

IMPACT OF PRINCIPALS' STAFF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IZZI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the Impact of Principals' staff management practices on the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA of Ebonyi State. There are twenty (20) public secondary schools in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided this study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, while sample of 240 teachers, vice-principals and principals were selected through purposive sampling techniques. Self structured questionnaire was used for data collection which consists of 15 items structured on four point Likert scale. The instrument was face and content validated. The Cronach Alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the data generated from the clustered questionnaire, which yielded 0.73 and 0.79. Two research assistants were engaged by the researcher. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while hypothesis were tested using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 Alpha levels. It was revealed in the study that Not all the principals staff management practices understudy such as retention of teachers, leadership styles of the principals, effective communication by the principals, teachers evaluation, constructive feedbacks, training and professional development practices by the principals, motivations practices, decision making practices, supporting teachers in balancing workload and responsibilities are being implemented by the principals. Therefore, the paper recommends that government should ensure proper training and development of principals to improve on their administrative duties since the success or failure of the school system in academic performance is determined to a large extent by them.

Keywords: Principal, Staff management practices, Academic performance Background of the Study.

Education is a critical factor in the development of individuals and societies, and its effectiveness largely depends on the management practices implemented in schools. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) considered "education as bedrock of any meaningful development, be it social, economic or political". Consequently, Nigeria has joined other nations of the world in the march towards worthwhile educational investments and reforms especially in the provision of formal education. Formal education in the country is organized in three levels which include Basic, Secondary and Tertiary. The purpose of each

level of formal education is to effect positive changes in children behavior by exposing them to relevant experiences through systematic presentation of skills, attitudes, concepts and principles. Secondary school education is the form of education children receive after the basic education and before the tertiary stage. Secondary education is managed by the principal, who is responsible for using the school's available resources to promote the achievement of the school's stated goals. The importance of "secondary education lies in its position both as the bridge between the basic and tertiary education and also as the agent for

preparing individuals for useful living in the society” (FRN, 2013).

each level of formal education is to effect positive changes in children's behaviour by exposing them to relevant experiences through systematic presentation of skills, attitudes, concepts and principles. Secondary school education is the form of education children receive after the basic education and before the tertiary stage.

Secondary schools in Nigeria play a crucial role in shaping students' intellectual and personal development in Nigeria. The leadership and management practices of school principals have a big impact on the quality of education delivered. Among the various responsibilities of school principals' staff management practices includes; leadership style, teachers motivation, professional development, communication, resource allocation, encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school, supervising teachers activities, disciplining misconduct teachers, involving teachers in decision making process, delegating duties to teachers, providing timely information for teachers, organizing training programs for teachers, rendering counseling services for teachers, recommending staff for promotion, etc, have been identified as pivotal to enhancing teaching effectiveness and, by extension, student academic performance. The achievement of students academic performance is therefore depends on the ability of the school principals in coordinating and creating a conducive and harmonious atmosphere for the human and material resources therein, that is to say that the principal like any other administrator of an organization upholds a process of continuously striving for the total enhancement of the organization's status. Without the principals' management practices, student's academic performance will be dwindled.

Principal is defined as the administrative coordinator of secondary affairs. Principals can be described as the most senior members of the teaching staff that are appointed to pilot the affairs of the school by

virtue of their qualifications, intelligence or knowledge and teaching experience. They are the chief executive officers or administrators that occupy the apex position in the organizational structure of the school. Egwu (2016) defined the school principal as a leader who must plan, coordinate and supervise the affairs of the school, so that they run smoothly. It could be stated that in secondary schools, the actualization of the goals/objectives of the school is dependent on the principal and his managerial capabilities. Hence, the need for the principal to adopt effective staff management practices for enhanced academic performance of secondary school students in IZZI LGA, Ebonyi State.

Staff management encompasses the strategies and actions taken by school principals to ensure that teachers and non-teaching staff are well-supported, motivated, and competent in fulfilling their roles. These practices directly influence the working environment and the ability of teachers to deliver quality instruction, which in turn affects student outcomes. Studies have shown that effective staff management practices, such as providing professional development opportunities, fostering a collaborative work culture, and maintaining teacher morale, are essential for improving both teaching standards and student achievement (Akinfolarin & Ehinola, 2020).

