

THE NEXUS BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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Abstract

This study examined the nexus between principals' social intelligence skills and administrative effectiveness in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out the relationship between principals' conflict management skills, principals' social skills, and administrative effectiveness. Two null hypotheses guided the study. Correlational survey design was adopted. The study population comprised all the 112 principals in public secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone. Census method was adopted to involve all the principals in the study. An instrument titled "Principals' Social Intelligence Skills and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PSISAEQ)" was used for data collection. It was structured on a four-points rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Its validity was determined by three experts from the Department of Educational Management and, the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), faculty of Educational Foundations Studies, University of Calabar. The Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded the coefficient values of 0.82 and 0.85 respectively. Scatter Plot was used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses. The result revealed a statistically significant relationship between principals' conflict management skills, principals' social skills, and administrative effectiveness. The study concluded that there is a statistical relationship between principals' social intelligence and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. These results underscore the pivotal role of interpersonal competencies in fostering effective school administration. Principals with well-developed conflict management and social skills demonstrate the capacity to resolve disputes, build trust, and promote collaboration, thereby creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. It was recommended that educational policymakers should integrate targeted training on conflict management and social skills into ongoing professional development programs for school principals.

Keywords: Principals', Social Intelligence Skills, Social Skills, Conflict Management, Administrative Effectiveness.

Introduction

Effective administration in secondary schools is crucial for attaining educational objectives, as it involves the efficient management of resources, thoughtful decision-making, and the creation of a supportive learning atmosphere, ultimately leading to enhanced academic outcomes, increased teacher motivation, and overall institutional achievement. This is in line with the submission of Ngene et al. (2024) that in every organization, administration is essential for coordinating resources, implementing policies, ensuring quality service delivery, maintaining discipline, and fostering a positive environment. Principals, as secondary school administrators, are expected to implement educational policies to achieve goals categorized into: opportunity for higher education, knowledge acquisition and teaching/learning outcome (Etor, Obeten & Obona, 2019). These goals can be realized through effective administration. In this study, principals' administrative effectiveness refers to their capacity to efficiently lead their schools and cultivate a productive, positive educational environment. This includes establishing a clear vision, making well-informed decisions, managing resources effectively, maintaining open communication with stakeholders, supervising curriculum implementation, fostering a safe and inclusive school atmosphere, promoting the professional development of staff, and ensuring adherence to educational policies and standards. Scholars define administrative effectiveness as the consistent accomplishment of administrative duties, application of efforts, and technical skills aimed at organizational tasks that lead to the achievement of goals, as well as the extent to which the objectives of a school program are realized (Akinola, 2013; Akinwale, 2017; Thompson & Anachuna, 2019).

Key indicators of administrative effectiveness in the secondary school system include accountability, improvement in school performance, monitoring, and appropriate delegation of tasks. Similarly, Ngene and Obona (2024) emphasized that administrative effectiveness can be evaluated through establishing a clear vision, making informed decisions, managing resources efficiently, supervising and implementing the curriculum, and fostering a safe and inclusive school environment, among other factors. Through these efforts, principals play a crucial role in achieving educational objectives and enhancing overall school performance. Effective principals ensure that school facilities are adequately maintained to allow the buildings and equipment to remain in their original, useful state and makes teaching and learning interesting (Obona, Sampson & Ekeuwei, 2021).

Effective school administration is crucial for fostering a positive work environment, reducing staff turnover, and enhancing job satisfaction. However, administrative ineffectiveness remains a significant concern for many parents and stakeholders. It is disheartening that many schools are underperforming due to the incompetence of their principals, which results in ineffective school organization. Reports indicate that numerous public schools in Nigeria face challenges with poor human and material organization (Onyeizu, 2018). Many principals lack the ability to motivate their teachers to complete tasks without resorting to aggression (Anayo, 2015). Additionally, some principals are overly strict in their interactions with subordinates (Oguejiofor, Igbokwe, & Amaeze, 2022). Other researchers highlight issues such as delays in processing students' results, challenges in meeting deadlines and curriculum targets, inadequate monitoring of students' attendance, mismanagement of records, poor teacher attitudes toward work, and ineffective leadership (Akinwale, 2017; Thompson &

