accountants to disclose information obtained in line of duty in any public environment and mostly to direct business associates, friends, and family members. It means accountants should not use information acquired for personal advantage or advantage of a third party. Accountants must not reveal any restricted facts received from a professional association after the end of the rapport unless it is obligatory by law or permitted by the employing institution or organization.



### **Professional Behavior**

Professional behavior means conforming to related laws and regulations and eludes any behavior that might dishonor the accounting profession. Accountant professionals must disassociate themselves from businesses, activities, or relationships that may damage the integrity, objectivity, or status of the profession. Behaviors that might dishonor the profession include any action that a rational or knowledgeable third party would conclude to negatively affect the fame of the profession.

### **THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW OF ETHICS**

Ethical theories denote the views of individuals and the foundation for decision making. They guide individuals in making decisions. Each theory gives a diverse decision-making style or tenet used in forecasting the consequence of one's duty to people to help the individual decide how that action is ethically correct. According to Chonko (2006), for an individual to understand ethical theory there is the need to appreciate the common set of principles or aims to make decision making successful. These principles are

- **Beneficence:** The principle of beneficence gives directions to the decision-maker on what is right and wrong. It conditions that ethical theories must help to realize the utmost amount of good because people profit most from good. This also means a decision-maker should try to create a bigger fraction of good over evil in every possible circumstance.
- **Least Harm.** This principle helps with conditions where no choice seems favorable but the decision-maker needs to choose the action with the least harm possible and one that hurts the least people.
- **Respect for Autonomy.** The principle of respect for autonomy means decision making must center on allowing individuals to be autonomous. This means for individuals to make decisions, they should have control over their lives and others to apply it. People

must have authority over their lives in the most possible circumstances because individuals wholly understand their preferred type of lifestyle. Independent people should have authority over their life experiences to obtain the lifestyle they adore.

- Justice. This norm conditions that decision-makers ought to stress on actions that are just to those involved. Thus, ethical choices ought to be steady with ethical theory unless justifying circumstances reasonably exist in the case. Such cases must have a major difference from comparable cases that validate the unpredictable decision.

### **Forms Of Ethical Theories**

People use ethical theories as guidance for decision-making, depict phases of ethical dilemma essential to them, and enable them to make the ethical resolution according to procedures in the theories (Chonko, 2006). There are four forms of ethical theories that are linked to this study. Namely; deontology theory, utilitarianism theory, right theory, and virtues theory.

#### **Deontology / Duty Theory**

This theory is developed by German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The word 'deontological' originates from the Greek word *deon*, which means 'duty'. This class of ethical theory states that people should stick to their commitments and duties when making a decision that involves ethics. This depicts that an individual should follow his or her obligations to other individuals or society because what is ethically correct is when one upholds his or her duty to others. This theory advocates the right actions because they are the right thing to do and frowns at wrong actions. One can't validate an action by displaying that it created a good result, thus why it is also referred to as the 'non-Consequentialist'. This theory infuses that actions are right or wrong because of the forms they are, and people have to act for that reason, irrespective of the good or bad results it may be produced. The theory contains many good qualities but also has its defects. One flaw is the absence of a rational basis for deciding a person's duty. Why someone

decides to make something his/her duty is dependent on that person although it may appear to be good which sometimes may conflict with the duties of other peoples.

This theory links to the fact that if accountants consider their duty of serving the public interest as an ethical requirement, then they will perform their duties adequately without having any issue like going to the PAC (Public Accounts Committee) to defend their woeful spendings.

### **Utilitarianism Theory**

This model is centered on one's capability to forecast the consequences of an act. This theory was developed by English philosophers and economists Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. The choice that produces the utmost benefit to the maximum people is the ethically correct one according to the utilitarian. Utilitarianism varies from ethical notions and thinks the appropriateness or wrongness of an act reliant on the objective of the person. The utilitarian thinks it is probable to make the right choice from a corrupt motive. There are two types of utilitarianism, act and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism is where an individual executes an act that benefits the most people irrespective of personal moods or societal restrictions such as laws. Rule utilitarianism considers the law in any decision and is bothered by equality. The rule admits that decisions must be based on trial and error and individual experience to yield the best result for the people. A person using the utilitarian approach for decision making takes into consideration his/her capability to relate the numerous types of results to each other on a comparable gauge. The utilitarianism theory has its drawbacks and an example is when people use life experiences to predict results that are uncertain and their forecasts may not be accurate. Vagueness can lead to unanticipated results making the utilitarian decision-maker look unethical because most people did not benefit from the choice as predicted.

The theory underpins that employees must explore actions in the line of duty when ethics is concerned to produce a positive effect on unforeseen circumstances. This type of theory



perceives that public accountants can make ethical decisions based on the public interest which is the majority rather than their self-gain if ethical issues are to be adhered to. Educational accountants must consider related laws like the PFM Act, 2016(Act 921) and other professional codes of conduct in making their professional choice to enable the public to benefit the most from these choices.

### **Right Theory**

This theory is grounded on rights and reveals that society is safe when the highest priority is given to rights established. This philosophy was first argued by British philosopher John Locke who thinks individuals must not hurt someone's life, health, liberty, or properties. A right is an acceptable assertion against a person's conduct. Rights are regarded to be ethically correct because greater people endorse them. An individual can give rights to others if he/she can do so. Right and duty are linked in such a manner that the rights of one individual designate a duty to another person. A key flaw of this theory is that one must understand the features of a right in society. The community has to decide what rights to endorse and offer to its citizens. Society can only determine the rights to enact by considering the ethical aims and concerns of society.

Rights theory can be useful for accountants in GES (Ghana Education Service) when it is practiced in conjunction with other ethical theories, rules, and practices of other professional bodies that reliably explain the goals of the society.

### **Virtue Theory**

The virtual theory adjudicates a person by their conduct rather than the action that stray from their usual behavior. The theory was developed by Aristotle who thinks the greatest deal of western culture is based on virtue and character ethics. It considers a person's morals, reputation, and motivation when assessing an unusual and crook behavior regarded as immoral. This theory dwells more prominence on the importance of developing good habits of character such as kindness and less on impacted rules. Historically, this theory is one of the ancient



normative customs of western philosophy having its origins in ancient Greek civilization. The theory campaigns for the good conduct of character and advocate individuals to avoid obtaining bad charisma relating to our duties towards oneself. Not considering a change in an individual's character is a major weakness of this philosophy.

The corrupt character of a virtuous educational accountant may go unseen until a major amount of evidence aggregates against him/her. Practicing accountants must acknowledge the habit of developing good habits and most of these good habits are published in the code of conduct at the workplace. Standards of conducts can also be instilled through training by stressing the relationship between attitudes and behavior towards achieving organizational excellence.

