



Principals' Communication And Problem-Solving Skills As Predictors Of Peaceful Learning Environment In Senior Secondary Schools In Nigeria

Obaji, Patricia Chinyere¹; Nwabueze, Akachukwu Ignatius¹; Obioji, Josephine Nneka^{3*}; Olawole, Israel Oluwasanmi⁴; Ahamefula, Chika Fidelia⁵; Okechukwu, Reuben Okey⁶ Nnokwe, Caroline Ijeoma⁷; Ugo, Philomena N. N.⁸; Alagbaoso, Kelechi Solace Jerry⁹; Ifediatu, Ngozi Mercy¹⁰; Osuagwu, Loveline Amamchim¹¹; Omilabu, Ayodeji Samuel¹²

¹Educational Administration & Planning Unit, Dept. of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²Educational Management and Policy Unit, Dept. of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

³Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

⁴Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

⁵Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

⁶Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Federal College of Education Technical, Isu, Ebonyi State

⁷Department of Social Science, Imo State University, Owerri

⁸Department of Life Science Education, Imo State University, Owerri

⁹Imo State University, Owerri

¹⁰Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

¹¹Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

¹²Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

***Corresponding Author: Obioji, Josephine Nneka**

^{*}Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Citation: Obaji, Patricia Chinyere, et al. (2023). Principals' Communication And Problem-Solving Skills As Predictors Of Peaceful Learning Environment In Senior Secondary Schools In Nigeria., *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4) 6170-6179
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.11209

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study investigated principals' communication and problem-solving skills as predictors of peaceful learning environment in senior secondary schools Nigeria. Based on the objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design adopted a correlational survey. The population comprised the 3,957 teachers in 194 public senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A sample size of 198 teachers was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. The instruments titled: Principals' Communication Skill Questionnaire (PCSQ); Principals' Problem-Solving Skill Questionnaire (PPSQ); and Peaceful Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ) were used to collect data. The instruments were validated and the reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha method on a sample of 20 teachers from secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The internal consistencies of the instruments were ascertained through Cronbach Alpha Statistics at 0.90, 0.87 and 0.88. In analyzing the data, linear regression were used to answer the research questions. In testing the hypotheses, t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha significant level. The findings of the study revealed that, there is a high predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. There is a significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment. There is a high predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment. There is a significant predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that, principals of secondary schools should possess the needed communication skill to sustain a peaceful learning environment for academic and administrative growth and development. Principals should adopt the problem-solving skill needed to sustain a peaceful learning environment in secondary schools.

Keywords: Principals, communication skill, problem-solving skill, peaceful learning environment

Introduction

In Nigeria secondary education system, principals' communication and problem-solving skills are some of the major variables that can promote peaceful learning environment for improved students' productivity in the secondary schools. Peaceful learning environment supports students' academic excellence when the principals communicate to teachers and students and solve their problems skillfully. Poor learning environment affects the academic performance of students, and this could be as a result of principals' poor communication network and problem-solving skills. Secondary education therefore, is the form of education children receive after primary school and before the tertiary institution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Secondary education is the educational stage that prepares the young ones to embrace the needed knowledge that would guide them to achieve their individual goals in life. Secondary education is the education and training given to students in secondary schools by teachers to equip them with knowledge and skills needed for global competitiveness. Secondary education is a very crucial level of education in Nigeria, where majority of the youths are trained to acquire knowledge, skills, ideas and behaviours through proper task performance of teachers as future hopes and leaders of their various societies (Nwabueze, 2017). Secondary education is managed by principals and teachers to sustain a peaceful learning environment.

