

Psychological Skills as Predictors of Administrative Competence of Secondary School Principals in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated psychological skills as predictors of administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State. The study used the correlational research design. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 1,653 principals in all private and public schools in Rivers state. A sample of 525 principals (231 public school principals and 294 private school principals) in Rivers State. They were drawn using multistage sampling techniques which include stratified random sampling, simple random sampling by balloting and proportionate random sampling. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study; Psychological Skills Questionnaire (PSQ) and Principal's Administrative Competence Questionnaire (PACQ). The Cronbach Alpha measured was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, the reliability coefficients obtained were 0.84 and 0.82 respectively. The data collected were analyzed with multiple regression, t-test and ANOVA. This finding of the study showed that psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly and independently predict administrative competence significantly among secondary school principals in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals should learn how to adapt their management styles in varied situations in order to sustain good working relationship with teachers

and other staff in their schools as this will translate to high administrative competence.

Keywords: Psychological Skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) and Administrative Competence

INTRODUCTION

The capacity of an administrative head or leader of any group or organization to skillfully, competently and successfully execute their assigned responsibilities, work with others and still maintain a healthy interpersonal relationship with colleagues and subordinates within the workplace, largely depends on one's interpersonal skills, irrespective of qualification. In the world of work and in general social life, one's social conduct may be considered more vital than the individual's educational or occupational skill, especially in trying to establish whether one is an experienced person. It has been observed that a principal's poor managerial or administrative skills and competencies often lead to negative attitudes of the teachers and poor academic performance of the students in secondary schools (Alani, 2003). An effective principal should be one who promotes an environment of trust and respect, makes the teachers and students have a sense of belonging.

Administrative competence in this context can be explained as the ability of a school principal to perform his or her duties effectively, who, in addition to the day-to-day running of the school, also possesses intra and interpersonal skills which enable him coordinate other activities in the school, relate well with teachers, colleagues, subordinates, students and others within the school setting, in such a manner that establishes an effective relationship; making him/her gain trust and respect, maintain a harmonious and healthy relationship with others, and bring out the best in them. It is the ability to successfully and efficiently execute responsibilities that are associated with one's profession or business, as well as competently coordinate other activities that may arise within the workplace, which may or may not be within one's regular job routine, but may facilitate a good working condition and healthy intra and inter-personal relationship.

Adeniyi and Omoteso (2014) noted that a principal's administrative competence may be seen as the extent to which a secondary school principal achieves the school's goals and objectives. They further observed that it may equally mean the ability of the school principal to carry out administrative tasks that are related to instructional management, organizational management, internal relations, students' performance, school-community relations and overall administration aimed at achieving the school's goals and objectives. It is therefore the responsibility of the principal to coordinate available human and material resources; using them methodically towards achieving educational objectives. By implication, the administrative responsibilities of secondary school principals cannot be overlooked.

In our secondary schools today, the roles of principals, especially their leadership skills seem to be generating concerns, particularly with respect to school management. There seems to be an increasing public apprehension as regards principals' administrative effectiveness and managerial skills. Interaction with teachers and secondary school students, as well as personal experience of the researcher had revealed that most secondary school principals lack the requisite administrative competence and task-performance ability. Human beings are social animals and they have different ways to communicate their messages, thought and feelings with others. The personal skills needed for successful communication and interaction are suffering.

The researcher experienced and observed certain loopholes during the period she was working with a principal that deemed it necessary to write on this topic. There is an increasing internal strife between principals and members of staff, which often times extends to the students. Role conflicts and poor job performance among principals abounds in schools. There seems also to be regular and occasional friction between or among some principals and teachers, parents and even students. Positive attitude of some school principals towards the students and teachers, subordinate, especially in Rivers State, has a lot impact on the overall wellbeing of the school, including staff and students' school adjustment. There are debates that some psychological skills such as interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy may predict administrative competence among secondary school principals. Psychological skills are set of knowledge and practice that allow one to effectively understand and

communicate with people verbally and non-verbally through gesture, language, persons' appearance etc. This comprises the deliberate use of pre-prepared and structured sequences of specific thoughts and behaviours and to regulate their psychological state (eg. Feeling of confidence). Therein, this study will examine psychological skills of interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy as predictors of administrative competence among secondary school principals.

