

The Relationship Between Principals' Communication Skills and Teacher Morale in Private Secondary Schools in Delta State

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Abstract:

This study investigated the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. The research employed a correlational design with a sample of 250 teachers selected from 25 private secondary schools using stratified random sampling. Data collection was facilitated through two standardized instruments: the Principals' Communication Skills Assessment Questionnaire (PCSAQ) and the Teacher Morale Inventory (TMI). The reliability coefficients of these instruments were established at 0.84 and 0.87 respectively. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and t-test. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, significant differences were observed in teacher morale based on the quality of principals' feedback mechanisms and transparency in communication. Results indicated that principals with strong interpersonal communication skills and effective feedback mechanisms fostered higher levels of teacher morale. Based on these findings, the study recommends that school administrators prioritize the development of communication skills among principals through specialized training programs and regular assessment of communication effectiveness within the school environment.

Keywords— *Principals' Communication Skills, Teacher Morale, Private Secondary Schools, Delta State*

A. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the lifeline of any organization, and educational institutions are no exception. The principal, as the administrative head of a school, plays a fundamental role in establishing effective communication networks that significantly influence the school climate and teacher morale (Harris & Jones, 2019). Generally, private secondary schools, particularly in Delta State have witnessed substantial growth in recent decades, highlighting the increasing importance of effective leadership and communication skills among school administrators. Teacher morale, defined as the professional interest and enthusiasm that teachers display toward their work and school environment, has been

consistently linked to student achievement, school culture, and overall institutional effectiveness (Lambersky, 2016). When teacher morale is high, there is typically greater job satisfaction, increased productivity, and enhanced commitment to achieving educational goals. Conversely, low teacher morale has been associated with increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and higher staff turnover rates (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). As private education continues to expand in Nigeria, understanding the factors that contribute to teacher morale becomes increasingly important for sustaining quality education.

Effective communication from principals has been shown to be a crucial determinant of teacher morale and productivity, as it fosters administrative efficiency and enhances overall school

performance (Nkedishu, 2022). Similarly, the assurance of job security and positive workplace interactions significantly influence teachers' commitment and satisfaction, highlighting the importance of supportive communication channels within educational institutions (Nkedishu, 2020). Furthermore, principals who demonstrate proficiency in integrating innovations and ICT in school leadership strengthen teachers' confidence, motivation, and adaptability to new teaching practices, thereby boosting morale and creating a more effective teaching-learning environment (Nkedishu, Nwaorgu, & Egwunyenga, 2022).

B. Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of effective communication in educational leadership, there remains a gap in empirical research specifically addressing the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State. Anecdotal evidence suggests that communication challenges between school administrators and teaching staff may contribute to decreased teacher motivation, increased turnover rates, and diminished educational outcomes. However, the specific communication factors that influence teacher morale and the extent of their impact remain largely unexplored in the context of Delta State's private education sector. Recent studies by Odunaike et al. (2022) and Egwunyenga (2018) have highlighted concerns regarding leadership practices in Nigerian schools, including communication deficiencies, but these studies have not specifically examined the relationship between communication skills and teacher morale in private school settings. The absence of empirical data on this relationship creates challenges for educational policymakers and school administrators seeking to implement

evidence-based strategies for enhancing teacher morale and school effectiveness.

Additionally, private secondary schools in Delta State operate in a competitive educational environment where teacher retention and motivation are critical for institutional sustainability. Understanding how principals' communication skills influence teacher morale could provide valuable insights for addressing challenges related to teacher job satisfaction and professional commitment. This study, therefore, seeks to address these knowledge gaps by empirically investigating the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State. The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide empirical evidence regarding the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State. By exploring this relationship, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership and offers practical insights for school administrators seeking to enhance teacher motivation and institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, the findings may inform policy decisions regarding principal training programs and school leadership development initiatives in Delta State and beyond.

C. Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State?
2. To what extent do principals' feedback mechanisms influence teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State?
3. How does transparency in principals' communication affect teacher morale

in private secondary schools in Delta State?

D. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.
2. There is no significant difference in teacher morale based on the quality of principals' feedback mechanisms in private secondary schools in Delta State.

