

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS' EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECODNARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated strategic leadership support for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study was anchored on the Social Support theory. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Five specific objectives, five research questions, and five null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was all the 333 principals of the 333 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select a total of 152 respondents from the three senatorial districts of Rivers State. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and titled "Strategic Leadership Support for Principals' Effectiveness in Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SLSPSSSQ)". The reliability coefficient of the instruments was determined using test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation and was found to be .86. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05 using independent samples t-test. SPSS Version-25 was used to perform the analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there were differences in the level of availability of leadership support practices such as mentoring, training, stress management, among others, for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It was also found that these support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent in the schools, except stress management support practices. Further findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the opinions of the male and female respondents on the availability of the support practices and on the extent to which they enhanced principals' effectiveness. The study concluded that supporting principals with resources, tools, training, and guidance boosts their effectiveness. It was recommended among others, that the Ministry of Education should periodically organize professional development programs like instructional leadership workshops, seminars, conference, among others, for the training and professional development of principals for their assured effectiveness.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Leadership Support, Principals, Mentoring, Training, Community Support, Stress Management Support, Effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

The goals of secondary education as articulated in relevant sections of the Nigerian National Policy on Education revolve around two basic subjects: to raise graduates who are capable of self-reliance and of meaningful contribution to community and national development, and to

prepare graduates for transition into tertiary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014). These goals are given a head start by the appointment of principals over secondary schools in Nigeria to man the affairs of the schools. Principals thus come through as both administrators and leaders of this level of education in Nigeria, saddled with the responsibility of managing both the human and non-human resources of the schools. Their job disposition thus places them on a position of accountability to their employers (the government), to their immediate community, and importantly to parents of students. It thus becomes obvious that the workload of principals is never an easy one, and their job demands become so overwhelming sometimes, such that their effectiveness begins to dwindle. The extent to which principals are effective as school leaders may therefore be said to be strongly dependent on the amount and quality of support they receive from the stakeholders of the school system. As such, it becomes important for stakeholders to be inundated with the roles of supporting principals if principals must continually deliver on their jobs.

Leadership support refers to the resources, guidance and encouragement provided to leaders, such as school principals, to help them succeed and excel in their school leadership roles (Egboka, 2018). The principal cannot do it all alone. No leader ever succeeds alone without the help and support of the organization and subordinates whom he is leading. As a matter of fact, the level of effectiveness of a principal is dependent on the level of support he receives from the school community. The task of managing school and the functions involved in the management process are not things that can be handled by one person alone. Even where the principal possesses perfect knowledge of management, he cannot be at all places at the same time to plan, organize, direct, control, supervise, and perform all the leadership functions that are attendant with the principalship position. It was in this regard that Obulor (2024) averred that exceptional principals are those who are able to optimize the principles of participative management, where participative management is the type of management that welcomes the participation of all categories of stakeholders in the management of the school. The supports provided by teachers, parents, the community, and the government go a long way in enabling principals become more effective on their jobs for the attainment of school goals and objectives.

Imperatively, principals must be provided with requisite support for the assurance of continuous improvement in their administrative functions and school effectiveness. This needed support can come from teachers, parents, the community, the schools management board, the Parents Teachers Association, the Senior Secondary Schools Board, the Ministry of Education, the government, civil societies, or from any other agent interested in the wellbeing of secondary schools within the locality of the principal. When principals are effectively supported, it could bring about self-efficacy and improved leadership confidence, enhanced teacher morale and retention, increased student achievement and outcomes, better school culture and climate, more effective decision-making and problem-solving, increased innovation and creativity, and improved leader retention and succession planning, among other benefits to the school system.

It is one thing for stakeholders to be aware that they need to support principals and another thing for them to know where and where their supports are required. Experiences and interactions with principals have revealed that majority of them need support in the areas of coaching and mentoring, professional development, evaluation and regular feedback on their performance, recognition and celebration, community involvement and partnership/collaboration in school administration, access to resources and finances, and importantly in work-life balance and stress management, among others. The practice of supporting principals will not only boost principals' job satisfaction and performance, but will also come with other benefits that rub off

positively on the entire school process, which could lead to better school climate that is supportive of teachers' and students optimal performance and school success.