Learning environments could be seen as a school environment where students can learn and develop their skills by interacting with other learners to share knowledge and ideas for improved productivity. According to Nwabueze (2014), a learning environment is an academic environment where knowledge is transferred to the learners to help them feel comfortable, encouraged and inspired within the school environment. Learning environment could be seen as a diverse physical location built for knowledge transfer to students and skill acquisition for improved learning outcomes within the school system (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). However, a learning environment is the setting in which learning takes place to improve students' academic engagements and successes within the school system. In the school setting, the characteristics of an effective learning environment may include: students feeling free to ask curiosity-based questions; have opportunities to explore valuable educational experience; be equipped with ideas to improve their knowledge about the subject-matter; use different learning models to be inspired; participate in continuous, authentic and transparent assessments to aid their personal development as well as be prepared for future opportunities; and modeling effective learning skills through their own behaviour (Madumere-Obike, Ukala & Nwabueze, 2013). Educators may also argue that learning environments have both a direct and indirect influence on student learning, including their engagement in what is being taught, their motivation to learn, and sense of well-being, belongingness, and personal safety (Yvonne, 2018). For example, learning environments are filled with sunlight and stimulating educational materials that are likely be considered more conducive to learning than drab spaces without windows or decoration, as would schools with fewer incidences of misbehavior, disorder, bullying, and illegal activity (Nwabueze, Obioji, Anigbogu, Oyibe, Ahamefula, Nnokwe, Osuagwu, Ifediatu & Nweke, 2023). However, teachers interact with students in a learning environment for improved productivity. It is the duty of principals with appropriate communication and problem solving skills to sustain a peaceful learning environment within the school system.

The duty of secondary school principals largely depends on bringing about the needed change in staff and students through the sustenance of peaceful learning environment. Nwabueze and Onyekaba (2017) define peaceful learning environment as educational environment that contribute to a continually evolving healthy learning ecosystem in which knowledge is co-created and shared in a community. Peaceful learning environment refers to the social, academic and emotional contexts of a school that can boost the academic performance of students (Nwabueze, Obioji, Anigbogu, Oyibe, Ahamefula, Nnokwe, Osuagwu, Ifediatu & Nweke, 2023). A peaceful school environment is a product of collective effort between the school, community and government (Ofojebe, 2014). Principles of a peaceful learning environment include love, respect, honesty, courage, empathy, compassion, and kindness (Nwabueze, 2014). Hence, in order to have any kind of school success, there is need to build a peaceful teaching and learning environment for instructional effectiveness (Yvonne, 2018). Therefore, a peaceful learning environment could be defined as a warm and welcoming environment where teaching and learning take place, and conflict resolution fostered to improve students' academic activities through communication and problem-solving skills.

A peaceful learning environment is very necessary and essential in educational investment for academic improvement, sustainability and productivity. A clear link between a peaceful learning environment and educational performance include: production of graduates with qualitative education, sharpened attitudes among students and teachers, and future outcomes of individuals and society as a whole (Nwabueze & Onyekaba, 2017). Peaceful learning environment attract positive effect on both the attitudes and achievement of students, and as well enhances school effectiveness (Ofojebe, 2014). Peaceful learning environment is created through positive relationships among staff, students and host communities as well as maintaining safety and participatory learning programme (Cohen, 2010). An unhealthy learning environment could be seen as one in which rules are unclear or arbitrary, bullying is accepted if not condoned, and teacher attitudes are indifferent, hostility or unnecessarily punitive for high absenteeism, misbehaviour and interpersonal aggression among staff and students (Madumere-Obike, Ukala & Nwabueze, 2013). This implies that, a peaceful school climate is a key ingredient in academic success and institutional development. Peaceful learning environment does not only engage students academically, but strongly associated with a range of

positive health and behavioural outcomes (Nwabueze, Obioji, Anigbogu, Oyibe, Ahamefula, Nnokwe, Osuagwu, Ifediatu & Nweke, 2023). Hence, peaceful learning environment could positively or negatively influence teaching and learning effectiveness depending on the management principles involved (Glantz, 2008).

A peaceful learning environment is determined by a broad range of factors from disciplinary policies to instructional quality as well as student and teacher morale for improved productivity. In secondary schools in Nigeria, the learning environments seem not to be healthy and peaceful as expected due to incessant communal clashes between the host communities, Bokoharam activities, cult activities, bandits, headers and regular fire outbreaks as a result of hunting practices taking place within the school environments (Nwabueze, Obioji, Anigbogu, Oyibe, Ahamefula, Nnokwe, Osuagwu, Ifediatu & Nweke, 2023). Nwabueze (2014) states that, a learning environment that is not peaceful affects teaching, learning, research and extracurricular activities, which eventually leads to poor academic performance among the students. The environments which are very bushy have become hideouts for wild animals and bad gangs, and have made the school environment very unhealthy, inharmonious, agitated, turbulent and non-peaceful for learning (Nwabueze & Onyekaba, 2017). Madumere-Obike and Nwabueze (2010) are of the opinion that, when secondary school learning environments are not peaceful, students become very uncomfortable in their learning attitudes, confused in their learning habits, unsupported in the acquisition of knowledge, and become afraid to manage their learning abilities, which eventually affect their general academic performance negatively. All these negative ills could be as a result of poor communication and problem-solving skills among principals eventually affect the learning environment negatively.