1) Literature Review

This study is anchored on two theories: the Human Relations Theory developed by Elton Mayo and the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership by Robert House. Human Relations Theory emphasizes the importance of social relationships and communication in organizational settings, suggesting that effective communication enhances worker satisfaction and productivity (Mayo, 1933, as cited in Nwankwo, 2019). The theory posits that when leaders demonstrate genuine interest in employees through effective communication, worker morale is likely to improve, leading to enhanced organizational outcomes. The Path-Goal Theory complements this perspective by highlighting the role of leaders in clarifying paths to organizational goals and removing obstacles through effective communication strategies (House, 1971, as cited in Agabi & Okorie, 2020). According to this theory, when school principals effectively communicate expectations, provide necessary guidance, and offer constructive feedback, teachers are more likely to experience enhanced motivation and job satisfaction.

Communication skills in educational leadership encompass various dimensions including verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, feedback

mechanisms, and transparency. According to Amanchukwu et al. (2015), effective principal communication involves clarity in conveying expectations, consistency in messages, and credibility of information shared. Similarly, Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016) conceptualize principal communication as the process through which school administrators share information, ideas, and emotions with teachers to foster understanding and cooperation. Research by Nwankwo (2019) identified several components of effective principal communication, including openness, empathy, active listening, and timely feedback. These components collectively contribute to what Okorie (2018) described as "communication climate" the perceived atmosphere of communication within the school environment that significantly influences teacher perceptions and responses.

Teacher morale refers to the mental and emotional attitudes of teachers toward their professional responsibilities and work environment (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). It encompasses job satisfaction, professional commitment, enthusiasm for teaching, and willingness to contribute to school improvement efforts. According to Lambersky (2016), teacher morale is influenced by various factors including leadership practices, professional development opportunities, recognition and appreciation, and working conditions. Evans (2021) conceptualizes teacher morale as having both cognitive and affective dimensions, with the cognitive dimension relating to teachers' perceptions of their professional efficacy and the affective dimension pertaining to their emotional engagement with teaching. High teacher morale is characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and resilience in the face of challenges, while low morale manifests as disengagement, absenteeism, and decreased effort (Egwunyenga, 2018).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between leadership communication and teacher morale in various educational contexts. A study by Harris and Jones (2019) involving 320 teachers in the United Kingdom found that principals' communication styles significantly influenced teacher job satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, research by Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) in Canadian schools revealed that principals who practiced transparent communication and provided regular constructive feedback fostered higher levels of teacher morale and reduced turnover intentions. In the Nigerian context, Odunaike et al. (2022) examined leadership communication in secondary schools in Ogun State and found that principal-teacher communication quality was significantly associated with teacher job satisfaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, Egwunyenga (2018) investigated principal leadership styles in Delta State public schools and revealed that democratic leadership, characterized by open communication and teacher involvement in decision-making, positively influenced teacher morale.

In examining the link between principals' communication skills and teacher morale, prior studies emphasize the importance of administrative efficiency, job security, and innovative practices in sustaining teacher motivation. Nkedishu (2022) established that effective administrative practices enhance teacher productivity, a process largely dependent on how principals communicate expectations, feedback, and support to their staff. Equally, Nkedishu (2020) highlighted that workers' sense of job security in educational centres is closely tied to open and reassuring communication patterns, which in turn raise morale and reduce disengagement. Beyond administrative processes, Nkedishu, Nwaorgu, and Egwunyenga (2022) demonstrated that when school leaders communicate effectively while promoting

the use of emerging technologies, teachers are more confident, motivated, and willing to embrace innovations in teaching. These findings collectively suggest that principals' communication competence is not only central to daily school administration but also to sustaining teacher morale in private secondary schools.

Despite these findings, research specifically addressing the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State remains limited. Agabi and Okorie (2020) noted the need for context-specific studies that account for the unique characteristics of different educational settings, highlighting a gap in the literature that the present study aims to address. Another significant study by Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016) examined the impact of communication on teacher performance in secondary schools in Anambra State. The researchers found that effective principal-teacher communication was positively associated with teacher performance and motivation. Their findings emphasized the importance of regular staff meetings, constructive feedback, and accessible communication channels in enhancing teacher commitment and effectiveness. The literature review indicates that while various studies have explored aspects of educational leadership communication and teacher morale, there remains a need for empirical research specifically examining this relationship in the context of private secondary schools in Delta State. The present study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in this specific educational context.