Interpersonal skills are cluster of personality traits, personal habits, communication, ability and optimism that characterize our relationships with other people either in workplace, school, churches and other settings. Klein, Deroum and Salas (2006) explained interpersonal skills as goal oriented behaviour, including communication and relationship-building competencies, employed in interpersonal interaction episodes characterized by complex perceptual and cognitive processes, dynamic verbal and non-verbal interaction exchange, diverse role, motivations and expectancies. They further explained that principals' interpersonal skills have the capacity of enhancing their administrative competence Mutuli (2009) observed that individuals with good interpersonal skills are more likely to improve their ability to determine appropriate self-behaviour, cope with difficult situations, absorb stress, deal with ambiguity, structure social interaction, share responsibility positively, and interact more easily with others. He further explained that interpersonal skills relate significantly to high administrative competence among secondary school principals. An individual's ability to be a team player, to collaborate with individuals from different cultures and backgrounds, to interact with diverse personalities and work on specific job in workplace requires good interpersonal skills (Bar-on, 2005). Opemi (2011) stressed that when interpersonal skills are well utilized in workplace it increases the propensity of high job performance.

Another factor that may also predict administrative competence among secondary school principals is intrapersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills refer to those traits or abilities within the individual that aid him/her in solving daily problem (Openi, 2011). They are internal skills in the individual such as attitude, self-organization, perceptions, self-esteem and open mindedness. Intrapersonal skills involve all the abilities which an employee acquired either through training or inherited that propels him to

perform effectively. Mutuli (2009) stressed that intrapersonal skills are skills resident in the individual which include being persistent, patient, working independently, self-motivation and self-discipline. He further explained that principals use these abilities and some of the training acquired to carry out his task appropriately.

In another dimension, self-efficacy may also be linked to administrative competence among secondary school principals. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has in his or her capacity to carry out actions that produce attainments. It refers to peoples believe in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task (Pajares & Graham, 1999). Self-efficacy deals primarily with the cognitively perceived capability of the self. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli and Caprara, 1999). Bandura (1997) maintained that among the mechanisms of humans, none is more central or pervasive than people's belief in their capability to regulate their own functioning and to exercise control over events that affect their lives and attain set goals. He further explained that these beliefs serve as determinants of how people think, behave, feel and act to bring about competency. Huntington and William (1993) observed that principals with high self-efficacy view problems as task given to them to be mastered and at the same time develop interest in the activities in which they participate. High self-efficacy influences the choices they make in deciding whether or how to act, the amount of effort they are prepared to invest in any activity, how long they persevere when confronted by obstacles. A low sense of self-efficacy on the other hand, makes an individual fail to exercise control over things he values and can give rise to feelings of futility and despondency (Huntington and William, 1993).

The educational system is besieged with myriads of problems which are directly linked to the leadership of school heads. Some secondary school principals lack some basic psychological skills that will enable them function effectively. As such most of them see their subordinates and teachers as less human and dish out directives in a manner that is derogatory and insulting. The consequence of this is that most teachers and students are not comfortable with them. As a result, teachers display a lukewarm attitude towards their job which results in a downward spiral in the educational standard. Moreso, the

attitude of some principals has poised a lot of concern which makes some teachers only execute task when the principal is around and see little reason in carrying out other responsibilities beyond their job description. From the foregoing therefore, the researcher is motivated to examine psychological skills as predictors of administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study examined psychological skills as predictors of administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Find out the extent to which psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.
2. Find out the extent to which psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) independently predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent do psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) independently predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State?

HYPOTHESES

1. Psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) do not jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

2. Psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) do not independently predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 1,653 principals in all private and public schools in Rivers state. A sample of 525 principals (231 public school principals and 294 private school principals) in Rivers State. This was done through multistage sampling which includes stratified random sampling, simple random sampling by balloting method and proportionate random sampling. To draw the sample, three Senatorial Districts in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State were randomly stratified. Then, simple random sampling by balloting method was used to draw 3 Local Government Areas in two Senatorial Districts to make up 6 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. Furthermore, proportionate sampling was used to drawn 294 principals from private schools and 231 principals from public schools making a total of 525 principals. Two instruments were used for the study. They are Psychological Skills Questionnaire (PSQ) and Principal's Administrative Competence Questionnaire (PACQ). The instruments were structured on a modified Likert 4 point response options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. The Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, the reliability coefficients obtained were 0.84 and 0.82. The data collected were analyzed with multiple regression, t-test and ANOVA.

RESULTS PRESENTATION

Research Question 1: To what extent do psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State?