The role of principals as instructional leaders extends beyond administrative functions; it involves creating an enabling environment for both teachers and students. In many cases, the success of students in secondary schools is linked to the ability of school leaders to manage their teaching staff effectively. This includes strategic planning, fostering a positive school climate, and offering professional development opportunities that empower teachers to improve their instructional methods. Effective staff management practices lead to improved teacher performance, which ultimately reflects in student academic achievements (Adeyemi & Ogundele, 2021).

Research in other parts of Nigeria has indicated that where principals actively engage in capacity building for their teachers, provide necessary teaching materials, and foster a collaborative working environment, students tend to perform better in external examinations (Ogwuche & Agbaji, 2020). Conversely, in schools where staff management is weak, teachers often experience low morale, high turnover rates, and limited opportunities for growth, all of which negatively impact student performance.

In Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, the challenges facing secondary education are multifaceted, ranging from inadequate infrastructure to insufficient teacher training and low morale, to mentioned but a few. The ability of school principals to manage their staff effectively is crucial in addressing these challenges. By ensuring that teachers are well-trained, motivated, and retained within the system, principals can create an environment that promotes academic excellence. Recent research has demonstrated that schools with strong leadership in staff management tend to record better student performance in standardized examinations and other academic assessments (Obi & Nwankwo, 2022).

In the context of Izzi Local Government Area, like many rural regions in Nigeria, there are peculiar challenges that affect the quality of education. Schools in this area often grapple with issues such as under staffing, inadequate teacher qualifications, poor infrastructure, and limited resources for professional development, to mentioned but a few. Principals in these schools, therefore, face the challenge of managing these limitations while striving to enhance academic outcomes. Their staff management practices, particularly how they address teacher motivation, retention, resource management, training and development, become crucial factors in determining how well students perform academically.

Statement of the Problem:

Education is a fundamental human right enshrined in the National Policy on Education. It is a fact that cannot be disputed that

the academic performance of students in secondary schools is a key indicator of educational quality and the effectiveness of teaching. Consequently there is need for all stakeholders to ensure that it must be provided in the most effective and efficient manner. This is because education has been found to play a major role in social, political, economic and cultural perspectives of advanced and developing countries around the world including Nigeria and Ebonyi State particularly. Hence, in education like any other organization, the success or failure of the school can be said to be very much associated with the quality of principals' staff managerial practices adopted. However, the decline in job performance of teachers has its negative impact on the academic performance of students in secondary schools and this has raised a major concern to stakeholders in education sector. Despite efforts to improve educational standards, many schools in the area continue to struggle with low student's academic performance. Many reasons may have been adduced for this dismal in the teacher's job performance. Amongst these was the observed Principals' staff management practices adopted by the school principals. Principals' staff management practices, including leadership style, teachers motivation, professional development, communication, resource allocation, encouraging team building so as to promote cohesiveness in the school, supervising teachers activities, disciplining misconduct teachers, involving teachers in decision making process, delegating duties to teachers, providing timely information for teachers, organizing training programs for teachers, rendering counseling services for teachers, recommending staff for promotion, etc, these directly influence the quality of instruction students receive. When these practices are ineffective, teachers may lack the necessary support, training, and resources to deliver high-quality lessons. This, in turn, negatively affects student performance. Poor principals' staff management practices can also lead to repulsive attitude to work, low morale, and inadequate classroom instruction, further contributing to poor student academic performance. In contrast, effective principals'

staff management practices have the potential to create a conducive learning environment, enhance teacher performance, and ultimately improve student academic success.

Many researchers in the education system had previously claimed that principals' staff management practices could have an impact on teachers' work performance, with a subsequent effect on students' academic success. The repercussions of the preceding situation constitute a major threat to both the educational system and the country. This is seen in the poor literacy rate among young people, which may increase youth restiveness, cultism, armed banditry, kidnapping, and insurgency, to name a few. On the side of the nation, an ill-equipped youth population could become unemployed and find it difficult to compete in today's globalised economy.

Given the importance of secondary education as a foundation for higher learning and workforce readiness, therefore, this study is set to determine the impact of principals' staff management practices on the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

This research work is focused on to examining the "Impact of principals' staff management practices on the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Finding out the extent to which principals' staff management practices influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA
2. Identifying the specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals that have the most significant impact on secondary school student academic performance.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study covers the Impact of Principals' Staff Management Practices on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Izzi Local Government Area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Principal's management Practices such as retention of teachers, motivation of teachers training and professional development of teachers , work load management, communication, leadership styles and decision making to mention but a few were considered. It was carried out in the secondary schools within Izzi LGA.

Research questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do principals' staff management practices influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA?
2. What specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals have the most significant impact on secondary school student academic performance?

