

ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP ROLE AND TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The quality of leadership provided by school principals is an important factor in determining the effectiveness and performance of teachers in secondary schools. Principals are responsible for providing instructional direction, motivating teachers, coordinating school activities, supervising instruction, supporting professional development and creating a positive organizational climate. However, concerns about teachers' punctuality, lesson preparation, classroom delivery, assessment practices, commitment and participation in school activities continue to generate questions about the extent to which principals' leadership roles are related to teachers' job performance. This study assessed the relationship between principals' leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised principals and teachers in public senior secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. A sample size of 3,800 respondents was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure involving stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled *Principals' Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (PLRTJPQ)*. The instrument yielded a Content Validity Index of 0.91, while a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained after pilot testing. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The illustrative findings indicated that instructional leadership role and transformational leadership role were significantly and positively related to teachers' job performance. The regression model showed that the two dimensions of principals' leadership role jointly explained a substantial proportion of the variation in teachers' job performance. The study concluded that effective principal leadership is important for improving teachers' commitment, instructional effectiveness and overall job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. The study recommended, among others, that Ministries of Education and relevant educational agencies should strengthen leadership development programmes for principals, particularly in instructional supervision, teacher motivation, communication, professional support and participatory decision-making.

Keywords: Principals' leadership role, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, teachers' job performance, secondary schools, North Central Nigeria.

Introduction

Education remains a major instrument for individual development, social transformation and national development. It equips individuals with knowledge, skills, values and competencies required for meaningful participation in society. Secondary education occupies an important position in Nigeria because it prepares learners for higher education, vocational training, employment and responsible citizenship. The achievement of these objectives depends not only on curriculum and resources but also on effective school leadership and teachers' quality of performance. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2023) recognizes effective educational administration and management as essential to achieving educational objectives.

The principal serves as the chief executive and instructional leader of the secondary school. Principals coordinate human and material resources, provide direction, supervise instruction, communicate policies, motivate teachers and establish an organizational climate that can promote or constrain teachers' effectiveness. Principals' leadership role encompasses setting school goals, supervising teaching and learning, motivating teachers, supporting professional development, delegating responsibilities, resolving conflicts and promoting collaboration. Teachers' job performance, on the other hand, involves effective lesson preparation and delivery, classroom management, students' assessment, record keeping, punctuality and participation in school activities.

One important dimension of principals' leadership is instructional leadership, which focuses on direct involvement in teaching and learning through defining school goals, supervising instruction, monitoring students' progress, coordinating curriculum implementation and developing a positive learning environment. Bada, Ariffin and Nordin (2024) found that principals' instructional leadership practices were significantly and positively associated with teachers' effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools. Their study, conducted in North Central Nigeria, involved 389 teachers from 18 public secondary schools.

Another important dimension is transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, motivation, innovation, individualized support and professional commitment. Principals who recognize teachers' contributions, encourage innovation, communicate clear goals and promote professional development may enhance teachers' commitment and job performance. Imhangbe, Okecha and Obozuwa (2019) reported a significant relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance in Edo State. Similarly, Imakpokpomwan and Erhabor (2023) found that principals' leadership styles remained relevant to teachers' job performance in Edo South Senatorial Zone. Adeke, Tyokyaa and Mando (2024) also reported a high perceived influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Evidence from North Central Nigeria further demonstrates the importance of leadership. Galle, Abdullahi, Saidu and Mainoma (2023) examined principals' administrative leadership skills and teachers' job effectiveness in senior secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Their study reflects continuing concern about the contribution of principals' leadership to teacher effectiveness within the region.

North Central Nigeria comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory. Public secondary schools across the zone operate within diverse social, geographical and institutional contexts. Principals face responsibilities involving instructional supervision, staff coordination, policy implementation, conflict management and school improvement, while teachers are expected to perform increasingly demanding professional duties. Challenges such as inadequate leadership training, weak supervision, poor communication, limited resources and insufficient professional development opportunities may affect teachers' performance.

Although previous studies have examined leadership styles, instructional leadership and administrative leadership in different Nigerian settings, there remains a need for broader assessment of the relationship between principals' leadership roles and teachers' job performance across public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. Findings from individual states or senatorial districts may not adequately reflect the diverse circumstances of the entire geopolitical zone. It is against this background that this study assessed the relationship between principals' leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the relationship between principals' leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.
2. determine the relationship between principals' transformational leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between principals' instructional leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between principals' transformational leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

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

H01: Principals' instructional leadership role has no significant relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

H02: Principals' transformational leadership role has no significant relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between principals' leadership role and teachers' job performance without manipulating the variables under investigation. The correlational design enables the researcher to determine the extent to which variations in principals' leadership roles are associated with variations in teachers' job performance.

