

PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION STYLES AND TEACHERS' JOB COMMITMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the relationship between principals' communication styles and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. Correlational survey research design was used for the study. The study population consisted of 6,922 secondary school teachers and 466 principals in the State, while the sample for the study consisted of 720 teachers and 36 principals. From the 30 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the State, nine LGAs were selected using simple random sampling technique. Four schools were selected from each LGA using simple random sampling technique. The principal and twenty teachers were selected from each of the 36 schools using purposive and simple random sampling technique respectively. Two instruments were used for the study, namely; Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire (PCSQ) and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (TJCQ). The hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that aggressive communication style was negatively related to teachers' job commitment to school and positively related to teachers' commitment to teaching and learning, but had no significant relationship with teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. There was also positive relationship between open communication style and teachers' commitment to school, negative relationship to teachers' commitment to teaching and learning, but no relationship with teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. Negative relationship existed between inclusive communication style and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning, but positively related to teachers' commitment to school but not related to commitment to the teaching profession. There was no relationship between assertive communication style and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning, teachers' commitment to school and teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. The study recommended that secondary school principals should carefully choose their communication styles in order to keep teachers committed to their jobs. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.*

KEYWORDS: *principalship, communication styles, teachers' job commitment.*

INTRODUCTION

Job commitment refers to an individual's attraction and attachment to the work and the organisation. It also refers to the socio-psychological bonding of an individual to his group, work, organisation, its goals and values or to his occupation and profession. It could manifest in three ways, that is, affective, normative and continuance and each type of commitment ties the individual to the organisation in different ways and will differently affect the manner in which the employee conducts him/herself in the workplace (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002).

Crosswell (2006) is of the opinion that teachers' commitment is one of the major professional characteristics that influence an educator's success. Commitment can be defined in various ways. The

definitions, however, indicate willingness, loyalty, and dedication to a cause/what one believes in. In this study, commitment is seen as the involvement of teachers to the schools' goals as to personal businesses wherein they get so attached, as to sacrifice personal resources for the schools' success if needs be. Teachers' commitment is regarded as a key concern in educational systems across the globe, because of its influence on students' outcomes and general school effectiveness (Park, 2005).

In a school system, the achievement of educational goals and objectives may be impossible without committed teachers who are the main facilitators of teaching and learning. Taking practical steps at improving teachers' commitment by both government and school owners is crucial because teachers who are highly committed are likely to stay longer on the job, perform better, get actively involved in the work and school programmes and go extra miles to ensure that the school achieves its set goals and objectives. Teachers' job commitment may be affected by so many factors among which are; relationship between teachers and students, the quality of the work being done by teachers, working environment, policies and decision making process, motivation, and interaction between teachers and principals among others. The interaction between principals and teachers can be determined by the communication system in the school. Communication system in any organisation be it formal or informal organisation is very vital to the survival, smooth running and success of the organisation. The transfer of information from one person to another within an organisation lies on communication process without which managerial, administrative and academic functions may not be possible. In fact, all administrative functions of planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting as identified by Gulick (1937) cannot be effectively carried out without effective communication.

Mckinney, Barker, Smith and Davis (2004) submitted that communication is essential to effective team performance, and communications for any organization is like blood flow in the human body. This corroborates the fact that no organisation can exist without communication and survival of any organisation is a function of communication in that organisation. According to Stephen (2011), communication is a critical factor in directing and mobilising the workforce towards the accomplishment of the organizational goals or objectives. It is the vehicle through which the basic management and administrative functions are carried out. Managers and administrators direct through communication, they co-ordinate through communication, and they staff, plan and control through communication. It is a give and take method involving the sender and the receiver (Nakpodia, 2006).

Communication in schools takes place between and among principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, students as well as other stakeholders. The goals of schools are shared by the principals, who are the main managers of secondary schools, with relevant individuals within the school system through communication. It could therefore be said that without good and effective communication, the achievement of educational goals in a school may be a mirage.

In schools, communication happens at all times and in many ways. However, principals have certain communication styles or patterns when sharing their ideas and thought and these styles or patterns to a great extent could determine the effectiveness of communication within a school system. The styles that a principal decides to adopt in coordinating the affairs of a school could go a long way in either increasing or decreasing the morale of staff members especially the teachers.