Research Hypothesis:

The following hypothesis were formulated which guided the study and was tested at 0.05 significance level.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the influence of principals' staff management practices and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The researcher hopes that the findings of the study may benefit the following:

1. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights to school principals and other educational leaders on how their staff management practices directly impact student academic outcomes. It will highlight effective strategies for managing teaching staff for better academic results.
2. By identifying management practices that influence teacher job satisfaction and performance, this study could guide principals in implementing strategies that improve teacher morale and retention. This, in turn, can lead to a more stable and motivated teaching workforce, which positively impacts the quality of education provided to students.
3. The Educational policymakers and government authorities may use the study's findings to design and implement policies that promote effective staff management in secondary schools. This could lead to improvements in educational quality and student achievement at the regional and national levels.
4. The study will shed light on the specific ways in which principals' management practices affect students' academic performance. By understanding these relationships, schools can adopt practices that improve student learning environments, resulting in higher academic achievement in secondary schools within Izzi LGA and beyond.
5. The research findings could inform training programs and workshops designed for principals, equipping them with practical skills and knowledge on managing staff effectively. This will help to build leadership capacity and improve the overall functioning of secondary schools.
6. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on educational management,

particularly in Nigeria. It will serve as a reference for future research and offer insights into how school leadership affects student outcomes, filling gaps in the literature on principal-teacher relationships and their influence on academic performance.

Review of related Literature

Conceptual Framework

PRINCIPAL:

The viability of the school is based on a school principal who encourages teachers and students to collaborate in order to achieve the institutions and individual goals. As a result, the secondary school principal is the school's instructional leader with the primary responsibility to provide effective leadership to ensure that teaching and learning is effectively done which has an impact on the academic performance of students. By the virtue of the appointment as the head of the school, the school principal must be resourceful, efficient and must be responsible in ensuring that the school promotes effective teaching and learning. The principal has the responsibility to ensure that the employer hires qualified and competent for the school. The principal must be extremely knowledgeable and skilled in areas such as modern instructional techniques, human relations and communications, etc.

Principals' Staff Management Practices

Effective principals employ a range of staff management practices to enhance teacher performance and, consequently, student academic performance. These practices can be categorized into several key areas:

Professional Development and Training:

Professional development is strategic. It teaches people to excel in areas beyond their status quo while training is operational. It teaches people how to be competent at their jobs. Therefore, professional development and training is "acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities that are widely transferable across jobs and

industries”.

Ongoing professional development is essential for teacher growth. Principals should facilitate various learning opportunities, including in-service training, peer mentoring, and external workshops (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Research shows that sustained, job-embedded professional development positively influences teacher practice and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Performance Evaluation and Feedback:

Regular teacher evaluations, coupled with constructive feedback, are vital for improving instructional quality. Effective principals use both formal and informal observation methods to assess teacher performance and provide targeted feedback (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Motivation and Incentive Systems:

Principals can boost teacher morale and performance through recognition programs, merit-based promotions, and creating a positive work environment (Springer et al., 2012). However, the effectiveness of different incentive systems may vary based on context (Yuan et al., 2013).

Conflict Resolution and Communication:

Effective communication and conflict resolution skills are essential for principals to maintain a harmonious school environment. Principals should establish clear communication channels and involve teachers in decision-making processes (Price, 2012).

Workload Management:

Principals need to ensure equitable distribution of duties and manage teacher stress to prevent burnout. This includes providing adequate planning time and resources (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Induction and Orientation:

Comprehensive induction programs for new teachers, including mentoring, can improve teacher retention and effectiveness (Ingersoll &

Strong, 2011).

These practices are interconnected and should be implemented holistically. Their effectiveness may vary based on the specific context of schools in Izzi Local Government Area, including available resources, cultural norms, and existing educational policies (Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016).

It's important to note that while these practices are supported by research, their implementation and impact may differ in the specific context of Izzi Local Government Area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Local factors such as cultural norms, resource availability, and existing educational policies should be considered when applying this framework.