Anachuna, 2019; Yusuf, Mohammed & Kazeem, 2020; Obona, Udang & Egwu, 2023). These troubling challenges are prevalent in public secondary schools within the Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Some school environments have become unsafe for teachers and students. Some of the school libraries and laboratories lack the basic resources to facilitate teaching and learning. If this situation is not promptly addressed, they could impede the achievement of secondary education goals both in the zone and across the state. The complexities of a principal's role, as outlined above, may be managed more effectively and efficiently through the development of social intelligence.

Principals' social intelligence skills can serve as a strategic solution to addressing these challenges in secondary schools by enhancing interpersonal relationships, encouraging teamwork, and facilitating proactive conflict resolution, all of which are vital for establishing a harmonious and productive school environment. A school principal serves as the key leader within a school setting (Okoro, 2018), responsible for managing the institution (Ibokwe, 2018), organizing workshops for both teaching and non-teaching staff (Asuquo, 2019), and overseeing the procurement of school facilities (Nwajuba, 2019). Principals' social intelligence refers to their ability to effectively navigate and manage interpersonal relationships within the school environment. It encompasses skills in addressing social complexities, recognizing and responding to the emotional needs of staff and students, and fostering positive interactions that create a cooperative and supportive school atmosphere. Social intelligence enables principals to build strong relationships, resolve conflicts, and motivate others to work collaboratively toward achieving the school's goals. Goleman (2006) identifies two core components of social intelligence: social awareness (e.g., empathy) and social facility (e.g., influence and concern). These abilities, when applied to educational leadership, empower principals to enhance teacher motivation, improve student behavior, and elevate overall school performance.

Emanghe, Madukwe, Nwanunu, and Ogbeche (2022) define social intelligence as the capacity to understand group dynamics, recognize group situations, and interact effectively with group members to achieve specific objectives. It aligns closely with the concept of social competence, which Bartz, Hall and Greenwood (2018) describe as "the ability to understand the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of others, including oneself, in interpersonal situations, and act appropriately on that understanding to reach a goal" (p. 51). For school leaders, social intelligence entails fostering harmonious relationships, managing social interactions, and building trust among staff, students, and parents—ultimately influencing their efforts toward the school's success. Principals with strong social intelligence significantly contribute to a positive school climate and higher teacher satisfaction. Such principals are better equipped to inspire and guide teachers and students toward achieving the school's objectives. Key elements of social intelligence, including emotional maturity, situational awareness, and empathy for subordinates, enhance a school leader's effectiveness (Bartz et al., 2018). This study focuses on two specific dimensions of principals' social intelligence: conflict management skills and social skills. These aspects are explored to understand how they influence leadership effectiveness and the achievement of school goals.

Principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of workplaces, particularly in secondary schools with diverse ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. Effective conflict resolution involves addressing and resolving disputes to foster harmonious relationships (Iyang, 2016; Doyle, 2022). Principals' conflict management refers to the strategies employed by school leaders to resolve conflicts involving staff, students, or stakeholders. These strategies include collaboration,

compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and domination. Transformational leadership theory provides a framework for understanding effective conflict management. According to Leithwood and Sun (2018), transformational principals often adopt collaborative and accommodating strategies, creating supportive and inclusive school environments. Okeke and Igwe (2020) emphasize that principals who adapt their conflict management approaches to specific situations maintain a positive school climate. Robinson and Morrison (2021) highlight that effective conflict management by principals fosters positive relationships with teachers, enhancing the organizational climate. Additionally, Adams (2017) notes that conflict resolution skills enable principals to effectively guide staff in their roles, while Idowu (2017) observes that teachers lacking problem-solving skills often struggle with focus and composure in the classroom.