The learning environment is ensured by school principal to help the students acquire relevant successes needed for self-development and growth of the institution through proper leadership practices expected of them. Secondary school principals that are very effective with their mode of communication and problem-solving principle would ensure positive work relationship among staff and students, and administer educational programmes to enhance peaceful learning environment (Nwabueze, 2016). Principals who have poor communication and problem-solving skills become weak in performing their administrative duties, which normally affect the learning environment negatively. Hence, in the present insecurity situations in Nigeria, principals' communication and problem-solving skills are strongly required to sustain a peaceful learning environment in secondary schools.

Communication skill is a leadership skill expected of principals to communicate information properly and clearly to maintain a peaceful learning environment for quality learning outcomes. It is a systematic process whereby a principal gives and receives information, and transfers ideas and opinions to staff and student to promote a peaceful learning environment of secondary schools. According to Francis and Oluwatoyin (2019), communication skill could be seen as that expected of the school principals to transmit or pass information to the subordinates to sustain a peaceful learning environment. The principal of a school is expected to possess communication skill to influence the staff improve on instructional transfer and enhance a peaceful learning environment. Communication skill entails acquiring the expected skill of speaking appropriately to staff and students while maintaining good eye contact, eloquent speech with tailored language, listening effectively, writing clearly with concise language, being confident, friendly, empathy, use of question, open mindedness and presenting ideas appropriately (Onyeke, Nwabueze & Ogbonnaya, 2023). The school principal is expected to be competent on communication skill and at the same time, be aware of their non-verbal behaviour and be extremely skillful in predicting subordinates (Manafa, 2018). Improper use of communication skills by secondary school principals poses a lot of negative effect on school management, which could lead to unsustainable and non-peaceful learning environment, and as well creates impediment in teaching and learning processes. Most of the times, improper adoption of communication network and skills by a secondary school principal could lead to poor and violent learning environment in secondary schools, which do not support successful academic growth, but brings about conflicts within the school system (Okechukwu, Nwabueze & Ogbonnaya, 2023). Therefore, principals must be logical in communicating ideas to both the staff and students to promote and sustain a peaceful learning environment thereby; proffering lasting solutions to problems that may accrue. This implies that secondary school principals with good communication skill promote and sustain a peaceful learning environment by solving problems of staff and students within the school.

Principals' problem-solving skill could be seen as the ability of the principals to handle difficult or unexpected situations in a school system by resolving conflicts and sustaining a peaceful learning environment. Secondary schools must rely on principals who can assess both kinds of situations and calmly identify solutions that are geared towards sustaining a peaceful learning environment. Maciej (2020) views problem-solving skill as a skill consisting of several interrelated abilities including: analytical, collaboration, communication, creativity, decision-making and research abilities that can minimise conflicts and violence to sustain a peaceful learning environment. Hence, problem-solving skill consists of two main components and they include: identifying the problem and deciding on the best solution to sustain a peaceful learning environment (Madumere-Obike, Okeke & Nwabueze, 2014). According to Uche, Nwabueze and Ememe (2009), problem-solving skill of principals enable them to acquire practical skills to manage staff and students for improved and sustained peaceful learning environments. Therefore, problem-solving skill helps to build-up creative and innovative minds among secondary school principals to make proper decisions on

ways of sustaining peaceful learning environments. Hence, problems can be solved by principals to enhance a peaceful learning environment through proper communication network.

Principals' communication and problem-solving skills help to sustain and facilitate peaceful learning environments in secondary schools for improved performance of students. These skills entail that, the principals are involved in coordinating teachers' and students' day-to-day activities in a sustained peaceful learning environment through appropriate leadership and administrative practices. Principals' communication and problem-solving skills enable them to guide and improve the teachers' functional performance in disseminating knowledge to the students in a peaceful learning environment for students' productivity and institutional development (Nwabueze, Obioji, Anigbogu, Oyibe, Ahamefula, Nnokwe, Osuagwu, Ifediatu & Nweke, 2023). Thus, these skills are adopted by principals to support the teachers in performing their duties and influencing learning in the school environment for sustainability of academic growth and institutional development. Principals' communication and problem-solving skills are very vital in ensuring that teachers carry out their instructional activities for improved learning output in a peaceful learning environment (Ukaigwe, Nwabueze & Nwokedi, 2019). They are entrusted to enhance instructions and clear a path that would improve teaching-learning processes and sustain peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Nigeria.

