

PRINCIPALS' ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE AS CORRELATE OF TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA EDUCATION ZONE, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to investigate principals' assertive communication styles as correlate of teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 1,616 principals and teachers from the 65 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. This comprised of 65 principals and 1,551 teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample size for this study was 375 respondents. The instruments for data collection were two structured questionnaires. The instrument was subject to face and content validation. Three experts from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, reviewed the instruments. A pilot test was conducted with 20 principals from public secondary schools in Enugu State to further test the instruments. The application of Cronbach Alpha reliability method yielded co-efficient values of 0.86 and 0.88 for PCSQ and TEQ. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The finding of the study revealed that a high positive relationship exists between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. Furthermore, finding of the study revealed principals' assertive communication styles significantly correlate with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. The researcher therefore concludes that principals' assertive communication style has a positive significant relationship with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. The researcher recommended that the Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) should organise regular workshops and training programmes focused on enhancing principals' communication style, with emphasis on assertive communication style.

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Introduction

Teachers have an important role as stakeholders in Nigerian secondary schools, with great influence over the educational environment. Teachers' involvement is important in curriculum implementation, as they are the major facilitators of learning. This position puts them at the forefront of instructional delivery, making their performance critical to accomplishing school objectives. The effectiveness of teachers is critical for achieving educational objectives. Eke (2023) opined that motivated and teachers work better, which improves student learning outcomes. Effective teachers not only engage their students, but also create a positive learning environment that promotes academic achievement (Ololube, 2019).

Teachers' effectiveness pertains to how well educators perform their core responsibilities of instruction and their overall disposition towards the teaching profession and its associated tasks (Arop et al., 2020). It is considered an intangible concept that cannot be directly observed or quantified. However, many researchers agree that it is a multidimensional construct, comprising various facets and components (Okogbaa & Igbogi, 2019). According to Nwogbo et al. (2019), teacher effectiveness is a multifaceted phenomenon that incorporates different aspects of teaching. These include proficiency in assigned roles, effective communication, thorough lesson preparation and execution, access to instructional materials, fostering a conducive learning environment, and maintaining teacher motivation.

Consequently, teacher effectiveness requires a deep understanding of professional methodologies and systems, coupled with the ability to address students' needs effectively. Enhanced teaching practices often lead to greater student engagement, which improves academic outcomes, particularly when supported by school principals' strategies to promote teacher effectiveness. Teachers' effectiveness in this study is defined to their capacity to manage their professional duties and responsibilities in a way that allows them to accomplish more work and deliver expected outcomes. This includes effective classroom teaching, maintaining discipline and overseeing students' academic activities. For teachers to perform effectively, discipline and commitment to their responsibilities are essential. Unfortunately, some teachers in public secondary schools within the Awka Education Zone of Anambra State appear to lack effectiveness in carrying out their roles. Onyekazi et al. (2024) reported a concerning decline in teachers' task performance, emphasising that teachers are the backbone of effective teaching and learning. This decline is evident in the negative behaviours exhibited by teachers in public secondary schools across Anambra State (Okeke et al., 2023). These behaviours include arriving at school late, leaving without proper authorisation, frequent absenteeism with weak excuses, failure to maintain updated lesson plans and notes, incomplete coverage of curriculum content, and teaching without adequate instructional materials. Authors like Onyekazi et al. (2024) stated that poor teachers' effectiveness could be linked to principals' communication style.

Communication refers to the exchange of information between individuals or among groups through various channels. Ekufu and Anetoh (2022) described communication as the process of sharing ideas, receiving messages, and achieving mutual understanding using different methods. Communication styles refer to the verbal and non-verbal approaches through which information is shared within an organisation. Sdeeq et al. (2021) defined communication styles as distinct methods of transmitting and receiving information in organisational settings. Similarly, these styles involve various patterns and strategies managers use to issue instructions or guidance to employees. Muhammad (2020) described communication styles as encompassing the methods used to share information, articulate ideas, and receive feedback. According to Suyu-Tattao (2019), communication styles integrate verbal and written strategies for effectively exchanging information. Okotoni and Akinwale (2019) categorised communication styles into aggressive, open, inclusive, and assertive styles. Chike et al. (2024) expanded this categorisation to include assertive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, submissive, manipulative, and open communication styles. For this study, the researcher concentrated on assertive communication style.

The assertive communication style is considered effective in most situations. It involves being aware of and addressing one's own emotions and needs while also recognising and respecting the emotions and needs of others.

Assertive communicators, by prioritising their needs while being empathetic, demonstrate a balance that fosters effective communication. Alabi (2022) defined assertive communication as the ability to express opinions clearly and confidently in a calm and controlled manner without infringing on the rights of others. Esan (2018) highlighted its effectiveness in enhancing students' self-esteem and overall academic achievement.

Assertive communication is regarded as an ideal communication style, as it fosters relationship building, trust, conflict resolution, expectation management, and boundary protection when applied effectively. However, mastering assertive communication requires significant self-control. It emphasises expressing ideas while upholding the rights of others. Nwabueze and Ohia (2020) described assertive communication as characterised by honesty, respectfulness, and the willingness to listen to others' perspectives. In the context of school leadership, assertive communication involves principals actively listening to teachers, encouraging them to share their views on school matters, and providing prompt feedback. According to Okotoni and Akinwale (2019), principals who adopt this style are comfortable expressing their opinions and receptive to the ideas of others. They engage with teachers in a moderate tone, carefully selecting words to avoid causing offence. Similarly, Alabi (2022) noted that principals who employ assertive communication are open to input from others while confidently sharing their perspectives. Akinwale and Okotoni (2018) stated that principals' communication styles has significant influence on school effectiveness. However, this views have not been empirically determined in public secondary schools in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher investigated principals' assertive communication styles as correlate of teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate principals' assertive communication styles as correlate of teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Research Question

What is the relationship between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Principals' assertive communication styles does not significantly correlate with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised of 1,616 principals and teachers from the 65 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. This comprised of 65 principals and 1,551 teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample size for this study was 375 respondents. The sampled the entire population of principals because they are small compared to the number of teachers in the zone. This amounted to 65 principals from the 65 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The researcher used simple random technique to select 20% of teachers from the public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. This amounted to 310 teachers from the 65 public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The combination of the sample of principals and teachers amounted to a sample size of 375.

