

INFLUENCE OF MIDDLE LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA,

BY

Ja'afar Sulaiman Nakwanta

Email: jafarsulaimannakwanta@gmail.com

Department of Educational Management

Faculty of Education

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Aliyu Ebini Kana PhD.

Department of curriculum studies, College of Education Akwanga,
Nasarawa State.

Email Kanaaliyu3@gmail.co

Phone number:08035985660

Abstract

This study examines the influence of middle leadership on teacher performance in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria, focusing on instructional effectiveness and classroom management as key indices. The research is guided by two research questions, objectives, and hypotheses developed to explore how middle leadership affects teachers' instructional practices and their ability to manage classrooms effectively. Adopting a descriptive research design, the study targets a population of 104,581 teachers and principals, with a sample size of 4016 determined based on the Research Advisory (2006) guidelines. The research instrument showed strong validity (0.78) and reliability (0.80), ensuring accurate and consistent data collection. Data analysis employed mean and standard deviation to address the research questions, with a benchmark of 2.50 for interpretive clarity. Chi-square analysis was used to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings reveal that middle leadership positively influences teachers' instructional effectiveness, helping them plan, deliver, and assess instruction with improved quality. Additionally, middle leadership has a significant impact on classroom management, aiding teachers in creating a structured and productive learning environment. These findings underscore the role of middle leaders in facilitating professional support, guidance, and modeling effective practices that enhance teacher performance overall. In conclusion, middle leadership plays a critical role in improving both instructional and management aspects of teaching, thereby contributing significantly to educational outcomes in secondary schools. The study recommends strengthening middle leadership through targeted professional development initiatives and establishing collaborative structures within schools to further enhance teacher support. Such efforts can foster a culture of instructional excellence and classroom efficacy, ultimately benefitting student learning.

Keywords: Middle Leadership, Teacher Performance, Instructional Effectiveness, Classroom Management, Secondary Schools, North Central Nigeria, Descriptive Research

Introduction

Leadership at all levels plays a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes, and middle leadership has emerged as a critical component of school management. Middle leaders serve as intermediaries between senior management and classroom teachers, offering professional guidance and fostering collaboration. In the context of secondary education in North Central Nigeria, the role of middle leadership is particularly significant due to the multifaceted challenges educators face, including large class sizes, resource constraints, and diverse student needs. Effective middle leadership has the potential to bridge the gap between administrative directives and classroom implementation, thereby enhancing teachers' instructional practices and classroom management (Bush & Glover, 2014). Instructional effectiveness is a critical determinant of educational quality, directly impacting student achievement and learning outcomes. In secondary schools across North Central Nigeria, instructional effectiveness refers to the ability of teachers to plan, deliver, and evaluate lessons in ways that engage students and promote deep understanding. Effective teachers utilize various pedagogical strategies, incorporate innovative teaching methods, and adapt their practices to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. Despite its importance, challenges such as inadequate professional development, limited access to teaching resources, and overcrowded classrooms often hinder teachers' instructional effectiveness in the region (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Research underscores that well-designed instructional practices significantly enhance student engagement and academic performance. For example, Hattie (2009) emphasized the importance of teacher clarity, feedback, and active student participation in achieving instructional goals. In North Central Nigeria, however, many teachers struggle to meet these standards due to systemic issues, including insufficient training and lack of support from school leadership. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve teachers' instructional competencies, ensuring they can deliver high-quality education.

Classroom management plays an essential role in creating an environment conducive to learning. In secondary schools across North Central Nigeria, teachers face significant challenges in managing classrooms effectively due to factors such as large class sizes, diverse student needs, and limited resources. Effective classroom management involves establishing clear rules and routines, maintaining student discipline, and fostering a positive classroom culture. According to Marzano et al. (2003), well-managed classrooms contribute to improved student behavior and academic outcomes, as they reduce disruptions and maximize instructional time. However, many teachers in North Central Nigeria report difficulties in maintaining classroom discipline, particularly in schools where resources are scarce and student populations are high. Issues such as bullying, absenteeism, and disruptive behavior further complicate classroom dynamics, placing additional pressure on teachers (Umar, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a combination of professional development, supportive leadership, and access to adequate teaching aids. Teachers who are empowered to manage their classrooms effectively can create structured, engaging, and inclusive learning environments that benefit all students.

