

Influence of Principals' Administrative Behaviour on Students' Academic Performance in Senior Secondary Schools in North-Central, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated principals' administrative behaviour on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The research design was descriptive. Five hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Structured questionnaire used for the study was titled "Principals' Administrative Behaviour Questionnaire" (PLBQ) while the qualitative data on student academic performance was collected using students' proforma titled "Students' Academic Performance Profoma" used to harness students' scores in WASSCE from 2015 to 2024. This was pilot tested. The target population of this study is made up of 12,364 teachers and 510 principals in the public senior secondary schools in the Education Zones of Niger, Nasarawa and Kogi, North-Central, Nigeria. The sample size for this study were 370 teachers and 51 principals drawn from the 51 sampled senior secondary schools in Niger State, Nasarawa State and Kogi State. Additionally, the sample size of principals was derived based on the number of schools and principals taken. The SAPP was designed to collect students' academic scores in WASSCE from 2015 to 2024 from the 51 sampled public senior secondary schools covering Niger, Nasarawa, and Kogi States. The hypotheses tests revealed that principals' administrative behavior such as: leadership, communication, decision-making, conflict management and supervision have a great influence on students' academic performance. It was therefore recommended that senior secondary school principals in North-central, Nigeria should continually use the administrative behavior that will enhance and improve students' academic performance in their schools.*

Keywords: *Principals administrative behaviour, students' academic performance, senior secondary schools, North-Central, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Education is recognized as a great investment that requires effective management for its success. Actualization of the educational goals irrespective of the nation concerned does not merely occur. It results from a combination of factors which include the behavior of administrators as well as influence of self-determination in giving right to the subordinates. This is very essential, because organizational effectiveness hinges largely on leadership efficacy. Administrative competence in terms of availability of skills and knowledge are necessary in realizing organizational goals. Apart from that, those are the rights to exercise leadership powers and authority on school governance. The school administrative behavior therefore, is often charged with the responsibility of being able to harness the available manpower and other resources in the organization in a way that desired school organizational goals can be achieved (Gunawan, Bafada, Nurabadi and Prayoga, 2020). Specifically, the basic requirement for effective school administrative behavior is in-built in the capability of secondary school administrators towards teachers' improvement, students' development and relevant educational stakeholders for the realization of educational goals (Sharma and Parham, 2020).

The role of the administrator (who is often referred to as the principal in Nigeria secondary school system) equally includes being able to translate educational policies into programs and actions in the school. The success or failure of the school largely relies on administrators' ability to touch desired educational goals. Therefore, principals' duties as administrative heads of the school are numerous, which subsequently bring variety of challenges in effective management of personnel and instructional activities towards enhancing quality and service delivery (Eneje, 2024). Suleiman, Ishola and Lukman (2021) opined that the principal administrative behavior acts as an energizer that arouses the interest of staff towards effective service delivery in school setting. Actualization of secondary education goals demands adequate guidance of staff and students', which on certain occasions poses severe challenges to the school heads (Sibaweh, 2024).

It also includes creating and maintaining environment, ensuring accountability and transparency as well as influencing decision making that guarantees success in the educational system. Moreover, administrative behavior is also an ability to translate educational policies into action in which (Sibaweh, 2024) emphasized as a product of competent leadership of the principal administrative behavior. According to Galapon (2024), knowing a good school depends on leadership and its quality in educational result. Therefore, education even though it is a business requires principal administrative behavior which can only be obtainable through quality headship and leadership. The vitality of the school can be measured by the administrative power and exercise of power that the school's head controls. It is through this that his or her ability to stimulate teachers, students and the general public in and outside the school to co-operate in order to achieve the aims of the school can be established.