## **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Knowledge Of IFAC Code Of Ethics**

Vitez (2019) examines the need for accounting professionals to know the IFAC code and explains the importance of the five (5) ethics of IFAC and their safeguards. The study uses a descriptive approach to analyze and stress the importance of the Ethics Code to the accountant as a professional. The findings of the paper suggest accountants have the sole obligation to deliver clients with expert services while giving a truthful and accurate assessment of a company's fiscal health and can only be achieved when accountants know, understood, and strictly adhere to the ethics of the profession. The paper argues the accountant cannot perform his/her duty with ethics.

Freedman (2020) analyses the ethical responsibility in accounting. The paper stresses the ethical responsibility of accountants to many different parties, both internal and external to the company. Understanding the ethical responsibilities of accountants help to understand the

appropriate information to share with the company's stakeholders. The accountant must be ethical both in mind and appearance to be able to perform his professional duties diligently.

West (2017) explores ways in which Aristotle's ethics can be functional to the ethics of IFAC. The paper summarizes IFAC's methodology and the three themes of Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics which are linked to the conduct of professional accountants. The importance of this viewpoint to professional accountants are enunciated. The study shows that knowing and applying both Aristotle's and IFAC's ethics makes the work of the accountant fruitful. Applying both leads to the development of excellence of character, intelligence, and morality. Being ethical comprises morality and responsibility of the action taken as accountants, therefore the accountant must put up ethical behavior in all its endeavor to help redeem the image of the profession.

Caglio and Cameran (2017) examine the need for learners and young employees born in the 1980s and 1990s to combine accounting and business ethics. The study stresses the need to increase consciousness of the views of accountants with special consideration given to ethical aspects. The study uses a database of 1,794 and close-ended questionnaires. Data were analyzed using Harman's one-factor test to ascertain the presence of the common method effect. The paper reveals seeing the accounting profession as unethical is not principal among the youth and suggests the presence of a manifold opinion of an accountant's ethics. The study also suggests the improvement of public sentiments of the accountant's ethics through university courses in ethics, persistent education programs, and focused communication strategies by professional accounting bodies.

Soltani and Mayupetiti (2013) examine the significance attached to core ethical values, honesty, and accountability in the European Codes and regulations of Corporate Governance. The objective of this paper is to analyze the modern laws, rules, and codes of corporate governance presented by the European Commission and the five major European countries (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) after 2002 and 2007. The examination is based on the enforcement intensity and content analysis. The examination indicates severe deficiencies in the European Corporate Governance Codes concerning the significance attached to ethical values, the integrity of managing and accounting devices. The study suggests these high-profile financial catastrophes of several multinational groups at the beginning of this century could have been avoided if the concern regarding the reverence to moral and ethical values much be raised. The paper acknowledges that the only way future accounting scandals can be avoided is through adherence to the ethical values of the accounting profession.

Thomadakis (2015) discusses the role of the IFAC board in guaranteeing accountants around the world obey the core ethical principles. The paper acknowledges the importance for accountants to have core ethical values that they follow. The paper recommends that since people anticipate the professional accountant to fulfill certain criteria to be trusted, it's really necessary to have fundamental ethical principles that they need to follow.

The University of West Florida (2017) tests the ethics of CPAs in Florida. The ethics examination seeks to ensure that CPA candidates and practitioners understand the state's licensing requirements and test their application of professional ethics. The study is done on one hundred and ninety-one CPAs and uses a descriptive data analysis approach. The paper



reveals ethics helps the accountant to cautiously assess the situations where professional judgment is needed. The paper concludes that the accountant understanding the ethical framework for independence, integrity, confidentiality, and professional competence guides decision making and helps preserve the reputation of the profession.

Branson et al. (2015) investigate the effect of cultural disparity on the implementation of the Accounting Code of Ethics. The prime aim of the paper is to probe the link between a country's cultural dimensions and the application of the international ethics code by IFAC. The study appraises past research to include more countries than previous studies and covers examination that involves professional accounting organizations zeal to successfully implement International Codes of Ethics. The study uses IBM SPSS 20<sup>th</sup> edition to conduct a binary logistic regression to find out the cultural dimensions of individuals and how professional accounting organizations can evade uncertainties to help forecast the implementation of an International Code of Ethics for Accountants. The paper stresses the need for the accountant to show ethical behavior and suggests management to include the IFAC Code of Ethics in the organizational culture to speed up its adoption.

#### **Ethical Dilemmas of Accountants and the IFAC Code of Ethics**

Ramona (2019) assesses the ethics and integrity of the professional accountant. This work aims to analyze the approach of ethics initiated by IFAC which has being pirated in Romania through the two representative professional bodies for the accounting profession in the country, B.E.C.A.R and C.F.A.R to acknowledge how these ethics can help accountants solve their ethical issues. The paper adopts a fundamental study of a normative nature focused on dealing with the topic by analyzing the elements of the Ethics Codes for Professional Accountants approved by IFAC based on its suggestion of IESBA. The paper shows that strict compliance



with ethics by auditors and accountants guarantees the fulfillment of the public interest and expectations. An accountant can never solve ethical issues in accomplishing his mandate without the ethics code.

Low et al. (2008) recognizes and explores five factors that impact and adds to the spread of accounting and corporate scandals due to their effect on ethical behavior. The study uses a simple questionnaire of twenty-five students on a master's level accounting course. The survey is to test student's responses and reactions to ethically challenging situations related to the five factors identified in the literature. The finding from the survey shows that ethics education have an important impact on their behavior and suggests accounting graduates must have ethic education in the program of study before they enter into the business world. These studies above show the need to educate upcoming accountants on the need to act ethically to redeem the lost image of the profession.

Jaijaram (2017) investigates whether there is a solid mutual interdependence between the accounting profession and the role of the accountant. It examines the duty of accounting bodies in upholding and enhancing morals in the accounting profession globally. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. The survey is done using data collected from 500 sampled employees of various financial institutions in Bronx. Participants have five alternative responses using the Likert scale. The results specify that the accountant's role is reliant on the accounting profession's ethics and accountants are expected to show good ethical behavior in their line of duty when confronted with ethical issues.

