



RELAXATION STRATEGIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT AS PREDICTORS OF PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

Ifeanyi Francis Ikedimma (PhD)

Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Faculty of Education,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka,
Anambra State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study investigated relaxation strategies for stress management as predictors of principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis, which was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 267 principals of the 267 public secondary schools in Anambra State, and the entire population was used as the sample. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled Relaxation Strategies for Stress Management Questionnaire (RSSMQ) and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PAEQ). The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by experts to ensure their suitability. A pilot study was conducted, and the internal consistency of the instruments was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 for cluster D. The researcher administered the questionnaires directly to the respondents with the assistance of five trained research assistants. Simple linear regression analysis was employed to answer the research question and to determine the extent to which relaxation strategies for stress management predicted principals' administrative effectiveness. The findings of the study revealed that relaxation strategies for stress management significantly predicted principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. This indicates that principals who consciously and consistently adopt relaxation strategies are more likely to sustain high levels of administrative effectiveness in the management of their schools. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the Anambra State Ministry of Education should organize regular training and capacity-building programmes for principals on the adoption of relaxation strategies such as mindfulness practices, physical exercise, and scheduled work breaks, with a view to preventing burnout and promoting sustained productivity in school administration.

Keywords: Relaxation Strategies, Stress Management, Principals, Administrative Effectiveness, Public Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Education is a deliberate process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for critical thinking, personal development, and meaningful



participation in society. It promotes social responsibility, prepares individuals for diverse career pathways, and equips them with competencies required to adapt to societal changes and address real-life challenges. According to Agogbua, Anyaeji, and Okonkwo (2021), properly administered education develops individuals' capacity to confront problems, stimulates intellectual curiosity, fosters inquiry, and nurtures inventiveness, self-reliance, and resourcefulness. In Nigeria, the educational system operates within the 9-3-4 structure, comprising basic, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. The present study is situated within the context of secondary school education.

Secondary education is the level of education provided to learners immediately after the completion of primary education. It serves as a critical stage in the educational system where students consolidate foundational knowledge acquired at the primary level while developing the cultural, intellectual, and social competencies required for responsible citizenship. In Nigeria, secondary education occupies a strategic position, as it prepares learners for higher education in various areas of specialization and enhances their skills for improved labour productivity. Consequently, both tertiary institutions and the labour market rely heavily on the quality of outputs produced by secondary schools. In recognition of this importance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) outlined the primary objectives of secondary education to include the acquisition of relevant competencies and skills that enhance individuals' quality of life and enable active participation in national economic development. Thus, secondary education in Nigeria is widely regarded as a foundation for quality human capital development and a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth.

Within the Nigerian secondary school system, the principal serves as the chief executive and instructional leader, charged with the responsibility of ensuring the attainment of the objectives of secondary education as prescribed in the National Policy on Education. Principals are expected to create and sustain a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic, social, and emotional development (Nwangwa & Memberr, 2021). As school leaders, principals play a central role in improving educational performance and overall school quality. Anukaenyi and Nwafor (2023) emphasized that principals are responsible for formulating and articulating school visions that guide institutional operations. The vision, mission, and core values established by principals provide the foundation for quality-driven strategies that promote continuous innovation, improvement, and change within schools. By virtue of their leadership position, principals remain pivotal to secondary school improvement, largely through the exercise of administrative effectiveness.

Principals' administrative effectiveness refers to the extent to which human, financial, and material resources are efficiently mobilized and utilized to achieve predetermined school goals and objectives. It encompasses planning, organizing, coordinating, and directing school activities, as well as allocating resources and implementing strategies that enhance productivity while maintaining a supportive work environment. Onyekazi, Ezeaku, and Anyaeche (2022) described effective school administration as the systematic application of available human and material resources in the implementation of educational programmes in line with established educational policies, with the aim of achieving educational goals. Similarly, effective administration entails efficient planning, organization, and leadership that influence staff and



resources toward the realization of institutional objectives. Okaforcha (2021) defined effective school administration as the successful achievement of set educational objectives through the optimal utilization of available resources.

Effective administration further involves the competent coordination of tasks, personnel, and resources to ensure smooth institutional operations and optimal outcomes. It demands strategic decision-making, strong leadership, and the capacity to manage competing responsibilities. Nwafor and Egboka (2020) observed that administrative effectiveness in schools is enhanced when leaders demonstrate clarity in decision-making, effectively balance multiple responsibilities, and implement practices that support staff motivation and student achievement. Ukaogba and Nwankwo (2020) added that strong organizational skills, appropriate delegation of duties, and open communication channels are essential for sustaining administrative effectiveness within the school community. However, the ability of principals to maintain these practices consistently is largely influenced by how effectively they manage occupational stress, particularly through relaxation strategies.