E. METHOD

1) Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale.

The correlational design was deemed appropriate as it allows for the examination of relationships between variables without manipulating the independent variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design facilitated the investigation of the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.

2) Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for this study comprised all teachers in private secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. According to records from the Delta State Ministry of Education, there were approximately 9,480 teachers in 338 approved private secondary schools in Delta State as of 2025 (Soluap, 2025). A sample of 250 teachers was selected from 25 private secondary schools using stratified, purposive and random sampling techniques. The state was divided into three senatorial districts (Delta North, Delta Central, and Delta South), and schools were proportionally selected from each district based on the number of private schools in each district. Within each selected school, 10 teachers were randomly selected to participate in the study, ensuring representation across different subject areas and levels of experience.

3) Research Instruments

Two standardized instruments were used for data collection, which were Principals' Communication Skills Assessment Questionnaire (PCSAQ). This 30-item questionnaire was developed to measure teachers' perceptions of their principals' communication skills. The instrument covered five dimensions of communication: clarity (items 1-6), accessibility (items 7-12), feedback mechanisms (items 13-18), transparency (items 19-24), and active listening (items 25-30). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Also, Teacher Morale Inventory (TMI). This 25-

item instrument measured teacher morale across four dimensions: job satisfaction (items 1-7), professional commitment (items 8-13), enthusiasm for teaching (items 14-19), and resilience (items 20-25). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

4) Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure content validity, the instruments were subjected to expert review by three professors in educational management and foundations and one in measurement and evaluation from Delta State University. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the items. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A pilot test was conducted with 30 teachers from three private secondary schools not included in the main study. The reliability coefficients were 0.84 for the PCSAQ and 0.87 for the TMI, indicating high internal consistency for both instruments.

5) Method of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over four weeks. After obtaining necessary permissions from school administrators, the researcher and two guided research assistants visited the selected schools to administer the questionnaires. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Questionnaires were administered in person, and respondents were given sufficient time to complete them. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 243 were properly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 97.2%.

6) Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics including means and

standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to determine the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale, addressing research question 1 and hypothesis 1. Independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences in teacher morale based on principals' feedback mechanisms and transparency in communication, addressing research questions 2 and 3, and hypothesis 2. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State?*

To address this research question, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between Principals' Communication Skills and Teacher Morale

Variables	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	Remark
Principals' Communication Skills	3.53	.64	.762	.581	58.1	Positive relationship
Teacher Morale	3.49	.85				

The result in Table 1 shows the correlation between principals' communication skills and teacher moral. The result revealed principals' communication skills with a mean rating of 3.53, SD=.64 and teachers morale with a mean rating of 3.49, SD=.85. The relationship between the two variables was $r=.762$ which shows a positive relationship. r^2 of .581 shows that principals' communication skills was related to teacher morale by 58.1%. Thus, there is a positive **relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale** in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-test for Teacher Morale Based on Principals' Feedback Mechanisms

Variables	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Effective Feedback	142	3.84	0.72	6.93	241	.000
Less Effective Feedback	101	3.21	0.69			

Table 2 shows a significant difference in teacher morale between schools with effective principal feedback mechanisms ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.72$) and those with less effective feedback mechanisms ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.69$), $t(241) = 6.93$, $p < 0.05$. This suggests that principals' feedback mechanisms significantly influence teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Research Question 3: How does transparency in principals' communication affect teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State?

