

International Journal Research Publication Analysis

Page: 01-19

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES ON TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Article Received: 18 September 2026

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Article Revised: 08 October 2026

Uyo Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Published on: 28 October 2026

DOI: <https://doi-org/101555/ijrpa.7794>

ABSTRACT

The study ascertained the perceived influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. Specifically the study was guided by three specific objectives. Also, three research questions were asked and answered by the study. Furthermore, three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a survey research design. The study was carried out in Benue state. The population of the study was 4588 teachers in all the public secondary schools in Benue State. Sample size for the study was 378 respondents. The above sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1969) sample size determination formula. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Principals' Leadership Styles on Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (PIPLSTPQ)" as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts and the reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The overall reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained for the instrument. Direct delivery and retrieval method was employed in the administration of the instrument with the aid of three research assistants. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions while Chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. Findings of the study revealed that laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional leadership styles have a high and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The study concluded that all the examined leadership styles; laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional have a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools

in Benue State. In view of the findings of the study, this recommendation was made among others; Principals should judiciously apply transformational leadership style in situations that require strict supervision, discipline, and quick decision-making to maintain instructional efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

The development of every nation is now largely dependent on the level of education acquired by its citizens. Education is the most effective instrument for academic progress, social mobilization, political survival and effective national development of a country. It constitutes the single largest enterprise in Nigeria. In Nigeria and some other countries of the world, education is seen as an instrument for achieving socio-economic and technological growth and development (Adepoju, 2024). It is an instrument per-excellence and the means of developing human intellect, technical skills, character and effective citizenship for self-reliance and effective national development (Abdurahman, 2014). A simple way to value education is that, it is a tool or a necessary weapon that is needed by every human being in order to effectively navigate the complex world (Aguba cited in Festus, 2020). Nigeria's educational objectives have been mapped out in the National Policy on Education with regard to their importance towards the needs of the individual and the society (FRN, 2014). The National Policy on Education set goals to enhance educational growth in the country. Some of these objectives are acquisition of knowledge, moral development, character development, self-realization, cultural development and personnel/community goals. In general, education aims at transmitting a common set of beliefs, values, norms, and understanding across all spheres of life.

It is pertinent to note that for the aims and objectives of education to be achieved, the roles of school principals in setting and overseeing the implementation of academic programmes and ensuring that teachers have the equipment and resources to meet those goals of the school are provided. This implies that principals' leadership styles are very essential tools for the success of any school and thus, any educational programme. Principals' leadership styles refer to the distinct ways and approaches school principals use to direct, motivate, guide, and influence teachers, students, and other stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the school. These styles determine how principals make decisions, interact with staff, and implement school policies and changes. According to Oyetunji (2016), leadership style is "the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people." The common principal leadership styles observed in educational settings, particularly in schools,

include autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, transformational and transactional leadership styles. Each of these styles reflects different approaches that school principals adopt in managing staff, making decisions, and driving school improvement.

The laissez-faire leadership style is a non-interventionist approach where the leader allows subordinates substantial freedom in decision-making and daily operations. The laissez-faire leadership style involves minimal intervention by the principal. Teachers and staff are given considerable freedom to make decisions and carry out their responsibilities. In the context of school administration; this means the principal delegates authority extensively and provides minimal supervision or direction to teachers and staff. According to Asiyai (2021), principals who practice laissez-faire leadership often fail to provide the necessary guidance and support, which can lead to disorganization and reduced academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. **Adeyemi (2020)** notes that while this style may promote creativity and independence among highly competent staff; it often results in weak accountability and poor instructional coordination. Moreover, **Ezeuwa (2015)** emphasizes that in Nigerian schools, laissez-faire leadership may be misinterpreted as a lack of leadership, leading to teacher indiscipline and student unrest. Although the style can be useful in schools with self-driven staff, it is generally considered ineffective in the Nigerian educational system where structured guidance and administrative presence are crucial. Therefore, many scholars recommend that Nigerian school principals adopt more participatory or transformational styles rather than a laissez-faire approach Nwankwo (2014). This style can be effective when the team is highly skilled and self-motivated but, it may result in lack of direction or accountability if not carefully managed, hence the need of alternative leadership style of transformational leadership style hence the need to adopt the transformational leadership style.