Statement of Research Problem

In recent times, there have been public outcries on the decline of teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. Studies have traced factors responsible for low level of teachers' job commitment to low incentives, inadequate resources in schools, and low recognition in the society, among others. However, not many known studies have focused on principals' communication styles as a determinant of teachers' job commitment. There is therefore a need for a study on the relationship between principals' communication styles and teachers' job commitment; hence, this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Teachers' Job Commitment

Alsiewi and Agil (2014) defined teachers' job commitment as the willingness of teachers to invest personal resources into the teaching task and thus remain in the teaching profession. They added that teachers' job commitment is a strong belief in and the acceptance of the school's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the school, and a strong desire to maintain one's membership of the school. Gaziel (2004) noted that teachers who express a higher level of commitment to the school, tend to voluntarily be absent from school less frequently. Similarly, Alsiewi and Agil (2014) believed that teachers with powerful job commitment find it easy to be interested in whatever is being carried out in the school and that the teachers can get involved wholeheartedly without strict supervision. Not only that, a committed teacher sees school's or students' problem as theirs.

On the study of teachers' multiple commitments in higher learning institutions, four types of teachers' commitment were identified by Carmelli and Freund (2004). These were: teachers' commitment to the institution, teachers' commitment to the student, teachers' commitment to the teaching occupation and commitment to outcomes. These areas of teachers' job commitment will be adopted in this study as they relate to teachers in secondary schools in Osun State.

Teachers' Commitment to the Institution: This is the level at which the teacher finds satisfaction and agreement between his idiographic and the school's nomothetic expectations of him/her. This satisfaction prompts his/her devotion, and willingness to spend his time and energy for the school's success, as well as maintain membership of the school. It is the readiness of teachers to accept the goals, policies and programmes of a school. He/she will be concerned about everything going on in the school and will also be willing and ready to protect and defend the image of the school at all times. This brings about a link between the teacher and the students.

Teachers' Commitment to the Student: The willingness of promoting the school creates emotional link between teachers and the students, which ultimately inspires teachers to be dedicated to the teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment, to allow students reach their targets (Altun, 2017). The commitment of teachers makes it easy to apply individualized instruction in the teaching of students. Such teachers also develop fewer plans to improve the quality of their instructions. When a teacher is committed to his students, he will find it easy to spend extra time in preparing for the class as well as helping the weak students in the class in order to be able to match up with their high flier counterparts in the class academically. In fact, the concept of differentiation in teaching may not be

possible without committed teachers. This is because it takes a teacher that is interested in all students to factor in students' levels of readiness, ability levels, interests, cognitive needs and learning preferences when preparing for the lesson as well as during lesson delivery.

Teachers' Commitment to Teaching: Somech and Bogler (2002) stated that teachers' commitment to teaching profession involves an affective attachment to the profession or occupation, which is associated with personal identification and satisfaction as a teacher. Commitment to the occupation was seen as important because it enables a teacher to develop the necessary skills and relationships to have a successful career, regardless of the institution within which he or she is employed. A teacher that is committed to the teaching profession is expected to develop the necessary skills, relationships and good instructional practices to have a successful career. In addition, he will be willing to join or associate with the teaching body be it local, state or national chapter. He/ she is proud of being a teacher even when there is low recognition for teachers in his society or country and will be happy to stay long in the teaching profession or even stay in the profession until retirement.

Commitment to Outcomes: Somech and Bogler (2002) also suggested that highly committed teachers go beyond what is expected of them in their work. In other words, teachers who are committed to output will do everything within their power to help both the school and the students to achieve their short and long term goals.

Communication Styles

Communication styles otherwise known as communication patterns can be seen as the way an individual expresses his/her thought when transmitting information and ideas to people. De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Siberg, Gameren, and Vlug, (2009) view communication styles as distinguishing ways an individual transmits verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal indicators in social interactions to present the identity he or she has or wants to (or appear to) have, the way he or she relates with people and the way his or her message should be understood. Reece, Brandt and Howie, (2010) described communication style as the method by which one negotiates situations with others. It is a distinctive way and mode of action by which one usually behaves when exchanging information, ideas, and emotions with others. Thomson (2004) was of the opinion that communication style is a way of thinking and behaving. To him, communication style is not the ability but instead a preferred way of using the abilities one has in communication. This distinction is very important, as ability or skill refers to how well one can do something, while a style refers to how one does something. Principals' communication style is about how secondary school principals use various communication skills when conveying their thoughts and ideas among members of staff in their various schools.