Cooper (2016) reports the findings of a study of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) who indicates that they are accountants in public practices. The study determines whether these CPAs tend to discover factors connected to their professional environment (professional conduct of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants-AICPA) to be more helpful than factors in their business environment. The paper uses a survey form in the collection of data by mailing to the sample. A random sample of two hundred and ninety of the five hundred and sixty-one members of the Iowa Society of Certified Public Accountants (IASPCPA). The paper uses a mean average rating for each factor to providing a better notion of the extent to which the respondents will identify the helpfulness of a factor in their response to ethical dilemmas run into in the course of their work. The study reveals CPAs appear to work more heavily in a business environment that has company culture and boss that do not inspire them to compromise their ethical values. Management philosophy emphasizing ethical conduct and the ability to turn to the superior for information and assistance on ethical matters makes accounting professionals ethical.

### **Effects of Applying the IFAC Code of Ethics**

Gartenstein (2019) examines the importance of ethics in accounting and finance decision making. The study uses a narrative approach to describe the role of ethics in financial management. The paper reveals ethical accounting makes sound practical sense because an accurate set of books will give you more useful information than pure fiction. Using morality as a guideline in accounting and financial decision making is the right thing to do. Waples and Shaub (2014) debate the accountant's master to be the public's interest. The study analyzed the accountant's master interest and examines the ethical obligation of the accountant under the Code of Ethics by IFAC. The study is base on the pivot question in Westra's (1986) quest for an ethical accounting concern to whom the accountant owes a faithful agency. The paper

reveals simplifying ethics to enable the accountant to perform definite responsibility of serving the interest of the public by fairly preparing and authenticating the presentation of financial statements.

Satava et al. (2014) describe how the rule-based customs of auditing became a convenient vehicle to proliferate unethical behavior in firms such as Enron and Arthur Anderson. The paper represents a ten model of ethical views and describes how these views impact rule-based and rule-based ethical conduct for accountants and auditors. The study finds out that accountants and auditors can restore public trust only by improving their ethical behavior.

Neradzic et al. (2012) explore the important role of personality traits and morality in acknowledgment of ethical principles by management, auditors, and professional accountants in corporate financial business operations, implementation of internal control systems, and evaluating their functionality. The study was done on management, auditors, and accountants from fifteen (15) companies including public, joint-stock, limited liability, middle, big, and small auditing houses as respondents. The study is piloted on a sample of 95 respondents between age twenty-five and sixty (25 and 60) in the Republic of Serbia using a five-level Likert rating scale. The paper engages the mixture of the five factors and a seven-factor model rating scale of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness, Negative valence, and Positive valence. The results of the study revealed combining ethics and morality in the training and education of managers, auditors and accountants play a vital role in executing their duties professionally. Acknowledging ethical principles helps in securing an unimpeded application of a code of ethics in the corporate governance model serving as a major influencer in the decision-making process. Naude (2018) discusses the initiative by IFAC concerning ethics education for accountants. The argument is mounted to inquire about ethics

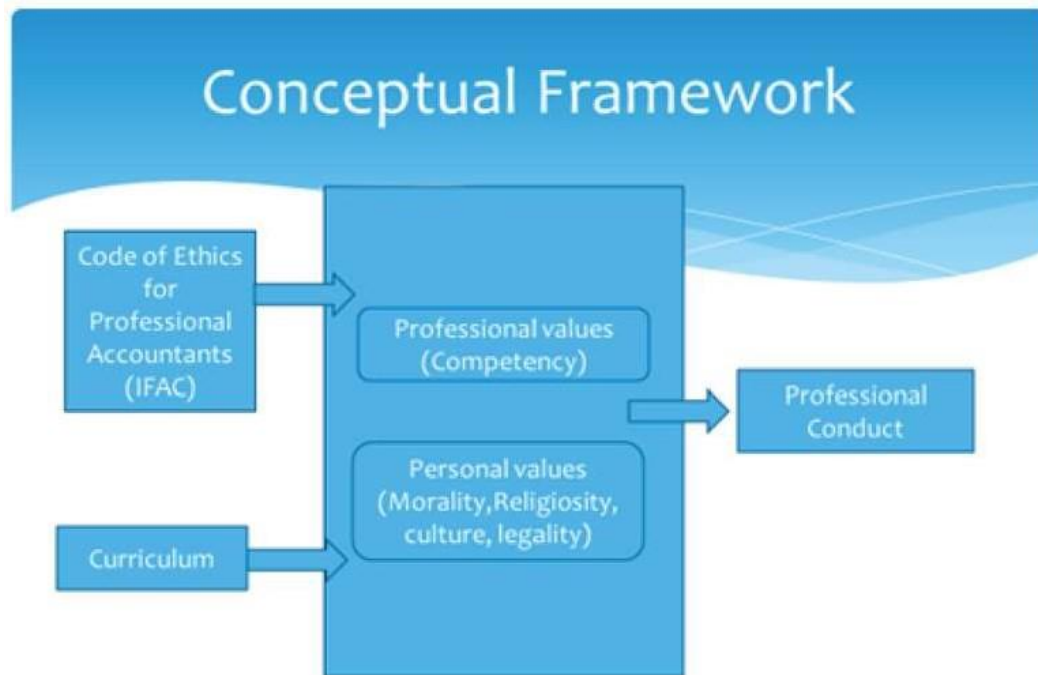


education, the potential and limitations of ethics education, and how it should be taught. The study finds boundless gratitude for the effort of professionals to refurbish public confidence and serve the public goal through the acknowledgment of professional ethics.

Bukola et al. (2013) investigate the effect of ethical principles on the accounting practice in Nigeria. The paper examines whether accounting ethics have a great impact on the practice of the accounting profession in Nigeria, identifies the elements that make the accountant disregard accounting rules, and evaluates how the ethical code of conduct can be used to address all the issues that border on ethical practices. The study employs a mixture of descriptive and survey research methods. Two hundred and fifty practicing accountants in business educational institutions, non-governmental parastatals, and government agencies were given a five response Likert scale questionnaire. The study uses the 2-score test to test the hypothesis of the level of significance using data from the field work. The study shows other major factors influencing the accounting practice like rules and policies of institutions and organizations where accountants work and the religion of the individual. It recommends among others the need for accountants to be responsive to good ethical conduct and strictly obey the ethical code of conduct to restore public confidence.



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Stephenson (2016) with adaptation

FIGURE 2.1



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter represents the data used and the methodology adopted. The chapter is organized into eight sections. Section 3.1 discusses the research design of the study, Section 2.2 presents the population used for the study, Section 3.3 discusses the sample size and sampling techniques used for the study while Section 3.4 presents the data collection tool and the data source for the study. Section 3.5 discusses the data analysis by revealing the specification and justification used, Section 3.6 discusses the reliability and validity of the data used, Section 3.7 presents the ethical consideration of the study and Section 3.8 presents the profile of the organization.

