
Examining Principals' Personnel Management Skills: The Interplay of Human Relations and Instructional Supervision in Delta State Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined principals' personnel management skills: the interplay of human relations and instructional supervision in Delta State secondary schools. It was guided by two research questions and hypotheses respectively. The research employed a correlational survey method within an ex-post-facto design. The study encompassed a population of 15,322 principals and teachers from Delta State Secondary Schools, from which a purposive sample of 380 principals and teachers was selected. The research utilized the Principals' Personnel Management Skills of Human Relations and Instructional Supervision Questionnaire (PPMSHRISQ) as the instrument for data collection. Data analysis involved mean rating to address the research questions, while hypotheses were tested utilizing Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) at a significance level of 0.05. Findings revealed that to a high extent, human relations and instructional supervision contribute significantly to effective personnel management by principals, in Delta State Secondary Schools. In conclusion, this study unveils crucial insights into the dynamics of personnel management by principals in Delta State Secondary Schools. It is evident from the data that both human relations and instructional supervision play substantial roles in contributing to effective personnel management. It was recommended that educational authorities and school leadership should prioritise professional development for principals, as human relations play a significant role in effective personnel management. These programmes should emphasise healthy connections, efficient communication, and a friendly workplace.*

KEYWORDS: Principals' personnel management skills, Human relations, Instructional supervision, Secondary schools, Delta State

INTRODUCTION

The responsibilities of educational administrators have changed significantly, particularly for principals of secondary schools, who increasingly serve as instructional leaders. These are

individuals responsible for overseeing and guiding the academic progress of students and teachers within an educational institution (Nnorom, Egwunyenga, & Anho, 2023). They play a vital role in ensuring that the educational goals and objectives of the institution are met, and in providing support and resources to teachers and other staff members as opposed to just administrators. This change is a result of a greater understanding of the influence principals have on education. According to Fullan (2014), principals are now essential change agents in schools, going beyond their conventional administration responsibilities. Principals are increasingly crucial in directing curriculum creation, pedagogical innovation, and teacher professional development via instructional leadership. Previously, they were in charge of managing resources, disciplinary issues, and operational elements (Robinson et al., 2008). Research showing a connection between student achievement and school leadership has sparked this change (Leithwood et al., 2004). Administrators guide their schools towards academic success, ongoing growth, and equal opportunity for every student as change agents. As their position changes, principals are now expected to be excellent human resource (HR) managers who actively support the professional development of teachers and the academic achievement of their students. They must be adept at handling people, which impacts the environment of education. The emphasis is on supporting student achievement and teacher advancement, highlighting the significant influence administrators have on determining how teachers and students perceive their experiences. Principals are now educational leaders who get the nuances of teacher development and student success, rather than just being overseers of school administration (Nkedishu, 2020). Students thrive and teachers are empowered under their direction. In order to help instructors enhance their teaching abilities, instructional leaders need to be advocates for ongoing professional development. Effective professional development, in accordance with Hattie (2012), reinforces the principal's role in promoting growth by increasing student performance.

Principals are tasked with keeping, and developing outstanding teachers in their capacity as adept HR managers. They aggressively support professional equality, give prompt feedback, and encourage teacher cooperation. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) emphasise the importance of efficient HR management on teacher retention and student growth. Contemporary principals work with their teaching staff, providing opportunities for growth and nurturing supportive learning environments. The effectiveness of secondary school education in Delta State, Nigeria, is contingent upon the performance of its educators. Since education is the cornerstone of socioeconomic development, qualified and committed teachers are needed. It becomes essential to evaluate administrators' HR management abilities in light of teachers' performance, especially in countries where pedagogy, infrastructure, and educational resources are lacking (Nkedishu, Nakpodia & Egwunyenga, 2019). Secondary school teachers continue to play a crucial role as stewards of knowledge and catalysts for social change in spite of these obstacles. Lawal and Adeyemi (2018) have emphasised that the quality of teaching is a prerequisite for the nation's prosperity and future aspirations.