This study focuses on four communication styles. These are open communication style, inclusive communication style, aggressive communication style and assertive communication. An open communication style is one in which all members of the school feel free to share feedback, ideas and even criticism at all levels. In a school where a principal adopts an open communication style, such principal usually allows teachers to share feedback. This implies that the principal uses participatory decision making method or leadership skills. The principal is open even to criticisms from both internal and external stakeholders. This type of communication style encourages all staff to say their minds on issues bothering them on school policies, programmes and views, and opinions expressed will not be used against

them. The style also allows school principals to see teachers not only as workers but as human beings whose views and opinions must be heard on all issues affecting them.

An inclusive communication style is another style that can be adopted by principals in schools. It is one in which conscious steps are taken by principals to ensure that all staff members in the school feel that they are involved in the decisions that affect their day- to- day activities (Barnlund, 2008). In other words, a school principal with an inclusive communication style is open to people and allows contributions from within and outside the school. This is so important because the school is regarded as an open system that depends on input from both internal and external environment (Scott, 2008). Such principal does not only accept the inputs from school stakeholders, but ensures that the views and opinions raised are considered during decision making.

Another communication style is the assertive style. A school principal who engages in assertive communication is open to hearing the opinions of others and feels comfortable enough to express his own opinions as well. He has high self-esteem, and the confidence to effectively communicate with others without getting offended or being manipulative. While engaging in conversations, he states limits and expectations, and observations without judgment, he is an active listener, and checks on others' feelings. Generally speaking, one can conclude that open, inclusive and assertive communication styles can be regarded as a democratic communication style. This style of communication of the leader according to Lussier (2010) is characterised by cooperation, democratic and politic language, delegation of duty and authority, and two-way communication. It is also characterized by respect for everybody's opinions and ideas. It can also be said that school principals with democratic communication style are people oriented leaders who usually care about the well fare and the well being of the followers and do everything possible to make subordinates happy in order to be able to give their best.

Aggressive communication style can also be used by principals in airing their ideas, goals and visions among teachers in schools. Aggressive communication is a style in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Thus, aggressive communicators are verbally and /or physically abusive (Adubato, 2014). A school principal who uses aggressive communication style creates a win-lose situation and use intimidation to get his own needs met is through power and control, often at the expense of others. He is usually a poor listener and tends to monopolise discussions. He is a fault finder, tries to dominate others, use humiliation to control others, criticises, blames or attacks others, has low frustration tolerance, speaks in a loud, demanding and overbearing voice, acts threateningly and rudely.

It is also worthy of note that aggressive communication style has a bearing with autocratic communication style. A school principal that uses autocratic communication style dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Messages in this style of communication come with orders that must be obeyed by the subordinates without any question. No use of personal initiative in the work place is allowed and no group inspired decision is allowed. Such a leader stay aloof from the group and hence takes decisions alone and assigns tasks to members when necessary without seeking their interest or opinions (Fashiku, 1997). It can also be added **that** the school principals with autocratic communication style are

product or output oriented leaders. They are not interested in the well being of workers, rather, they are only concerned about workers meeting targets and deadlines.

Importance of Effective Communication in a School System

In any organisation, formal or informal, effective communication leads to effective management which aids achievement of organizational goals. Effective personnel management is a function of effective communication as management involves working with and through others to achieve corporate goals. The realisation of the goals of a secondary school as an educational organisation, among others, hinges on effective communication among the various stakeholders. For example, researches indicate that principals spend 70% to 80% of their time in interpersonal communication with various stakeholders (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2009; Green, 2010; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2010; Tareilo, 2011). Communication helps to build relationships and facilitates achievement of goals in schools.

The importance of effective communication between principals and staff in a school system cannot be overemphasized. This is because every administrative functions and activities in a school involves some forms of direct or indirect communication. Whether planning and organising or leading and monitoring, school administrators communicate with and through other people. This implies that principal's communication skills and styles affect both personnel and schools' effectiveness (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to schools' effectiveness is lack of effective communication between the leaders and the subordinate (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). In order for the school principal to make sound and coherent decision, plan, organise, control *etcetera*, he must map-out strategies for receiving and passing information to every individual within the school for effective management.

Teachers' Job Commitment and Communication Styles

Guo, Li and Wu (2015) carried out an empirical study on effects of leaders' verbal communication styles on employees' job satisfaction. The result of the study revealed that autocratic verbal communication style leads to low job satisfaction while supportive verbal communication style results in high job satisfaction. The study suggested that leaders should use more of supportive communication style in order to keep the satisfaction of employees high which in turn will increase job commitment.

From the study of Shilpee, Damodar and Seema (2012), it was indicated that assertive style of communication lends maximum support to employees while aggressive style has negative impact on job satisfaction. It concluded that satisfaction with communication fosters emotional bond with an organisation, and reduces employees' absenteeism. The study recommended that managers should use more of assertive style of communication in order to keep the job satisfaction of the teachers high, as this will lead to the achievement of set goals and objectives.