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

To attain the projected objective of the research a quantitative research approach was embraced to help draw numerical data and analysis prove for effective decision related to the future of the Ghana Education Service. A survey method was used to collect primary data. A descriptive survey type is ideal to help fuse the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data in some aspects of the study. The study employed an all-inclusive questionnaire designed to assess the ethical behavior of educational accountants. Several considerations were made in the collection of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire is classified into four sections. Section one contains questions about the personal details of the respondents, Section two questions looks at the knowledge of respondents on the IFAC Code of Ethics, Section three questions relate to some ethical dilemmas being confronted within their line of duty and how it's being addressed in their everyday practice, Section four contains questions relating to the effects of applying the IFAC ethics in the educational sector. The study uses a five Likert scale questionnaire for the

respondents to tick their responses. The questionnaires were designed in reference to the research questions and objectives of the research.

### **POPULATION**

The population size is three hundred and thirty (330) accountants in the educational sector from the Brong Ahafo Region (Bono, Ahafo, and Bono East Regions) in which the sample size was drawn. The population includes senior and lower rank accountants such as Deputy Chief Accountant I, Deputy Chief Accountant II, Principal Accountant, Senior Accountant, Accountant, Assistant Accountant, Senior Accounts Clerk, Account Clerk, and Account Assistant.

### **SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The study uses a simple random sampling method because this method is ideal for the elimination of bias and create equal opportunity for each prospective contributor to be chosen. A sample of two hundred (200) was selected based on their early response to the questionnaire.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

For the purpose of this study, questionnaires were issued through the AEA Whatsapp platform with the help of google forms to get the primary data needed. This medium was conducive due to the dispersed nature of participants. All participants are on the Whatsapp platform and can follow the google form link to answer the questionnaires. The secondary data was sorted from journals and articles from approved sites like Elsevier online, Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, and many others. Other secondary materials were retrieved from IFAC and ICAG Websites.



## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The study analyzed the primary data collected from the responses provided by the educational accountants using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0). The SPSS was used to conduct a regression with the help of Microsoft Excel which was used for the data entry and preparation to translate the raw data to a structured format that is appropriate for the analysis. The dependent variable in this analysis is the professional conduct of the accountants to address ethical dilemmas and the effect of applying the IFAC code, and the independent variable is the AEA accountants knowledge on IFAC Code of Ethics. The independent variable will be used to predict the impact of organizations and institution's efforts to improve the professional conduct of accountants characterized by the organizational culture of the Ghana Education Service.

The data analysis included editing, coding, and descriptive analysis of assessing the ethical behavior of the accountants in the Ghana Education Service in the Brong Ahafo region. The findings were seriously examined to reflect the objectives of the research. A summary of the conclusions and findings were provided based on the findings from the analysis.

## **RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE DATA**

The researcher is convinced that the data collected for the study were valid and reliable. Questionnaires were carefully designed and subjected to the scrutiny, comments, and suggestions of the researcher's supervisor and AEA executives in the region for the pilot testing. The questionnaire was administered through the AEA platform after the approval of the supervisor. The study was confined to the accountants of Ghana Education Service in the Brong Ahafo Region and the respondents are professionals mandated to conduct the accountancy work by Ghana Education Service within the Brong Ahafo Region making the investigation reliable. The procedures employed inconsistency to the objectives, data collection, the methodology engaged and the critical analysis, in addition to the



recommendations offered by the supervisor, have validated the information and its outcome can be linked and generalize with respect to the ethical behavior of the educational accountants in the region.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The study was subject to certain ethical issues and participants were convinced by the leadership of the AEA-Brong Ahafo on the aim of the research and their protection for them to freely give out their point of view. Participants were fully informed regarding the objective of the research and assured that their answers were treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes and only for this study. A climate of comfort was maintained throughout the research period to avoid respondents being physically or psychologically abused.

### **THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION IN GHANA**

The accounting profession in Ghana is regulated by ICAG. ICAG is the professional accounting body charged with the regulation of the accountancy profession in Ghana. It was established by the Chartered Accountant's Act, 1963 (Act 170). Its membership comprises chartered accountants and practicing accountants. The accountants work in various sectors of the Ghanaian economy including public services, accounting firms, industries, and education where funds need to be effectively and efficiently managed. The Companies code 1963 (Act 179) only recognizes its members for publicly practicing accounting in Ghana. ICAG is a member of IFAC, the Association of Accountancy Bodies in West Africa, and the Pan African Federation of Accountants. ICAG in 2007 adopted IFRS as the accounting standard required for the preparation of financial statements of all government business enterprises, bonds, insurance companies, security brokers, pension funds, and public utilities. This reform is later backed by the Companies Act, 2019 (Act 992) given the corporate financial reporting in Ghana.

The Act outlines the preparation and publication of financial statements and provides legal backing to the standards that have been issued by ICAG.

In 1885, Ghana established the Controller and Accountant's General's Department as a department in charge of all government accounts and the Chief Accounting Officer of Government serving as an advisor to the Government and the Minister of Finance in accounting matters. The CAGD is in charge of the accounts and reporting of the accounts of all public institutions in Ghana and is mandated by the Public Financial Act 2016(Act 921) to supervise and see to the compliance of reporting standards. The staffs of CAGD are under the supervision of ICAG which is the mother body of all practicing public accountants. Ghana through the CAGD launched the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (GIFMIS) which is a computer-based system automated to store key financial information in government organizations. This is to enhance public financial management through reliable financial reporting, informed decision making, and reliable planning for national growth.

In 2014, Ghana adopted the accrual-based IPSAS to help improve financial reporting in the public sector. IPSAS is a framework for the preparation, presentation, and disclosure of general-purpose financial statements of public institutions. The CAGD is assigned the responsibility for the implementation process to aid in suitable financial reporting.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

The main objective of this study is to assess the ethical behavior of accountants in the Brong Ahafo Region's Ghana Education Service. This chapter represents the results and discussions. The summaries of responses gathered from the questionnaires administered are analyzed to achieve the objectives of the study. The sample is made up of 200 accountants of the Ghana Education Service in the Brong Ahafo Region. The data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 version which provided the statistical tools and helped with the linear regression. The chapter is made up of three sections, section 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics, section 4.2 shows the presentations based on the objectives of the study and section 4.3 gives the correlation analysis of the variables.

#### **BACKGROUND/DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

The opening section of the questionnaire asks about the demographic background and profile of all the respondents. The respondents are categorized according to age, gender, educational qualification, department, number of years respondents have worked in the sector, and the current rank of respondents.

