



Behaviour and Instructional Management Strategies as Correlates of Public Secondary Schools Effectiveness in Imo State

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Abstract

The study empirically determined if behaviour and instructional management strategies are correlates of public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all 306 principals of public secondary schools in Imo State. The sample of the study comprised 306 public secondary school principals. Two structured questionnaires developed by the researcher were used for data collection. To ascertain the face and content validity of the instruments, the questionnaires were presented to three experts. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted to determine the reliability of the instruments. The data obtained from the pilot test were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse data for the study. Findings of the study revealed that behaviour management strategies have a high positive and significant relationship with public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. Findings of the study also revealed that instructional management strategies have a high positive and significant relationship with public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. It was therefore recommended that the Imo State Ministry of Education should organise regular training programmes and workshops for principals on effective behaviour management strategies to help maintain discipline and create a conducive learning environment in public secondary schools. It was also recommended that the Imo State government, through the Ministry of Education and the Post Primary School Services Commission, should provide continuous professional development programmes for principals on instructional management strategies.

Keywords: Behaviour, Instructional, Management Strategies, School Effectiveness, Public

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Introduction

Secondary education serves as a vital tool for the development of the human mind. It equips individuals with essential knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and societal contribution. Secondary schools, in particular, represent a crucial level of education that prepares students for useful living in society and for higher education. This stage is the bridge between primary education and tertiary education. Secondary education promotes critical thinking, problem-solving abilities and social awareness. Moreover, secondary education plays a key role in economic development by producing a skilled workforce ready to meet modern challenges. It is therefore essential that secondary schools remain effective to fulfil these roles. School effectiveness has been conceptualised by various scholars in recent literature. Javornik and Klemenčič Mirazchijski (2023) defined school effectiveness as the extent to which a school achieves its goals in terms of student learning, development and well-being. Similarly, Agirdag and Muijs (2023) viewed school

effectiveness through the lens of impacts on academic achievement, where schools demonstrate measurable gains in student outcomes. Saga (2025) defined school effectiveness as an outcome shaped by governance, management practices and organisational commitment, measured by strong leadership, emphasis on basic skills, a secure environment, high expectations, continuous assessment and financial flexibility. In the context of this study, school effectiveness refers to the ability of public secondary schools in Imo State to attain educational goals, including high student performance, positive learning environments and stakeholder satisfaction. However, it appears that public secondary schools in Imo State are struggling to achieve such effectiveness.

Public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria, demonstrate poor effectiveness primarily due to inadequate infrastructure, including dilapidated classrooms (52.5% deteriorated), leaking roofs (45%), cracked walls (34.2%) and non-functional toilets (50.6%), which compromise teaching, learning and safety (Adah & Egolum, 2024). Financial constraints and poor maintenance culture exacerbate facility decay, fostering unhealthy environments and diminishing staff productivity (Mbonu et al., 2022). Principals' inadequate leadership, including favouritism and weak supervision, erodes teacher morale and disrupts school management. Deficient instructional leadership practices, like irregular monitoring of teaching and failure to appreciate staff, lead to teacher absenteeism and poor classroom management (Onedigbo & Okorji, 2023). Furthermore, Egboka and Onyeagba (2024) averred that some teachers in public secondary schools in exhibit lateness, reluctance in duties and incomplete coverage of schemes of work, contributing to substandard educational outcomes. Lack of relational transparency, evidenced by principals' arrogant behaviour and poor communication, fosters misunderstandings and conflicts among staff. An example includes principals not holding dialogue sessions or encouraging open questions, resulting in demotivated teachers and ineffective administration.

Poor teacher connectedness manifests in weak student relationships, leading to disruptive behaviours, higher dropout rates and increased absenteeism. Eziamaka et al. (2024) noted that low staff productivity and poor human relations further indicate ineffective school management. Overpopulation and vandalism accelerate infrastructure deterioration, creating unproductive learning settings (Adah & Egolum, 2024). Improper curriculum implementation, due to unqualified personnel, yields poor student performance in examinations (Mbonu et al., 2022). These interconnected challenges seem to culminate in low productivity, unachieved objectives and a non-competitive education system in the state (Egboka & Onyeagba, 2024; Onedigbo & Okorji, 2023). This has led to the need for the determination of factors that could predict school effectiveness. Yarden (2025) suggested that school effectiveness could be linked to principals' management strategies.

Principals in secondary schools have been defined by several scholars. Mugwaze and Smith (2024) defined principals as instructional leaders who coordinate staff, implement strategies and create conducive environments to improve student outcomes. Auerbach (2024) defined principals as educational administrators who manage schools by setting policies, hiring staff, overseeing finances and enforcing discipline. Martinez-Garcia et al. (2025) described effective principals as passionate leaders with strong communication and leadership skills who assess school culture and foster teacher commitment. In this study, principals are viewed as key administrators who apply different management strategies in the management of the school.

