Confidentiality of Accounting Academics: Consequences of Nonconformity

Emmanuel B. Amponsah[1*]   Peter Agyekum Boateng[1]   Luke N. Onuoha[2]
1. School of Business, Valley View University, PO Box AF595, Accra, Ghana
2. Postgraduate School, Babcock University, PMB 21244, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract
This paper examined ways by which nonconformity to confidentiality among accounting academics could lead to increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs to their employing universities in Ghana that offered accounting degree programmes. With a cross-sectional design, data collected from 1,225 accountants analysed via Cronbach's alpha, differences-between-proportions, and one-way ANOVA revealed that the impact of lack of confidentiality on increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs was not significant. The most outstanding ramification to the nonconformity problem among accounting academics was increase in expensive lawsuits against the universities. Universities must provide rules and regulations as well as incentives to ensure conformance to confidentiality by accounting academics.
Keywords: Accounting academic, accounting ethics, non-adherence, cost consequence, confidentiality

1. Introduction
The fundamental principles of the Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants are integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour (IFAC, 2010). This paper focuses on the fourth. Confidentiality is crucial in the life of every institution disregard for which could bring untold consequences to the individuals and their employers alike. Undeniably, the accounting profession, like any other, reasonably appreciates the need for its members to uphold this crucial ethical behavior and hence have listed it as one of its fundamental principles in its ethics code. The principles are not only listed by the profession, it requires every accountant, regardless of where they are engaged, and even accounting students, to live and do their work in consonance with the provisions in the code.

By virtue of their work of training future accountants, those who teach accounting should be the most conforming group of accountants with respect to upholding the provisions in the code of ethics. Regrettably, however, the literature has demonstrated that some of these academics fail to conform in myriad ways. Academics' unethical behaviours such as using student assistants for personal work, sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student, sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class, using colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest, etc. (Robie & Kidwell, 2003; Engel & Smith, 1990; Tabachnick et al., 1991) are some of the commonest examples which are deemed to increase recruitment and legal costs for the employing institutions. The universities also experience high labour turnover on account of academics disclosing confidential information or telling lies about colleagues or publicly criticising or censuring them (Richards-Gustafson, 2013), and coercing or retaliating against other academics (Wile, 2013).

It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted to examine some of the ways by which nonconformity to confidentiality among accounting academics could lead to increased recruitment and legal costs to their employing universities. The study concludes with computations of some of the probable financial costs that could be suffered by those universities whose accounting academics do not conform to the fundamental principle of confidentiality.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Issues
All professionals do have obligations, sense of responsibility and accountability towards their profession and its stakeholders. Nagy (2011) indicated that safeguarding information about an individual is a primary obligation of a psychologist. Similarly, belonging to a highly professional body, accountants have this sense of duty to the organisations in which they serve. Without a doubt, their duty extends further than themselves and their organisation to their profession and the public expects them to keep the highest ethical behaviour standards. They are responsible for their own competence and maintenance of confidentiality (Ogbonna & Ebinobowei, 2011) and other requirements of unquestionable ethical standards. From Canada to Egypt to Japan, accounting codes of ethics require accountants to conform to these principles.

The fourth fundamental ethical requirement for accountants is confidentiality. The principle requires a professional accountant to
> respect the confidentiality of information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships and should not disclose any such information to third parties without proper and specific authority unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to disclose. Confidential

information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships should not be used for the personal advantage of the professional accountant or third parties (IFAC, 2010, sec. 140.1).

That is, the principle of confidentiality is to ensure that information received by the accountant must be kept in secrecy and respected in the course of duty. Unless obligated by law, an accountant should not disclose or use such information unless specific authority has been given. Lack of confidentiality also refers to the failure to properly acquire and use or disclose any information.

Unlike the others, the principle of confidentiality is by far knotted with the law. The *AAT Code of Professional Ethics* (2014), for instance, noticeably states that there is a legal duty as professional accountants to maintain the confidentiality of information given or obtained in situations that give rise to a responsibility of confidentiality. Nonetheless, there undeniably are some situations where the law allows for violation of duty. When this legal duty is intractably flouted, there could be an onset of litigation or lawsuit. Besides the law, good professional behaviour of accountants requires the maintenance of confidentiality (Hammer, 2000).

Information is sensitive in the global world. The sensitivity calls for proper measures to be adopted to safeguard information. The concept of confidentiality governs the release of important details about individuals, workers, organizations, among others to the outside world or third parties. The principle of confidentiality emphasizes that information acquired as a result of professional duties must not be used to gain unfair advantage. Unless the law allows for the release of information for particular reasons, professionals are advised to uphold the principle of confidentiality.

Confidential information are in the form of personal details about individuals, clients and organizations. It could also be trade secrets and firm specific information on activities that should not be allowed to escape into the hands of competitors and other third parties. Accountants and teachers alike keep information about similar personalities and are under obligation not to disclose such information to any third party. Consequently, the fundamental obligation of accountants and teachers regarding confidentiality is to safeguard sensitive information of individuals and organizations they deal with.