Several studies confirmed that the way a principal handles conflicts plays a crucial role in shaping the school's organizational climate, influencing staff morale, teamwork, and overall school effectiveness (Villanueva & Moleño, 2022; Özkan & Ceylan, 2019; Okeke & Igwe, 2020; Thomas & Simmons, 2018). In another study, Yusuf and Ibrahim (2019) investigated the connection between conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions located in Sokoto metropolis. The study utilized a correlational survey research design, with a questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for data collection. The research population included all eight tertiary institutions in the area. A sample of 168 lecturers from four of these institutions was selected. Two instruments, the "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire" (CMSQ) and the "Administrative Effectiveness Scale" (AES), were developed by the researchers. These instruments had reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.85, respectively. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis, revealing a significant relationship between conflict management strategies—such as dialogue, competition, prevention, and communication—and administrative effectiveness.

Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) examined the effects of conflict management strategies on employee productivity in the Nigerian civil service. The study focused on four strategies: collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance, and imposing. Using a descriptive survey and data from 240 respondents selected via stratified random sampling, the findings revealed that collective bargaining and negotiation positively influenced employee productivity, while avoidance and imposing had negative effects. The study highlighted the importance of adopting collaborative conflict resolution approaches to enhance productivity. In a related development, Osei and Boadi (2022) investigated the relationship between principals' conflict management styles and the organizational climate in Ghanaian secondary schools. Using a quantitative approach, data were gathered from 280 teachers through structured questionnaires. The study revealed that principals who adopted integrative conflict management strategies, such as collaboration and accommodation, positively influenced the school climate by improving job satisfaction and fostering better teacher relationships. In contrast, competitive or avoiding styles were associated with low staff morale and student discipline issues. Maxwell and Deo (2024) researched how principals' conflict management strategies influence teachers' effective service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Using a descriptive survey design, they sampled 1,379 teachers from a population of 6,893 across 286 schools. Data were collected with a validated, reliable questionnaire (*PCMSTESDQ*, reliability index: 0.80). Analysis involved mean, standard deviation, and t-tests at a 0.05 significance level. The study found that communication, negotiation, collaboration, and counseling/support services significantly enhance teachers' service delivery.

Principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness

Social skills are essential for fostering effective relationships and ensuring smooth interactions within any social context. Defined as learned abilities that enable competent and appropriate engagement (APA, 2022), social skills play a pivotal role in managing human relationships. For school principals, social skills are crucial in complementing teaching methodologies and enhancing overall school administration (Oguejiofor et al., 2022). Principals' social skills encompass their capacity to interact effectively, communicate clearly, and foster positive relationships within the school community, including staff, students, and parents. These skills, such as empathy, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and teamwork, help principals address challenges constructively and cultivate a supportive school environment. While emotional disposition is important, the social dimension of an individual is equally critical. As inherently social beings, humans rely on these skills to minimize conflicts and maintain harmony, thereby preventing disruptions that could negatively impact the school environment and teaching processes. Therefore, principal's social skills are crucial for administrative effectiveness as they enhance leadership quality and decision-making, enabling principals to inspire collaboration and achieve institutional goals.

Research indicates that principals with strong social skills contribute to healthier school climates, leading to greater job satisfaction, reduced conflict, and improved academic outcomes (Adeyemo, 2017; Goleman, 2006). In a study, Oguejiofor et al. (2022) examined the connection between the management of principals' social skills and effective school organization in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, the study involved 236 principals, representing 80% of the population of 295 schools, selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Management of Principals' Social Skills Scale (MPSSS) and the Effective School Organization Scale (ESOS), with reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.71, respectively. Analysis employed simple regression for research questions and t-tests at a 0.05 significance level for hypotheses. Results revealed that principals' conflict resolution and interpersonal skills significantly predict effective school administration. Emanghe et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the connection between principals' social intelligence and their leadership role performance in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The researchers utilized a correlational research design with a sample of 765 principals and vice-principals. Data were collected using the "Principals' Social Intelligence and Leadership Role Performance Questionnaire" (PSILRPQ). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analyses were employed for data analysis. The results indicated that principals' emotional maturity, situational skills, and empathy for subordinates were significantly linked to their leadership performance. The study concluded that to improve decision-making, boost staff motivation, enhance instructional supervision, and maintain discipline, principals must exhibit a high level of social intelligence.