##### **Age Composition of Respondents**

The ages of the respondents were placed in 10 years of class intervals to give a fair and effective presentation. From Table 1, 20.5% of the respondents are 30 years and below, 38% are between 31 and 40 years, 24.5% are from 41 to 50 years, and 17% above 50 years. This means most of the respondents are in their youthful stages and have more years in active service. This shows the importance of including ethic education in the youthful generation (Caglio and Cameran, 2017).



**Table 4.1: Respondents Age**

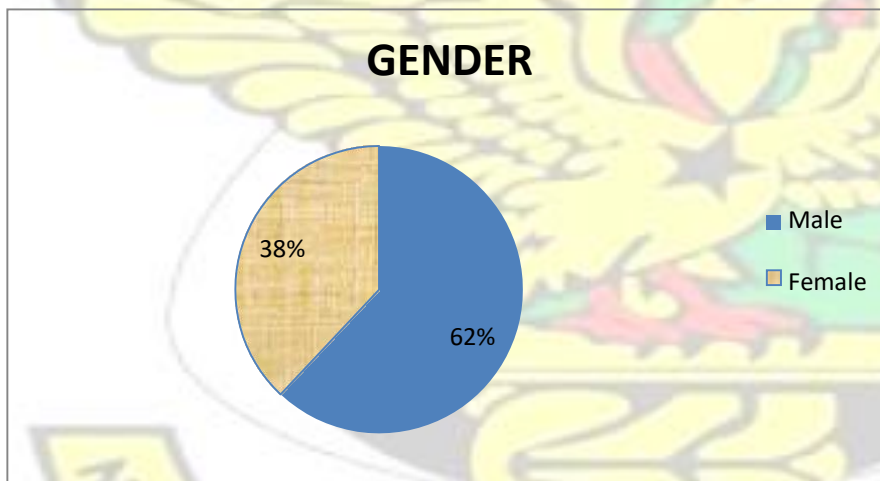
Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	41	20.5
31 - 40	76	38
41 - 50	49	24.5
Above 50	34	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:**Field data,2020

#### **Gender Composition of Respondents**

The respondents were classified according to their gender to aid the presentation of the study. 124 which represents 62% of the sample are male and 76 representing 38% of the sample are females. This means the accountancy job in Ghana Education Service of the Brong Ahafo Region is mainly dominated by males than females. This can be seen in the figure below;

**Figure 4.1: Gender of Respondents**



**Source:** Field data,2020

#### **Classification According to Educational Level**

The study classified the educational level or qualification into Higher National Diploma (HND), Bachelor Degree, Masters, and Professional Certificate (ICAG/ACCA). From table 4.2, 37 respondents representing 18.5% are Masters Degree holders, 108 representing 54% of



the sample are Bachelor Degree Holders, 37 showing 18.5% are HND holders and 18 representing 9% are Chartered Accountants. Most of the respondents are bachelor's degree holders and are expected to at least know the IFAC ethics since most institutions have added it to the courses being taught.

**Table 4.2: Educational Qualification of Respondents**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Masters	37	18.5
Degree	108	54
HND	37	18.5
ICAG/ACCA	18	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Field data, 2020*

#### **Departmental Classification of Respondents**

To analyze the department of each respondent by the researcher, respondents were asked to identify whether they are in secondary schools, education offices, or educational units.

**Table 4.3: Department of Respondents**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Secondary School	137	68.5
Educational Office	50	25
Educational Unit	13	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** *Field data, 2020*

Table 4.3 reveals 137 of the respondents representing 68.5% works in the Senior High Schools. 50 respondents representing 25% are in the Educational Offices which includes the District and Municipal offices of Education, 13 respondents representing 6.5% work in the Educational Unit which includes the Methodist, Catholic, Alhamadiya Educational Units, and others. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are from senior high school than the other sectors.

This also can be seen as there are more accountants in the schools than the offices since the schools are many in every district.

#### **Number of Years Respondents have Worked in the Educational Sector**

The researcher was to analyze the number of years respondents have worked in the educational sector. From Table 4 below, 37.5% which represents the majority of the respondents have worked between the period of 11 to 15 years, 24.5 % have worked above 15 years, 24% have worked for the period of 6 to 10 years and 14% have worked for 5 years and below. This indicates majority of the respondents have worked for many years and are the best to help achieve the objectives of the study because of their work experiences.

**Table 4.4: Years Respondents have Worked in the Education Sector**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below 5	28	14
6 – 10	48	24
11 – 15	75	37.5
Above 15	49	24.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:**Field data,2020

#### **Current Ranks of Respondents in the Ghana Education Service**

From Table 4.5 below, the respondents of the study are mainly Principal Accountants having the majority 133 representing 66.5%, 39 Deputy Chief Accountant II representing 19.5%, below and up to the rank of Senior Accountants were 11 representing 5.5% and 17 respondents are having the rank of Deputy Chief Accountant and above representing 8.5% of the total respondents. The respondents attained the majority rank through either the completion of their bachelor's degree or promotions due to long service. This means most of the respondents are

experienced in the accounting field and are the best to the achievement of the objectives of this study.

**Table 4.5: Ranks of Respondents**

<b>Current Ranks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below and up to Senior Accountants	11	5.5
Principal Accountants	133	66.5
Deputy Chief Accountants II	39	19.5
Deputy Chief Accountants and above	<u>17</u>	<u>8.5</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:**Field data,2020

### **PRESENTATIONS BASED ON THE OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

To facilitate the researcher to achieve the aim of the study, the second section of the questionnaire was subjected to achieve the objectives of the research. The respondents were questioned to know their knowledge of the IFAC Code of Ethics, the Ethical dilemma of respondents in their line of duty, and the effects of applying the Code of Ethics in Ghana Education Service. Respondents were to answer based on the Likert scale by ticking Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

### **Knowledge of Respondents on the IFAC Code of Ethics**

The respondents were tested on their knowledge of IFAC ethics and to help the researcher achieve the first objective of the study. 139 respondents representing 69.5% of respondents acknowledged their idea on the IFAC ethics and 61 respondents representing 30.5 had little or no idea about the IFAC Code of Ethics.