The principals, being 'administrative leaders' are in position to communicate effectively with teachers when supervising and monitoring the instructional processes, disseminating current information and evaluating performance in order to improve learning using modern teaching techniques in establishing and sustaining a peaceful learning environment. Igoni and Nwabueze (2021) stated that, principals are the fulcrum upon which the success or failure of school administration revolves around, and must maintain close ties with the teachers and students when performing their duties to sustain a peaceful learning environment. Principals' communication and problem-solving skills are among the various skills that could help to promote and sustain peaceful learning environment for institutional productivity in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the learning environments seem not to be healthy and peaceful as expected due to incessant communal clashes between the host communities, Bokoharam activities, cult activities, bandits, headers and regular fire outbreaks as a result of hunting practices taking place within the school environments. Hence, a learning environment that is not peaceful affects teaching, learning, research and extracurricular activities negatively leading to poor academic achievement among the students. Some secondary school environments in the study area are very bushy which had become hideouts for wild animals and bad gangs, and all these have made the school environment very unhealthy, inharmonious, agitated, turbulent and non-peaceful for teaching and learning. In secondary schools Nigeria in this recent time, some hoodlums come into the horrible school environment to rape some female students, initiate the students into cultism and even kidnap students for ransoms, which have really affected teaching and learning in secondary schools. Some schools are equally faced with religious violence, intra-communal and inter-communal clashes, armed robbery, series of assassinations, kidnappings, encroachments into the land belonging to the institutions, attacking the institutions with weapons and other deadly tools that may pose unhealthy and non-peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. All these ill-human practices and insecurity have affected the school environments negatively, which had kept the learning environment un-peaceful. However, secondary school learning environments that are not peaceful become very uncomfortable in students' learning attitudes, bring about confusion in students' learning habits, unsupported classroom discussion, and become afraid to manage their learning abilities, which eventually affect their general academic performance negatively. All these negative ills may also be rooted from non-possession of communication and problem-solving skills by the principals would make them not to live-up with their leadership expectations, which eventually make the learning environment non-peaceful.

Communication network and problem solving skills are needed by every principal to sustain a peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Hence, poor communication and problem-solving skills among the principals affect the learning environments negatively, which directly reduce the academic achievement of students. It is the expectation of the government, parents, and even students that quality education can be received by students in a peaceful learning environment through the adoption of appropriate communication and problem-solving skills among principals. However, there are growing fears in the minds of people with regard to the negative signals coming from the system over poor communication and problem-solving skills among principals in secondary schools in the State. The poor practices seem to render the school learning environment non-peaceful of which empirical researches and personal observations in this state have equally been sustained.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate principals' communication and problem-solving skills as predictors of peaceful learning environments in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment; and
2. ascertain the predictive power of principals' problem-solving skill on peaceful learning environment.

Research Questions

The following seven research questions guided the study.

1. What is the predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment?
2. What is the predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment?

Hypotheses

The following seven null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment.

H₀₂: There is no significant predictive power of principals' problem-solving skill on peaceful learning environment.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a correlational survey design. The population of the study comprised all the 3,957 teachers in the 194 public senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A sample size of 198 teachers was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. In doing so, 12 per cent of the population of the senior secondary schools in each zone were drawn using simple random sampling technique, which gave six (6) senior secondary schools in Onueke Education Zone, eight (8) senior secondary schools in Abakiliki Education Zone, and nine (9) senior secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone giving a total of 23 secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Equally, 5 per cent of teachers were drawn from the population using stratified random sampling technique. This gave a sample of 53 teachers from Onueke Education Zone, 59 teachers from Abakiliki Education Zone, and 86 teachers from Afikpo Education Zone making a sample size of 198 teachers. Three instruments were used for data collection. The instruments used for data collection are Questionnaire titled: 'Principals' Communication Skill Questionnaire (PCSQ)'; 'Principals' Problem-Solving Questionnaire (PPSQ)'; and 'Peaceful Learning Environment Questionnaire (PLEQ)' developed by the researchers. The three instruments are non-cognitive assessment tools. Each questionnaire was divided into two sections – section A & B. Section A dealt with demographic information and section B contained questionnaire items designed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The items of the instruments were structured using the Modified Likart four-point scale of: Strongly Agree (SA - 4), Agree (A - 3), Disagree (D - 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD - 1). The instruments were validated by three specialists in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha method on a sample of 20 teachers from secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. However, 20 copies of each questionnaire were administered to the respondents once. Thereafter, the internal consistencies of the instruments were determined at 0.90 for communication skill; 0.87 for problem-solving skill; and 0.88 for Peaceful Learning Environment. In analyzing the data, linear regression was used to answer the research questions. In testing the hypotheses, t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha significant levels.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment?