Principal as the administrative head of secondary school plays key person in ensuring that the students receive quality school experiences (Suleiman, Ishola and Lukman, 2021). The following are the administrative responsibilities of the school principal; student personnel, school community relation, teaching and programme development, finance and management and school facilities (Kakati, 2024). Ogaba and Egwuonwu (2024) observed that today's school heads are anticipated to be visionaries, instructional and curriculum implementer, supervisors, role models, public relation officers and communication specialists, financial plan specialists and caretakers of numerous legitimate, vowed and plan directives and creativities. Apart from these responsibilities, the school principal strives to meet the expectations of various stakeholders such as parents, teaching and the non-teaching staff, Post-Primary Schools' Service Commission and educational ministries in both Federal and State levels.

Faruk and Ajadi (2023) stated that principal administrative behavior in the school management is the orderly procedure of skill force and material resources existing in educational setting and judiciously utilizing them with clear guiding principle towards achieving the educational objectives. Therefore, principal administrative behavior in post-primary education would mean the degree to which institution principals annex manpower and other resources and policies required for the actualization of set goals. However, without the requisite competencies, the school principals in Nigeria would not be able to achieve effectiveness in school administration. Faruk and Ajadi (2023) acknowledges that the management competencies, administrative behavior and styles applied by a secondary school principal is very critical to ensuring that students have quality school experience and quality output from the system.

Academic performances are the extent to which students have achieved their long or short term educational goals. According to Anum, Tyokyaa and Ochai (2024), academic performance is defined as the level of accomplishment or proficiency one has in academic area as opposed to one's potential. The authors were emphatic that academic performance is an educational goal that is achieved, by a student, leader or institution over a period of time. Students' scores in achievement test, Cumulative Grade Point Average and completion of educational degrees such as High School and bachelor's degrees represent academic performance. In relation to this study, academic performance can be regarded as an observable

and measurable behavior of students in the subjects taken during the terms. This is academic performances obtained through the administration of achievement test which could either be teacher made test or standardized achievement test. Manafa (2020) stated that principal administrative behavior in the school management is the orderly procedure of skill force and material resources existing in educational setting and judiciously utilizing them with clear guiding principle towards achieving the educational objectives. Ogaba and Egwuonwu (2024) and Chinenye (2020) acknowledges that the management competencies, administrative behavior and styles applied by a secondary school principal is very critical to ensuring that students have quality school experience and quality output from the system. The author outline principals' administrative behavior as: leadership, communication, decision-making, conflict management and supervision which is the focus of this study.

Statement of Problem

The rate and degree of failure by secondary school students in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) is confirmation that the performance of students appears to be far below expectations that are acceptable. This poor academic performance of students at both the internal and external examinations conducted by both the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) could be attributed to a lot of factors such as lack of conducive environment, poor teaching methods of teaching, teachers attitude to their job, lack of interest of students in the teaching learning process, students time management amongst others. To this extent, Ogaba and Egwuonwu (2024) believes that the falling level of academic performance of students is attributable to teachers' non-use of verbal reinforcement strategy, as Sibaweh (2024) also found that the attitude of some teachers to their job, poor teaching methods, teachers qualification and students interest influence students' academic performance.

Considering the poor academic performance of the students over the years, questions have been raised on the extent to which state secondary schools have performed in producing students for tertiary education in Nigeria. This cannot be said to be satisfactory, as the situation is particularly disturbing when it was realized that one of the broad aims of secondary education as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), is preparation of students for higher education. This has led to persistent decline of the products of secondary school leavers, thereby discrediting the productivity and functionality of the secondary school system. Recently, principal administrative behaviour in North-central Nigeria's public senior secondary school has become worrisome and bedevilled with challenges of effective communication, decision-making, leadership styles among other administrative behaviour that culminated into teachers' productivity and students' academic performance. Incidentally, several factors have been observed as clogs on the wheels of progress of students' academic performance. Principals presumed to be driving force in secondary schools because he or she influenced teachers to perform well at work, which will improve students' academic performance.