A study conducted by Onuma (2015) investigated principals' management support practices for enhancing teachers' performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design, with a population of 5,083 (221 principals and 4862 teachers) and a sample of 1803 respondents selected using proportionate random sampling techniques. A structure questionnaire was used for data collection. The finding revealed that principals needed training support for supervisory skills development. It was also revealed that principals needed support for teachers' welfare and motivation. In another study by Gbeke-Kalagbor (2023) which investigated the challenges of effective leadership and teachers motivation on secondary education service delivery in Rivers State, utilizing descriptive survey design, and with a population of 8,356 secondary school teachers in Rivers State and a sample of 836 teachers, the finding from the instrument analysis showed that secondary school leadership was confronted with challenges such as: lack of leadership skills; poor knowledge of education law; poor funding of schools; and inadequate provision of school facilities. All these areas of concern for school leadership and more necessitated the conduct of this study to investigate leadership support for principals' effectiveness in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Public secondary school principals in Nigeria are mostly burdened and hard pressed with having to look out for the good, wellbeing, growth and development of their teachers, students, and the school community all the time without anyone really looking out for them despite the fact that they are humans as well who face similar or even more daunting personal and professional challenges than those faced by other staff members of the school system. The attitudes of educational employers, teachers and co-administrators towards these principals sometimes show that they erroneously perceive principals to be superhumans who have it all and know it all. As such, helps, guidance, supports, and acknowledgements are hardly accorded principals. This really makes a lot of principals to be weighed down with workload, personal challenges, and societal expectations, culminating in their declining effectiveness in the school system.

Furthermore, majority of principals are so occupied with administrative engagement that they hardly have time for professional development towards career advancement or even for performance improvement amidst the ever-evolving requirements placed on their administrative skills by the dynamics of the educational system and changing global best practices in school administration. For some, they are administratively handicapped by poor financing and inadequacy of educational resources in their schools. Majority of others find themselves in situations where their communities are hardly partnering with their schools to ease the administrative burdens on them. For others, it is the challenge of non-recognition of their efforts by their employers and school community. All of these factors and more are perceived by the researcher to be contributing to loss of motivation and decline in effectiveness of most school leaders in the country. As such, the study investigated strategic leadership support for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate strategic leadership support for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The specific objectives included to:

- Identify available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Assess the extent mentoring support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Determine the extent training support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Examine the extent community support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Assess the extent stress management support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the available leadership support practices that enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent do mentoring support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent do training support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent do community support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what do stress management support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated and tested to guide the study at a significance level of .05:

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support practices enhance principals’ effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhance principals’ effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework adopted for the study is as presented in Figure 1. It shows the independent and the dependent variables of the study.

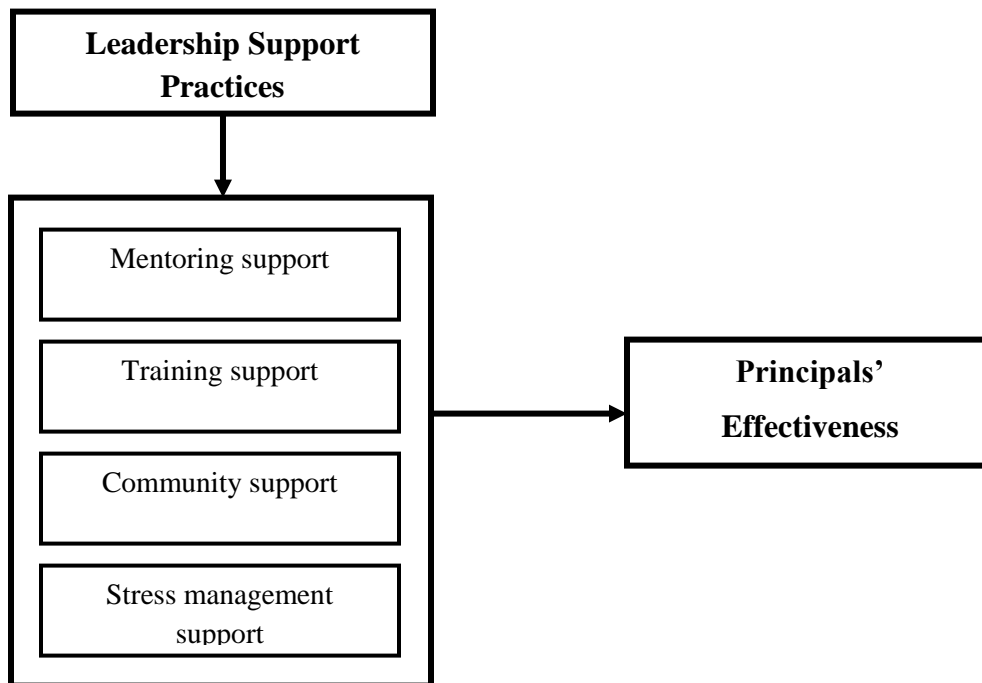


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher’s Conceptualization (2024)