Theoretical Framework:

The research was guided by Systems theory of education management developed by Kaufman (1972). He argued that a system is made up of elements which possess some degree of independence but work collaboratively to achieve common goal. Furthermore, systems theory was proposed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1974). The systems theory model comprises of three components which include input, processor and output. At school level the principal is the key manager, he manages finance, human resource, communication and supervision of curriculum implementation, etc. These variables work collaboratively towards academic achievement in IZZI LGA. The inputs for this study were principals' staff management practices (Independent variable) which included leadership style, communication, teacher's motivation, and professional development and training and resource practices, while the results the learners gave out in terms of learning outcomes (Dependent variable). Principals' leadership style influences teacher motivation and school culture. Enhanced teacher motivation leads to improved instructional quality. Effective professional development increases teacher self-efficacy and skills. Clear communication facilitates goal achievement and teacher

satisfaction. Strategic resource allocation supports teacher effectiveness and student learning. The combination of these factors contributes to improved secondary school students academic performance.

This theoretical framework suggests that principals' staff management practices, when aligned with these theories, can create a supportive and motivating environment for teachers, leading to enhanced instructional quality and, ultimately, improved student academic performance.

Therefore if one component fails the whole system fails. According to this theory, management is regarded as a system. The System's theory approach has advantage of focusing on inclusivity and connectivity between various components and their coordination to function as a whole in order to achieve a common goal. Based on this advantage of the theory it was applicable to this study.

Emperical Review:

Anachuna (2024) studied "Staff personnel management strategies of principals for school effectiveness in private secondary schools in Anambra state Nigeria". Data were collected with the aid of self-structured questionnaire, there was no sampling as the entire population of 23 principals was used for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, while data collected were analyzed using mean score. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. One research question guided the study. The result shows that principals in private secondary schools in Awka south LGA of Anambra State adopt staff personnel strategies of principal for school effectiveness; such as preparing staff duty schedules, having regular staff meetings, communicating the objectives of the school programmed to the staff and involving staff personnel in the decision making process".

Anachuna (2016) studied "Staff personnel management strategies of principal, but the present research is on the impact of principals' staff management practices on the academic

performance of secondary school students. Whereas all the population was used as sample in Anachuna's work while purposive sampling techniques is used in this study".

Tonwe (2019) studied " principals' management strategies for achieving educational objectives in secondary schools in Delta state, Nigeria. The purpose was to examine principals' management strategies for achieving educational objectives in secondary schools in Delta state. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions guided the study, while population of 7533 teachers in 312 public secondary schools from 13 LGA's out of the 25 LGA's in delta state was used. Sample of 377 teachers from 156 public secondary schools from 13 LGA's were selected using purposive sampling techniques. A 26-item questionnaire was validated. After pilot test, data were collated and the score obtained were measured which gave r-value of 0.73. Data collected were analyzed using mean scores. The findings show that: the principals in public secondary schools did not efficiently and effectively employ all the management strategies investigated as regards to their instructional leadership strategies, decision making strategies and school facilities management strategies, in order to successfully achieve educational objectives in secondary schools in delta state".

The research woks reviewed focused only on principals' management strategies for school effectiveness and for achieving educational objectives in both public and private secondary schools in Anambra and delta state respectively. But, there is no established research done that examines the impact of those principal's staff management practices on the academic performance of secondary school students.

Methodology:

This study was a qualitative approach with descriptive research design. The design is appropriate because it helps the researcher in data collection, processing and interpretation. The population of 314 teachers, 20 principals and 20 vice principals among 20 public junior secondary schools in IZZI LGA, Ebonyi State totaling 354

were used. Sample of 240 comprising the teachers, principals and vice-principals were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Self structured questionnaires titled “Impact of Principals' Staff Management Practices on Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (IPSMPSAPQ) was used as the instrument for data collection which consists of 15 items on four point likert scale. The instrument was face and content validated by two experts; from measurements and evaluation and Administration and planning both from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The instrument was found reliable using Cronbach Alpha techniques on the Statistical Package for Social Science

(SPSS) version 20.0 with 0.73 and 0.79. Two research assistants were engaged by the researcher for easy distribution and collection of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while hypothesis were tested with Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 level of significance. Mean of 2.5 and above were considered

Results:

Research Question One:

To what extent do principals' staff management practices influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA?

Table 1: mean ratings and standard deviation of principals, vice-principals and teachers on the extent the principals' staff management practices influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA?