Maintenance of confidentiality breeds trust among parties involved. Both parties acknowledge the sensitivity and importance of either's personal details. The tendency for either party to worry is reduced. Moreover, respect is accorded to professionals who exercise confidentiality. Confidentiality promotes control and autonomy. Consequently, the dignity of professionals is enhanced (Hammer, 2000). Compliance by the accountant on professional ethics of confidentiality, whilst not overlooking integrity, objectivity, honesty, compliance and accountability, will improve the quality of financial reports and the performance of the organization (Ogbonna & Ebinobowei, 2011).

However, there are threats to confidentiality as a result of lack of privacy. Although accountants are under obligation not to disclose confidential information, Flood (2013) indicated that the structure of information in certain contexts creates benefits with a permeating effect on some institutions and their relationships. In effect, the process of enhancing transparency through careful supervision can expose confidential information to examiners who are obliged to protect them. Behaving unprofessionally to expose sensitive information to the public for material benefits is another threat to confidentiality. One example is whistle-blowing. The rule of thumb is that, where confidentiality may be an important value that may conflict with the right to know, the accountant must identify the values related to the situation.

Furthermore, lack of security threatens confidentiality. Properly securing sensitive information and providing effective controls help to reduce security threats to information about third parties. Increasing demand for globalisation of information is another area of threat to confidentiality (Arroyo, 2009). Professionals have difficulty of controlling changes and movement of information as the world is gradually becoming a global village. In this respect, it has been observed that some accounting academics divulge confidential information about students, colleagues, and the university (to students and outsiders) for some reasons, a kind of behaviour that likely has cost consequences for the employing university.

Undeniably, certain attempts have been made to help forestall the conflicts detailed above. For example, a quantitative analysis of academics' responses by Kleiner and Maury (1997) looked at a long list of ideals and principles that they hoped business school staff could agree upon in this respect. Through to these, the list was narrowed down to ten key relevant ideals: respect for the human person, integrity, fairness, concern, total quality, professionalism, allegiance, confidentiality, service to the institution, and responsible citizenship (Brinkmann & Peattie, 2005). Interestingly, these ideals and principles are in one way or the other captured in the fundamental principles of the Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants. The Global Code of Ethics for Accounting Educators issued by The International Association for Accounting Education and Research (IAAER) is another commendable attempt to avert these conflicts.

Confidentiality problems are difficult to nib in the bud. However, effective controls over all sensitive information by authorities responsible must be ensured and enforced. Proper procedures and processes must be used to handle sensitive information. Such procedures help to secure and safeguard information and prevent breach of confidentiality. They also give respect to privacy and ensure confidentiality (Zayatz, 2009).

Accounting academics must ensure they religiously uphold the principle of confidentiality in their work and teach their students to emulate their example. This would in no mean way protect them and their institutions or organisations from frequent, expensive recruitment and lawsuits among other undesirable consequences.

3. Methodology

The study combined cross-sectional, qualitative and quantitative research study designs. It surveyed accounting faculty, students and practitioners in university and university colleges in Ghana which had been given accreditation by the National Accreditation Board by December 2012 to run bachelor degrees in accounting. A sample of 1,225 was used which consisted of 140 academics, 1,050 (Level 400) students, and 35 finance officers with response rates of 57 percent, 74 percent and 72 percent respectively.

The 3-set questionnaires were constructed based on the works of Engle and Smith (1990), Robie and Kidwell, Jnr. (2003), and Saat, Jamal and Othman (2004) on the unethical behaviours of academics. Some of the behaviours were fully retained and others were changed slightly to suit the study and to enhance respondents' comprehension of the issues under study. The cost consequence variables that were used in the questionnaires were derived from the literature (Smith, 2013; Addai, 2013; Dalhat & Barnabas, 2015; Jennings, 1995; Li, 2008).

Using a sample of 270 selected accounting academics and Level 400 students in a pilot test, a test-retest was used to validate the questionnaires and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient gave a 0.8447 result. Test of differences-between-proportions was used to analyze the data collected and to test the hypothesis. One-way ANOVA was used as a confirmatory tool.

In the final phase of the analysis, the results were related to the percentage of respondents who responded in particular manner to the total respondents and total enrolment figures gathered to come out with the proportion of cost consequences that could be suffered by the employing institutions of the accounting academics studied.

The hypothesis for this study was stated as follows:

H_0: Increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs is not significantly impacted by lack of integrity of accounting academics.

The variables were operationalised as below:

$$Y = f(X) \tag{1}$$
$$Y = CC = y_1 \tag{2}$$
$$X = x_1 \tag{3}$$

where

CC = Cost consequences

x_1 = LOC = Lack of confidentiality, and

y_1 = REN, HLT, and ELS

where

REN = Reduced enrolment

HLT = High labour turnover

ELS = Expensive lawsuits

$$CC = f(LOC) \tag{4}$$
$$LCC = f(REN, HLT, and ELS) \tag{5}$$

This last equation is the principal function that characterizes the modeled effects of accounting academics' lack of confidentiality on the cost consequence variables.