The instruments for data collection was two structured questionnaires. The first questionnaire was titled "Principals' Communication Styles Questionnaire (PCSQ)" which contains 10 items. The questionnaire was designed using a 4-point rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The second instrument was titled "Teachers Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ)" and it contains 20-item statements on teachers' effectiveness. The instrument is structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and a numerical value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instrument was subject to face and content validation. Three experts from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, reviewed the instruments. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with 20 principals from public secondary schools in Enugu State to further test the instruments. The application of Cronbach Alpha reliability method yielded co-efficient values of 0.86 and 0.88 for PCSQ and TEQ. The instruments were

administered by the researchers with the help of three research assistants who are teachers in public secondary schools. The instrument was administered to the respondents on the spot and retrieved after completion. In cases where it was impossible to retrieve the instrument immediately, appointment on the date of retrieval was made. This lasted for two weeks. Out of the 375 copies of the instruments administered, 362 copies were retrieved in good condition which amounts to 97% questionnaire return rate. The 362 copies were used for the analysis of data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research question and test the hypothesis. The decision rule was based on the following guidelines Price et al (2017) provided:

Correlation Coefficient	Interpretations
Plus (+) or minus (-) 0.00 to 0.20	Very Low Relationship
Plus (+) or minus (-) 0.20 to 0.40	Low Relationship
Plus (+) or minus (-) 0.40 to 0.60	Moderate Relationship
Plus (+) or minus (-) 0.60 to 0.80	High Relationship
Plus (+) or minus (-) 0.80 and above	Very High Relationship

While positive coefficient (+) indicate positive relationship between the variables, negative coefficient (-) indicates negative coefficient between the variables. In interpreting the values of the null hypotheses, when p-value was less than or equal to .05 ($p \leq .05$), the null hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value was greater than .05 ($p > .05$), the null hypothesis was not rejected, meaning that there is no significant relationship between the variables.

Results

Research Question

What is the relationship between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis on Correlation between Principals' Assertive Communication Styles and Teachers' Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State

		Principals' Assertive Communication Styles	Teachers' Effectiveness	Remark
Principals' Assertive Communication Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**	High Positive Relationship
	Sig, (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	362	362	
Teachers' Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1	
	Sig, (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	362	362	

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

Data in Table 1 reveals that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is $r = 0.723$. This shows that a high positive relationship exists between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This implies that in public secondary schools where principals' use assertive communication styles there would be high teachers' effectiveness. Thus, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient r of 0.723 indicate that a high positive relationship exists between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Hypothesis

Principals' assertive communication styles does not significantly correlate with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State.

Table 2: Test of Significance of Correlation between Principals' Assertive Communication Styles and Teachers' Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State

Correlation		Principals' Assertive Communication Styles	Teachers' Effectiveness	Remark
Principals' Assertive Communication Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**	Significant
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	362	362	
Teachers' Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	362	362	

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

Data in Table 2 reveals that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is $r = 0.723$ with a p -value = 0.000. Since the P value of 0.000 is less than .05 ($P < .05$), it means that the effect principals' assertive communication styles on teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State is statistically significant. This means that principals' assertive communication styles significantly correlate with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that a high positive relationship exists between principals' assertive communication styles and teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. This finding may have resulted because assertive communication ensures that principals articulate expectations, feedback, and instructions clearly and concisely. This reduces ambiguity, enabling teachers to understand their roles and responsibilities effectively. Also, assertive communication promotes a respectful environment where principals value teachers' input and perspectives. This mutual respect enhances teachers' motivation and commitment to their duties. This finding is in agreement Akinwale and Okotoni (2018) who revealed that principals' communication styles has significant influence on school effectiveness. Nwabueze and Ohia (2020) described assertive communication as characterised by honesty, respectfulness, and the willingness to listen to others' perspectives. In the context of school leadership, assertive communication involves principals

actively listening to teachers, encouraging them to share their views on school matters and providing prompt feedback. Thus, improving teachers' job effectiveness. Furthermore, principals' assertive communication styles significantly correlate with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. The finding of the study is in agreement with Alabi (2022) who reported that principals' assertive communication style would impact on teachers' attitude towards work. Okotoni and Akinwale (2019) noted that principals who adopt assertive communication style are comfortable expressing their opinions and receptive to the ideas of others and this makes the teachers comfortable in their work environment.

Conclusion

The researcher concludes based on the findings of the study that principals' assertive communication style has a positive significant relationship with teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone, Anambra State. The implication of the findings is that there would be higher teachers' effectiveness in schools where principals apply assertive communication style. It is therefore essential that measures are put in place to improve on principals' application of assertive communication style in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) should organise regular workshops and training programmes focused on enhancing principals' communication style, with emphasis on assertive communication style. This will equip public secondary school principals with the assertive communication strategies needed to ensure clarity, mutual respect, and constructive feedback in public secondary schools. This would improve teachers' effectiveness.
2. The Anambra State Government in collaboration with the PPSSC should integrate assertive communication practices into school management policies. This could include guidelines for effective principal-teacher interactions. This would ensure that principals adopt assertive communication styles to enhance collaboration, reduce conflicts, and promote a positive school climate that supports teachers' effectiveness.

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