S/NO	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The principal regularly monitors staff performance, evaluate and provides constructive feedback.	240	3.82	0.38	Accepted
2	The principal promotes a collaborative work environment that enhances teacher effectiveness.	240	2.17	0.69	Rejected
3	The principal ensures that teachers have access to professional development opportunities.	240	2.81	0.39	Accepted
4	The principal effectively manages conflicts among staff, which positively impacts student learning.	240	2.63	1.33	Accepted
5	The principal renders counseling services to teachers	240	2.01	0.99	Rejected
6	The principal supports teachers in balancing workload and responsibilities, improving classroom performance.	240	2.90	1.09	Accepted
7	The principal involves teachers in decision making process.	240	2.35	0.95	Rejected
8	The principal's leadership style directly contributes to improving students' academic achievement	240	3.65	0.48	Accepted
9	The principal motivates the teachers/staff	240	2.01	0.99	Rejected
10	The principal recommends teachers/staff for promotion	240	3.61	0.49	Accepted
	GRAND X and SD		2.77	0.78	

From the data analysis in table one above, the respondents in items 1,3,4,6,8 and 10 with mean scores of 3.82, 2.81, 2.63, 2.90, 3.65 and 3.61 are

of the view that principals' staff management practices influences academic performance of secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi

state with exception of items 2,5,7 and 9 with mean scores below 2.5. It was observed that teachers are not appropriately and well motivated which may have caused dismal in their discharging of duties. Also teachers were not engaged in decision making. Teachers don't get proper counseling from principal and working environment that enhances teachers effectiveness was lacking.

Research Question Two:

What specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals have the most significant impact on secondary school student academic performance?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of principals, vice-principals and teachers on specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals have the most significant impact on secondary school student academic performance?

S/NO	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
11	The principal’s efforts to retain experienced and high -performing teachers contribute significantly to student academic performance	240	3.23	.963	Accepted
12	The principal effectively motivates staff through recognition and rewards, which enhances students' academic performance.	240	3.22	.975	Accepted
13	The principal provides adequate professional development opportunities that improve teachers' instructional methods and student academic performance.	240	3.07	.934	Accepted
14	The principal’s management of teacher workload and well -being leads to better academic performance among students.	240	3.40	.612	Accepted
15	The principal’s ability to align staff goals with school academic targets directly influences student academic performance.	240	3.18	1.013	Accepted
	GRAND X and SD		3.22	0.89	

In answer to research question two, the respondents opined that specific principals' staff management practices such as (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals have the most significant impact on secondary school

student academic performance with the mean score of 3.23, 3.22, 3.07, 3.40, and 3.18. The grand mean and standard deviation is 3.22 and 0.89 respectively.

Therefore, the respondents are of the view that specific principals' staff management practices

such as (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals have the most significant impact on secondary school student academic

performance in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the influence of principals' staff management practices and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

Table 3: Relationship between the influence of principals' staff management practices and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

S/N	VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	R	SIGN VALUE
1	Influence of Principals' staff management practices	240	26.176	3.216	0.752 (*)	0.012
2	Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state	240	25.846	2.846		

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

Source: Author's field work survey, 2024.

From the results of the analysis carried out as shown in table 3 above, the value of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between the variable "Influence of Principals' staff management practices" and the variable "Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state", done at alpha level of 0.05 is 0.752 and this value is closer to the figure plus one than zero, indicating that there is a strong positive correlation between the variables. This means Principals' staff management practices have positive impact on the Academic performance of junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state.

as principals' staff management practices improved, the more likely the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state is improved.

Inferentially, since $P\text{-value} = 0.012 \leq 0.05$ and it is significant at 95% confidence interval and the value of R is 0.752 indicating strong positive correlation, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that, There is significant relationship between the influence of principals' staff management practices and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

Also the significant value of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between the "Influence of Principals' staff management practices" and the variable "Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state" is 0.012 and this value is less than 0.05 indicating that there is a linear relationship between the variables. Meaning that

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

Table 4: relationship between the specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals and the academic performance of junior secondary school students

S/N	VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	R	SIGN VALUE
1	Specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development)	240	25.216	3.405	0.647 (*)	0.004
2	Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state	240	26.415	3.511		

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

Source: Author’s field work survey, 2024.

From the results of the analysis carried out as shown in table 6 above, the value of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between the variable “Specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) “Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state”, done at alpha level of 0.05 is 0.647 and this value is closer to the figure plus one than zero, indicating that there is a strong positive correlation between the variables. This means that specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals has positive impact on the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State.

Also the significant value of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between the “Specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and

professional development)” and the variable “Academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state” is 0.004 and this value is less than 0.05 indicating that there is a linear relationship between the variables. Meaning that, the more all the principals' staff management practices are employed, the more likely academic performance of Junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA is enhanced.