Principalship and Leadership of Secondary Schools in Nigeria

A principal is the chief administrator and instructional leader of a secondary school in Nigeria. He is popularly referred to as the head teachers (Hornby cited in Ogonor & Omajuwa, 2020). In the view of Olaitan (2014), the principal is the chief executive of post-primary institution. According to Ijeoma cited in Luga (2016, p.23), the secondary school principal is the chief executive of the school who occupies the apex position in the organization structure of the school. He is the administrator of the school responsible for the major decision making activities which are necessary for the achievement of the goals of the school. He brings into the school the elements and processes of administration to bear on his specific functions (as the educational administrator) to enhance teaching and learning (Ogonor & Omajuwa, 2020).

Principals' Effectiveness Conceptualized

Effectiveness insinuates the ability to produce an effect as and when desired. With respect to organizational settings, different authors associate effectiveness with knowledge, skill, acumen, attitudes, thought patterns, judgments, which when used regularly or in various combinations, consistently result in the successful performance of tasks (Olaitan et al. cited in Luga, 2016). Effectiveness can also be seen as the degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved (Luga, 2016). Principals' effectiveness therefore implies the degree to which principals are able to synergize different kinds of knowledge for the realization of the goals of secondary school administration. In a nutshell, effectiveness refers to producing the desired result and on a timely basis.

Effectiveness in relation to the study then implies that the principals have to produce the desired result by their supervision and leadership of the school system. An effective principal therefore is one who possesses the right and appropriate personal, professional and academic qualifications that will enable him/her to manage the school, promoting student learning, teacher growth, and community engagement. Effective principals are able to foster a positive school culture, and climate, develop and implement effective instructional strategies, build and maintain strong relationship with teachers, students, and parents, manage resources and budgets efficiently, empower teachers to take ownership of their professional growth, address conflict and challenge proactively, and celebrate success and recognize individual contributions (Adejumobi & Ojikuta, 2013; Ibukun et al., 2021; Kurland et al., 2012; Ukpong et al., 2018; Uzoigwe et al., 2021).

Strategic Leadership Support Practices

Leadership support was described by Egboka (2018) as the provision of resources, guidance and encouragement for leaders, such as school principals, to help them succeed and excel in their school leadership roles. This definition encompasses the provision of both tangible and intangible resources (material and immaterial) to assist principals in effectively carrying out their duties. It is the process of empowering leaders with the tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to effectively lead and manage their teams (Graham, 2022). Leadership support encompasses the actions and behaviours of individuals, teams, and organizations that enable leaders to succeed in their roles (Center for Creative Leadership, 2019). It involves providing leaders with the support, resources, and guidance needed to develop their leadership skills and achieve their goals (Rowlings, 2024). These definitions highlight the importance of providing leaders with the necessary support to excel in their roles, achieve their goals, and develop their leadership skills.

Leadership support practices therefore refer to the specific actions, strategies, and behaviours used to support leaders in their roles, helping them to succeed, grow and develop. In the light of supporting principals towards administrative effectiveness, some leadership support practices found in literature include coaching and mentoring, regular feedback and evaluation, professional development opportunities, resource allocation and support, emotional support and wellness initiatives, collaborative leadership and teamwork, clear communication and goal setting, facilitating network and school building, guidance on navigating challenges and conflicts, technical supports, recognition and celebration of success (Egboka, 2018; Kaki et al., 2023; Ohia, 2021), among others. Within the scope of this present study, the practices of focus

include mentoring and coaching support, training and development support, community support and stress management support.