4. Results and Discussion

The specific objective of the present study was to establish how lack of confidentiality by accounting academics impacts on increased recruitment and legal costs of their employers. In other words, the goal was to find which of the elements of "increased recruitment and legal costs" can be caused most by the lack of confidentiality variables. The components of increased recruitment and legal costs—the dependent variable on the conceptual framework—were reduced enrolment (REN), high labour turnover (HLT), and expensive lawsuits (ELS). In all, eight unethical behaviours were examined; namely, using student assistants for personal work, sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student, sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class, and sharing with students confidential information of the university. The rest were use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest, exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university, disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage, and giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her. Tables 1A (faculty) and 1B (students) in Appendix I summarize the results (Table 1C presents cross-tabulation results).

The first lack of confidentiality factor examined was using student assistants for personal work. In Table 1C, 36.2 percent of faculty respondents indicated that the behaviour can result in reduced enrolment (REN)

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while 26.2 percent had the view that it could lead to high labour turnover (HLT). The difference (0.10) in views for these two cost consequences was not significant at the 5 percent alpha level as shown by the p-value of .172 in Table 1A. Similarly, the differences in views regarding REN and ELS, and between HLT and ELS were not significant (difference = -0.01, p-value = .864; difference = -0.11, p-value = .125 respectively). Generally, the faculty responses were tilted towards ELS (37.5%) and then REN (36.2%). By way of contrast, in Table 1C, 45.4 percent of student respondents said that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers use student assistants for their personal work but only 8.6 percent said they will rather shift school (SS) for the same reason. The difference (0.36) between these two consequences was significant (p-value = .001). Likewise, all the other differences were significant. By and large, the students' responses were tilted towards MS (45.4%) and then I will not recommend school (NR) (25.9%). Eventually, the significance levels of the p-value did not warrant further discussion on this variable.

The second factor examined was sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student. In Table 1C, 28.8 percent of faculty respondents designated that this behaviour can result in REN while another 28.8 percent indicated that it could lead to HLT. As shown in Table 1A, the difference (0.00) in views for these two cost consequences was not significant (p-value = 1.000). The other two pairs each had a difference of -0.13 and with statistically insignificant p-values of .070. Generally, the faculty responses were more of ELS (42.5%) and a perfect split between REN and HLT. On the other hand, as in Table 1C, 38.7 percent of students stated that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers share with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academics by a student but 15.1 percent said they will rather shift school (SS) for the same reason. The difference between these two consequences was significant (difference = 0.23, p-value = .001). All the other differences were also significant except for SS-RS (difference = -0.04, p-value = .387). On the whole, the students' responses were basically MS (38.7%) and then I will not recommend school (NR) (27.1%). Like the first variable in this section, the significance levels of the p-value did not warrant further discussion on this variable.

Sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class was the third factor we examined. With respect to Table 1C, 26.2 percent of faculty subscribed that this unethical behaviour can result in REN while only 31.2 percent indicated that it could lead to HLT. The difference (-0.05) in views for these two cost consequences was not significant (p-value = .484) as depicted in Table 1A. Similarly, the difference in views regarding HLT and ELS was not significant (difference = -0.11, p-value = .138) but REN-ELS was statistically significant (difference = -0.16, p-value = .029). Generally, the faculty responses were more of ELS (42.5%) and HLT (31.2%). Conversely, in Table 1C, 41.5 percent of students said that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers share with students confidential information about colleagues in class but 10.4 percent said they will shift school (SS) for this. The difference between these two consequences was significant (d = 0.34, p-value = .001). All the other differences were significant with p-values of 0.000 except RS-NR which had difference -0.02 and p-value .242. In general, the students' responses were mostly MS (41.5%) and then I will not recommend school (NR) (23.5%).

The fourth factor examined was sharing with students confidential information of the university. In Table 1C, 31.2 percent of faculty respondents indicated that this unethical behaviour can result in REN while 22.5 percent had the view that it could lead to HLT. As can be seen from Table 1A, the difference (0.08) in views for these two cost consequences was not significant at the 5 percent alpha level as shown by the p-value of .214. Similarly, the difference in views regarding REN-ELS was not significant (difference = -0.15, p-value = .051) but HLT-ELS was significant (difference = -0.23, p-value = .001). Generally, the faculty responses were mostly ELS (46.2%) and REN (31.2%). On the other hand, in the same Table 1C, 46.5 percent of student respondents said that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers share with students confidential information of the university but 11.4 percent said they will rather shift school (SS) for the same reason. The difference (0.37) between these two consequences was significant (p-value = .001). Likewise, all the other differences were significant except that of RS-NR (difference = -0.02, p-value = .242). By and large, the students' responses leaned towards MS (46.5%) and RS (22.2%).

Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interests was the fifth behaviour examined. The results reveal, in Table 1C, that 15 percent of faculty responded that this unethical behaviour can result in REN while 38.8 percent had the view that it could lead to HLT. The difference in views for these two cost consequences was significant at the 5 percent alpha level as shown in Table 1A (d = -0.23, p-value = .001). Similarly, the difference in views regarding REN-ELS was significant but that of HLT-ELS was not (difference = -0.07, p-value = .343). By and large, the faculty responses were ELS (46.2%) and HLT (38.8%). On the other hand, 43.9 percent of students said they will maintain school (MS) but 11.6 percent stated that they will not recommend school (NR) if their teachers use colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interests. The difference between these two consequences was statistically significant (difference = 0.32, p-value = .001). In the same way, all the other pairings were significant but RS-NR was not (difference = -0.02, p-value = .326). On the whole, the students' responses were mostly MS (43.9%) and NR (23.3%).

The sixth factor examined was exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university. Here, 33.8 percent of faculty indicated that this behaviour can result in REN while 21.2 percent were of the view that it can result in HLT, as indicated in Appendix I. The difference of 0.12 in views for these two cost consequences was not significant with p-value of .074 as presented in Table 1A. Also, the difference in views between REN and ELS was not significant (difference = -0.11, p-value = .147). HLT-ELS was, however, statistically significant (difference = -0.23, p-value = .001). In the main, the faculty responses were ELS (45%) and REN (33.8%). Alternatively, 43.8 percent of student respondents stated that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers expose university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university while 10.4 percent said they will instead shift school (SS). The difference between these two consequences was significant (difference = 0.33, p-value = .001). Excepting RS-NR with difference of -0.02 and p-value .326, all the other differences were also significant. On the whole, the students' responses were basically MS (43.8%) and NR (23.6%).

Disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage was the seventh factor that was considered. The results showed, as in Table 1C, that 25 percent of faculty subscribed that this unethical behaviour can result in REN while 26.2 percent indicated that it could lead to HLT. The difference (-0.01) in views for these two cost consequences was not significant (p-value = .861) with respect to Table 1A. The other two pairings were, however, statistically significant. Generally, the faculty responses were more of ELS (48.8%) and HLT (26.2%). Students (43.9%) said, on the other hand, that they will maintain school (MS) if their teachers disclose confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage but 10.9 percent said they will shift school (SS). The difference between these two consequences was significant (d = 0.33, p-value = .001). All the other differences were also significant excepting of RS-NR (difference = -0.01, p-value = .709). In general, the students' responses were mostly MS (43.9%) and then NR (23%).

The last lack of confidentiality factor examined was giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her. The results revealed that 13.8 percent of faculty (see Table 1C) responded that this unethical behaviour can result in REN while 28.8 percent were of the view that it could lead to HLT. The difference in views for these two cost consequences was significant at the 5 percent alpha level as publicized in Table 1A (difference = -0.15, p-value = .020). Similarly, the two other differences in views were significant. By and large, the faculty responses were ELS (57.5%) and HLT (28.8%). On the other hand, 41.6 percent of students held that they will maintain school (MS) but 11.2 percent assured that they will shift school (SS) if their teachers give a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her. The difference between these two consequences was statistically significant (difference = 0.30, p-value = .001). All the others were significant too except RS-NR (difference = -0.02, p-value = .251).

It is a general practice that confidential information should not be disclosed without following certain rules. As such, in order to avoid expensive lawsuits, universities have enacted policies to safeguard access to such information. For example, one university had this to say: Universities keep personal and 'non-personal' confidential information about their employees and students, business finances, strategy and planning. All employees who are permitted to access such records have the responsibility not to divulge inappropriately the confidential information. Students must not usually have access to such records (CU, 2012). Although "the Freedom of Information Act gives individuals a general right of access to information held by any public authority" (p.7), which includes universities, the Data Protection Act exempts from disclosure certain types of information and spells out conditions and procedures under which some confidential information may be released to third parties (CU, 2012).

Besides university policies, the accounting profession has made provision for its members in this respect. In fact, the IFAC Code of Ethics 2006, section 140.8 (c) stipulates that "professional accountants should be satisfied that the parties to whom the communication is addressed are appropriate recipients." Therefore it was expected that accounting faculty would reckon their sharing of university confidential information with students as a recipe for expensive lawsuits, from the university and/or affected third parties. Students, however, expectedly would maintain and recommend school probably because they want to be privy to every information in their universities. But since it is the universities that shall bear the cost consequences of misuse of the shared confidential information, they should make it more difficult for faculty to access such information.

Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest (Engel & Smith, 1990; Robie & Kidwell, 2003; Tabachnick et al., 1991) attracted high responses for expensive lawsuits and an appreciable percentage for high labour turnover. It was reasonable to have such a tendency because many a faculty would usually leave a university where there has been a lawsuit between them and other colleagues who have used their confidential information to pursue personal interests. Indeed, Section 140.1 (b) of the IFAC Code forbids "using confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships to their (accountant's) personal advantage or the advantage of third parties." It appears this behaviour does not immediately affect students, hence their want to maintain school yet would not recommend it.