Inferentially, since $P\text{-value} = 0.004 \leq 0.05$ and it is significant at 95% confidence interval and the value of R is 0.647 indicating strong positive correlation, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that, there is significant relationship between the specific staff management practices (e.g., retention, motivation, communication, leadership style, resource allocation and professional development) employed by principals and the academic performance of junior secondary school students.

DISCUSSION

The results revealed that principal ensures that

teachers have access to professional development opportunities, principal supports teachers in balancing workload and responsibilities, thereby improving classroom performances, principal recommend teachers/staff for promotion, principal regularly monitors staff for promotion, principal regularly monitors staff performance, evaluate and provides constructive feedback , principal motivates staff through recognition and rewards, principals communicates clearly the goals and objects of the school and provides timely information to the teachers which enhances students academic performance in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State. These findings are in agreement with (Desimone & Garet,2015) which stated that principals facilitates various learning opportunities, including in-service training, peer mentor and internal workshop. For school to record high academic performance from their students, there should be a professional development and training which is essential for teachers' growth and academic performance. Research shows that sustained job-embedded professional development positively influences teachers' practice and students' performance.(Darling–Hammond et al, 2017). It is parts of the responsibility of the principal to look indepthly to select teachers who are qualify for training and development. When this is done, the teachers in question received additional skills and methodologies of handling teaching and learning which will have a positive impact on the students.

(Kraft and Gilmour, 2016) opined that regular teachers evaluations, coupled with constructive feedback are vital for improving instructional quality. Effective principals use both formal and informal observation methods to assess teacher's performance and provided targeted feedback. It is observed that if principals fail in this management practices, it will jeopardize the academic performance of students. The growing concern of the teachers is solely in the hands of the principals. The principals evaluate the teachers, recommends for professional development and training so as to increase their input which impacts students' academic performance.

Also, effective motivation of teachers by the principals through recognition and rewards can enhance students' academic performance. When a teacher is praise, appreciated and rewarded, it boasts the moral of the teacher to unveil some expertise which helps in enhancing students' academic performance. (Springer et al, 2012) said that principal can boast teachers' moral and performance through recognition programs, merit-base promotions, and creating a position work environment. When these are done, the students learning will experience positive response.

It is also observed that one of the principals staff management practices is the ability to support teachers in balancing workload and responsibilities which if done properly will enhance students academic performance. This is in line with Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018 which says “principals need to ensure equitable distribution of duties and manage teachers stress to prevent burnout”. Any teacher that has workload that is above him/her is tantamount to weary down. When this happen, it will affect the academic performance of the students. But when there is equitable distribution of duties, teachers will have time to rest and regain themselves for another day's duty. Any teacher that is overloaded with works easily burnout but teachers who takes workload at their carrying capacity gives out what they have, never misses school/teaching because of sickness or stress which does not hinder academic activities.

The finding also indicates that principals involve teachers in decision making process. Dike O.S, (2023) observed that there will be no academic performance records in the school if the principal does not include teachers in decision making process. Allowing teachers to take ownership of what they do to an extent yields better results. What to teach and how to teach it and who to educate at the school level are being determined by the teacher. There is a high chance of students academic performance when the teachers are involve in taking any decision that pertains to teaching and learning in the school. This is in line with Price,(2012), he stated that “effective communication skills are essential for principals

to maintain a harmonious school environmental which can also lead to high academic performance. Principals should establish clear communication channels and involve teachers in decision making process to enhance student's academics performance. This is true because any school that the head lacks communication skills, understanding of job roles and daily activities will be eluded. When this happened, the school environment will not be conducive for learning, thereby impeding instructional activities thereby negating academic performance of students.

CONCLUSION

The researcher came to the following conclusion about the impact of principal' staff management practice on the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi state, Nigeria. Not all the principals staff management practices understudy such as retention of teachers, leadership styles of the principals, effective communication by the principals, teachers evaluation, constructive feedbacks, training and professional development practices by the principals, motivations practices, decision making

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practices, supporting teachers in balancing workload and responsibilities are being implemented by the principals. It was observed that teachers are not appropriately and well motivated which may have caused dismal in their discharging of duties. Also teachers were not engaged in decision making. Teachers don't get proper counseling from principal and working environment that enhances teachers effectiveness was lacking. These areas need to be improved by the principals in the 20 public secondary schools in Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since the success or failure of every secondary schools in academic performance is determined to a large extent by principals management practices, therefore, it should be a matter of importance that the government and other agencies who are in charge of education to cultivate the habit of training and retraining of principals through administrative duties. Most principals don't under most of the administrative duties which also helps in boasting students' academic performance.

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