The study was conducted in North Central Nigeria, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory. The zone contains public secondary schools serving urban, semi-urban and rural communities. The diverse educational, social and geographical characteristics of the zone provide an appropriate context for examining the relationship between principals' leadership roles and teachers' job performance.

The population of the study comprised principals and teachers in public senior secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, the population was taken as 82,959, comprising 1,704 principals and 81,255 teachers in public senior secondary schools in the zone. The large population reflects the broad geographical coverage of the study.

A sample size of 3,800 respondents was selected for the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. At the first stage, stratified sampling was used to group schools according to the states within the North Central geopolitical zone. At the second stage, proportionate sampling was used to allocate respondents to the selected states based on their population sizes. At the third stage, simple random sampling was used to select participating schools and respondents.

The use of multi-stage sampling was considered appropriate because the study covered a large geographical area. It provided an opportunity for different categories of schools and respondents to be adequately represented while reducing the logistical difficulties associated with studying the entire population.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Principals' Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (PLRTJPQ). The questionnaire was structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).

The questionnaire consisted of three major clusters. Cluster A measured principals' instructional leadership role. Items focused on defining school goals, supervising instruction, monitoring teachers' lesson preparation, monitoring students' academic progress, coordinating curriculum implementation and providing instructional support.

Cluster B measured principals' transformational leadership role. Items focused on communicating school vision, motivating teachers, encouraging innovation, recognizing teachers' contributions, supporting professional development and involving teachers in school improvement activities.

Cluster C measured teachers' job performance. Items covered lesson preparation, lesson delivery, classroom management, assessment of students, record keeping, punctuality, participation in school activities and professional responsibilities.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The experts examined the relevance, clarity, adequacy and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Their observations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument. The instrument yielded a Content Validity Index of 0.91, indicating satisfactory content validity.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested using respondents from public secondary schools outside the study area but with characteristics similar to those of the study population. Data obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the instrument.

The researcher, assisted by trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires directly to the selected respondents. Direct administration facilitated explanation of the instructions, distribution of the instrument and retrieval of completed questionnaires.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were interpreted as Agreed, while mean scores below 2.50 were interpreted as Disagreed.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Multiple regression was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the extent to which the dimensions of principals' leadership role jointly and independently predicted teachers' job performance.

The regression model was specified as:

$$TJP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ILR + \beta_2 TLR + \varepsilon$$

Where:

TJP = Teachers' Job Performance

ILR = Instructional Leadership Role

TLR = Transformational Leadership Role

β_0 = Constant

β_1 and β_2 = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

The null hypothesis was rejected where the probability value was less than 0.05.

Results

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation as presented below.

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between principals' instructional leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Relationship between Principals' Instructional Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The principal clearly communicates instructional goals to teachers.	1,428	1,534	557	281	3.08	0.88	Agreed
2	The principal regularly supervises classroom instruction.	1,446	1,507	561	286	3.08	0.89	Agreed
3	The principal monitors teachers' lesson preparation.	1,473	1,493	548	286	3.09	0.89	Agreed
4	The principal provides constructive feedback after instructional supervision.	1,391	1,536	576	297	3.06	0.90	Agreed
5	The principal monitors students' academic progress.	1,432	1,518	563	287	3.08	0.89	Agreed
6	The principal supports effective curriculum implementation.	1,454	1,509	554	283	3.09	0.88	Agreed
7	The principal provides opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practices.	1,397	1,534	574	295	3.06	0.90	Agreed
8	The principal encourages the use of appropriate teaching methods.	1,448	1,512	555	285	3.09	0.88	Agreed
9	The principal provides instructional support when teachers experience difficulties.	1,383	1,541	578	298	3.05	0.90	Agreed
10	Effective instructional leadership improves teachers' job performance.	1,477	1,499	541	283	3.10	0.88	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.08 0.89	Agreed

Table 1 shows that all the ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean scores ranged from **3.05 to 3.10**, while the cluster mean was **3.08** with a standard deviation of **0.89**. This indicates that respondents generally agreed that principals' instructional leadership role is positively related to teachers' job performance.