Today, in Nigeria, there is a growing public concerned and outcry that the administrative behaviour of some school principals jeopardized the progress of school and job performance of teachers. It appears that some public secondary school principal in North-Central, Nigeria are failing to meet their administrative responsibilities, resulting to poor productivity among the teaching staff and students' academic performance as well. The observed discrepancies in principals' administrative behaviour and may be responsible for the low level of students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in the North-Central, Nigeria. Given the above, therefore this study sought to examine the relationship between principals' administrative behaviour and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain principals' administrative behaviour, and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' use of the leadership behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' adoption of the decision-making behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' employment of the conflict management behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between principals' application of the supervision behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Ho₅: There is no significant relationship between principals' use of the communication behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This research work is anchored on the Administrative Behavior Theory Herbert Simon (1947)

The Administrative Behavior Theory:

The administrative behavior theory is a universal concept that explain steps through which personnel completer their task. The theory was developed by Herbert Simon in 1947 whose discoveries centered on how organization provide the bases to perform certain functions that run counter to other. He elucidated the procedures through which goal specificity and validation enhance functional behavior in work place. The theory postulates that highly ranked people are involved in decision making with a greater worth component and vice versa. Simon notes that from this viewpoint, an organization's ladder can be observed as a congealed set of means-ends chains that is stimulating consistency of choices and actions all through the society. There are two fundamental perceptions associated to the administrative behavior theory. The first concept deals with bounded level-headedness which connotes the intellectual confines of those making decision. The second concept relates is concerns with satisfaction which attempts to attain at least some least level of a particular variable, but which does not strive to achieve its maximum possible value. Therefore, the most common application of this concept is in administrative behavior, which, unlike conventional economic accounts, assumes that fabricators treat profit not as a goal to be maximized, but as a restraint. Under these, although at least a critical level of profit must be achieved by firms; thereafter, priority is attached to the attainment of other goals. The model is useful to this research because it can be used to study how individuals and organizations develop goals and values, describe and judge different alternatives, gather and make use of information, and make conclusions – decisions.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey research so as to meet its objectives. Five hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Structured questionnaire used for the study was titled "Principals' Administrative Behaviour Questionnaire" (PLBQ) while the qualitative data on student academic performance was collected using students' proforma titled "Students' Academic Performance Profoma" used to harness students' scores in WASSCE from 2015 to 2024. This was pilot tested. The target

population of this study is made up of 12,364 teachers and 510 principals in the public senior secondary schools in the Education Zones of Niger, Nasarawa and Kogi in North-Central, Nigeria. The sample size for this study are 370 teachers and 51 principals drawn from the 51 sampled senior secondary schools in Niger State, Nasarawa State and Kogi State. The sample size of teachers was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining samples from a finite population. Thus, a population of 12,364 teachers elicited a sample size of 370 teachers. The sample size of public senior secondary schools and school principals was determined by taking 10% of the population of schools and principals. This procedure is justified by Kpee (2015) who considered such percentage appropriate to serve as an acceptable sample size. Additionally, the sample size of principals was derived based on the number of schools and principals taken. The SAPP was designed to collect students' academic scores in WASSCE from 2015 to 2024 from the 51 sampled public senior secondary schools covering Niger, Nasarawa, and Kogi States.

The decision rule for interpretation of the results of the data analysis was to accept the null hypotheses when the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance; and reject the null hypotheses when the p-value is less than a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' use of the leadership behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table1: Significant Relationship between Principals' use of the Leadership Behavior and Students' Academic Performance

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.543	.295	.292	.02359	29.5%	.0000	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .543 in Table 1 shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .000 < 0.05$) less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is significant relationship between principals' use of the leadership behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The R square (R^2) value of .295 implies that 29.5% of the variance in students' academic performance is predicted by the principals' use of the leadership behavior in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' adoption of the decision-making behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 2: Significant Relationship between Principals' Adoption of the Decision-Making Behavior and Students' Academic Performance

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.522	.272	.269	.02773	27.2%	.0002	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .522 in Table 2 shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .0002 < 0.05$) less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between principals' adoption of the decision-making behavior and students' academic performance in public

senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The R square (R^2) value of .272 implies that 27.2% of the variance in students' academic performance is predicted by the principals' decision-making behavior in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' employment of the conflict management behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 3: Significant Relationship between Principals' Employment of the Conflict Management Behavior and Students' Academic Performance