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis of prediction of psychological skills on administrative competence among secondary school principals

R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the Estimate
0.681	0.464	0.461	3.045

Table 1 shows the model regression summary indicating that the correlation coefficient R is 0.681, R-square is 0.464 and adjusted R square value is 0.461 respectively. This shows that psychological skill variables (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict professional task performance with a regression coefficient R of 0.681. The predictor variables contribute 46.10% to the prediction of administrative competence among secondary school principals. This shows the extent to which psychological skill variables (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: Psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly do not significantly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of variance associated with multiple regression on the extent psychological skills predict administrative competence among secondary school principals

	Sum of sq.	Df	Mean Square	F	α	p-value	Decision
Regression	4182.950	3	1394.317	150.421	0.05	0.0005	Significant
Residual	4829.362	521	9.269				(Rejected)
Total	9012.312	524					

Table 2 shows that, the sum of squares are 4182.950 and 4829.362 while the mean squares are 1394.317 and 9.269 respectively. The F value of 150.421 is significant at 0.0005 at df of 3 and 521. Since, the p-value ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha level, the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This implies that psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent do psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) independently predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 2: Psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self -efficacy) do not independently predict administrative competence among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

Table 3: Beta and associated t-values showing the distribution of psychological skills on administrative competence among secondary school principals

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients	T	P-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	6.234	1.280	4.86		.000
Interpersonal skill	.249	.040	.266	6.152	.000
Intrapersonal skill	.152	.030	.180	5.114	.000
Self-efficacy	.380	.041	.386	9.288	.000

Table 3 revealed that interpersonal skill had a standardized beta value of .266, intrapersonal skill .180, self-efficacy .386 respectively. From the analyzed data, the results showed that self-efficacy predicts more to administrative competence, followed by interpersonal skill and then intrapersonal skill among secondary school principals in Rivers state. The unstandardized coefficient (B) value of interpersonal skills had a value of .249, intrapersonal skill .152 and self-efficacy .380 with standard error estimate of .266, .040 and .041 respectively. The B value reveal that as the values of psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) increases by a unit, there will be a corresponding .249, .152 and .380 increase in the values of administrative competence among secondary school principals for their psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) respectively. Furthermore, Table .3 also shows that in interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy had t-test values of 6.152, 5.114 and 9.288 respectively which are significant at 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. The alternate hypothesis that psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy)

independently do predict administrative competence significantly among secondary school principals in Rivers State is upheld.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study shows that psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) predict administrative competence significantly among secondary school principals in Rivers State. The predictor variables (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy skills) jointly contribute 46.10% to the prediction of administrative competence among secondary school principals. Why this result stand correct is based on the fact that the success or failure of secondary schools with respect to achieving educational goals, largely depends on the administrative skills of the principal. The finding of this study agrees with an earlier study by McGrew (2015) who found out that interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are the tools used by administrative heads to work effectively, relate and communicate with others in an organizational setting. Mamudu (2009) found out that interpersonal skills significantly predict job performance of principals.

The finding of the present study also agrees with Huntington and William (1993) who found out that principals with high self-efficacy perceive problems as task given to them to be mastered and at the same time develop interest in the activities in which they participate. They further explained that high self-efficacy influences the choices principals make in deciding whether or how to act, the amount of effort they are prepared to invest in any activity, how long they persevere when confronted by obstacles, whereas low sense of self-efficacy makes principals fail to exercise control over work task and can rise to feelings of futility and despondency.

CONCLUSION

In some secondary schools today, the roles of the principals especially their leadership skills seem to be generating concerns, particularly with respect to school management. There seems to be an increasing public apprehension as regards principals' administrative effectiveness and managerial skills. Some secondary school principals lack some basic psychological skills that will enable them function

effectively. As such most of them see their subordinates and teachers as less human and dish out directives in a manner that is derogatory and insulting. The consequence of this is that most teachers and students are not comfortable with them. As a result, teachers display a lukewarm attitude towards their job which results in a downward spiral in the educational standard. This study has shown that psychological skills (interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-efficacy) jointly and independently predict administrative competence significantly among secondary school principals in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended the following;

1. Principals should learn how to adapt their management styles in varied situations in order to sustain good working relationship with teachers and other staff in their schools as this will translate to high administrative competence.
2. Principals should have a quiet time to reflect on their actions, reactions or inactions each day to see if there are grey areas or over sight for possible review. This form of self-evaluation and self-appraisal will reassess their administrative style and help improve their leadership skill.
3. There is need for school counsellors to always carry out sensitization and orientation seminars to educate administrative heads on healthy interpersonal relationship with their teachers, students and others in the school.

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