Table 1: Linear regression analysis on the predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square (R ²)	Decision
1	0.78 ^a	0.61	0.60	High Predictive Power

Key (R): Very Low = 0.01-0.20; Low = 0.21-0.40; Moderate = 0.41-0.60; High = 0.61-0.80; Very High = 0.81 and above

a. Predictors: (Constant), principals' communication skills

Table 1 revealed that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This shows that, the regression coefficient (R) is given as 0.78 while the adjusted regression square R² is given as 0.60 respectively. It is then predicted that, the regression coefficient of 0.78 had a coefficient of determination of 0.61, which indicated that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This implied that, principals with communication skill enhance peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. However, principals with communication

skill promote peaceful learning environment in secondary schools for quality output among students. Hence, the coefficient of determination of 0.61 indicates that 61% variation on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools could be as a result of principals' communication skill. This is an indication that, 39% of the variation on peaceful learning environment could be attributed to other factors such as teacher qualification and competences other than principals' communication skill.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment.

Table 2: t-test associated with linear regression analysis on the significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Alpha level	Decision
		B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	10.25	0.71		12.18	0.00		
	Principals' communication skill	0.72	0.07	0.78	26.52	0.01	0.05	Significant/ Rejected

Table 2 revealed that, the t-test value associated with linear regression on the predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State is 26.52. The analysis showed that, the t-value of 26.52 is greater than the p-value of 12.18 indicating that the hypothesis is significant with a significant value of 0.01, which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Research question Two: What is the predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment?

Table 3: Linear regression analysis on the predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	0.74 ^a	0.55	0.54	High Predictive Power

a. Predictors: (Constant), principals' problem solving skill

b.

Table 3 revealed that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This shows that, the regression coefficient (R) is given as 0.74 while the adjusted regression square R^2 is given as 0.54 respectively. It is then predicted that, the regression coefficient of 0.74 had a coefficient of determination of 0.55, which indicated that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This implied that, principals' problem solving skill promote peaceful learning environment for students' productivity in secondary schools. Hence, the coefficient of determination of 0.55 indicates that 55% variation on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools could be as a result of principals' problem solving skill. This is an indication that, 45% of the variation in teachers' productivity could be attributed to other factors such as teaching materials and methods other than principals' problem solving skill.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment.

Table 4: t-test associated with linear regression analysis on the predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Alpha level	Decision
		B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	11.65	0.68		15.06	0.00		
	Principals' problem-solving skill	0.69	0.06	0.74	29.77	0.00	0.05	Significant/ Rejected

Table 4 revealed that, the t-test value associated with linear regression on the predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State is 29.77. The analysis showed that, the t-value of 29.77 is greater than the p-value of 15.06 indicating that the hypothesis is significant with a significant value of 0.00, which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Hence, the null

hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Principals with good communication skills promote peaceful learning environment in secondary schools by: exploring explicit directives for team operations among students; establishing proper communication network among students; using the communication network within the school to create new ideas; interacting appropriately with students to enhance their performance abilities; and using eloquent speech with tailored language while addressing staff to perform their instructional tasks. This implied that, principals with communication skill sustain peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. However, principals with communication skill promote peaceful learning environment in secondary schools for quality output among students. The test of hypothesis one had shown that, there is a significant predictive power of principals' communication skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Principals possessing communication skills, sustain peaceful learning environment by having good listening ear to staff complains about the students' behavioural attitude, clearly writing with concise language to enable the staff understand the message for quality learning outcome, being confident in communicating administrative ideas that promote peaceful learning environment, being friendly to students for improved learning outcomes, having the ability to understand the students' emotions for knowledge building, sharing in the feelings of students to have a friendly learning environment, Using questionings to know students' opinions, and being open to all students through the teachers to promote peace in the school.