Management strategies refer to the approaches principals use to organise and direct school operations. Korpershoek et al. (2025) defined management strategies as structured interventions focused on teacher behaviour, student-teacher relationships, student behaviour and social-emotional development to enhance outcomes. Putra and Yanto (2025) conceptualised management strategies as systematic concepts that create

positive learning environments through rules, time management, behaviour control and adaptability. Hu and Shi (2024) defined management strategies as innovative models involving data-driven decisions, resource optimisation and enhanced communication. Ossai et al. (2025) viewed management strategies as frameworks for aligning curricula and pedagogy with global needs. According to these scholars, different management strategies include behaviour-focused approaches, relationship-building techniques, data-driven methods and innovative recruitment. In the context of this study, management strategies encompass the planned actions principals take to improve school operations and outcomes. For this study, the researcher will explore three principal management strategies: behaviour management, instructional management and resource management.

Behaviour management strategy involves deliberate approaches used by principals to guide student conduct and create a conducive climate for teaching and learning. Korpershoek et al. (2025) defined behaviour management strategies as structured interventions that shape teacher actions, strengthen student–teacher relationships and regulate student behaviour to improve academic, behavioural and socio-emotional outcomes; this highlights the principal’s role in promoting proactive measures that prevent disruptions. Putra and Yanto (2025) described behaviour management strategies as establishing rules, managing time, controlling behaviour and adapting responses to student needs, emphasising the importance of consistent structure in reducing misbehaviour. Masood et al. (2025) further defined behaviour management strategies as a blend of proactive and reactive techniques such as building trust, setting clear expectations and applying fair discipline to form positive student behaviours. These perspectives underscore the central responsibility of principals in fostering an orderly school environment that minimises behavioural challenges and enhances school morale. When effectively applied, behaviour management leads to reduced bullying, higher attendance and improved relationships within the school community, ultimately supporting a productive learning atmosphere that complements instructional management.

Instructional management strategy focuses on how principals guide, supervise and enhance teaching practices to improve learning outcomes. Mugwaze and Smith (2024) defined instructional management strategy as the actions principals take to support teachers, refine instructional methods and stimulate innovation. This shows that the leadership role in shaping teaching quality. Auerbach (2024) described instructional management as setting performance goals, monitoring curriculum implementation and enforcing instructional standards, highlighting the administrative obligation of principals to maintain consistency and quality across classrooms. Martinez-García et al. (2025) conceptualised instructional management strategy as the leadership processes through which principals inspire teachers, strengthen school culture and build professional commitment, emphasising the motivational dimensions of instructional leadership. In practice, instructional management requires principals to conduct classroom observations, provide constructive feedback and coordinate professional development to align practice with curriculum objectives (Mugwaze & Smith, 2024). The views explored are theoretical and have not been empirically proven to be true. It is against this background that the researcher empirically determined if behaviour and instructional management strategies are correlates of public secondary schools effectiveness in Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

School ineffectiveness in public secondary schools in Imo State appears to be an issue of growing concern, as many schools seem unable to achieve the level of academic and administrative performance expected of them. Field observation by the researcher seem to suggest that teaching and learning may be weakening in some schools, with students showing signs of low engagement, inconsistent academic achievement and reduced motivation. Teachers also appear to struggle with issues such as classroom management, delayed

feedback and limited instructional supervision, which may contribute to the declining instructional quality observed in some schools.

There also seems to be a decline in discipline, attendance and the general orderliness required for an effective school environment. Field observation in some public secondary schools in Imo State revealed that cases of truancy, poor behaviour and irregular student participation in school activities appear to be on the increase. Also, in some schools, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, poorly maintained facilities and inadequate learning resources may indicate gaps in how school resources are managed. These patterns seem to suggest that management strategies applied by some principals may not be sufficiently effective in promoting strong supervision, clear communication, staff motivation and collaborative decision-making. Although these issues have been noted in practice, there is limited empirical evidence in Imo State that links management strategies directly with school effectiveness. This lack of empirical clarity creates a gap in knowledge, which the present study seeks to address by investigating how management strategies and stakeholders' engagement may predict public secondary schools effectiveness in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State?
2. What is the relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.
2. There is no significant relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.

Research Method

The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all 306 principals of public secondary schools in Imo State. The sample of the study comprised 306 public secondary school principals. Due to the manageable size of the population, the census sampling technique was adopted for the study. Two structured questionnaires developed by the researcher were used for data collection. The first instrument was titled "Behaviour and Instructional Management Strategies Questionnaire (BIMSQ)". The instrument contained 20 items arranged in two clusters, A and B. Cluster A contained 10 items eliciting information on behaviour management strategies, while Cluster B contained 10 items eliciting information on instructional management strategies. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1. The second instrument was titled "School Effectiveness Questionnaire (SEQ)". The instrument contained 15 items designed to elicit information on school effectiveness. The instrument was also structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1.