The fact that as much as 45 percent of faculty were of the view that exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university could lead to expensive lawsuits (one of three options) and more than a third (33.8%) said it could lead to reduced enrolment indicates that the behaviour could have telling cost consequences on the universities whose faculty luxuriate in it. To break the camel's back, though a reasonable number of students would remain in their schools, close to a quarter would not recommend them. The accounting profession, doubtless foreknowing the ramifications of such behaviour on the employing organisations, have made appropriate provision to at least minimise the problem thus:

> The principle of confidentiality imposes an obligation on professional accountants to refrain from disclosing outside the firm or employing organization confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships without proper and specific authority or unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to disclose (IFAC Code of Ethics 2006, Section 140.1 (a)).

It is most likely that the awareness of this provision influenced the responses of both faculty and their students.

Accountants, regardless of their place of employ, should not be disclosing confidential information about their colleagues to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage (Richards-Gustafson, 2013). This includes the use or disclosure of "any confidential information either acquired or received as a result of a professional or business relationship" (IFAC, 2006, sec. 140.6). It continues that "in deciding whether to disclose confidential information, professional accountants should consider . . . whether the interests of all parties, including third parties whose interests may be affected, could be harmed" (Sec. 140.8 (a)). Probably, being conscious of this ethical responsibility, close to one-half of faculty admitted possible expensive lawsuits against the employing university to be the consequence. Before this can happen, it might have to be the fault of the university in some respect. Another cost consequence could be the cost of resignation and subsequent replacement of one or both faculty members who may be involved in such a mêlée. Universities could help themselves to formulate policies on faculty-faculty relations to forestall such ill-fated incidents.

Giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her is not too different from divulging it to a colleague for the colleague's personal advantage. In fact, a whopping 57.5 percent of faculty indicated that it can lead to expensive lawsuits. That is, they perceived giving the information to a student more offensive than to a colleague. This seems to allude to IFAC's provision that "professional accountants should be satisfied that the parties to whom the communication is addressed are appropriate recipients" (Sec. 140.8 (c)). It is like faculty respondents would rather prefer their confidential information getting to their colleagues rather than their students if it is going to be used against them. Again, the university could suffer cost consequences for time lost for suit proceedings on the part of the injured faculty, fines for causative participation, possible labour turnover, etc. University policies tend to address faculty-student relations as opposed to confidentiality in matters like this; policy provisions in this direction would be in order.

On balance, the results show that two of the eight lack of confidentiality variables have been eliminated because of their insignificant impact on the elements of the dependent variable. They were: using student assistants for personal work, and sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student. Figure 1 is a snapshot of the results.
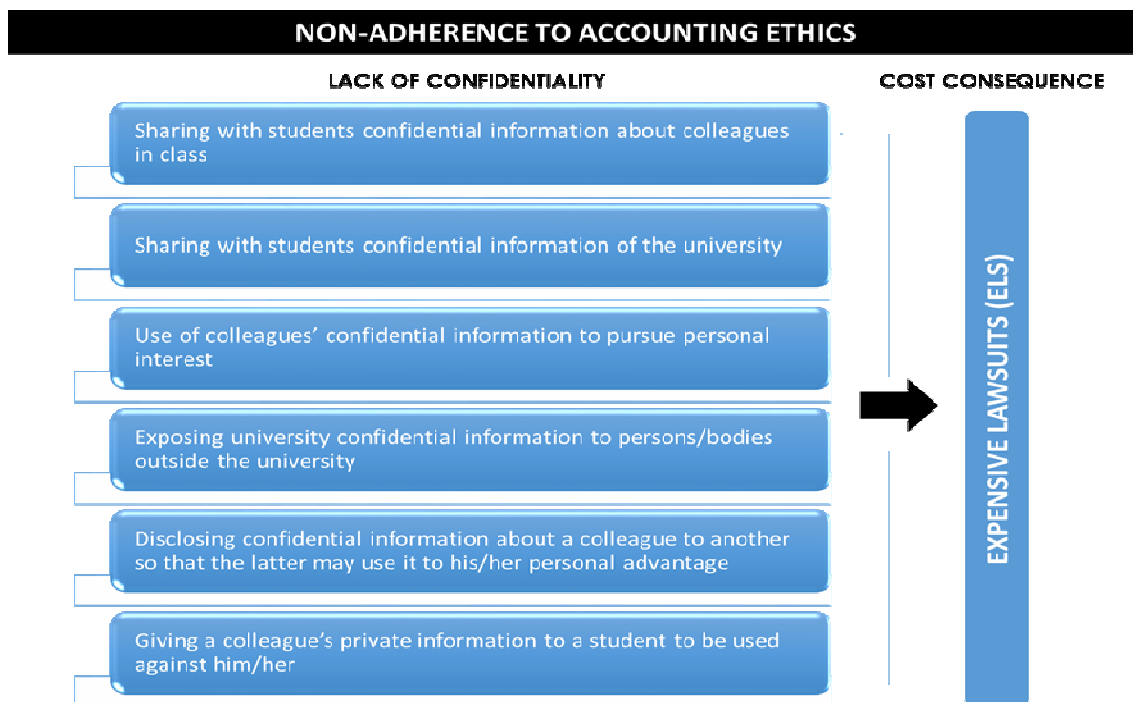
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Figure 1. Cost consequence of lack of confidentiality
Source: Researchers' model.