In line with the findings, Nwogbo, Nwankwo and Nwachukwu (2019) indicated that, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the communication strategies adopted for the sustenance of peaceful learning environment. Manafa (2018) revealed that poor communication network reduces the standard of education, hinders educational policy implementation, misunderstanding, lack of unity of purpose in the school, and hinders the sustenance of peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. Akinwale and Okotoni (2018) had shown that the common communication styles adopted by secondary school principals were inclusive, open and assertive communication styles in that order. Nwite and Eze (2016) revealed that application of listening skills, writing skills and feedback skills in communication can improve the managerial communication skills of school principals in sustaining peaceful learning environment. Communication skills make the principals to be more dedicated and motivated in adopting various performance management strategies for the sustenance of peaceful learning environment. Onyeke, Nwabueze and Ogbonnaya (2023) revealed that, the extent to which principals' verbal communication skill enhance peaceful learning environment in secondary schools is high; while the extent to which principals' non-verbal communication skill enhance peaceful learning environment is moderately high. Also, the extent to which principals' written communication skill enhance peaceful learning environment is very high.

The findings of this study finally revealed that, there is a high and positive predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. In order to sustain peaceful learning environment, principals must possess problem solving skill and be able to identify the problem of subordinates, understand the cause of a particular problem experienced by subordinates, generate solutions to problems identified, make proper decision about how to solve problems that arises in the school, communicate problems concerning the students to them for quick solutions, and possess the ability to solve problems of the students in a timely manner. This implied that, principals' problem solving skill promote peaceful learning environment for students' productivity in secondary schools. The test of hypothesis two had shown that, there is a significant predictive power of principals' problem solving skill on peaceful learning environment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Principals with problem solving skill sustain peaceful learning environment by possessing the ability to monitor teachers evaluating students' performance, selecting the best alternative of solving students' problems, involving students in solving problems concerning them, presenting matters that concerns the school clearly to the students, and presenting ideas precisely in a variety of modes to students.

In line with the findings of this study, Nwabueze, Ememe and Nzeneri (2010) revealed that successful problem-solving skills among principals support peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. However, there was no statistically significant difference among the principals' responses on problem solving skills and peaceful learning environment. Gulsen (2015) revealed a difference in the administrator's level of using scientific problem-solving techniques to sustain peaceful learning environment. The school administrators usually used the scientific problem-solving skills in solving organizational problems they encountered within the school environment. Nwabueze (2017) agreed that, principals who are effective problem-solvers explicitly check their own assumptions about the problem, relate the problem to the wider vision and values of the school, clearly state their own interpretation of the problem without reasons, and actively seek the interpretation of others to sustain a peaceful learning environment. Such principals anticipate obstacles and how they could be overcome on time, plan a collaborative problem-solving process, develop widely shared goals for the process, overtly manage the meeting and discussion processes, and

express little or no negative emotion, frustration or impatience to build a peaceful learning environment (Khan, Hafeez & Saeed, 2012).

Conclusion

The study had shown that principals' communication and problem-solving skills are leadership expectations of principals that can sustain peaceful learning environment. Therefore, every principal requires effective communication and problem-solving skills to effectively run the school system smoothly and sustain peaceful learning environment. Hence, principals' communication skill promotes peaceful learning environment in secondary schools; and this is made possible by establishing proper communication network among students; using the communication network within the school to create new ideas; and interacting appropriately with students to enhance their performance abilities. This is achieved by using eloquent speech with tailored language while addressing staff to perform their instructional tasks, and students' learning outcomes within a peaceful learning environment. The educational implications of this finding is that, principals with poor or no communication skills find it difficult to support peaceful learning environments in secondary schools. This is because they have no good communication network to create new ideas. They do not interact appropriately with students, and they find it very difficult to use eloquent speech with tailored language while addressing staff and students. Principals with poor or no communication skills do not have good listening ear to staff complaints on students' behavioural attitude. They are not confident in communicating administrative ideas that promote peaceful learning environment in the school system. Hence, principals with good communication skill become very active administrator in sustaining peaceful learning environments of secondary schools.