This study was corroborated by Carlijn Van de Linden's (2016) empirical investigation on the effects of leaders' communication on job satisfaction among employees which also found that expressive (assertive) communication style enhances job satisfaction while verbal aggressive communication style reduces job satisfaction. The study recommended that organisations should train their managers to be as precise and assertive as possible in explaining expectations and upcoming events.

Fashiku (2016) carried out a research to determine the relationship between leaders' communication styles and lecturers' job performance in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Nigeria. The result of the investigation revealed that significant relationship existed between leaders' democratic communication pattern and lecturers' job performance. Leaders' autocratic and laissez faire communication patterns did not significantly relate to lecturers' performance. The study concluded that leaders' pattern or style of communication significantly enhances lecturers' performance. It therefore recommended that leaders should as much as possible engage in democratic pattern of communication in order to facilitate the attainment of stated aims and objectives of the institutions.

Furthermore, Solaja, Faremi, and Adesina (2015) made investigation on the relationship between leadership communication style and organisational productivity. The result of the study revealed that there is a relationship between leadership communication style and organizational productivity. Specifically, precise, friendly, open and attentive communication styles have been found to have positive relationship with organisational productivity and job performance. On the other hand, dominant and contentious communication styles have negative relationship with organisational productivity. It was therefore recommended that managers should employ good leadership communication styles when disseminating information, in order to increase the job commitment of workers, knowledge creation, job satisfaction, acceptance of work responsibility and positive subordinate behaviour which leads to increase in productivity.

All these studies are important and relevant to this study because they showed very strong links among job satisfaction, job commitment and job performance of workers.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between aggressive communication style and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State.

Ho2. There is no significant relationship between inclusive communication style and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State.

Ho3. There is no significant relationship between open communication style and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State.

Ho4. There is no significant relationship between assertive communication style and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was correlational survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 6,922 secondary school teachers and 466 principals in Osun State. The sample for this study consisted of 756 (36 principals and 720 teachers) respondents using multistage sampling procedure. From each of the three Senatorial Districts of Osun State, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected using simple random sampling technique, and from each of the LGAs, four schools were selected also using simple random sampling technique. The principal of each of the 36 schools was selected using purposive sampling technique. Twenty teachers were selected from each of the 36 schools using simple random sampling technique. Two adapted instruments from (Mowday *et al.*, 1979; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; De Vries *et al.*, 2009) were used for the study; they were; Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire (PCSQ) which was used to elicit information from principals on their communication styles, and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (TJCQ) which was used to elicit information from teachers on their job commitment. PCSQ comprised twenty-eight questions while TJCQ comprised eighteen questions. The questionnaire sets were divided into two sections (Section A and B). Section A captured demographic information, Section B was drawn to obtain relevant information on principals' communication styles and teachers' job commitment respectively. Sections B were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. Both validity and reliability of the instrument were done to ensure the appropriateness of the instrument. The reliability co-efficient of 0.75 and 0.82 were obtained on the instruments for the study. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

r = coefficient of correlation; r^2 =coefficient determination; $n=756$; $df=n-2$; Reject H_0 if P-value is less than alpha (sig.), otherwise, accept it

Table 1: The Effect of Principals' Communication Styles on Teachers' Job Commitment

VARIABLES	AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE		
	R	r ²	P-Value (sig.)
Teachers' commitment to teaching/learning	0.083	0.006899	0.025***
Teachers' commitment to school	-0.105	0.011025	0.007***
Teachers' commitment to teaching profession	-0.017	0.000289	0.346
VARIABLES	ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE		
	R	r²	P-Value (sig.)
Teachers' commitment to teaching/learning	-0.036	0.001296	0.2
Teachers' commitment to school	0.05	0.0025	0.118
Teachers' commitment to teaching profession	-0.019	0.000361	0.329
VARIABLES	OPEN COMMUNICATION STYLE		
	R	r²	P-Value (sig.)
Teachers' commitment to teaching/learning	-0.079	0.006241	0.031***
Teachers' commitment to school	0.052	0.002704	0.042***
Teachers' commitment to teaching profession	0.014	0.000196	0.369
Variables	INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE		
	R	r²	P-Value (sig.)
Teachers' commitment to teaching/learning	-0.063	0.003969	0.07***
Teachers' commitment to school	0.102	0.010404	0.008***
Teachers' commitment to teaching profession	0.033	0.001089	0.218
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Note: *Significant at p<0.05**