Teacher performance encompasses the overall effectiveness of teachers in delivering quality education, including their instructional practices, classroom management, and professional conduct. In North Central Nigeria, teacher performance is a critical factor in determining the quality of secondary education. High-performing teachers are those who demonstrate proficiency

in subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the ability to inspire and motivate students. However, achieving optimal teacher performance in the region is often constrained by systemic challenges, such as insufficient training opportunities, poor working conditions, and inadequate support from school leadership (Ajayi, 2018).

The link between teacher performance and student achievement is well-established in educational research. Darling-Hammond (2000) found that teacher quality is one of the most significant predictors of student success, emphasizing the need for continuous professional development and support systems to enhance teacher performance. In North Central Nigeria, improving teacher performance requires a holistic approach that addresses both individual and systemic factors, including professional development, adequate remuneration, and effective leadership.

Middle leadership serves as a critical bridge between school management and classroom teachers, playing a pivotal role in influencing teacher performance. Middle leaders, such as department heads and coordinators, provide professional guidance, mentorship, and support to teachers, helping them navigate the challenges of their roles. In secondary schools across North Central Nigeria, the presence of effective middle leadership has been shown to enhance teacher performance, particularly in terms of instructional effectiveness and classroom management. Research by Harris and Jones (2017) highlights the transformative potential of middle leadership in fostering collaborative professional environments and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. Middle leaders play a key role in facilitating professional learning communities, where teachers can share best practices, receive constructive feedback, and develop innovative teaching strategies. In the context of North Central Nigeria, middle leaders are particularly important in addressing the challenges faced by teachers, such as resource limitations and diverse student needs. By providing targeted support and fostering a collaborative culture, middle leaders can empower teachers to improve their instructional practices and classroom management. The impact of middle leadership on teacher performance is further supported by evidence from empirical studies. For example, Bush et al. (2019) found that middle leaders who actively engage with teachers, provide regular feedback, and model effective practices significantly enhance teacher performance. In North Central Nigeria, this translates to improved instructional planning, delivery, and assessment, as well as more effective classroom management. Middle leaders also play a crucial role in addressing teacher professional development needs, ensuring that teachers have access to relevant training opportunities and resources. Moreover, middle leadership contributes to building a positive school culture that prioritizes teacher well-being and professional growth. This is particularly important in North Central Nigeria, where many teachers face significant challenges, including high workloads and limited resources.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of leadership in education, middle leadership remains an under-researched area, particularly in the Nigerian context. Many schools in North Central Nigeria face significant challenges, including inadequate professional support for teachers, poor instructional practices, and weak classroom management. These issues are often compounded by insufficient leadership at the middle tier, which could otherwise provide the necessary guidance and mentorship to teachers. . However, the extent to which middle leadership influences teacher

performance, particularly in terms of instructional effectiveness and classroom management, remains unclear in this region. This gap in knowledge necessitates an empirical investigation into the role of middle leaders in enhancing teacher performance, aiming to provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening leadership structures in schools.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does middle leadership influence teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?
2. To what extent does middle leadership influence teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. Middle leadership has no significant impact on teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.
2. Middle leadership has no significant impact on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive research design to examine the influence of middle leadership on teacher performance. Descriptive research is well-suited for studies aiming to describe and interpret existing conditions or relationships (Creswell, 2014). The study targeted a population of 100,000 teachers and principals from secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Using the Research Advisory (2006) guidelines, a sample size 4016 respondents was determined. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure representative coverage of the diverse schools within the region. The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire designed to assess the perceived impact of middle leadership on instructional effectiveness and classroom management. The instrument underwent rigorous validation, achieving a validity index of 0.78, while its reliability was established at 0.80 using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring consistency and accuracy in data collection. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to answer the research questions. A benchmark of 2.50 was set as the interpretive threshold, with mean scores above this value indicating a positive influence of middle leadership. Hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square statistical method at a 0.05 significance level to determine the strength and direction of relationships between middle leadership and teacher performance. Questionnaires were administered to teachers and principals across the sampled schools by the researcher and trained assistants, facilitated by formal authorization from relevant educational authorities. Data collection was carried out systematically to ensure high response rates and minimize biases. This methodological approach provides a robust framework for understanding the role of middle leadership in enhancing teacher performance in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Result