In another study, Ofojebe and Akudo (2021) investigated how interpersonal skills predict teachers' job performance in secondary schools within the Awka education zone of Anambra State. Adopting a correlational research design, the study involved a population of 1,694 teachers. Data were collected using two structured, validated questionnaires with reliability coefficients of 0.75 and 0.72, determined via Cronbach alpha. The researchers, supported by four assistants, personally administered the questionnaires. Data analysis employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation for research questions and regression analysis to test hypotheses. Results revealed a strong correlation between interpersonal skills and teachers'

job performance, demonstrating that interpersonal skills significantly predicted the job performance of both male and female teachers in the study area. In a similar study, Oguejiofor (2023) examined how principals' communication skills predict effective leadership in secondary schools in Rivers State. Using a correlational research design, the study targeted 285 principals in public secondary schools, with a sample size of 143 principals selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Principals' Communication Skills Scale (PCSS) and the Effective Leadership Scale (ELS), with reliability coefficients of 0.88 and 0.81, respectively, established via Cronbach alpha. Linear regression was used to analyze research questions, while the t-test associated with linear regression tested hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that principals' communication skills are crucial for achieving effective leadership in secondary schools in Rivers State.

The review confirmed that social intelligence is associated with administrative effectiveness. However, it remains uncertain whether principals' social intelligence can predict administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools within the Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Existing research has primarily adopted a global perspective, leaving a contextual gap. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between principals' social intelligence skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in the Ikom Education Zone. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to address the identified gap and contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge.

Statement of problem

In secondary schools, the principal serves as the administrator, manager, and chief executive of the institution. Administratively effective principals establish a clear vision and inspire the school community to work collaboratively toward achieving it. They make informed and timely decisions, efficiently manage financial, human, and physical resources, and communicate effectively with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Additionally, they oversee curriculum implementation, ensure high-quality instruction, foster a safe and inclusive school climate, support professional development for teachers and staff, and ensure compliance with educational policies, regulations, and standards. These qualities collectively contribute to a well-managed and effective school environment.

However, the state of administrative activities in secondary schools in the Ikom Education Zone is troubling. Many principals struggle to motivate teachers without resorting to aggression, while others maintain excessively strict relationships with their subordinates. Challenges such as delays in processing students' results, failure to meet deadlines and curriculum targets, inadequate monitoring of student attendance, poor record management, negative teacher attitudes toward work, and ineffective leadership persist in many schools. These issues often create unsafe and unproductive school environments for both teachers and students. Furthermore, some school libraries and laboratories lack essential resources needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

Significant efforts have been made to address the problem of administrative ineffectiveness in the education zone and Cross River State at large.

The government has renovated school structures, procured learning resources, and ensured the timely payment of salaries and wages. Numerous studies have offered recommendations to tackle these issues, yet the problems persist. This ongoing concern has raised the curiosity of the researcher, prompting an investigation into potential solutions. Specifically, the researcher questions whether these challenges stem from a lack of social intelligence among

principals in their respective schools. Based on this premise, the study aims to examine the Nexus Between Principals' Social Intelligence Skills and Administrative Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in the Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The study examined the nexus between principals' social intelligence skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the relationship between:

1. Principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions directed the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness?
2. What is the relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

1. Principals' conflict management skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Principals' social skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational survey research design to ascertain the relationship between Education Management Information System and principals' administrative effectiveness. It was carried out in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. Ikom is one of the Education Zones in Cross River States, made up of 6 local government areas, namely; Abi, Boki, Etung, Obubra, Ikom and Yakurr. The study population comprised all the 112 principals of public secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State (Secondary Education Board, Cross River State, 2024). No sampling was employed in this study owing to the relatively small size of the population of the study. Hence, all the 112 principals were used for the study through census method. However, the researchers selected a total of 60 teachers (10 teachers from each school) to assess principals' social intelligence skills administrative effectiveness in the respective schools so as to avoid any information bias. An instrument titled "Principals' Social Intelligence Skills and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PSISAEQ)." was used for data collection. It was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A questionnaire letter that explained the purpose of the study preceded the main questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two sections – Section A, B and C. Section A was designed to gather information on respondents' demographic data such as sex, age, marital and educational status. Section "B" was designed to elicit information based on the independent sub variables. While section "C" measures