Principals have a critical role in shaping the educational environment and teacher effectiveness by applying their HR competencies, which include instructional supervision and interpersonal skills. According to Adebayo and Adediran (2020), principals who have positive interpersonal interactions report higher levels of satisfaction and devotion among their teachers. When teachers see that their administrators value them, they become more motivated and engaged, which in turn creates a peaceful and effective learning environment. Strong interpersonal abilities help to establish a psychologically secure environment in which teachers may try new things, exchange ideas, and work through issues, improving the standard of instruction as a whole. For school principals, instructional supervisory abilities seem important. They have the power to change teaching strategies and student learning by mentoring, supporting, and guiding educators as they work to enhance their instructional practises. Student achievement was found to be favourably impacted by instructors' human abilities, such as establishing connections and offering emotional support (Deng and Sun, 2022). Park and Cho (2022) have observed that the influence of instructors' human abilities extends to managing school atmosphere and student achievement. The human skills of teachers influence school culture and student accomplishment. Suh and Kim (2022) point out that positive feedback-giving and environment-building are two such abilities that increase student engagement. Furthermore, Wang and Wu (2022) discovered that teachers' human skills improve their wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Effective instructional supervision is thought to improve teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and learning, according to Owolabi (2019). Yoon and Kim (2021) reported that administrators' watchful and encouraging oversight creates a lively and intellectually engaging school environment. This is supported by the fact that administrators' instructional supervision improved teachers' job satisfaction and output. Furthermore, as noted by Zhao and Hoy (2021), principals' instructional leadership which includes monitoring supports the professional development of teachers, highlighting the crucial role that administrators play in encouraging teacher advancement and, eventually, raising performance. Administrators who are trustworthy and have a close relationship with teachers support teacher-professional learning communities, which in turn increases student learning through increased engagement, learning, and growth (Chang and Yeh, 2022). According to Louis and Spillane (2021), administrators are essential in encouraging staff cooperation in schools since such collaboration involves decision-making and fosters respect and trust among staff members. Improved performance is a result of the teachers' increased involvement and morale.

Statement of the Problem

In Delta State secondary schools, the effectiveness of educational leadership, particularly the personnel management skills of principals, is paramount for the overall success of the academic institutions. However, despite the significance of this role, there is a noticeable gap in the existing

literature concerning the interplay between human relations and instructional supervision within the context of principals' personnel management skills. The lack of comprehensive research leaves educational stakeholders and policymakers with limited insights into the specific dynamics that contribute to or hinder effective personnel management in Delta State Secondary Schools. Previous studies have touched upon aspects of educational leadership, human relations, and instructional supervision, but a comprehensive examination of how these elements interact specifically Delta State Secondary Schools remains elusive. Moreover, speculations and observations suggest that the unique socio-cultural and economic factors in Delta State may influence the application of personnel management skills by school principals. These factors may include but are not limited to cultural diversity, economic disparities, and regional educational challenges. This study aims to bridge the existing gap by delving into the intricacies of principals' personnel management skills, focusing on the interplay between human relations and instructional supervision in the unique educational landscape of Delta State Secondary Schools.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised:

1. To what extent does human relations contribute to effective personnel management by principals?
2. To what extent does instructional supervision contribute to effective personnel management by principals?

Hypotheses

1. Human relations does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.
2. Instructional supervision does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.