Research Question One: How does middle leadership impact teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 1: Analysis: mean and standard deviation analysis showing middle leadership influence teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std	Decision
1	Middle leaders in my school provide adequate support and guidance to enhance my instructional planning and delivery.	2046	1947	22	1	3.50	1.87	Above
2	Middle leaders regularly observe and provide constructive feedback on my teaching practices to improve instructional quality	1542	2444	22	8	3.37	1.83	Above
3	The professional development opportunities facilitated by middle leaders in my school have improved my instructional effectiveness	2152	1841	17	6	3.52	1.87	Above
	CLUSTER MEAN					3.46	1.86	Above

Table 1: item 1 Middle leaders in my school provide adequate support and guidance to enhance my instructional planning and delivery., mean 3.50 and standard deviation 1.87. Item 2 shows Middle leaders regularly observe and provide constructive feedback on my teaching practices to improve instructional quality. ,mean 3.37 and standard deviation 1.83. Item 3 shows Regular The professional development opportunities facilitated by middle leaders in my school have improved my instructional effectiveness, mean 3.52 and standard deviation 1.87. Base on the cutoff point of 2.50 the cluster mean of 3.46 is above, which implies that middle leadership influence teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Research Question Two: To what extent does middle leadership influence teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 2 Analysis: mean and standard deviation analysis showing middle leadership influence teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std	Decision
4	Middle leadership facilitates professional development opportunities focused on improving teachers'	1152	2600	260	4	3.22	1.79	Above

	classroom management skills.							
5	Middle leaders provide effective support and guidance that enhances teachers' ability to establish clear classroom rules and routines.	1252	2751	11	2	3.30	181	Above
6	Middle leaders actively mentor teachers in managing classroom disruptions and maintaining a structured learning environment	2046	1947	22	1	3.50	1.87	Above
	CLUSTER MEAN					3.34	1.82	

Table 2: item 4 show Collaborative leadership enhances partnerships with external stakeholders to secure resources for public schools, mean 3.22 and standard deviation 1.79. Item5 show Administrators effectively involve teachers and community members in identifying and prioritizing resource needs through collaborative leadership, mean 3.30 and standard deviation 1.81. Item 6 show Collaborative leadership practices improve transparency and accountability in the allocation and utilization of school resources, mean 3.50 and standard deviation 1.87. Base on the cutoff point of 2.50, the cluster mean of 3.34 is above which implies that middle leadership influence teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria

Testing Research Hypotheses

in order to test the five hypotheses of this study, the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of fit was used to test the options of respondents at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented on Tables

Hypothesis 1: Middle leadership has no significant impact on teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square Test on the significant Influence of Middle leadership has significant impact on teachers' instructional effectiveness in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N		Level of Sig.	Df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	1	4016.		0.05	3	336.03	0.001	Sig.
D	22	4016						
A	1947	4016						
SA	2046	4016						
Total	4016							

The counted cell frequency is 48.

Table 3: revealed that $\chi^2=336.03$, $df=3$ and $p=0.001$. Since the p-value of 0.001 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05 ($p<0.05$) at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that Collaborative leadership has no significant influence on teacher-administrator relationships in public schools of North Central Nigeria is therefore rejected. This implies that Middle leadership has significant influence on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Middle leadership has no significant impact on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria

Table 4: Chi-square test of the significant influence of Middle leadership has significant impact on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N		Level of Sig.	Df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	4	4016.		0.05	3	316.30	0.001	Sig.
D	260	4016						
A	2600	4016						
SA	1152	4016						
Total	4016							

Table 4: revealed that $\chi^2=316.30$, $df=3$ and $p=0.001$. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05, ($p<0.05$) at 3 degree of freedom, the above null hypothesis was rejected, showing Middle leadership has significant influence on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that middle leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Middle leaders, often serving as heads of departments, coordinators, or other intermediary roles, significantly influence the way teachers manage their classrooms. This influence stems from the professional guidance, mentorship, and organizational support that middle leaders provide, which collectively contribute to a structured and conducive learning environment.