Mentoring and Coaching Support Practices for Principals' Effectiveness

Mentoring and coaching support for principals' effectiveness involves providing personalized guidance, feedback, and development opportunities to help principals improve their leadership skills and achieve their school goals. This support can be provided by experienced principals or retired principals, leadership coaches or consultants, educational leaders at the state level, peer mentoring programs, and professional learning communities (Fenwick & Pierce, 2019; Yirci & Kocabas, 2020).

Mentoring and coaching support is provided by experienced principals to less experienced principals. It is more like a veteran-novice relationship: a scenario where novices are matched with veterans, enabling veterans to share their knowledge and expertise with the novices. This is of utmost importance because principals of public secondary schools have deferring demographic variables of age, experience and qualifications (Crosby cited in Gümüş, 2019; Daresh cited in Aslan and Ocal, 2022). Mentorship and coaching of the younger, less-experienced or less-qualified principals therefore becomes a veritable form of professional development for effective management of public secondary schools. As such, providing mentoring and coaching support to principals could prove highly effective at assuring principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Training and Development Support Practices for Principals' Effectiveness

Goldstein cited in Bello and Salahudeen (2020) was of the view that training and manpower development is the prerogative of the employers of every organization. According to him, training is a form of specialized education aimed at giving the employee a particular or specialized knowledge, skill and attitude which he must possess to effectively perform in a given position. It is a way of supporting the employee to become more competent and more productive on the job. He further explained that development on the other hand is concerned with specific program designed to prepare and groom a worker with particular education and training for higher responsibilities. Thus, training and manpower development is seen as a major hallmark of every thriving organization.

Training and development support for principals thus refers to the process of enhancing their knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively lead and manage their schools. It involves providing principals with opportunities to learn, grow, and develop their leadership capacities, enabling them to improve instructional leadership and teaching practices, enhance student learning outcomes and achievement, develop effective communication and interpersonal skills, build and maintain positive relationships with teachers, students, and the community, manage school operations and resources efficiently, stay current with best practices, research, and educational trends, address challenges and complexities in their schools, foster a positive school culture and climate, develop strategic plans and goals for school improvement, and evaluate and improve their own leadership practice (Eyinna & Chituo, 2021; Singh & Mohanty cited in Bello & Salahudeen, 2020).

Literature has widely advanced some training and development schemes for school leaders, which are imperative for principals' effectiveness. These include but are not limited to workshops, seminars, conferences, online courses and webinars, peer mentoring and support

groups, instructional leadership development programs, data analysis and interpretation training, and leadership retreats and institutes (Malaolu & Ogbuabo, 2013; Ogundiran, 2018; Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2015). These training and development schemes could be done on the job, off-the-job, or through formal education (Egungwu cited in Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2015). The goal of training and development for principals is to equip them with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to lead high-performing schools and improve student outcomes.

Community Support Practices for Principals' Effectiveness

Community support for principals' effectiveness refers to the resources, encouragement, and collaboration provided by the community to help principals succeed in their roles. This can include supports from parent and teacher associations, local businesses and organizations, community volunteers, school boards and district officials, higher education institutions, professional organizations, mentorship programs, coaching and consulting services, networking opportunities, and recognition and appreciation programs (Ezugo & Adesina, 2020). Previous studies like those of Ezugoh (2012) and Ogbonnaya (2016) indicated that many educational institutions like the primary and secondary schools cannot function on their own because they need support from their immediate environment, that is, the community, for their continual growth and development.

Community support can help principals build relationships and trust with stakeholders, access resources and expertise, stay informed about community needs and concerns, develop partnerships and collaborations, enhance their leadership skills and knowledge, manage stress and burnout, improve student outcomes and achievement, foster a positive school culture and climate, address challenges and complexities, and celebrate successes and achievements

Community support can be demonstrated through community members attending school events and meetings, volunteering in schools, providing resources and donations, offering expertise and advice, advocating for schools and principals, building relationships with principals and teachers, participating in decision-making processes, providing emotional support and encouragement, recognizing and celebrating principals' achievements, and fostering a positive and supportive community culture (Davies, 2009; Ezugo & Adesina, 2020).