administrative effectiveness, respectively. The validation of the instrument was established by three experts, from the Department of Educational Management and, from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), faculty of Educational Foundations Studies, University of Calabar. The suggestions and inputs of the experts were reflected on the final draft of the instrument. The Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded the coefficient values of 0.82 and 0.85 were obtained. The overall coefficient value of 0.82 was considered high enough for the instrument.

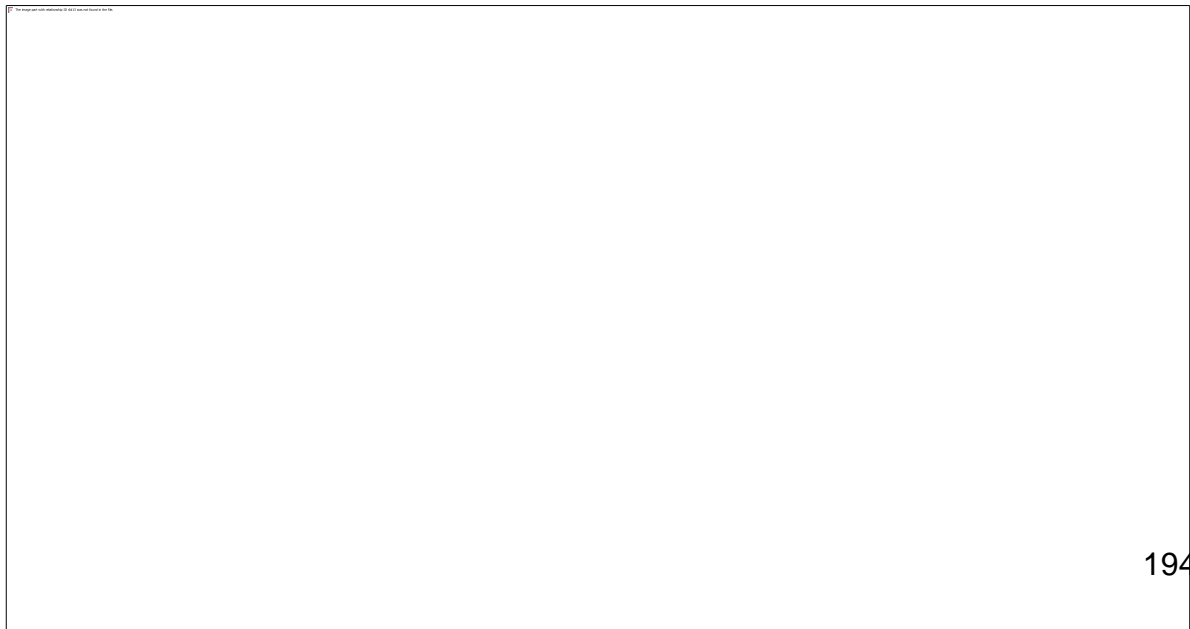
The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The researchers recruited five trained research assistants to assist in the exercise. After obtaining permission from each school authority, copies of questionnaires were administered on the respondents. After three days, the researchers went back and retrieved all the questionnaire copies from the respondents. First, the researcher carefully sorted out the collected questionnaire to ensure that all the items have been well responded to by the respondents. Out of 121 questionnaire copies given out, only 112 copies were correctly responded to by the respondent, and were used for the analysis. This is approximately 94.92 % return rate. Thereafter, the questionnaire was then organized in the order of the variables they were designed to measure. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4point, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1point. But for all the negatively worded items, the pattern was reversed. The scores of respondents on the respective sub-scales were summed and used for analysis. Scatter Plot was used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27.

Results

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State? Scatter Plot was used to answer the research questions. The result is presented in table 1.