In Figure 1, all the six lack of confidentiality factors that were retained were reckoned as having significant impact of expensive lawsuits which can increase recruitment and legal costs of the universities because their accounting faculty prove themselves to be unfaithful trustees of confidential information. IFAC (2006) cautions against such questioned trustworthiness among accountants, and this could possibly be the reason why both accounting faculty and students responded in such significant ways.

4.1 Testing of significance impact of lack of confidentiality on increased recruitment and legal costs
H_0: Increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs is not significantly impacted by lack of confidentiality of accounting academics.

Table 2. Hypothesis testing on lack of confidentiality with ANOVA

Increased recruitment and legal costs	F	Probability	Significance level: > or .05	Decision
REN	.673	.688	>	Do not reject
ELS	.139	.966	>	Do not reject

Source. Extraction from Appendix II

With respect to Appendix III, the critical value of F (df1 = 1; df2 = 6;   = .05) = 5.9874. While the computed F values in Table 2 are lesser than the critical value, then the impact of lack of confidentiality on increased recruitment and legal costs is not significantly different among the latter's elements. As could be seen from the same table, the corresponding probabilities p(.688; .966) furthermore confirm that the impact among the elements of increased recruitment and legal costs is not significant. As a result, the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

The hypothesis states that increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs is not significantly impacted by lack of confidentiality of Accounting Academics. In Table 2, the results showed that the hypothesis was accepted. The result defies the literature because the latter reveals very significant ramifications for lack of confidentiality in the life of an institution. Per the literature, this kind of non-adherence can even land some senior management in prison, attract huge fines, and cost organisations or institutions billions of dollars or cedis in litigation (Chandler, 2005). It sometimes may lead to legal consequences such as fines, prosecutions, and other legal penalties as well as blacklisting (International Finance Corporation, 2014).

In sum, although lack of confidentiality has significant cost consequences on affected entities, according to this study's results, these have not been the experience of the universities that participated.

4.2 Potential costs of reduced enrolment for lack of confidentiality
In this section, we attempted to determine the potential costs of REN as a consequence of lack of confidentiality

with the help of the cross-tabulation percentages and our assumptions. The data are presented in Table 3. Columns a, b and c form a unit and should be interpreted as such. Columns a, d and e is another unit. Column a lists the unethical behaviours that were examined. In column b is shown the percentages of students who indicated that they will leave their universities if they found their accounting teachers indulging in the unethical behaviours in column a. The revenues that could be lost on a present enrolment of 757 students (total student respondents) are computed in column c. Column d displays the percentages of students who will not recommend their school should their teachers be found indulging in the unethical behaviours in column a. A future potential revenue loss on assumed 200 students who would not be introduced by the present 757 students for enrolment is also computed in column e.

The computations were done as follows: Column c: It was assumed that each of the 757 student respondents pays average total fees of $2,000 per semester. That is, 757 x 2000 = $1,514,000. The result was multiplied by the percentages in column b. Column e: It has been observed that a certain proportion of new students into a university is recommended by continuing students. Based on the 4.51 percent growth rate of Accounting students into the universities, it was further assumed that a quarter of new enrolments—200 of the new students who would be enrolled in a session—would come from the recommendations of the 757 continuing students. (One university's admission records indicate that about a fourth of all new enrolments come from continuing students' recommendations of their university to others). So the percentages in column d (those who will not recommend their school because of their teachers' unethical behaviours) were multiplied by 200 x $2,000; that is, if the fees ($2,000) remained unchanged.

It is worthy to note that, the deciphering of the data in Table 3 below must be done in light of the above assumptions. (All percentage figures, from cross tabulations, are found in Table 1C) The computed costs, their interpretations, as well as their implications are presented below:

Table 3: Potential costs of reduced enrolment as a consequence of lack of confidentiality

a	b	c	d	e
Lack of confidentiality factors	**Percentage of Students Who Will Shift School**	**Revenue Loss on Present Enrolment of 757 Students $**	**Percentage of Students Who Will Not Re-commend School**	**Future Revenue Loss on 200 Students to be enrolled $**
Using student assistants for personal work	8.6	130,204	25.9	103,600
Sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student	15.1	228,614	27.1	108,400
Sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class	10.4	157,456	23.5	94,000
Sharing with students confidential information of the university	9.3	140,802	21.1	84,400
Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest	11.6	175,624	23.3	93,200
Exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university	10.4	157,456	23.6	94,400
Disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage	10.9	165,026	23	92,000
Giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her	11.2	169,568	24.8	99,200
TOTALS		**1,324,750**		**769,200**

Source: Researchers' computations.