Transformational leadership style is a leadership approach in which the leader inspires and motivates subordinates to exceed their own self-interest for the good of the organization. In the context of school leadership, transformational principals focus on fostering a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and supporting the professional development of teachers. According to **Nwankwo (2014)**, transformational leaders in Nigerian schools promote a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, which enhances both teacher performance and student outcomes. Such principals lead by example, showing commitment, ethical behavior, and a clear vision that others willingly follow. **Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013)** asserted that transformational leadership positively influences school effectiveness by boosting teacher morale and fostering a sense of belonging. This leadership style is

particularly valuable in reforming underperforming schools and in driving educational change within the Nigerian school system. Therefore, transformational leadership is increasingly seen as a strategic approach to achieving sustainable development in education. The transformational leadership style is visionary and inspiring. Principals who adopt this style focus on motivating teachers and students to achieve beyond expectations (**Adeyemi & Bolarinwa, 2013**). They emphasize professional development, innovation and school-wide change, often fostering a strong sense of purpose and commitment among staff hence the need of alternative leadership style of transactional leadership style hence the need to adopt the transactional leadership style.

Transactional leadership style is a leadership approach in which the leader establishes clear goals and uses a system of rewards and punishments to motivate followers toward achieving those goals. In the context of school administration, principals who adopt this style focus on compliance, structured tasks and performance monitoring. According to Ezeuwa (2015), transactional leaders in Nigerian schools operate within existing organizational frameworks and rely on established rules to maintain order and efficiency. This leadership style tends to be effective in situations where short-term goals need to be met, such as managing discipline or enforcing examination standards. However, Okeke (2014) argues that while transactional leadership ensures accountability, it may stifle innovation and does little to inspire long-term professional development among teachers. Nigerian educational institutions, especially public secondary schools, often favour transactional leadership due to their bureaucratic structures and policy-driven operations. Despite its limitations, Okezie and Obineli (2013) maintain that transactional leadership can be effective when combined with other styles that encourage teacher motivation and creativity. Principals using this approach manage by setting clear goals and expectations, and rewarding performance that meets those goals. It is effective for achieving short-term objectives but may not encourage long-term growth or creativity. The adoption of various principal leadership styles may influence how productive teachers are in school and this would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of teachers.

Teachers' productivity refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which teachers perform their professional duties, leading to desirable educational outcomes. It encompasses how well teachers plan lessons, deliver instruction, manage classrooms, assess student learning, and contribute to the broader goals of the school. According to Okorie (2021), teacher productivity is demonstrated through the ability to translate educational objectives into successful classroom practices that result in measurable student learning. A productive teacher is not only knowledgeable but also skilled in applying pedagogical methods that suit

learners' needs (Ukeje, 2022). Productivity also includes teachers' commitment to continuous professional development and their willingness to innovate and adapt. Ofoegbu (2014) opines that teacher productivity is influenced by principal leadership style, motivation, access to resources, and administrative support within the school system. When teachers are productive, students are more likely to perform well academically and exhibit positive attitudes towards learning. Conversely, low teacher productivity can result in poor academic achievement and declining school standards. Obanya (2016) emphasizes that productivity is not solely about classroom teaching but also includes teachers' involvement in co-curricular activities, curriculum development, and community engagement.