To address this research question, teachers' responses regarding transparency in principals' communication were categorized as either "High Transparency" (mean score ≥ 3.5) or "Low Transparency" (mean score < 3.5). An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in teacher morale based on these categories. The results are presented in Table 3.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do principals' feedback mechanisms influence teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State?*

To address this research question, teachers' responses regarding principals' feedback mechanisms were categorized as either "Effective" (mean score ≥ 3.5) or "Less Effective" (mean score < 3.5). An independent samples t-test was then conducted to examine differences in teacher morale based on these categories. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test for Teacher Morale Based on Transparency in Principals' Communication

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
High Transparency	156	3.92	0.66	8.47	241	.000
Low Transparency	87	3.06	0.74			

Table 3 shows a significant difference in teacher morale between schools with high transparency in principals' communication ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.66$) and those with low transparency ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.74$), $t(241) = 8.47$, $p < 0.05$. This suggests that transparency in principals' communication

significantly affects teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Correlation between Principals' Communication Skills and Teacher Morale

		Principals' Communication Skills	Teacher Morale
Principals' Communication Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	243	243
Teacher Morale	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	243	243

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

Based on the results presented in Table 4, the correlation coefficient between principals' communication skills and teacher morale is 0.762, which is significant at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between

principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in teacher morale based on the quality of principals' feedback mechanisms in private secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test for Teacher Morale Based on Principals' Feedback Mechanisms

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Effective Feedback	142	3.84	0.72	6.93	241	.000
Less Effective Feedback	101	3.21	0.69			

Based on the results presented in Table 5, there is a significant difference in teacher morale based on the quality of principals' feedback mechanisms ($t(241) = 6.93, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a significant difference in teacher morale based on the quality of principals' feedback mechanisms in private secondary schools in Delta State.

7) DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of a significant positive relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale ($r = 0.762, p < 0.05$) aligns with previous research by Harris and Jones (2019) and Kutsyuruba et al. (2019), who reported similar positive associations between leadership communication and teacher job satisfaction. This consistency across different educational contexts suggests that effective communication is a universal factor in enhancing teacher morale, regardless of geographical location or school type. The significant influence of principals' feedback mechanisms on teacher morale supports findings by Nwankwo (2019), which highlighted the importance of timely and constructive feedback in fostering teacher motivation. When principals provide regular, specific, and constructive feedback, teachers feel valued and supported in their professional growth, leading to enhanced morale and commitment to the school's mission.

Similarly, the finding regarding the influence of transparency in principals' communication on teacher morale corroborates research by Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016), which emphasized the importance of open and honest communication in building trust and positive school climate. Transparency in communication allows teachers to understand the rationale behind decisions, fostering a sense of inclusion and respect that contributes to higher morale. The results also align with the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. Consistent with Human Relations Theory, the findings suggest that when principals demonstrate effective communication skills, they create a more supportive and satisfying work environment for teachers, leading to enhanced morale. Similarly, in line with Path-Goal Theory, principals who effectively communicate expectations, provide guidance, and offer constructive feedback help teachers navigate their professional paths more

effectively, resulting in higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. It is noteworthy that the correlation coefficient between principals' communication skills and teacher morale ($r = 0.762$) indicates a strong relationship, suggesting that communication skills should be considered a critical component of principal leadership development programs. This finding holds particular significance for private secondary schools in Delta State, where teacher retention and motivation are essential for institutional sustainability in a competitive educational market.

F. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in private secondary schools in Delta State. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale, with specific aspects of communication such as feedback mechanisms and transparency significantly influencing teacher morale. These results emphasise the critical role of effective communication in educational leadership and its impact on teacher motivation and job satisfaction. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on educational leadership by providing empirical evidence of the relationship between principals' communication skills and teacher morale in the specific context of private secondary schools in Delta State. The findings highlight the importance of developing and enhancing communication skills among school administrators as a strategy for improving teacher morale and, by extension, educational outcomes.

1) RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School owners and educational authorities should prioritize the development of communication skills among principals through specialized training programs, workshops, and seminars. These professional development initiatives should focus on various aspects of communication, including clarity, active listening, feedback mechanisms, and transparency.

2. Schools should implement regular assessments of communication effectiveness within the school environment, including feedback from teachers regarding principals' communication practices. This would help identify areas for improvement and monitor progress in enhancing communication quality.
3. Principals should establish structured and effective feedback systems that provide teachers with regular, specific, and constructive feedback on their performance. These systems should be designed to support professional growth rather than merely evaluate performance.
4. School administrators should prioritize transparency in communication by sharing relevant information with teachers, explaining the rationale behind decisions, and involving teachers in decision-making processes where appropriate. This would foster trust and enhance teacher morale.

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