Effective classroom management requires teachers to establish and maintain order, foster positive interactions, and create an atmosphere that supports learning. According to Marzano et al. (2003), classroom management is critical in reducing disruptions and maximizing instructional time. In North Central Nigeria, teachers face numerous challenges, including large class sizes, limited teaching resources, and diverse student needs. The presence of supportive middle leadership can help teachers navigate these challenges, as middle leaders serve as a bridge between school management and classroom-level operations, providing direct support and tailored solutions to individual teachers' challenges.

Harris and Jones (2017) underscore the importance of middle leaders in creating professional learning communities where teachers can collaboratively address classroom management issues. In this study, middle leadership was shown to positively impact teachers' ability to set clear expectations, enforce consistent rules, and develop strategies for handling disruptive behavior. By fostering collaboration and providing regular feedback, middle leaders enable teachers to refine their classroom management practices, ultimately leading to better student behavior and academic engagement.

Furthermore, the study supports the assertion by Bush and Glover (2014) that middle leaders play an essential role in modeling effective practices. Through their actions, middle leaders demonstrate strategies for maintaining classroom discipline, engaging students, and creating inclusive environments. This modeling effect helps teachers adopt and adapt proven approaches to managing their classrooms effectively.

The findings also highlight the indirect influence of middle leadership on classroom management through its impact on teacher motivation and professional growth. When middle leaders actively engage with teachers, recognize their efforts, and provide opportunities for skill enhancement, teachers are more likely to feel valued and empowered. This sense of professional fulfillment translates into improved classroom management, as motivated teachers are better equipped to create positive learning environments.

However, the study also identified areas where the influence of middle leadership could be strengthened. Limited professional development opportunities for middle leaders and a lack of formal structures for mentoring teachers were noted as constraints. Addressing these gaps could further enhance the impact of middle leadership on classroom management.

Conclusion

This study concludes that middle leadership has a significant influence on teachers' classroom management in secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Middle leaders play a critical role in equipping teachers with the skills and strategies needed to create structured, engaging, and productive classroom environments. By providing professional support, fostering collaboration, and modeling effective practices, middle leaders contribute to reducing classroom disruptions and improving student outcomes. The study underscores the importance of strengthening middle leadership structures and ensuring that middle leaders are adequately trained and supported to maximize their impact on teachers and students.

Recommendations

- a) To maximize the influence of middle leadership on classroom management, schools should prioritize the professional development of middle leaders. Targeted training programs should focus on equipping middle leaders with advanced skills in mentoring, conflict resolution, and instructional leadership. Workshops and seminars could be organized to provide middle leaders with the tools and techniques needed to support teachers effectively. Moreover, creating opportunities for middle leaders to participate in

regional and national leadership forums could help them share best practices and gain insights from diverse contexts.

- b) Schools should establish formal mentorship structures that enable middle leaders to work closely with teachers on classroom management strategies. These structures could include regular coaching sessions, peer observations, and feedback mechanisms. Middle leaders should be given dedicated time and resources to support teachers in addressing specific classroom challenges. Additionally, schools should encourage collaborative planning and professional learning communities, where teachers and middle leaders can discuss and develop innovative approaches to classroom management.

References

- Adedeji, S. O., & Olaniyan, O. (2011). *Improving the conditions of teachers and teaching in rural schools across African countries*. UNESCO.
- Ajayi, I. A. (2018). Enhancing teacher performance through improved working conditions and professional development in Nigerian secondary schools. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 22(3), 45-61.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, 34(5), 553-571.
- Bush, T., Glover, D., & Harris, A. (2019). Middle leadership: Drivers of school improvement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(4), 556-573.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, 34(5), 553-571.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1-44.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2017). Middle leaders as catalysts for school improvement: The case for action. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(1), 45-59.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2017). Middle leaders as catalysts for school improvement: The case for action. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(1), 45-59.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Marzano, R. J., Marzano, J. S., & Pickering, D. J. (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. ASCD.
- Umar, M. (2020). Addressing classroom management challenges in Nigerian secondary schools: Strategies for improvement. *Journal of Educational Policy and Practice*, 11(2), 67-78.