Stress Management Support Practices for Principals' Effectiveness

Executive stress or work-related stress is a common phenomenon with the position of principalship, just as it is with virtually all educational leadership positions in the school system, and to say that public senior secondary school principals in Nigeria need to be supported in this regard is simply to state the obvious. Seyle cited in Sokpuwu and Ibara (2021) averred that executive stress could be managed with three different broad strategies, vis-à-vis personal management strategies, non-personal management strategies and hazardous management strategies. The non-personal management strategies are the concern of this present study. In the application of these strategies, the person being stressed (the principal in this regard) relies on others to support him. The steps include: counseling, pastoral care, medication (that is the use of drugs), and social support (Ibara & Sokpuwu, 2021). Teachers volunteering for delegated responsibilities from the principal could also be a veritable source of workload-relieving and stress management support to principals. Principals could get this support from the school management, parents of students, the host community, and from the schools board at the governmental level.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. This design sought to identify and simply describe the leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness and to establish the extent to which they enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised of all the 333 public senior secondary school principals in Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 152 respondents – representing 46% of the study population and comprising of 96 male principals and 56 female principals. A combination of stratified sampling and simple random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents of the study from the three geopolitical zone of Rivers State (Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South-East).

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire constructed by the researcher and titled “Strategic Leadership Support for Principals Effectiveness in Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire (SLSPESSSQ)”. The instrument had 25 items evenly distributed across five clusters pertaining to the five research questions of the study. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was determined using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation statistics on the test-retest data. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) at a criterion mean of 2.50 on 4 points Likert scale, while the null hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-test at a significance level of 5%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) - Version 25 was used for the analysis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the answers to the research questions and output of the hypotheses testing with their corresponding interpretations.

Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the available leadership support practices for principals’ effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the available leadership support practices for principals’ effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

s/n	Items	Male Principals (N = 96)		Female Principals (N = 56)		Mean Set (N = 152)		Dec.
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	SD	
1	Mentorship support	2.50	.492	2.52	.504	2.51	.498	A
2	Coaching support	2.78	.487	2.84	.572	2.81	.530	A
3	Leadership training support	2.65	.521	2.70	.539	2.68	.531	A
4	Professional development schemes like conferences, seminars, symposia, among others.	2.35	.500	2.39	.493	2.37	.497	D
5	Community support	2.83	.675	2.91	.640	2.87	.658	A
6	Stress management support	2.73	.326	2.70	.414	2.72	.370	A
7	Regular feedback	2.11	.800	2.06	.444	2.09	.622	D
8	Workload management support	2.67	.313	2.55	.417	2.61	.365	A
9	Recognition and rewards	2.08	.521	2.12	.520	2.10	.521	D
10	Wellness programs	1.88	.202	2.02	.214	1.95	.208	D
	Grand Mean	2.46	.484	2.48	.476	2.44	.480	D

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of male and female principals on the available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The data was analyzed against a criterion mean of 2.50. The result shows that some of the practices were available to a considerable level with mean scores higher than the criterion mean score, whereas some had mean scores which were lower than the criterion mean, meaning that they were not really available. The available ones based on majority response and their mean set scores include items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8. These are mentoring support (M = 2.51, SD = .498), coaching support (M = 2.81, SD = .530), leadership training support (M = 2.68, SD = .531), community support (M = 2.87, SD = .568), stress management support (M = 2.72, SD = .370), and workload management support (M = 2.61, SD = .365) respectively. The score for the grand mean set was found to be 2.44±.480, which being less than the criterion mean implies that majority of the respondents disagreed to the collective availability of all the assessed leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent do mentoring support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

s/n	Items	Male Principals (N = 96)		Female Principals (N = 56)		Mean Set (N = 152)		Dec.
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	SD	
11	Principals are paired with more experienced principals for transfer of administrative knowledge.	2.09	.712	2.02	.726	2.07	.716	LE
12	Serving principals are paired with retired principals for knowledge-sharing and this brings about administrative effectiveness.	2.10	.703	2.07	.628	2.09	.675	LE
13	Newly appointed principals are paired with experienced principals to enable them learn best administrative practices for effective principalship.	2.16	.701	1.96	.710	2.07	.710	LE
14	Principal are made to belong to professional learning communities which help them in gaining knowledge from more experienced members for enhanced effectiveness.	2.20	.690	2.21	.680	2.20	.684	LE
15	Principals are granted access to leadership coaches and consultants and this enables them to gain professional knowledge for effective administration of their schools.	2.16	.716	2.21	.731	2.18	.720	LE
Grand Mean		2.14	.704	2.09	.695	2.12	.701	LE

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Item 11 to item 15 were assessed in this regard against a criterion mean of 2.50. The result as revealed in the table shows that mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness

to a low extent in public senior secondary school, with a grand mean set of $2.12 \pm .701$, which is less than the criterion mean score.