The evaluation of teacher productivity is vital in ensuring quality education delivery and achieving national educational goals. Productivity is often assessed using indicators such as student performance, teaching effectiveness, lesson planning, and participation in professional development. Afe (2021) argues that teacher productivity must be measured not only by output but also by the quality and impact of their teaching on learners. In Nigeria, teacher productivity is often hampered by challenges such as poor remuneration, inadequate teaching facilities, overcrowded classrooms and principals' leadership styles. It is in view of this that this study is being carried out to ascertain the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' productivity in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers in senior secondary schools are expected to demonstrate high levels of productivity through effective lesson planning, delivery of quality instruction, timely assessment of students, and continuous professional growth. Their productivity is critical in achieving the goals of secondary education, which include preparing students for higher education and meaningful contributions to society. Teachers who are productive tend to foster improved student learning outcomes, higher academic performance, and a positive school climate. Central to achieving this, is the leadership style adopted by school principals, who play a key role in motivating teachers, managing resources, and creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

However, the current situation in many senior secondary schools in Benue State indicates a worrying trend of low teacher productivity. This is manifested in poor lesson preparation, irregular attendance, and lack of innovation in instructional delivery, low student performance, and minimal engagement in professional development activities. These issues raise concerns about the effectiveness of the school leadership in promoting and sustaining

teacher performance. It appears that many teachers in the state are not meeting expected standards of professionalism and efficiency. While numerous factors could contribute to low teachers' productivity, one critical area that demands attention is the leadership style employed by school principals. Principals, as administrative and instructional leaders, influence the work conditions, motivation, and job satisfaction of teachers. If their leadership approach is too autocratic, overly relaxed, or lacks strategic direction, it can adversely affect teacher morale and performance. Conversely, leadership that is democratic, transformational, and participatory may tend to inspire commitment and enhance productivity.

Despite the significance of principal leadership in influencing school outcomes, there appears to be a gap in empirical research linking leadership styles of principals to teachers' productivity in Benue State. Most studies have focused on broader administrative issues without isolating the specific leadership behaviours that may directly impact teacher effectiveness. Therefore, there is a compelling need to carry out a research study to investigate the perceived influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to determine the perceived influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The specific objectives of this study are;

1. To determine the perceived influence of laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.
2. To determine the perceived influence of transformational leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.
3. To determine the perceived influence of transactional leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. What is the perceived influence of laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?
2. What is the perceived influence of transformational leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?

3. What is the perceived influence of transactional leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?

Hypotheses

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

1. Laissez-faire leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.
2. Transformational leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.
3. Transactional leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. Survey research design is a type of design in which a group of people or item is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or item considered to be the representative of the entire group. The study was carried out in Benue State. Benue is in the North-Central region of Nigeria with a population of about 4,253,641 (National Population Commission, 2006). The population of the study was 4588 teachers in all the public secondary schools in Benue State (TSB, 2026). The sample size for the study was 378 respondents. This was gotten from the population using the Taro Yamane formula. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Principals' Leadership Styles on Teachers' Productivity Questionnaire (PIPLSTPQ)". To determine the face and content validity of the instrument, initial copies of the instrument with the specific purposes, research questions and hypotheses were given to three experts. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out. An overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained for the instrument.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 378 respondents on a face-to-face basis by the researcher and three research assistants (teachers selected from some schools). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Specifically, Mean and Standard Deviation were used in answering the research questions. Chi-square goodness of fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented according to research questions answered and hypothesis tested as follows:

Research Question 1

What is the perceived influence of laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?

To answer this research question, mean and standard deviation of the responses of the respondents were computed and presented on Table 1

Table 1: Frequency Counts, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Respondents on the perceived influence of laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	When principal rarely gives guidance on teaching activities, it hinders teachers' productivity	378	2.92	1.04	Agree
2	Teachers feel less motivated when the principal does not monitor their work.	378	3.01	.81	Agree
3	The absence of supervision from the principal reduces teachers' commitment to work.	378	2.97	.77	Agree
4	Teachers perform better when principal is actively involved in school activities.	378	3.01	.95	Agree
5	Teachers feel confused about their responsibilities due to lack of direction from the principal.	378	3.10	.89	Agree
6	When the principal does not interfere even when there are problems that need leadership, it hinders teachers' productivity	378	3.07	.99	Agree
7	Lack of principal's involvement leads to poor collaboration among teachers.	378	3.42	.74	Agree
	Cluster Mean		3.07		High Influence

Result presented on Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of item 15 to 21 are above the mean bench mark of 2.50, and this implies that the respondents agreed on all the items. The result also shows a cluster mean of 3.07 which is above the mean bench mark of 2.50. This is an indication that laissez-faire leadership style has a high and positive influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The standard deviation as shown on Table 1 ranges from 0.74 to 1.04 and this implies that the respondents were homogenous in their responses.