From Table 3, using student assistants for personal work could cost the university $130,204 on continuing students, and $103,600 on new students. It would be $228,614 and $108,400 respectively for sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to the academic by a student. The total respective costs that could be suffered by the University for the Eight Factors examined under lack of confidentiality are $1,324,750 and $769,200.

A lot of unethical behaviours can attract sanctions by the laws of the nations or bring about expensive lawsuits (ELS) by aggrieved individuals, groups or organizations. Some examples of such behaviours are plagiarism, sexual harassment of students, sharing confidential information, etc. It has been reported that certain unethical behaviours of faculty members have brought untold cost consequences to the individuals themselves,

their families and their employing institutions (Solberg, 2012; WSU, n. d.). These sources list some of the costs suffered by certain respectable universities in the form of fines and penalties such as the costs of reduction in government funding, lost grants, additional cost of special monitoring of culprits' future works, repayment of used and unused grant funds, etc.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

Despite the fact that increased-recruitment-and-legal-costs is not significantly impacted by accounting academics' lack of confidentiality, expensive lawsuits against the employing universities could result in appreciable proportions. Furthermore, in a country where almost all universities are more or less completely financed through the fees students pay and government subvention (if any) is inadequate, no university in the study area can afford to lose the whopping amount of fees that could be lost through reduced enrolment alone as a result of their accounting academics' nonconformity to the fundamental principle of confidentiality. Apparently, universities and their business schools and the profession should act in concert to provide very potent incentives and deterrents to ensure just right conformance with this crucial principle. Regulatory bodies of the institutions must join in this venerable enterprise.

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Appendix I

Table 1A. Differences between proportions among cost consequences for lack of confidentiality—faculty

	REN-HLT		REN-ELS		HLT-ELS	
Using student assistants for personal work	*d*	*p-v*	*d*	*p-v*	*d*	*p-v*
Sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student	.10	.172	-.01	.864	-.11	.125
Sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class	.00	1.00	-.13	.070	-.13	.070
Sharing with students confidential information of the university	-.05	.484	-.16	.029	-.11	.138
Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest	.08	.214	-.15	.051	-.23	.001
Exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university	-.23	.000	-.31	.000	-.07	.343
Disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage	.12	.074	-.11	.147	-.23	.001
Giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him	-.01	.861	-.23	.001	-.22	.003
Using student assistants for personal work	-.15	.020	-.43	.000	-.28	.000

d = Difference in percentage   *p-v* = *p*-value
REN = Reduced enrolment   HLT = High labour turnover   ELS = Expensive lawsuits
Source: Computed from field data

Table 1B. Differences between proportions among cost consequences for lack of confidentiality--students

	MS-SS		MS-RS		MS-NR		SS-RS		SS-NR		RS-NR	
	d	p-v	d	p-v	d	p-v	d	p-v	d	p-v	d	p-v
Using student assistants for personal work	.36	.000	.25	.000	.19	.000	-.11	.000	-.17	.000	-.05	.007
Sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student	.23	.000	.19	.000	.11	.000	-.04	.387	-.12	.000	-.08	.000
Sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class	.34	.000	.24	.000	.26	.000	-.10	.000	-.13	.000	-.02	.242
Sharing with students confidential information of the university	.37	.000	.24	.000	.25	.000	-.12	.000	-.11	.000	-.02	.242
Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest	.32	.000	.22	.000	.20	.000	-.09	.000	-.11	.000	-.02	.326
Exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university	.33	.000	.21	.000	.20	.000	-.11	.000	-.13	.000	-.02	.326
Disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage	.33	.000	.21	.000	.20	.000	-.11	.000	-.12	.000	-.01	.709
Giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her	.30	.000	.19	.000	.16	.000	-.11	.000	-.13	.000	-.02	.251

MS = I will maintain school;   SS = I will shift school;   RS = I will recommend school;   NR = I will not recommend school
Source: Computed from field data

Table 1C: Accompanying percentages for Tables 1A & 1B from cross-tabulations—Faculty and students

	REN	HLT	ELS	MS	SS	RS	NR
Using student assistants for personal work	36.2	26.2	37.5	45.4	8.6	20.1	25.9
Sharing with colleagues confidential disclosures told to academic by a student	28.8	28.8	42.5	38.7	15.1	19.1	27.1
Sharing with students confidential information about colleagues in class	26.2	31.2	42.5	45.1	10.4	21.0	23.5
Sharing with students confidential information of the university	31.2	22.5	46.2	46.5	9.3	22.2	21.1
Use of colleagues' confidential information to pursue personal interest	15.0	38.8	46.2	43.9	11.6	21.2	23.3
Exposing university confidential information to persons/bodies outside the university	33.8	21.2	45.0	43.8	10.4	22.2	23.6
Disclosing confidential information about a colleague to another so that the latter may use it to his/her personal advantage	25.0	26.2	48.8	43.9	10.9	22.2	23.0
Giving a colleague's private information to a student to be used against him/her	13.8	28.8	57.5	41.6	11.2	22.3	24.8