Research Question Three (RQ3): To what extent do training support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Item 16 to Item 20 were analyzed in this regard against a criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean set was found to be $1.88 \pm .625$. Since this value is less than the criterion mean, it shows that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. In other words, these practices were not really implemented or adopted in the school system.

Table 3: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

s/n	Items	Male Principals (N = 96)		Female Principals (N = 56)		Mean Set (N = 152)		Dec.
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	SD	
16	Training workshops are organized for principals to help raise their skills towards greater competences for effective administration of their schools.	1.83	.675	2.00	.688	1.89	.682	LE
17	Seminars are organized for principals to where seasoned educational leaders and management experts train them on current best practices in instructional leadership.	2.31	.529	2.16	.596	2.26	.558	LE
18	The ministry of education organizes conferences for principals to train and retrain them to gain requisite skills for administrative effectiveness.	1.77	.589	1.92	.657	1.83	.617	LE
19	Principals are made to take online courses and webinars to sharpen their administrative effusiveness.	1.72	.691	1.68	.636	1.70	.669	LE
20	Principals are supported to go for further studies for professional development.	1.77	.589	1.66	.611	1.73	.598	LE
Grand Mean		1.88	.612	1.88	.638	1.88	.625	LE

Research Question Four: To what extent do community support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4 shows the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The investigated support practices (Items 21-25) included financial support, moral support through recognition of principals' efforts, sharing of information, partnership with school management, and recognition and appreciation by patents. All the items had mean sets that were less than the criterion mean score, implying that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent. In other words, they were poorly practiced.

Table 4: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

s/n	Items	Male Principals (N = 96)		Female Principals (N = 56)		Mean Set (N = 152)		Dec
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	SD	
21	Financial supports received from the community by the school helps principals in effective administration of the school.	2.09	.822	2.18	.917	2.13	.856	LE
22	Recognition of principals' efforts in the school by the community gives principals the needed moral support to give their best.	2.00	.649	1.96	.660	1.99	.651	LE
23	Information resources provided by the community to the school enhance principals' effectiveness in administrating the school.	1.95	.759	2.25	.879	2.06	.816	LE
24	Community partnership with the school management makes the work easier for principals and this boosts their effectiveness.	1.95	.701	2.11	.731	2.01	.714	LE
25	When parents recognize and appreciate principals, it is often a great support that boosts principals' effectiveness.	2.16	.716	2.18	.690	2.16	.704	LE
Grand Mean		2.03	.729	2.14	.775	2.07	.748	LE

Research Question Five: To what extent do stress management support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

s/n	Items	Male Principals (N = 96)		Female Principals (N = 56)		Mean Set (N = 152)		Dec.
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	SD	
26	Teachers readily volunteer to help principals out with workload to relieve him/her of much stress.	2.93	.700	2.87	.740	2.91	.713	HE
27	The school staff members effectively work with the principal to achieve school goals and this relieves the principal of stress.	2.92	.721	2.87	.740	2.90	.726	HE
28	Principals are provided with counseling services to manage stress for administrative effectiveness.	2.42	.724	2.40	.740	2.41	.729	LE
29	Principals have access to medical care for stress management and this boosts their effectiveness.	1.55	.630	1.87	.854	1.67	.735	LE
30	The principal enjoys social support from the school community and this helps him/her manage stress.	2.96	.679	2.87	.749	2.93	.714	HE
Grand Mean		2.56	.691	2.60	.763	2.58	.727	HE

Table 5 shows the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Items 26 to 30 were analyzed in this regard against a criterion mean of 2.50. Items [26, 27 & 30] had mean scores that were greater than the criterion mean; implying that majority of the respondents agreed that they enhanced principals' effectiveness to a high extent. On the other hand, Item 28 and Item 29 had mean scores that were lower than the criterion mean, which means they had low extent tendency of enhancing principals' effectiveness. The grand mean set was found to be $2.58 \pm .727$. Since this is greater than the criterion mean, it means majority of the respondents were of the opinion that stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State to a high extent.