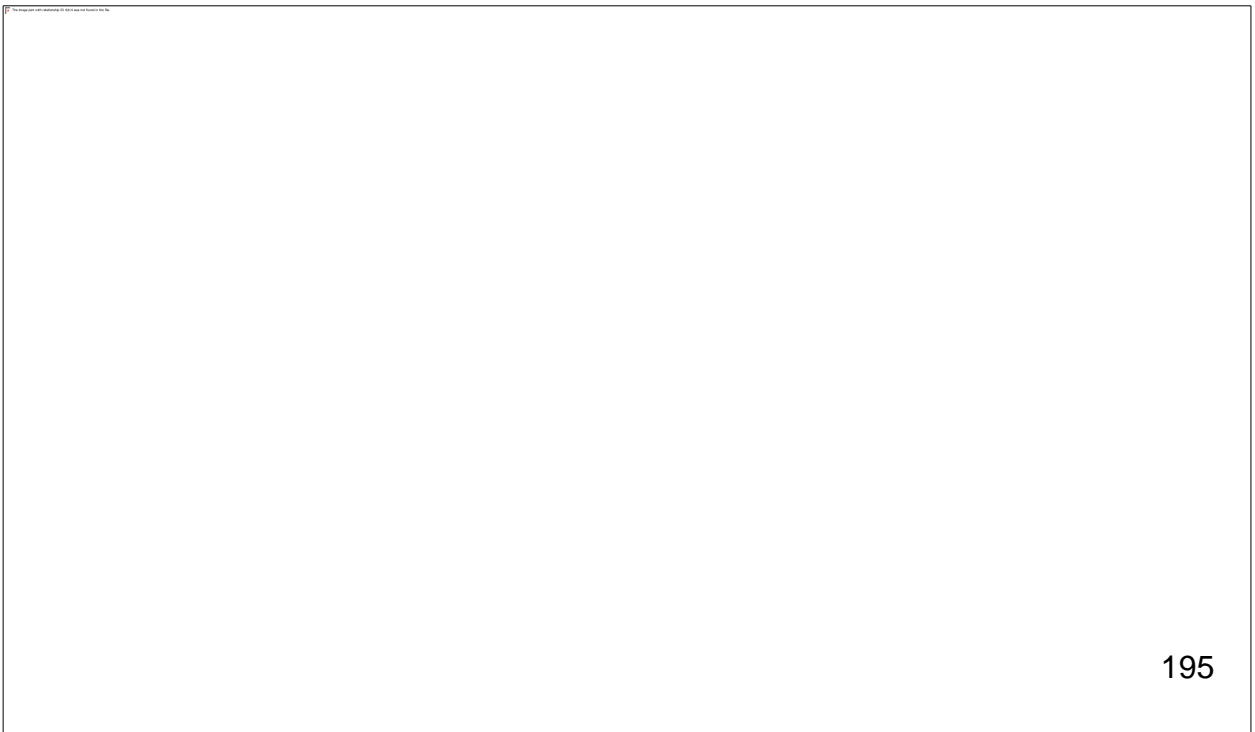
Table 1: Scatter Plot showing the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.



The analysis of data in Table 1 revealed that the point is relatively narrow along the line indicating that the correlation was moderate (0.479). The graph also show that the slop of the scatter lies in a relatively straight line. This indicate a linear relationship between the variables. Finally, the line moved from lower left to the upper right which indicates a positive correlation between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in the schools sampled for the study.

Research Question 2:What is the relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State? Scatter Plot was used to answer the research questions. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Scatter Plot showing the relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.



The analysis of data in Table 2 revealed that the point is relatively narrow along the line indicating that the correlation was is high (0.518). The graph also show that the slop of the scatter lies in a relatively straight line which indicate a linear relationship between the variables. Finally, the line moved from lower left to the upper right which indicates a positive correlation between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in the schools sampled for the study.