METHOD

The study employed an ex-post-facto correlational survey method to investigate the relationship between human relations, instructional supervision and effective personnel management by principals. This research design was deemed appropriate as it allowed the researchers to examine the existing relationship between the variables without manipulating or altering any conditions. The study's population encompassed 15,322 principals and teachers from Delta State Secondary Schools. Employing a purposive sampling technique, a sample of 380 principals and teachers was strategically selected to ensure representation from diverse school types and geographical locations. This sampling strategy helped in achieving a balance between the representation of different subgroups within the population and the feasibility of data collection. The research

utilized the Principals' Personnel Management Skills of Human Relations and Instructional Supervision Questionnaire (PPMSHRISQ) as the primary instrument for data collection. This self-report questionnaire was specifically designed to assess relationship between human relations, instructional supervision and effective personnel management by principals. The questionnaire underwent a rigorous validation process to ensure its accuracy and reliability. Face validity was established through expert reviews, while content validity was evaluated by comparing the questionnaire items to the theoretical constructs they were intended to measure. Reliability testing, conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, yielded a coefficient index of 0.81. This high alpha coefficient indicated that the questionnaire consistently measured constructs, demonstrating the instrument's internal consistency and reliability. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, including mean ratings, to address the research questions. These descriptive statistics provided an overview of the distribution of the variables and allowed for comparisons between different subgroups. Hypotheses were tested utilizing Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) at a significance level of 0.05. Pearson's correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does human relations contribute to effective personnel management by principals?

Table 1: Mean rating extent human relations contribute to effective personnel management by principals

S/N	Human relations that contribute to effective personnel management by principals	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Establish positive interpersonal relationships with teachers	2.97	.83	+
2.	Foster a supportive collaborative work environment	2.94	.80	+
3.	Demonstrate empathy and understanding in their interactions with personnel	3.00	.81	+
4.	Communicate with staff to address their concerns and needs	2.99	.81	+
5.	Promote a sense of belonging and inclusivity among personnel	2.97	.81	+
6.	Consider the individual strengths of personnel in their management approach	2.95	.81	+
7.	Consider the individual weaknesses of personnel in their management approach	2.96	.83	+
8.	Handle conflicts and interpersonal issues within the school	3.07	.81	+
9.	Encourage open communication and feedback from teachers	2.91	.80	+
10.	Demonstrate a genuine interest in the well-being of their personnel	2.98	.81	+
Average mean rating		2.97	.81	+

Keys: + = Agreed; - = Disagreed; Benchmark =2.50

Table 1 presents the mean ratings assessing the perceived extent of how human relations contribute to effective personnel management by principals. With an average mean rating of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 0.81, the table indicates an overall positive outlook on the role of human relations in personnel management. Notably, respondents express a generally high degree of agreement that principals establish positive interpersonal relationships with teachers, foster a supportive collaborative work environment, and demonstrate empathy and understanding in their interactions with personnel. Additionally, principals are viewed as effective in addressing conflicts and interpersonal issues within the school, as evidenced by the notably higher mean rating of 3.07. The findings suggest that, on average, human relations, encompassing elements such as open communication, consideration of individual strengths and weaknesses, and genuine interest in personnel well-being, are perceived as integral to effective personnel management.

Research Question 2: To what extent does instructional supervision contribute to effective personnel management by principals?

Table 2: Mean rating extent instructional supervision contribute to effective personnel management by principals

S/N	Instructional supervision that contribute to effective personnel management by principals	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Instructional supervision provided by principals enhance the professional growth of teachers	2.96	.84	+
2.	Utilize instructional supervision to identify and address areas of improvement among teaching staff	3.02	.82	+
3.	Instructional supervision contribute to maintaining a high standard of teaching and learning within the school	2.97	.81	+
4.	Instructional supervision by principals align with the overall goals and objectives of personnel management	2.98	.82	+
5.	Feedback provided during instructional supervision sessions contribute to the professional development of teachers	2.96	.80	+
6.	Principals use instructional supervision to ensure that teaching methods align with curriculum requirements	2.95	.83	+
7.	Support the alignment of teaching strategies with the diverse learning needs of students	2.99	.82	+
8.	Contribute to fostering a culture of continuous improvement among teaching staff	2.99	.81	+
9.	Address challenges for teachers in their professional roles	2.89	.81	+
10.	Provide support for teachers in their professional roles	2.94	.82	+
Average mean rating		2.96	.82	+

Keys: + = Agreed; - = Disagreed; Benchmark =2.50

In Table 2, the mean ratings depict the perceived extent to which instructional supervision contributes to effective personnel management by principals. The data indicates a generally positive sentiment, with an average mean rating of 2.96 and a standard deviation of 0.82.