To ascertain the face and content validity of the instruments, the questionnaires were presented to three experts: two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts examined the instruments in terms of clarity of items, relevance to

the research objectives and appropriateness of the rating scale. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated into the final versions of the instruments. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted to determine the reliability of the instruments. The instruments were administered to 20 principals of public secondary schools in Enugu State, which was outside the study area but shares similar characteristics with Imo State. The data obtained from the pilot test were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability analysis yielded reliability coefficients of 0.89 and 0.86 for clusters A and B respectively, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.88 for P BIMSQ and 0.87 for SEQ. These coefficients were considered adequate for the study since they exceeded the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.70.

The instruments were administered to the respondents through direct delivery method with the assistance of research assistants to ensure a high return rate. Out of the 306 copies of the questionnaires administered, 245 copies were returned in good condition and used for data analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse data relating to the research questions in order to determine the relationship between the variables. For the hypotheses, the p-value associated with the correlation coefficient was used to determine statistical significance at the 0.05 level of significance. If the p-value was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. If the p-value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis and Test of Significance between Behaviour Management Strategies and Public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State

Variables		Behaviour Management Strategies	School Effectiveness	Remark
Behaviour Management Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	.728**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	High Positive/Significant Relationship
	N	245	245	
School Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.728**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	245	245	

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

Data in Table 1 reveals that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is $r = 0.728$. This shows that a high positive relationship exists between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. This implies that in schools where principals apply behaviour management strategies, it improves school effectiveness. Thus, there is a high positive relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis and Test of Significance between Instructional Management Strategies and Public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State

Variables		Instructional Management Strategies	School Effectiveness	Remark
Instructional Management Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	.811**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	High Positive/Significant Relationship
	N	245	245	
School Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.811**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	245	245	

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

Data in Table 2 reveals that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is $r = 0.811$. This shows that a very high positive relationship exists between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. This implies that in schools where principals apply instructional management strategies, it improves school effectiveness. Thus, there is a high positive relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a high positive relationship between behaviour management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. This indicates that improvements in the way principals manage student behaviour are associated with corresponding increases in school effectiveness. In practical terms, schools where behaviour is properly controlled and guided tend to experience fewer disruptions, better student engagement and smoother instructional delivery, all of which contribute to overall effectiveness. The strength of the relationship suggests that behaviour management is a major factor influencing how well schools achieve their goals. This is in agreement with Korpershoek et al. (2025) who reported that structured and consistent behaviour management practices contribute to improved academic outcomes, better student conduct and a more supportive school climate. Putra and Yanto (2025) reported that behaviour management strategies improves school effectiveness, The agreement with these studies suggests that effective behaviour management not only minimises disciplinary problems but also creates an enabling environment for teaching and learning to thrive.

Furthermore, the finding showed that the relationship between behaviour management strategies and school effectiveness is statistically significant, as the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the observed relationship is not due to chance, but reflects a real and meaningful connection between the variables. The

implication is that principals who pay attention to behaviour management are more likely to run effective schools. This supports existing empirical evidence that disciplined school environments enhance attendance, reduce conflict and improve collaboration among members of the school community, thereby strengthening overall school performance.

The study also found a very high positive relationship between instructional management strategies and public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. This suggests that instructional management has an even stronger influence on school effectiveness compared to behaviour management. The result implies that when principals actively supervise teaching, support teachers and ensure proper curriculum implementation, the effectiveness of the school improves significantly. The very high correlation indicates that instructional management is a critical driver of school success, as it directly affects the quality of teaching and learning. This finding is consistent with Mugwaze and Smith (2024) who found that principals' involvement in instructional processes significantly improves teaching quality, teacher commitment and student outcomes. Auerbach (2024) noted that instructional management strategies of school principals when properly applied would lead to school improvement.

Furthermore, the null hypothesis for instructional management strategies was rejected which indicated that the relationship between instructional management and school effectiveness is statistically significant. This means that effective instructional management practices are essential for improving school performance and are not merely incidental factors. The implication is that principals who prioritise instructional supervision, continuous teacher development and effective curriculum delivery are more likely to achieve higher levels of school effectiveness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that principals' behaviour management strategies and instructional management strategies have significant and positive relationships with public secondary schools' effectiveness in Imo State. The study revealed a high positive correlation between behaviour management strategies and school effectiveness, as well as a very high positive correlation between instructional management strategies and school effectiveness. This indicates that both strategies play important roles in enhancing how effectively school's function. Therefore, it is important for school administrators and educational authorities in Imo State to strengthen both behaviour and instructional management practices in order to improve school effectiveness, promote a conducive learning environment and enhance overall educational outcomes.

Recommendations

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

1. The Imo State Ministry of Education should organise regular training programmes and workshops for principals on effective behaviour management strategies to help maintain discipline and create a conducive learning environment in public secondary schools.
2. The Imo State government, through the Ministry of Education and the Post Primary School Services Commission, should provide continuous professional development programmes for principals on instructional management strategies such as classroom supervision, curriculum monitoring and teacher support to enhance school effectiveness.
3. Principals should consistently apply appropriate behaviour management techniques, including clear rule-setting and fair disciplinary measures, to reduce student misconduct and improve school climate.
4. Principals should prioritise instructional supervision and provide constructive feedback to teachers in order to improve teaching quality and students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

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