The ethics were explained to respondents in the part 'B' of this section of the questionnaire for respondents to acknowledge by ticking whether SA, A, N, D, or SD. Respondents score are detailed in the table below;



**Table 4.6: Respondents Knowledge of IFAC Code of Ethics**

IFAC Ethics	SA	A	N	D	SD	No.	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Integrity	140	55	5	0	0	200	1.00	3.00	1.33	.52029
Objectivity	165	33	0	2	0	200	1.00	4.00	1.20	.48284
Professional Behaviour	195	0	5	0	0	200	1.00	3.00	1.05	.31303
Confidentiality	182	14	0	4	1	200	1.00	4.00	1.15	.55591
Professional Competence and Due Care	155	39	1	3	2	200	1.00	5.00	1.29	.65424

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, and SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: Field data, 2020

Table 4.6 indicates 140 respondents strongly agreed with the definition of integrity given a mean of 1.33 representing 70% of the respondents. 55 agreed and 5 are neutral representing 27.5% and 2.5% respectively. 165 acknowledges the meaning of objectivity representing the majority of the respondents with 82.5% and a mean of 1.20. Professional behavior was acknowledged by 195 respondents representing 97.5% with a mean of 1.05. 181 accepted the confidentiality definition representing 92.5% of the respondents with a mean of 1.15. 155 respondents strongly agreed with Professional competence and due care definition representing 77.5% of respondents with a mean of 1.29, 39 agreed representing 19.5% and the remaining 3% are for the other factors. The responses of the respondents attained a standard deviation between 0.52029 and 0.65424.

The majority of the respondents know and understand IFAC ethics as revealed in Table 4.6. This attests to previous studies (Vitez 2019; West 2017; Caglio and Cameran 2017; Thomadakis 2015) that stress the need for accountants to know and understand the elements of the IFAC ethics to enable them to adhere to these principles in avoiding future sandals. The majority agreeing to the definitions of the elements indicates most of the accountants are



knowledgeable about the IFAC ethics and this will help them to improve the public opinion about the profession.

### **Ethical Dilemmas of Respondents in their Line of Duty**

To achieve the second objective of the study, the researcher sought to ask respondents about the ethical dilemmas most confronted within their line of duty. The analysis below revealed most of the respondents strongly agreed to the ethical dilemmas and would wish it is solved to help improve their work as educational accountants.

**Table 4.7: Ethical Dilemma of Respondents**

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD	No.	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Management pressure to manipulate figures	79	62	12	40	7	200	1.00	5.00	2.17	1.2445
The omission of figures to cast a shadow on the institution	71	85	9	33	2	200	1.00	5.00	2.02	1.1296
Conflict of interest between management and accounting staff	87	70	5	26	12	200	1.00	5.00	2.03	1.2356
Whistleblowing on spending officers	72	35	24	58	11	200	1.00	5.00	2.51	1.3746
Confidentiality issues	101	58	10	28	3	200	1.00	5.00	1.87	1.1123
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1000</b>				

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, and SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: Field data, 2020

The analysis from table 4.7 shows management pressure to manipulate figures has a mean of 2.17 and a standard deviation of 1.2445. This reveals many of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to it with both representing 70.5% of the total respondents. It confirms Cooper (2016) that accountants work heavily in environments where business cultures and bosses don't interfere with their ethical values. The omission of figures (mean=2.02; SD=1.1296) with 85

agreeing which represents the majority indicates accountants are mostly forced to practice creative accounting by manipulating earnings and assets to cast a shadow for stakeholders to think the company or institution is performing well. With a mean spread of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 1.2356, respondents strongly agreed to the existence of the conflict of interest between accounts staff and management when it comes to ethical decisions. Whistleblowing on spending officers has a mean of 2.51 and a standard deviation of 1.3746. The majority, thus 72 of the respondents strongly agreed to this dilemma and confirms the difficulty they go through when you report a spending officer who spends public funds recklessly and the intimidation they receive from management. The accountant can carry out his duty of protecting the public interest when the company or institution's culture safeguards him (Ramona 2019; Jaijaram 2017; Cooper 2016). The confidentiality of issues also creates another form of an ethical dilemma. With a mean of 1.87 and SD of 1.1123, 101 of the respondents representing 50.5% strongly agreed to the confidentiality dilemma. Whether to open up to auditors on some issues or not mostly places them in a corner that compromises that ethical principles.

### **Effects of Applying the Code in the Ghana Education Sector**

The table below indicates the effects of applying the IFAC Code of Ethics in the Ghana Educational Service in the Brong Ahafo Region. 400 out of the total respondents strongly agreed to the effects that have been achieved by strictly adhering to the Code of Ethics representing 40%, 245 agreed to the effects of the ethics representing 24.5%, 90 neutral respondents representing 9%, 145 disagreed representing 14.5% and 120 respondents disagreed to the effects of the code representing 12%. The effects of the IFAC Code have a mean spread between 2.20 and 2.50 and a standard deviation between 1.2521 and 1.5335. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to the effects of the

code and acknowledge its impact on their activities as practicing accountants. This indicates that ethical accounting practice should be the pivot for the educational accountant to help perform their responsibility of serving the public's interest (Gatenstein 2019; Bukola et.al 2013; Satava et.al 2014).

**Table 4.8: Effects of the IFAC Code of Ethics on the Education Sector**

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD	NO.	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Improved financial reporting	70	75	15	25	15	200	1.00	5.00	2.20	1.2521
Improved professional judgment	75	42	20	35	28	200	1.00	5.00	2.49	1.4384
Enhanced decision making by management due to accurate and timely reporting	85	40	35	25	15	200	1.00	5.00	2.23	1.2173
Increase in Accountants self-esteem and confidence levels	95	38	11	28	28	200	1.00	5.00	2.28	1.5109
Distinguish between personal and professional interest	75	50	9	32	34	200	1.00	5.00	2.50	1.5335
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1000</b>				

KEY: SA=Storngly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, and SD=Strongly Disagree

Source:primary data

### 4.3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF VARIABLES

The correlation analysis of the variables is to help the researcher achieve the third objective of the study. Thus to identify if the IFAC Code of Ethics can address all ethical issues of the accounting profession. The correlation analysis is to reveal the relationship among the variables under study, the direction and the strength of their relationship to enable the variables to be understood correctly. A linear regression analysis was used to ascertain the results of the study.



A variable is significant if the regression figure gives 0.5 or below which means the analysis is 95% reliable. The analysis below reveals EDEL has 0.42 and ECODE has 0.41 which indicates their significance on the constant variable KIFAC. The correlation analysis reveals the accountants' knowledge of the IFAC Code of Ethics has a significant correlation with the ethical dilemmas of accountants (EDEL) and the effects of applying the code (ECODE). The results of the analysis support Vitez (2019) argument on the need for accountants to know the IFAC Code and their safeguards to help in the performance of their duty to the satisfaction of the public. It proves the significance of the ethical code to help achieve public interest (Soltani and Mayupetit, 2020).