Hypotheses Test Results

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: SPSS output of independent t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Principals	96	2.46	.484	5.07	150	.357	H ₀₁ Upheld
Female Teachers	56	2.48	.476				
Total	152						

Significance level of .05

Table 6 shows the result of the independent samples t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The mean and standard deviation scores of the male and female respondents were found to be $2.46 \pm .484$ and $2.48 \pm .476$ respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that $t(150) = 5.07$, $p = .357 > .05$. With the obtained p value greater than the significance value, H₀₁ was upheld and the alternate hypothesis declined. This means there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 7: SPSS output of independent t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Principals	96	2.14	.312	1.017	150	.311	H ₀₂ Upheld
Female Principals	56	2.10	.300				
Total	152						

Significance level of .05

Table 7 shows the result of the independent samples t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The mean and standard deviation scores of the male and female respondents were found to be 2.14±.312 and 2.10±.300 respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that $t(150) = 1.017$, $p = .311 > .05$. With the obtained p value greater than the significance value, H₀₂ was upheld and the alternate hypothesis declined. This means there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent of mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 8: SPSS output of independent t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Principals	96	1.88	.320	-.088	150	.930	H ₀₃ Upheld
Female Principals	56	1.89	.272				
Total	152						

Significance level of .05

Table 8 shows the result of the independent samples t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The mean and standard deviation scores of the male and female respondents were found to be 1.88±.320 and 1.89±.272 respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that $t(150) = -.088$, $p = .930 > .05$. With the obtained p value greater than the significance level value of .05, H₀₃ was upheld and the alternate hypothesis declined. This means there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 9: SPSS output of independent t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Principals	96	2.03	.365	-1.858	150	.065	H ₀₄ Upheld
Female Principals	56	2.13	.296				
Total	152						

Significance level of .05

Table 9 shows the result of the independent samples t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent community support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The mean and standard deviation scores of the male and female respondents were found to be 2.03±.365 and 2.13±.296 respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that $t(150) = -1.858$, $p = .065 > .05$. With the obtained p value greater than the significance value, H₀₄ was upheld and the alternate hypothesis declined. This means there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent of community support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhance principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 10: SPSS output of independent t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Principals	96	2.66	.553	-.127	150	.899	H ₀₅ Upheld
Female Principals	56	2.67	.635				
Total	152						

Significance level of .05

Table 10 shows the result of the independent samples t-test of difference in mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The mean and standard deviation scores of the male and female respondents were found to be 2.66±.553 and 2.67±.635 respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that $t(150) = -.127$, $p = .899 > .05$. With the obtained p value greater than the significance value, H₀₅ was upheld and the alternate hypothesis declined. This means there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent of stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Leadership Support Practices for Principals' Effectiveness in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

The first objective of the study with its corresponding research question sought to ascertain the available leadership support practices for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. In this regard, the study found the available support practices to include mentoring support practices, coaching support practices, leadership training support practices, community support practices, stress management support practices, and workload management support practices. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the opinions of male and female principals regarding the availability of these support practices.

These findings agree with existing literature on the subject matter. For example, Egboka (2018) was of the view that principals needed to be supported by their employers and the school committee through the provision of resources, guidance and encouragement, to help them succeed and excel in their school leadership roles. Some other authors explicitly highlighted support practices such as the provision of coaching and mentoring services, regular feedback and evaluation, professional development opportunities, resource allocation and support, emotional support and wellness initiatives, collaborative leadership and teamwork, clear communication and goal setting, and recognition and celebration of success as effective strategies of helping school leaders towards administrative effectiveness (Egboka, 2018; Graham, 2022; Kaki et al., 2023; Ohia, 2021).

Extent Mentoring Support Practices Enhanced Principals' Effectiveness in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

The second research objective with its corresponding research question sought to assess the extent mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in their schools. The findings of the study revealed that such practices, which included pairing of principals with more experienced principles and with retired principals for knowledge transfer, pairing newly appointed principals with experienced or old principals for guidance and professional support, membership of professional learning communities, and granting principals access to leadership coaches and consultants, were hardly in place and as such enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Furthermore, majority of the male and female principals who participated in the study shared similar opinions on the low extent to which mentoring support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness.