Research Question 2

What is the perceived influence of transformational leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?

To answer this research question, mean and standard deviation of the responses of the respondents were computed and presented on Table 2

Table 2: Frequency Counts, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Respondents on the perceived influence of transformational leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	SD	Remark
8	When principal inspires teachers to perform beyond expectations, it enhances their productivity	378	3.37	.75	Agree
9	Teachers are motivated when principal shares a clear and compelling vision as this enhances their productivity	378	3.36	.82	Agree
10	The principal regularly appreciates teachers efforts and this enhances their productivity.	378	3.18	.89	Agree
11	The principal treats every teacher as an individual with unique needs and this boost their moral towards work	378	3.27	.83	Agree
12	The principal encourages collaboration among teachers and this enhances their productivity.	378	3.03	1.02	Agree
13	Teachers are empowered to take initiative in their duties because of the principal's leadership.	378	2.90	.98	Agree
14	Teachers are more productive because of the principal's inspirational leadership style.	378	3.19	.99	Agree
	Cluster Mean		3.19		High Influence

Result presented on Table 2 shows that the mean ratings of item 22 to 28 are above the mean bench mark of 2.50, and this implies that the respondents agreed on all the items. The result also shows a cluster mean of 3.19 which is above the mean bench mark of 2.50. This is an indication that transformational leadership style has a high and positive influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The standard deviation as shown on Table 2 ranges from 0.75 to 1.02 and this implies that the respondents were homogenous in their responses.

Research Question 3

What is the perceived influence of transactional leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State?

To answer this research question, mean and standard deviation of the responses of the respondents were computed and presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency Counts, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Respondents on the perceived influence of transactional leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remark
15	Teachers feel pressured to meet targets due to strict monitoring from the principal.	378	3.20	.79	Agree
16	The principal corrects mistakes quickly and this enhances teachers' productivity	378	2.96	.97	Agree
17	The principal's emphasis on performance targets makes them more committed to duties.	378	3.22	.87	Agree
18	Teachers receive warnings or sanctions when they fail to meet expectations and this hinders their productivity	378	3.22	.87	Agree
19	When principal sets performance benchmarks for all teachers to meet, it enhances their job productivity	378	3.09	.83	Agree
20	Teachers' performances are enhanced when rewards and penalties are clearly outlined by the principal	378	3.22	.99	Agree
21	When principal ensures every teacher's responsibility is monitored for output and compliance, it enhances their job productivity	378	3.19	.89	Agree
	Cluster Mean		3.16		High Influence

Result presented on Table 3 shows that the mean ratings of item 29 to 35 are above the mean bench mark of 2.50, and this implies that the respondents agreed on all the items. The result also shows a cluster mean of 3.16 which is above the mean bench mark of 2.50. This is an indication that transactional leadership style has a high and positive influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The standard deviation as shown on Table 3 ranges from 0.79 to 0.99 and this implies that the respondents were homogenous in their responses.

Hypothesis One

Laissez-faire leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-square goodness of fit on the influence of Laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

	Observed N	Expected N	Df	Asymp. Sig	Chi-Square	Sig. value	Remark
SD	30	94.5	3	0.00	121.429 ^a	0.05	S, Reject H ₀₃
D	54	94.5					
A	138	94.5					
SA	156	94.5					
Total	378						

df= degree of freedom, S= significant

The result presented on Table 4 shows that the Asymp. Sig value of 0.00 is less than the set significant value of 0.05 and this shows that the test of hypothesis is significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that laissez-faire leadership style has a statistical significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Hypothesis Two

Transformational leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 5: Chi-square goodness of fit on the influence of Transformational leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