Specifically, respondents express moderate agreement that instructional supervision enhances teachers' professional growth, aligns with personnel management goals, and contributes to maintaining high teaching standards. Notably, there is a slightly above-average agreement regarding the use of instructional supervision to identify and address areas of improvement among teaching staff. The findings suggest that instructional supervision, as measured by the provided questionnaire, is viewed favourably in its role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement, supporting diverse learning needs, and providing professional support for teachers. Overall, the table implies a positive perception of the contribution of instructional supervision to effective personnel management.

Hypothesis 1: Human relations does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.

Table 3: Pearson r on human relations and personnel management by principals

	Human Relations	Effective personnel management by principals
Human Relations	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.667**
	N	380
Effective personnel management by principals	Pearson Correlation	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1
	N	380

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 3, the relationship between human relations and effective personnel management by principals shows that there is a strong positive relationship with r value of .667 and significance $p=.002$. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that human relations does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals was rejected. Thus, human relations significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.

Hypothesis 2: Instructional supervision does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.

Table 4: Pearson r on instructional supervision and personnel management by principals

		Instructional Supervision	Effective personnel management by principals
Instructional Supervision	Pearson Correlation	1	.537**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	380	380
Effective personnel management by principals	Pearson Correlation	.537**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	380	380

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 4, the relationship between instructional supervision and effective personnel management by principals shows that there is a strong positive relationship with r value of .537 and significance p=.000. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that instructional supervision does not significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals was rejected. Thus, instructional supervision significantly contribute to effective personnel management by principals.

DISCUSSION

Finding revealed that to a high extent, human relations contribute significantly to effective personnel management by principals, in Delta State Secondary Schools. This could be attributed to the role of positive interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and a supportive work environment in fostering a conducive atmosphere for both educators and staff. The attribution of this high contribution could be rooted in the understanding that creating a positive school culture requires principals to establish connections built on trust, empathy, and collaboration. The unique socio-cultural of Delta State, with its diverse population and educational challenges, may further emphasize the importance of strong human relations skills. Principals who are adept at navigating and respecting this diversity, while fostering inclusivity and a sense of belonging among personnel, are likely to excel in personnel management. Additionally, the emphasis on human relations may be a response to the recognition that effective educational leadership extends beyond administrative tasks to encompass the cultivation of a harmonious and motivated workforce, ultimately contributing to a more successful and enriching educational experience for both educators and students. This finding concurs with the findings of Adewale, Oluwalola, and

Adebayo, (2022) who revealed a positive and significant relationship between principals' human relation strategies and teachers' job performance. Nwokocha, Nkwocha, and Agumanu, (2022) who revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between principals' management of human resources and educators' job performance. Enwezor (2021) who revealed a strong and positive correlation between the human resource management practices implemented by principals and the job satisfaction of instructors. Okoye (2020) who revealed that principals applied personnel management skills for both effective human relations and staff security to a moderate extent. However, the finding disagrees with findings of Adedoyin, and Onasanya (2022) who revealed that there was no significant association between principals' leadership styles and job satisfaction of teachers in public schools, while there was a positive and significant relationship between principals' leadership styles, and job satisfaction levels of teachers working in private schools. Ajani, and Owolabi, (2021) who revealed that while principals used a variety of human relations strategies, teachers' perceptions of school climate were not significantly related to principals' use of these strategies. Akpan, and Edem (2020) who revealed a positive but weak relationship between principals' human resource management practices and teachers' organizational commitment.