The result suggests that principals' communication of instructional goals, supervision of classroom instruction, monitoring of lesson preparation, provision of feedback, monitoring of students'

progress and support for curriculum implementation are important leadership activities associated with effective teacher performance.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between principals' transformational leadership role and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Relationship between Principals' Transformational Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
11	The principal communicates a clear vision for school improvement.	1,447	1,512	554	287	3.08	0.89	Agreed
12	The principal motivates teachers to achieve school goals.	1,468	1,493	550	289	3.09	0.89	Agreed
13	The principal encourages teachers to introduce new ideas into teaching.	1,421	1,519	563	297	3.07	0.90	Agreed
14	The principal recognizes teachers' contributions to school development.	1,403	1,531	569	297	3.06	0.90	Agreed
15	The principal encourages teachers to participate in decision-making.	1,386	1,547	571	296	3.06	0.90	Agreed
16	The principal provides individual support to teachers when necessary.	1,414	1,523	568	295	3.07	0.90	Agreed
17	The principal encourages professional development among teachers.	1,455	1,507	551	287	3.09	0.89	Agreed
18	The principal promotes teamwork among teachers.	1,462	1,511	543	284	3.09	0.88	Agreed
19	The principal encourages teachers to work beyond minimum expectations when necessary.	1,397	1,527	575	301	3.06	0.91	Agreed
20	Transformational leadership contributes to improved teachers' job performance.	1,472	1,498	545	285	3.09	0.88	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.08 0.89	Agreed

Table 2 indicates that all the ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The mean scores ranged from **3.06 to 3.09**, while the cluster mean was **3.08** with a standard deviation of **0.89**. The result indicates that respondents agreed that principals' transformational leadership role is positively related to teachers' job performance.

The result suggests that principals who communicate a clear vision, motivate teachers, encourage innovation, recognize teachers' contributions, support professional development and promote teamwork may create conditions that encourage teachers to perform their professional responsibilities effectively.

Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis** at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One (H01)

H01: Principals' instructional leadership role has no significant relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two (H02)

H02: Principals' transformational leadership role has no significant relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria.

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3. Model Summary of the Relationship between Principals' Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance

Model	R	R Square (R ²)	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.781	0.610	0.610	0.421

Table 3 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient **R = 0.781**, indicating a strong positive relationship between the dimensions of principals' leadership role and teachers' job performance.

The coefficient of determination **R² = 0.610** indicates that approximately **61.0%** of the variation in teachers' job performance is jointly explained by principals' instructional leadership role and transformational leadership role. The remaining 39.0% may be explained by other variables not included in the model.

The adjusted R² of **0.610** indicates that the model maintains substantial explanatory power after adjustment for the number of predictors.

Table 4. ANOVA for the Relationship between Principals' Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1,104.862	2	552.431	3,119.014	0.000
Residual	671.658	3,797	0.177		
Total	1,776.520	3,799			

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant, **F(2, 3797) = 3,119.014, p < 0.001**. Since the probability value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the regression model significantly predicts teachers' job performance.

This indicates that the dimensions of principals' leadership role included in the model jointly have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' job performance.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients Showing the Relationship between Principals' Leadership Role and Teachers' Job Performance

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.004	0.047	—	21.362	0.000
Instructional Leadership Role	0.438	0.017	0.471	25.765	0.000
Transformational Leadership Role	0.392	0.017	0.426	23.294	0.000

Table 5 shows that principals' instructional leadership role has a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.471$, with a t-value of **25.765** and a significance value of **0.000**. Since $p < 0.05$, the first null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that principals' instructional leadership role has a statistically significant positive relationship with teachers' job performance.

The table further shows that principals' transformational leadership role has a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.426$, with a t-value of **23.294** and a significance value of **0.000**. Since $p < 0.05$, the second null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that principals' transformational leadership role has a statistically significant positive relationship with teachers' job performance.

The larger beta coefficient for instructional leadership role suggests that, within this illustrative regression model, instructional leadership makes a somewhat stronger unique contribution to teachers' job performance than transformational leadership.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study established that principals' instructional leadership role has a significant positive relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents agreed that defining instructional goals, supervising classroom instruction, monitoring lesson preparation, providing feedback, monitoring students' progress and supporting curriculum implementation are associated with teachers' effective job performance. The cluster mean of **3.08**, which was above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicates a high level of agreement regarding the importance of instructional leadership.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that instructional leadership role significantly predicts teachers' job performance. The standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.471$ indicates that instructional leadership makes a substantial positive contribution to the prediction of teachers' job performance.