**Table 4.9: Regression Analysis**

**ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2.895	2	1.448	7.220	.001
Residual	39.500	197	.201		
Total	42.395	199			

a. Predictors: (Constant), ECODE, EDEL

b. Dependent Variable: KIFAC

**Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.064	.071		15.002	.000



### ANOVA

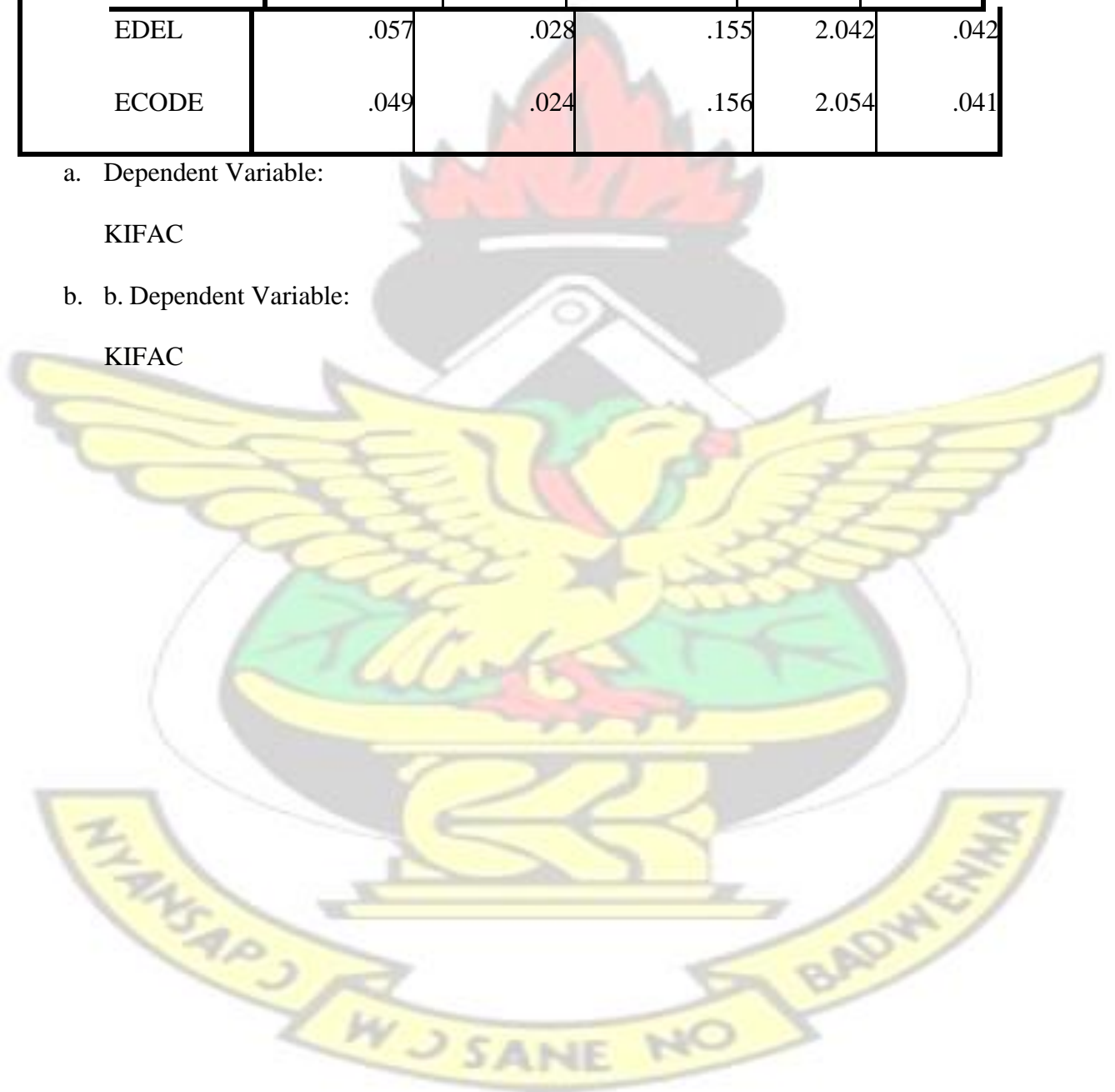
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.895	2	1.448	7.220	.001
	Residual	39.500	197	.201		
	Total	42.395	199			
	EDEL	.057	.028	.155	2.042	.042
	ECODE	.049	.024	.156	2.054	.041

a. Dependent Variable:

KIFAC

b. b. Dependent Variable:

KIFAC



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The study is to assess the ethical behavior of accountants in the Brong Ahafo Region's Ghana Education Service. This chapter looks at the summary of findings in connection to the objectives of the study and recommendations made to help improve the ethical conduct of the accountants in the service.

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

On assessing the knowledge of accountants on the IFAC Code of Ethics, the study revealed that most of the accountants have an idea about ethics but the issue is its application to help them address their ethical issues. The study revealed that the accountant can only act professionally if the elements of the Code of Ethics are understood and strictly adhered to.

Accountants in Ghana Education Service experience a lot of ethical issues in their professional practice which most have to do with the spending officers of their institution or units. These issues can be de solved when these institutions have an ethical code embedded in their organizational culture. Observing and exhibiting these by all staff including management of the institutions can help curb a lot of these ethical issues.

On the aspect of the ethical code addressing the ethical issues, the study revealed addressing the ethical issues and providing services that are expected of the accountants is depend on their knowledge of the IFAC Code of Ethics. Concentrating on ethics helps accountants to focus on the fact of a given situation instead of focusing on what others might perceive.

Accountants' role is dependent on applying the Code of Ethics. Strict adherence to professional ethics improves financial reporting therefore enhancing management economic decisions. The accountant can only satisfy his/ her master, thus the public by only exhibiting ethics in the accounting practice

## **CONCLUSION**

The recent demands relating to the accounting profession have been base on the need for accountants' ethics and morality. The study, therefore, seeks to assess the ethical behavior of accountants in Brong Ahafo Region's Ghana Education Service. The study embraced a quantitative research approach and adopts a survey method to collect primary data using a likert scale questionnaire structured to achieve the objectives of the study. A population of 330 accountants with a sample of 200 accountants in the educational sector of the region from the ranks of Accounts clerks to Deputy Chief Accountant I was for the study. The sample was drawn using random sampling method and data was collected through the AEA whatsapp platform with the help of google forms. A linear regression was run using SPSS version 16.0 to analyze the data which indicates that the behavior of the accountant and resolving their ethical dilemma is dependent on their knowledge of the IFAC Code of Ethics. The study revealed the accountants can only work to meet the satisfaction of the government and its citizenry only when they show professional skills and professional abilities in their work. This can happen when they know their professional ethic imposed by the IFAC Code of Ethics. The current government is investing a lot of its revenue in the education sector and there is a need for value for the monies spent. The accountant can only produce good reports to the government, stakeholders, and the citizenry at large by strictly complying with the ethics of the profession.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the results and discussions from the study, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should infuse the IFAC Code of Ethics in the service Code of Conduct. Adding the IFAC Code of Conduct to the Ethical Conduct of the service will help the accountant overcome their fears and boost their confidence level knowing their actions are back by the service's ethical conduct requirements.