Hypothesis one

Principals' conflict management skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result presented in table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficients between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State. The correlation coefficient was statistically significant for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools ($r = .69$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis was is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 1

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State (N = 112)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	R	Sig.
Principals' conflict management skills	19.38	3.09		
Administrative effectiveness	19.54	3.37	.69*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df = 110$

Hypothesis two

Principals' social skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result presented in table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State. The correlation coefficient was statistically significant for administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools ($r = .72$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis was is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State (N = 112)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	r	Sig.
Principals' conflict management skills	20.37	3.29		
Administrative effectiveness	19.54	3.37	.72*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df = 110$

Discussion

The finding of research hypothesis one revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between principals' conflict management skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This could be attributed to the principal's ability to effectively address and resolve conflicts, which is pivotal in fostering a positive school environment. It suggests that principals possess strong conflict management skills that help them de-escalate disputes, handle disagreements impartially, and encourage collaboration among staff members. This approach minimizes tension and cultivates a cohesive, peaceful atmosphere conducive to the growth and success of both teachers and students. Consequently, it underscores the importance of integrating conflict resolution techniques into educational leadership training, as these skills are essential for sustaining a harmonious and productive organizational climate within schools.

This finding is similar to the submission of Robinson and Morrison (2021) who highlight that effective conflict management by principals fosters positive relationships with teachers, enhancing the organizational climate. Adams (2017) notes that conflict resolution skills enable principals to effectively guide staff in their roles, while Idowu (2017) observes that teachers lacking problem-solving skills often struggle with focus and composure in the classroom. The finding is also in alignment with that of Yusuf and Ibrahim (2019) who investigated the connection between conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions located in Sokoto metropolis. The study revealed a significant relationship between conflict management strategies—such as dialogue, competition, prevention, and communication—and administrative effectiveness.

The finding of research hypothesis two revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between principals' social skills and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This can be attributed to the critical role social skills play in shaping interactions, communication, and relationships within a school setting. It may mean that principals in the sampled schools possess strong social skills such as effective communication, empathy, and conflict resolution, which better equipped them to cultivate a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment. These skills promote staff collaboration, reduce conflicts, and build trust, thereby enhancing the overall performances. The implication is that principals should prioritize the development and enhancement of social skills, as they are essential for creating a healthy school environment that drives both teacher and student success.

The finding gives credence to that of Emanghe et al. (2022) who conducted a study to explore the connection between principals' social intelligence and their leadership role performance in

public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The study concluded that to improve decision-making, boost staff motivation, enhance instructional supervision, and maintain discipline, principals must exhibit a high level of social intelligence.

It is in tandem with the findings of Oguejiofor et al. (2022) who examined the connection between the management of principals' social skills and effective school organization in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result revealed that principals' conflict resolution and interpersonal skills significantly predict effective school administration. The finding is similar to that of Oguejiofor (2023) who investigated how principals' communication skills predict effective leadership in secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings revealed that principals' communication skills are crucial for achieving effective leadership in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a statistical relationship between principals' social intelligence and administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. These results underscore the pivotal role of interpersonal competencies in fostering effective school administration. Principals with well-developed conflict management and social skills demonstrate the capacity to resolve disputes, build trust, and promote collaboration, thereby creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

The study highlights that principals' ability to manage conflicts and maintain strong social relationships directly impacts their effectiveness in achieving organizational goals, improving staff morale, and enhancing student outcomes.

Recommendation

Arising from the findings, the study recommended that:

1. Educational policymakers should integrate targeted training on conflict management and social skills into ongoing professional development programs for school principals. These programs should focus on enhancing communication, empathy, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to improve principals' administrative effectiveness and foster a positive organizational climate in public secondary schools.
2. Ministries of education should establish mentorship and peer-support networks for principals to encourage continuous learning and sharing of best practices in conflict resolution and social interactions. Such platforms can help principals refine their skills, adapt to emerging challenges, and sustain their administrative effectiveness over time.

Contribution to knowledge

This study provides empirical evidence that highlights the critical role of interpersonal competencies in fostering effective school leadership and improving organizational performance. The study advances the understanding of how targeted skill development in areas such as communication, empathy, and problem-solving can enhance administrative outcomes. Additionally, it offers practical insights for policymakers and educators, emphasizing the need for structured professional development programs and support systems

that equip principals with essential interpersonal skills to address the dynamic challenges of school administration.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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