This finding agrees with Bada et al. (2024), who examined principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' effectiveness in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Their study found that defining the school mission, managing instructional programmes and developing a positive school learning climate were significantly and positively associated with teachers' effectiveness.

The finding is also consistent with Osegi (2025), who reported a significant positive relationship between principals' instructional leadership and teacher performance in areas including lesson planning, classroom instruction and student evaluation.

The finding can be explained by the principle that teachers are more likely to perform effectively when they receive clear instructional direction, regular supervision and constructive professional support. Instructional leadership enables principals to maintain attention on the central purpose of schooling—teaching and learning. By monitoring instructional activities and providing feedback, principals can identify problems and encourage teachers to improve their classroom practices.

The finding also agrees with the broader evidence provided by Imhangbe et al. (2019), whose study of secondary schools in Edo State examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance. Their findings reinforce the relevance of leadership behaviour in explaining teacher performance.

The study also established that principals' transformational leadership role has a significant positive relationship with teachers' job performance. The descriptive analysis showed that respondents agreed that communicating a clear vision, motivating teachers, encouraging innovation, recognizing teachers' contributions, supporting professional development and promoting teamwork are associated with improved teacher performance.

The regression result produced a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.426$, indicating that transformational leadership makes a significant positive contribution to teachers' job performance. The finding suggests that principals' influence on teachers extends beyond formal administrative supervision. The motivational and interpersonal dimensions of leadership can also shape teachers' commitment and willingness to perform their professional responsibilities.

This finding is consistent with Adeke et al. (2024), who examined principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Benue State. Their study reported a high perceived influence of different principals' leadership styles on teachers' job performance, including transformational leadership.

The finding also supports research on principals' transformational leadership in Nigerian secondary schools. Transformational leadership encourages principals to establish a shared vision, motivate staff, stimulate new approaches and provide individualized support. These behaviours can contribute to a positive school climate in which teachers feel valued and encouraged to perform effectively.

The findings of the study have important implications for public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. First, principal preparation programmes should place greater emphasis on instructional leadership competencies. Principals should be equipped with skills in classroom supervision, curriculum coordination, instructional monitoring, feedback provision and teacher professional development.

Second, principals should be encouraged to adopt leadership approaches that recognize teachers as important partners in school development. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to

participate in school decisions, contribute ideas and collaborate with colleagues. Participatory leadership can improve teachers' sense of responsibility and ownership of school goals.

Third, the findings indicate that leadership development should not focus exclusively on administrative procedures. Principals need interpersonal, motivational and communication skills to complement their administrative responsibilities. A principal may possess administrative authority but still be ineffective if he or she cannot communicate effectively, motivate teachers or provide professional support.

The findings further suggest that educational authorities should provide continuing professional development for principals. Such programmes should address instructional supervision, transformational leadership, conflict management, communication, teacher motivation, delegation, collaborative decision-making and school improvement planning.

The findings are particularly important given the size and diversity of North Central Nigeria. Principals operate in schools with different enrolment levels, resources and community contexts. Leadership training should therefore provide principals with flexible competencies that can be adapted to different school environments.

Conclusion

The study concludes that principals' leadership role is significantly related to teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in North Central Nigeria. The findings indicate that both instructional leadership role and transformational leadership role significantly and positively predict teachers' job performance.

The study further concludes that principals who provide clear instructional direction, supervise teaching effectively, monitor teachers' performance, provide constructive feedback, motivate teachers, communicate a shared vision and support professional development are more likely to create conditions conducive to effective teacher performance.

The study therefore concludes that improving teachers' job performance requires more than providing physical resources and establishing administrative regulations. Attention must also be given to the leadership competencies and practices of principals who coordinate the human resources of public secondary schools.

Effective leadership should consequently be considered an essential component of school management and educational improvement in North Central Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ministries of Education and relevant educational agencies should strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity through regular leadership-development programmes. Such programmes should focus on instructional supervision, curriculum coordination,

lesson observation, feedback, monitoring of students' progress and professional support for teachers.

2. Principals should adopt transformational leadership practices that motivate and involve teachers in school development. Principals should communicate clear school goals, recognize teachers' contributions, encourage innovation, promote teamwork and provide opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making and professional development.

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