Also, the knowledge of ethics should not only be taught to substantive accountants since most of the subordinates are not aware of IFAC ethics. Subordinates should also be taught these ethics to build them up for the profession. Ghana Education Service should therefore make it obligatory for all staff to receive training on the IFAC Code of Ethics.

Lastly, accountants in the Ghana Education Service much be cautioned on the need to apply accounting ethics to aid in their financial reporting since management depends on their reports to make economic decisions that influence the service.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The study is to assess the ethical behavior of accountants in the Ghana Education Service with evidence from the Brong Ahafo Region. The research was conducted when most of the accountants are writing their professional exams. Different research can be conducted in the next five years when most of the accountants are professionals and their conduct is monitored by both ICAG and the Ghana education Service code of conduct. Future studies may be conducted in other regions in the country to assess the ethical behaviors of the educational accountants. Future research can even look at other sectors such as the Ghana Health Service.



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**APPENDIX**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIELD SURVEY**

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

MSc. ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

*Confidential Questionnaire Survey*

**TOPIC: ASSESSING THE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR OF ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA**  
**EDUCATION SERVICE. EVIDENCE FROM BRONG AHAFO REGION (BONO,**  
**BONO EAST, AND AHAFO)**

This study is being undertaken by a post-graduate student of the Department of Accounting and Finance of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, studying for a Master of Science Degree in Accounting and Finance and under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Domeher, a lecturer of the department.

The research is purely for academic purposes and the questionnaire attached seeks to gather information on the Ethical behavior of Accountants in Ghana Education Service, Evidence from the Brong Ahafo Region. The researcher believes that your participation is very significant to the success of this research and the development of the service as a whole. The information provided will be considered highly confidential and will not be shown to any other individual except the researcher and the supervisor. As a participant of this survey, a summary of the findings may be delivered to you at your request.

THANK YOU IN ANTICIPATION OF YOUR COOPERATION



## SECTION ONE: PERSONAL DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

Please tick the most appropriate answer to each of the questions. Please state your answer in the blank spaces provided for the question without multiple choice.

1. Please indicate the Age grouping you belong to

- a. Below 30 years [ ]      b. 31 to 40 years [ ]  
c. 41 to 50 [ ]      d. Above 50 years [ ]

2. Gender

Male [ ]      Female [ ]

3. What is your Educational Qualification?

- a. MSc/MBA/Mphil [ ]      b. BSc [ ]      c. HND [ ]      d. ICAG/ACCA [ ]  
e. Any other.....

4. What type of Department are you working in or for?

- a. Educational Office [ ]      b. Secondary School [ ]

5. How long have you been working in the Educational Sector?

- a. Below 5 years [ ]      b. 6 to 10 years [ ]      c. 11 to 15 years [ ]  
d. Above 15 years [ ]

6. What is your Current Rank?

- a. Below Senior Accountant [ ]      b. Principal Accountant [ ]  
c. Deputy Chief Accountant [ ]      d. Deputy Chief Accountant and above [ ]

## SECTION TWO: KNOWLEDGE OF RESPONDENTS ON IFAC CODE OF ETHICS

7. Do you have any idea about the IFAC Code of Ethics for Professional Conduct?

- a. Yes [ ]                      b. No [ ]

**NOTE: Please indicate by ticking (√) how you assess the following about the IFAC Code of Ethics.**

**1. Strongly Agree    2. Agree    3. Neutral    4. Disagree    5. Strongly**

**Disagree**

8. The IFAC Code of Ethics includes Integrity, Objectivity, Professional Behavior, Confidentiality, Professional Competence, and Due Care.

1. Strongly Agree[ ]    2. Agree[ ]    3. Neutral[ ]    4. Disagree[ ]    5. Strongly Disagree[ ]

9.

S/N		1	2	3	4	5
1	Integrity requires accountants to be honest and straight forward in all professional and business relationships					
2	Objectivity requires accounting professionals not to compromise professional judgments because of bias, conflict of interest, or undue influence of others					
3	Professional behavior requires accountants to comply with all relevant laws and regulations and avoid conduct that might discredit the profession					
4	Confidentiality requires accountants to respect the confidentiality of information required as a result of professional and business relationships and never disclose to a third party unless it is required by law					

5	Professional competence and due care requires accountants to attain and maintain professional skill and knowledge at the level required to ensure that the client or employing institution receives competent services based on current technical and professional standards and relevant legislations					
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### SECTION THREE: ETHICAL DILEMMAS OF RESPONDENTS IN THEIR LINE OF DUTY

10. Please indicate by ticking ( √ ) to attest to some ethical issues you are confronted with within your line of duty.

1. Strongly Agree    2. Agree    3. Neutral    4. Disagree    5. Strongly Disagree

S/N		1	2	3	4	5
1	Pressure by management to manipulate figures					
2	The omission of figures form financial reports that might cast a shadow on the institution					
3	Conflict of interest between management and accounting staff					
4	Whistleblowing on spending officers who spend recklessly without thinking about the welfare of the institution					
5	Access to information and confidentiality issues on taking a principled stand on sensitive moments of the institution					



## SECTION FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF APPLYING THE IFAC CODE OF ETHICS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

11. Please indicate by ticking ( ✓ ) how the application of ethics has impacted your professional conduct. 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

S/N		1	2	3	4	5
1	Increase in self-esteem and confidence level					
2	Professional training and knowledge on ethics have improved your professional judgment					
3	Knowledge of IFAC ethics have helped you to identify threats and act upon it quickly by applying the necessary safeguards					
4	Ethics has helped you to distinguish between personal interest and professional interest.					

12. Please indicate by ticking ( ✓ ) how the application of ethics has impacted the Educational; sector. 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

S/N		1	2	3	4	5
1	Improve in financial reporting in the educational sector					
2	Accurate and timely reporting of figures needed by management for economic decisions					
3	The image of the educational accountant has been protected through strict adherence to accounting ethics					

13. Comment or make recommendations on ethical behavior as a practicing educational accountant.

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