Table 1 shows that aggressive communication style was negatively related to teachers' job commitment to school ($r = -0.105$; $p < 0.05$) and positively related to commitment to teaching and learning ($r = 0.083$; $p < 0.05$) but was not related to teachers' commitment to the teaching profession ($r = -0.017$, $p > 0.05$). There was also positive relationship between open communication style and teachers' commitment to school ($r = 0.052$; $p < 0.05$) and negatively related to teachers' commitment to teaching and learning ($r = -0.079$; $p < 0.05$) but not related to commitment to the teaching profession ($r = 0.014$; $p > 0.05$). Negative relationship existed between inclusive communication styles and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning ($r = -0.63$; $p < 0.05$) and positively related to commitment to school ($r = 0.102$; $p < 0.05$) but not related to commitment to the teaching profession ($r = 0.033$; $p > 0.05$). There was no relationship between assertive communication style and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning ($r = -0.036$; $p > 0.05$), commitment to school ($r = 0.05$; $p > 0.05$) and commitment to the teaching profession ($r = -0.019$; $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the study showed that aggressive, open and inclusive communication styles all had significant relationship with teachers' job commitment. These communication styles had different level of relationship with teachers' commitment to teaching and learning and commitment to school. However, no significant relationship existed between assertive communication style and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning, commitment to the teaching profession and commitment to school. The positive relations that existed between each of open and inclusive communication styles and teachers commitment to school could be as a result of the level of involvement of teachers in decision making by the secondary school principals in the State. As man is a social animal, workers' productivity tends to increase when there is a cordial relationship between the super-ordinates and subordinates. The positive relationship between aggressive communication style and teachers' commitment to teaching and learning could be as a result of notion of McGregor's theory x who believes that man dislike work and will avoid it if possible, must be coerced, controlled, directed, or threatened with punishment before they achieve set targets but aggressive communication style had negative relationship with teachers' commitment to school and to the teaching profession. This may be because teachers do not want to be coerced before engaging in school activities and in professional activities. In order words, the more principals adopt aggressive communication style, the more likely teachers will be committed to teaching and learning but the less they will be committed to the school and to the teaching profession. However, neither did being assertive by principals affect any of the commitment levels of the teachers in the State.

This result corroborates the position of Guo, Li, and Wu (2015) who reported that autocratic verbal aggressive communication style leads to low job satisfaction and job commitment. Shilpee *et al* (2012) added that aggressive communication style reduces job satisfaction and increases absenteeism. Fashiku (2016) submitted that leaders' democratic communication style has significant relationship with job performance of workers. He added that democratic communication style allows subordinate to be involved in taking decision that will affect the day-to-day running of an organisation and this involvement can influence the commitment of workers.

Ezenwekwe (2013) submitted that there exists significant relationship between inclusive communication pattern and teachers' professional performance. He added that open communication pattern allows the principal and teachers to share feedback and criticism. He concluded that communication styles have a level

of relationship with teachers' job commitment and professional performance of teachers in schools. This was not different from the opinion of Solaja *et al* (2015) who emphasized that precise, friendly, open and attentive communication styles all have significant relationships with job satisfaction and job productivity. Conversely, the results of this study negates an aspect of the findings of Fashiku (2016) who submitted that autocratic communication style has no significant relationship with job performance. It also contrasts an aspect of Shilpee *et al* (2012) who reported that assertive communication style lend maximum support to workers in order to be able to do their best towards organizational goals and objectives.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that principals' communication styles play important roles in the smooth running of schools as well as in the increase of job commitment of teachers and their productivity. secondary school principals should be aware of this and their administrative and communication styles should be such that will help in boosting the morale of teachers which in turn will lead to increase in teachers' job commitment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to enhance effective school administration which in turn may lead to increase in teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Osun State. Secondary school principals in Osun State should carefully choose their communication styles in order to keep teachers committed to their job. Principals must study their teachers and situations in their schools before adopting styles of communication. In other words, principals must know when democratic communication style will yield high level of job commitment and when to use autocratic communication style for effective administration of their various schools. It is further recommended that the Ministry of Education, All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) and school owners should organise trainings for principals on communication skills for effective school administration. This will expose principals to various communication styles and skills that can be adopted in schools. The Ministry of Education and school owners should also organise regular supervision of schools to monitor the styles of communication used by principals that could enhance better job commitment among teachers. This is necessary in order to achieve the objectives of secondary education as entrenched in the National Policy on Education.

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