Finding revealed that to a high extent, instructional supervision contributes significantly to effective personnel management by principals in Delta State Secondary Schools. One possible attribution is the acknowledgment that instructional supervision serves as a mechanism for principals to actively engage with and support the professional development of teaching staff. By aligning teaching methods with curriculum requirements and providing constructive feedback, principals can enhance the pedagogical skills of educators, directly influencing the overall effectiveness of personnel management. The emphasis on instructional supervision may also be attributed to the acknowledgment of the ever-evolving educational landscape, requiring principals to stay attuned to innovative teaching practices and adapt their supervision strategies accordingly. Furthermore, in a state with diverse learning needs and challenges, effective instructional supervision becomes a crucial tool for principals to address and navigate these complexities, ensuring a responsive and tailored approach to personnel management. The attribution of the high contribution of instructional supervision may reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and a recognition that principals who actively engage in this practice are better positioned to address challenges, support their teaching staff, and contribute significantly to the overall success of Delta State Secondary Schools. This finding corresponds with the findings of Eke, and Nnadi, (2023) who established a positive and significant relationship between principals' instructional supervision and teacher effectiveness. Nwogu, and Nwachukwu, (2022) who revealed that there was a positive and significant connection between principals' instructional supervision practices and instructors' job satisfaction. Uzoma, and Nnaji, (2022) who revealed that principals used a variety of instructional supervision strategies, and teachers perceived these strategies to be

effective in promoting their professional development. Okafor, and Ifejika (2021) who revealed a positive and significant relationship between principals' instructional supervision and students' academic achievement. Although the finding did not align with the findings of Aigbogbo, and Odigie, (2023) who revealed that there was a weak and negative relationship between principals' instructional supervision and teacher motivation. The study concluded that principals' instructional supervision may not be a significant factor in motivating teachers. Udeh, and Nwagwu, (2022) who revealed that while principals used a variety of instructional supervision practices, teachers did not perceive these practices to be effective in promoting school effectiveness. Njoku, and Orji, (2021) who revealed a weak and positive relationship between principals' instructional supervision and teacher burnout.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study unveils crucial insights into the dynamics of personnel management by principals in Delta State Secondary Schools. It is evident from the data that both human relations and instructional supervision play substantial roles in contributing to effective personnel management. The study indicates a high level of agreement among respondents that human relations significantly contribute to effective personnel management. This implies that principals who establish positive interpersonal relationships, foster a collaborative work environment, and demonstrate empathy and understanding are more likely to excel in managing personnel effectively. Similarly, the study emphasizes the significance of instructional supervision, revealing that it also contributes significantly to effective personnel management. Principals who employ instructional supervision practices, align teaching methods with curriculum requirements, and provide support for teachers are more likely to excel in managing personnel in a manner that enhances overall educational outcomes. Together, these findings emphasize the interconnectedness of human relations and instructional supervision in shaping the landscape of effective personnel management by principals in Delta State Secondary Schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Educational authorities and school leadership should prioritise professional development for principals, as human relations play a significant role in effective personnel management. These programmes should emphasise healthy connections, efficient communication, and a friendly workplace. Principals may better manage staff and foster a healthy school culture by learning advanced human relations skills.
2. Given the importance of instructional supervision to good people management, principal training should be expanded. Workshops, seminars, and continuing professional development programmes on aligning teaching techniques with curricular objectives,

offering constructive criticism, and encouraging teaching staff continual growth may be used. Principals can improve Delta State Secondary School teaching and learning by enhancing their people management abilities.

3. A comprehensive approach to educational leadership is recommended since human relations and instructional supervision are interwoven in efficient people management. Principals should consider these as complementary rather than separate duties. Leadership training and development can emphasise the combination of human relations and instructional supervisory tactics to provide a holistic leadership strategy that covers both interpersonal and instructional personnel management.
4. Establishing a structured assessment and feedback procedure can help maintain and enhance human management practises. Regular assessments of principals' human relations and instructional supervision performance may help. Principals can use peer evaluations and self-assessments to evaluate their practises and improve. This continuous improvement method guarantees Delta State Secondary School administrators meet changing instructional demands and manage staff well.

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