	Observed N	Expected N	Df	Asymp. sig	Chi-Square	Sig. value	Remark
SD	26	94.5	3	0.00	144.603 ^a	0.05	S, Reject H ₀₄
D	53	94.5					
A	125	94.5					
SA	174	94.5					
Total	378						

df= degree of freedom, S= significant

The result presented on Table 5 shows that the Asymp. Sig value of 0.00 is less than the set significant value of 0.05 and this shows that the test of hypothesis is significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that transformational leadership style has a statistical significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Hypothesis Three

Transactional leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 6: Chi-square goodness of fit on the influence of Transactional leadership style has no significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

	Observed N	Expected N	Df	Asymp. sig	Chi-Square	Sig. value	Remark
SD	26	94.5	3	0.00	136.074 ^a	0.05	S, Reject H ₀₁
D	52	94.5					
A	140	94.5					
SA	160	94.5					
Total	378						

df= degree of freedom, S= significant

The result presented on Table 6 shows that the Asymp. Sig value of 0.00 is less than the set significant value of 0.05 and this shows that the test of hypothesis is significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that transactional leadership style has a statistical significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Summary of Major Findings

The following are the major findings of this study.

1. Laissez-faire leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State
2. Transformational leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State
3. Transactional leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding revealed that laissez-faire leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The study found that granting teachers autonomy and professional freedom can enhance their performance. Under this leadership approach, principals provide minimal direct supervision, allowing teachers to take initiative, make instructional decisions, and manage their classroom activities independently. This may explain the significance of the finding, as many teachers especially experienced ones tend to be more productive when they are trusted to exercise their professional judgment without excessive interference. The result aligns with the study of Ofojebe and Nwankwo (2017), who found that teacher autonomy under less restrictive leadership improved creativity and effectiveness in lesson delivery. Similarly, Ibrahim (2020)

reported that reduced administrative control encouraged self-motivation and accountability among teachers, leading to improved productivity in secondary schools.

The second finding revealed that transformational leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The finding revealed that principals who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate teachers can significantly enhance their work performance. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision, encourage professional development, and recognize individual contributions, which fosters commitment and a strong sense of purpose among teachers. This may explain the significance of the finding, as teachers are more likely to exceed expectations when they feel valued, supported, and empowered to innovate in their instructional practices. The result is consistent with the study of Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), who found that transformational leadership positively influenced teachers' motivation and classroom effectiveness through vision-building and support. Similarly, Nwosu (2018) reported that principals who adopted transformational practices improved teachers' productivity by promoting collaboration, mentorship, and continuous professional growth in Nigerian secondary schools. The implication is that transformational leadership serves as a catalyst for both individual and organizational performance in schools.

The third finding revealed that transactional leadership style has a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State. The finding revealed that a system of rewards and sanctions can effectively drive teachers' performance. Transactional leaders emphasize clear expectations, performance standards, and structured supervision, where teachers are rewarded for meeting targets and corrected when they fall short. This approach may explain the significance of the finding, as it creates a performance-oriented environment that encourages accountability, punctuality, and adherence to instructional goals. In many public secondary schools, such structured exchanges between principals and teachers help to maintain order and ensure that academic tasks are completed efficiently. The result aligns with the study of Bass (2015), who posited that transactional leadership enhances productivity through contingent reinforcement and active management. Similarly, Ogunyemi (2017) found that the use of incentives and disciplinary measures by school administrators significantly improved teachers' job performance in Nigerian secondary schools. The implication is that transactional leadership can be an effective managerial strategy for improving teachers' productivity, particularly in systems where clear guidelines and performance monitoring are essential.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that all the examined leadership styles laissez-faire, transformational, and transactional have a high, positive and significant influence on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Benue State.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals should allow a degree of professional autonomy associated with laissez-faire leadership, especially for experienced teachers, to promote innovation and self-direction.
2. Educational authorities should encourage principals to practice transformational leadership by motivating, inspiring, and supporting teachers' professional development.
3. School leaders should utilize transactional leadership strategies by establishing clear expectations and using rewards and sanctions to reinforce teachers' performance.

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