These findings negate what is considered best practices in organizations like a school system, where it has been established that no leader succeeds without the guidance of more experienced people or persons who have gone that path of leadership ahead of him/her. In a study by Obulor (2024) on participative management for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, it was found that principals greatly relied on the expert knowledge of stakeholders, especially those considered more knowledgeable than them. Nwonodi (2024) in the same vein found that school leaders could tap from wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise of some human resources within their communities for the administrative effectiveness of their schools. Crosby cited in Gumus (2019) was also of the opinion that mentorship and coaching were a necessity for effective principalship because principals of public secondary schools have deferring demographic variables of age, experience

and qualifications. Mentoring support is therefore important for the transfer of administrative experience and skills from more experienced to the less experienced principals for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Extent Training Support Practices Enhanced Principals' Effectiveness in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Assessment of the extent training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State was the third objective of the study. In this regard, the findings of the study revealed that training support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent, and there was no significant difference in the opinion of the male and female principals regarding this position.

The revelation made by the findings of the study in this regard shows that public senior secondary schools in Nigeria are obviously not on the path to success, even as their success depends significantly on the effectiveness of their principals, which in turn depends on the quality of knowledge, skills, and expertise possessed by the principal at any given time. These needed knowledge, skills, and expertise are the essence of training support practices, of which literature highlighted schemes such as educational conferences, seminars, workshops, online courses and webinars, formal studies, etc. to be the appropriate mediums where principals can acquire such trainings (Malaolu & Ogbuabo, 2013; Ogundiran, 2018; Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2015). The findings of the study therefore reveal the need for relevant authorities to proactively make provisions of these schemes for principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Extent Community Support Practices Enhanced Principals' Effectiveness in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

In this regard, the study revealed that community support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness to a low extent in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Furthermore, it was found that majority of the respondents were in consensus on this position as there was no significant difference in the opinions. The situation revealed by this finding places principals in precarious positions of effectiveness, even as literature has widely revealed that community support to schools was a cardinal determinant of administrative effectiveness and school success (Kamkwis & Zumo, 2019; Osadolor, 2016). The findings of Nwonodi (2024) corroborated this position. According to him, community support in the areas of school financing, information sharing, security of the school, provision of physical facilities, and availing expert knowledge to principals on how to best handle school matters (especially when the interest of the community was at stake) were worthy determinants of principals' success.

Extent Stress Management Support Practices Enhanced Principals' Effectiveness in Public Senior Secondary School in Rivers State

The fifth objective of the study together with its corresponding research question sought to investigate the extent stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The results of the analysis showed that stress management support practices enhanced principals' effectiveness to a large extent. Such supports came through teachers who readily volunteered to help principals out on their workload (by

accepting delegated responsibilities), through effective collaboration of members of staff with the principal in achieving school goals and through other forms of social support provided by members of the school community. Majority of the respondents did not also significantly differ in their opinions on the extent these stress management practices enhanced principals' effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

This finding is highly imperative for principals' effectiveness, even as it agrees with Nwiyi (2023) who posited that executive stress (work-related stress) was a silent killer of educational administrators and needs to be nipped in the bud for administrative effectiveness. Sokpuwu and Ibara (2021) equally posited that executive stress could be effectively managed through the combination of personal strategies, non-personal strategies and hazardous strategies. The non-personal strategies encompassed all supports received from colleagues and members of the school community, which is the emphasis of this study.

CONCLUSION

Public senior secondary school principals in Rivers State need to be supported for them to continuously be effective on their roles of school leadership. Such supports, which could come from teachers, parents, the community, the schools board, and the government, are in the areas of mentoring and coaching, training, community partnership in funding school, and in stress management, among others. As revealed by the study, these supports have not been significantly practiced in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and there is need for stakeholders' intentionality in ensuring that such supports are made available for principals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The management of every public senior secondary school in Rivers State should occasionally sensitize stakeholders of various ways they could support the principal and the school for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in the state.
- The Senior Secondary Schools Board should have provisions for the pairing of newly appointed and less experienced principals with older and more experienced ones for mentoring and coaching support to facilitate the process of learning on the job.
- The Ministry of Education should periodically organize leadership training programs like instructional leadership workshops, seminars, conference, among others, for the training and professional development of principals.
- Community stakeholders and well-to-do individuals should normalize funding secondary schools in their communities, and seeking ways of supporting principals towards effectiveness.

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