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.629	.396	.393	.001734	39.6%	0.0001	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .629 in Table 3 shows that there is a high positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .0001 < 0.05$) less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between principals' employment of the conflict management behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The R square (R^2) value of .396 implies that 39.6% of the variance in students' academic performance can be explained by principals' employment of the conflict management behavior. Which means that there are other extraneous variables outside principals' employment of the conflict management behavior that can influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between principals' application of the supervision behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 4: Significant Relationship between Principals' Application of the Supervision Behavior and Students' Academic Performance

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.391	.341	.378	.03872	34.1%	0.0003	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .522 in Table 2 shows that there is a low positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .0003 < 0.05$) less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between principals' application of the supervision behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The R square (R^2) value of .341 implies that 34.1% of the variance in students' academic performance is predicted by the principals' application of the supervision behavior in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between principals' use of the communication behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 5: Significant Relationship between Principals' Use of the Communication Behavior and Students' Academic Performance

R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Extent of Prediction	Sig.	Decision
.646	.417	.414	.001549	41.7%	.0004	Rejected

* $p < 0.05$ = Significant relationship

The computed correlation coefficient of .646 in Table 2 shows that there is a high positive relationship between the variables. With the probability value ($p = .0004 < 0.05$) less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between principals' adoption of the communication behavior and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The R square (R^2) value of .417 implies that 41.7% of the variance in students' academic performance is predicted by the principals' communication behavior. Which means that there are other extraneous variables outside principals' adoption of the communication behavior that can influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria.

Discussion

This findings of the study indicated that there is significant relationship between principals' use of the administrative behaviours (leadership, communication, decision making, conflict management & supervision) and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The basic requirement for effective school administrative behavior is in-built in the capability of secondary school administrators towards teachers' improvement, students' development and relevant educational stakeholders for the realization of educational goals (Sharma and Parham, 2020). The findings from the study is in agreement with Sibaweh (2024) who revealed that public secondary schools principals' administrative behaviours are positively related to students' academic performance. The findings of this study also confirms the work of Galapon (2024), Faruk and Ajadi (2023) that principals' administrative behavior positively influence students' academic performance of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Furthermore, the study discovered that the application of various principals' administrative behavior can influence the academic performance of students'. Principals in institutions that uses these administrative behavior performed better in academic than those principals that do not (Gunawan, Bafada, Nurabadi and Prayoga, 2020). Principals' duties as administrative heads of the school are numerous, which subsequently bring variety of challenges in effective management of personnel and instructional activities towards enhancing quality and service delivery (Eneje, 2024). Suleiman, Ishola and Lukman (2021) opined that the principal administrative behavior acts as an energizer that arouses the interest of staff towards effective service delivery in school setting and which in turn enhances students' academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that principals' administrative behavior have significant influence on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in North-Central, Nigeria. The evidence suggests that knowing a good school depends on leadership and its quality in educational result. Therefore, education even though it is a business requires principal administrative behavior which can only be obtainable through quality headship and leadership. The vitality of the school can be measured by the administrative power and exercise of power that the school's head controls. It is through this that his or her ability to stimulate teachers, students and the general public in and outside the school to co-operate in order to achieve the aims of the school can be established. The use of a set of administrative roles by principals is informed by the fact that principals are to bring all round development into the school in order to improve students' academic performance. They must be able to adopt some administrative behaviours and also evaluate their teachers in order to ascertain the strengths and weakness of the instructional delivery system for better student' academic performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended as follows:

1. Principals should maintain good administrative behaviours that would encourage and improve students' academic performance.
2. Principals should improve their supervision administrative behaviour so that teaching/learning.

3. All schools should have competent professional guidance and counsellors to dialogue with students and discuss disciplinary matters as well as issues that affect their academic performance.

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