REN to ELS are for faculty; MS to NR for students

Appendix II

ANOVA Results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
REN	Between Groups	294.920	5	58.984	.673	.688
	Within Groups	175.220	2	87.610		
	Total	470.140	7			
ELS	Between Groups	61.170	5	12.234	.139	.966
	Within Groups	176.345	2	88.172		
	Total	237.515	7			

Appendix III

ANOVA F-Distribution table and hypothesis results

F - Distribution ($\alpha = 0.05$ in the Right Tail)

df_2 \ df_1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	161.45	199.50	215.71	224.58	230.16	233.99	236.77	238.88	240.54
2	18.513	19.000	19.164	19.247	19.296	19.330	19.353	19.371	19.385
3	10.128	9.5521	9.2766	9.1172	9.0135	8.9406	8.8867	8.8452	8.8123
4	7.7086	9.9443	6.5914	6.3882	6.2561	6.1631	6.0942	6.0410	6.9988
5	6.6079	5.7861	5.4095	5.1922	5.0503	4.9503	4.8759	4.8183	4.7725
6	5.9874	5.1433	4.7571	4.5337	4.3874	4.2839	4.2067	4.1468	4.0990
7	5.5914	4.7374	4.3468	4.1203	3.9715	3.8660	3.7870	3.7257	3.6767
8	5.3177	4.4590	4.0662	3.8379	3.6875	3.5806	3.5005	3.4381	3.3881
9	5.1174	4.2565	3.8625	3.6331	3.4817	3.3738	3.2927	3.2296	3.1789
10	4.9646	4.1028	3.7083	3.4780	3.3258	3.2172	3.1355	3.0717	3.0204
11	4.8443	3.9823	3.5874	3.3567	3.2039	3.0946	3.0123	2.9480	2.8962
12	4.7472	3.8853	3.4903	3.2592	3.1059	2.9961	2.9134	2.8486	2.7964
13	4.6672	3.8056	3.4105	3.1791	3.0254	2.9153	2.8321	2.7669	2.7144
14	4.6001	3.7389	3.3439	3.1122	2.9582	2.8477	2.7642	2.6987	2.6458
15	4.5431	3.6823	3.2874	3.0556	2.9013	2.7905	2.7066	2.6408	2.5876
16	4.4940	3.6337	3.2389	3.0069	2.8524	2.7413	2.6572	2.5911	2.5377
17	4.4513	3.5915	3.1968	2.9647	2.8100	2.6987	2.6143	2.5480	2.4943
18	4.4139	3.5546	3.1599	2.9277	2.7729	2.6613	2.5767	2.5102	2.4563
19	4.3807	3.5219	3.1274	2.8951	2.7401	2.6283	2.5435	2.4768	2.4227
20	4.3512	3.4928	3.0984	2.8661	2.7109	2.5990	2.5140	2.4471	2.3928
21	4.3248	3.4668	3.0725	2.8401	2.6848	2.5727	2.4876	2.4205	2.3660
22	4.3009	3.4434	3.0491	2.8167	2.6613	2.5491	2.4638	2.3965	2.3419
23	4.2793	3.4221	3.0280	2.7955	2.6400	2.5277	2.4422	2.3748	2.3201
24	4.2597	3.4028	3.0088	2.7763	2.6207	2.5082	2.4226	2.3551	2.3002
25	4.2417	3.3852	2.9912	2.7587	2.6030	2.4904	2.4047	2.3371	2.2821
26	4.2252	3.3690	2.9752	2.7426	2.5868	2.4741	2.3883	2.3205	2.2655
27	4.2100	3.3541	2.9604	2.7278	2.5719	2.4591	2.3732	2.3053	2.2501
28	4.1960	3.3404	2.9467	2.7141	2.5581	2.4453	2.3593	2.2913	2.2360
29	4.1830	3.3277	2.9340	2.7014	2.5454	2.4324	2.3463	2.2783	2.2229
30	4.1709	3.3158	2.9223	2.6896	2.5336	2.4205	2.3343	2.2662	2.2107
40	4.0847	3.2317	2.8387	2.6060	2.4495	2.3359	2.2490	2.1802	2.1240
60	4.0012	3.1504	2.7581	2.5252	2.3683	2.2541	2.1665	2.0970	2.0401
120	3.9201	3.0718	2.6802	2.4472	2.2899	2.1750	2.0868	2.0164	1.9588
∞	3.8415	2.9957	2.6049	2.3719	2.2141	2.0986	2.0096	1.9384	1.8799

Numerator Degrees of Freedom (column header)

Denominator Degrees of Freedom (row header, vertical)