Also, principals' problem solving skill helps to promote peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. Principals' inability to solve problems in secondary schools would make the learning environment non-peaceful by increasing the problems of subordinates. It becomes difficult to make proper decision on how to solve problems that arises in the school in a timely manner. Principals without problem solving skill cannot monitor teachers and students' progresses. They become confused in selecting the best alternative of solving students' problems, cannot present matters that concerns the school clearly to the students, and at the same time, may not present ideas precisely in a variety of modes to students. Hence, principals with active problem-solving skill have the capacity to sustain peaceful learning environments of secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers made the following recommendations.

1. Principals should possess the required communication skill to sustain peaceful learning environments by exploring explicit directives for team operations; establishing proper communication network among students; using the communication network within the school to create new ideas; interacting appropriately with students to enhance their performance abilities; and using eloquent speech with tailored language while addressing staff to perform their instructional tasks.
2. Principals should acquire problem-solving skill to sustain peaceful learning environments by identifying the problem of subordinates, understanding the cause of a particular problem experienced by subordinates, generating solutions to problems identified, communicating problems concerning the students to them for quick solutions, and possessing the ability to solve problems of the students in a timely manner.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Availability of Data and Material: Not Applicable

Acknowledgements: Not Applicable.

AUTORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Obaji, Patricia Chinyere; Nwabueze, Akachukwu Ignatius¹; Okechukwu, Reuben Okey6 Nnokwe, Caroline Ijeoma; Ugo, Philomena N. N.; Alagbaoso, Kelechi Solace Jerry

Research: Nwabueze, Akachukwu Ignatius; Obioji, Josephine Nneka; Olawole, Israel Oluwasanmi

Methodology: Alagbaoso, Kelechi Solace Jerry; Ifediatu, Ngozi Mercy; Osuagwu, Loveline Amamchim; Omilabu, Ayodeji Samuel

Data Analysis: Obaji, Patricia Chinyere; Nwabueze, Akachukwu Ignatius; Ifediatu, Ngozi Mercy; Osuagwu, Loveline Amamchim; Omilabu, Ayodeji Samuel

Writing: Nwabueze, Akachukwu Ignatius; Chika Fidelia; Okechukwu, Reuben Okey Nnokwe, Caroline Ijeoma; Ugo, Philomena N. N.; Alagbaoso, Kelechi Solace Jerry

Writing-Revision and Editing: Obaji, Patricia Chinyere; Kelechi Solace Jerry; Ifediatu, Ngozi Mercy; Osuagwu, Loveline Amamchim; Omilabu, Ayodeji Samuel

REFERENCES

1. Akinwale, A. S. & Okotoni, C. A. (2018). Assessment of Principals' Communication Styles And Administrative Impact On Secondary Schools In Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, 2(1), 43-48.
2. Cohen, A. (2010). The impact of employee involvement on organizational performance: A review of the literature. *Management Review*, 18(2), 97-113.
3. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education (5TH Edition)*. Abuja: NERDC Press.
4. Francis, O.B. & Oluwatoyin, F.C. (2019). Principals' personnel characteristic skills: a predictor of teachers' classroom management in Ekiti State Secondary School. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 7(1), 72-103. DOI: 10.17583/ijelm.2018.3573
5. Glantz, A. M. (2008). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate pro-social behaviour. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 215-224.
6. Glossary of Education Reform (2014). Understanding standards of competency-based learning. Retrieved from <https://www.edglossary.org/understanding-standards/>.
7. Gulsen, U. & Turhan, A. (2015). Strategies for improving English language listening skill (The case of Distract BANNU). *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(7), 67-76.
8. Igoni, C. G. & Nwabueze, A. I. (2021). Teachers' professional competences in knowledge management for effective instructional delivery in secondary schools in Rivers State. *International Journal of Educational Research and Policy Making (IJERPM)*, 4(1), 580-592
9. Khan, K.; Hafeez, K. S. & Saeed, A. K. (2012). Prevalence of various mutations in beta thalassaemia and its association with haematological parameters. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22352100/>
10. Maciej, A. (2020). Principal communication skills and social development of primary school student in the academic year. *International Transaction Journal, Engineering, Management and Applied Science and Technologies*, 10(8), 2225-9860.
11. Madumere-Obike, C.U. & Nwabueze, A.I. (2018). Research and innovations in Government: Education trade union relations. In M. T. Joshua (Ed.) *Research and innovations in Nigeria Education: Nigerian Academy of Education Year Book 10* (Pp. 456-477). Nigeria: Bloann Educational Publishers.
12. Madumere-Obike, C.U., Okeke, E.O. & Nwabueze, A.I. (2014). The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Male and Female Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions in the Universities in Rivers State. *Journal of Gender and Women Development (JOGEWOD)*, 1(1); 1-15.
13. Madumere-Obike, C.U., Nwabueze, A.I. & Ukala, C.C. (2013). Impact of good teaching on secondary school students for national transformation in South-Eastern States of Nigeria. *AFTRA Teaching and Learning in Africa Proceedings*.
14. Madumere-Obike, C. U., Oragwu, A. A. & Nwabueze, A. I. (2013). Approaches for creating environmental awareness among undergraduates in Universities in Abia State. *Niger Delta Journal of Education*, 9(1&2), 80-88.
15. Madumere-Obike, C.U. & Nwabueze, A.I. (2010). Quality education: A panacea to managing the effects of climate change in South-East, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning*, 10(3); 156-184
16. Manafa, I. F. (2018). Communication skills needed by principals for effective management of secondary schools in Anambra State. *Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (OJAMSS)*; 3 (2) 17 –25.
17. Nwabueze, A. I., Obioji, J. N., Anigbogu, N. G., Oyibe, O. A., Ahamefula, C. F., Nnokwe, C. I., Osuagwu, L. A., Ifediatu, N. M., & Nweke, P. O. (2023). Principals' leadership skills and administrative practices as predictors of sustainable peaceful learning environment in secondary schools. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(3)1590-1599.
18. Nwabueze, A. I. (2016). Provision and maintenance of health and safety facilities for quality service delivery in secondary schools in Rivers State. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development (AJERD)*, 8(1); 174-185.
19. Nwabueze, A.I. & Onyekaba, M.N. (2017). Environmental security management and peace building in an era of economic recession in universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development (AJERD)*, 9(2); 161-173.
20. Nwabueze, A. I. (2017). Office management in school system. In W. A. Amaewhule, N. M. Abraham & J. D. Asodike (Eds.) *School Business Management: Theoretical & Practical Approach* (pp.11-33). Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers International Limited.
21. Nwabueze, A. I. (2016). Resources in education. In J. M. Ebong, J. D. Asodike & N. J. Izuagba (Eds.) *Economics of Education: Expository Issues* (p.186-205). Port Harcourt: EagleLithograph Publishers.
22. Nwabueze, A.I. (2014). Influence of Teaching/Learning Environment on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in South-East, Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development (AJERD)*, 7(1), 80-95.

23. Nwabueze, A. I., Ememe, O. N. & Nzeneri, U. P. (2010). Promoting environmental awareness and safety in Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria: An approach to environmental management. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning*, 10(3); 209-215.
24. Nwite, O. & Eze, S. (2016). Principal's management support practices for enhancing teachers' performance in secondary schools in Nigerian: a case study of Ebonyi state. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, 4(3), 26-36.
25. Nwogbo V. N., Nwankwo, I. N. & Nwachukwu, E. A. (2019). Principals' communication strategies for teachers' effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, 10(3): 175-181.
26. Ofojebe, W. N. (2014). Teachers' motivation and its influence on quality assurance in the Nigerian educational system. *An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Ethiopia*, 4(2): 398-417
27. Okechukwu, R. O., Nwabueze, A. I. & Ogbonnaya, N. O. (2023). Motivational and conflict resolution practices of provosts as correlates of quality education delivery in federal colleges of education in South East, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research and Policy Making (IJERPM)*, 6(1), 1138 – 1145.
28. Onyeke, P. C., Nwabueze, A. I. & Ogbonnaya, N. O. (2023). Town and gown relations in the management of human and teaching resources as predictors of tertiary education development in Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research and Policy Making (IJERPM)*, 6(1), 1118 – 1126.
29. Uche, C.M., Nwabueze, A.I. & Ememe, O.N. (2009). Developing Entrepreneurial Skills among University Students: A Tool for Attaining Millennium Development Goals in South-South States of Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development (AJERD)*, 3(2), 54-64
30. Ukaigwe, P.C., Nwabueze, A. I. & Nwokedi, C.U.O. (2019). Principals' Leadership Skills as Determinants of effective administrative performance in public senior secondary schools in Abia State. *Review of Education*, 31(1), 190-210.
31. Yvonne, S. B. (2018). Environmental effect on students' academic performance in public and private secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research and Management Technology*, 4(3), 41-52.