Scholars have identified various stress management strategies as essential for effective school administration. Ngerem and Chinedum (2020) noted that principals who employ strategies such as time management, delegation of duties, emotional regulation, relaxation techniques, and the use of social support are better positioned to minimize the adverse effects of stress and improve administrative effectiveness. Panigrahi (2018) similarly identified stress management approaches including workload reduction, work-life balance, use of technology, effective communication, attention to security concerns, and task prioritization as critical for school administrators. In the same vein, Asuquo, Ogbeche, Udeh, and Owan (2023) emphasized delegation and effective time management as key strategies for managing occupational stress in secondary school administration. Notwithstanding the relevance of these strategies, the present study specifically focuses on relaxation strategies for stress management.

Relaxation is a stress management approach aimed at reducing tension, enhancing mental clarity, and promoting overall well-being. Volpato, Banfi, Nicolini, and Pagnini (2018) described relaxation as a collection of strategies designed to increase calmness and reduce stress. Principals facing work-related pressures may adopt relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, and scheduled breaks during the workday to maintain emotional balance and focus. Engaging in physical activities, such as walking, and allocating time for leisure or hobbies can further support mental and physical rejuvenation. When principals effectively manage stress through relaxation, they are more likely to make sound decisions and manage school activities efficiently. In addition to relaxation, social support remains another important stress management strategy for school administrators.

Empirical evidence from existing literature consistently indicates that principals' deliberate and systematic use of stress management strategies, including time management, delegation, emotional regulation, relaxation, and resilience-building practices is strongly associated with improved administrative behaviour and enhanced job performance. Asuquo et al. (2023) asserted that principals who consciously adopt appropriate stress management strategies tend to demonstrate greater leadership effectiveness, improved administrative performance, reduced burnout, and a more positive school climate, which in turn enhances teacher productivity



and student learning outcomes. Conversely, principals who inadequately or inconsistently apply relaxation strategies are more susceptible to stress-related challenges such as burnout, impaired judgment, poor decision-making, and diminished job performance. These challenges often manifest in weak coordination of school activities, low staff morale, reduced teacher productivity, and poor student academic achievement.

In Anambra State, growing concerns have been expressed regarding the administrative effectiveness of principals in public secondary schools. Observations of ineffective teacher supervision, poor utilization of time, inadequate delegation of responsibilities, strained interpersonal relationships, and delayed or inappropriate administrative decisions suggest that some principals may be experiencing difficulty in coping with the demands of their roles. These challenges appear to be exacerbated by heavy workloads, limited resources, and increasing expectations from government authorities, parents, and the wider community. Supporting this concern, Onyekazi, Ohamobi, Osegbue, Oguejiofo, Anagor, and Anyaeche (2024) reported that principals' inconsistent application of stress management strategies, particularly in task prioritization, was associated with lower teacher performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. This finding highlights the likelihood that poor stress management practices among principals may undermine administrative effectiveness and overall school performance.

Despite the increasing recognition of the relationship between stress management strategies and administrative effectiveness, empirical evidence remains insufficient in establishing the extent to which principals' stress management strategies, particularly relaxation strategies, predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This gap in the literature limits the ability of policymakers, educational administrators, and school leaders to develop targeted interventions for improving principals' performance. Against this background, the present study examined relaxation strategies for stress management as predictors of principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Administrative effectiveness is fundamental to the successful functioning of secondary schools. Principals are entrusted with numerous responsibilities, including planning and coordinating school activities, supervising teachers, managing students, maintaining discipline, fostering effective relationships with parents and the wider community, and ensuring the proper implementation of government educational policies. When these responsibilities are effectively discharged, schools are better positioned to achieve their educational objectives. In Anambra State, however, increasing concerns have been expressed regarding the administrative effectiveness of principals in public secondary schools. Reports of inadequate supervision of teachers, weak student discipline, ineffective communication, poor delegation of responsibilities, strained interpersonal relationships, delayed decision-making, and weak school-community relations suggest that some principals may be experiencing difficulties in effectively managing their administrative roles. These shortcomings have adverse implications for teaching and learning processes and often result in reduced overall school performance.



One major factor that may be contributing to this situation is occupational stress. School principals are exposed to multiple stressors, including excessive workloads, shortages of qualified teachers, large student populations, pressure from government authorities, rising expectations from parents, and inadequate material and financial resources. When such stress is poorly managed, it can negatively affect principals' physical health, emotional stability, judgment, and overall administrative efficiency. Although stress is an inherent aspect of the principalship, principals differ in the strategies they adopt to manage it. While some principals employ positive stress management approaches such as effective time management, delegation of duties, emotional regulation, relaxation techniques, and seeking social support, others may rely on ineffective or maladaptive strategies that further undermine their performance.

Despite the recognized importance of stress management in school administration, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which principals' stress management strategies, particularly relaxation strategies, predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This gap in knowledge necessitates systematic investigation. Consequently, this study examined relaxation strategies for stress management as predictors of principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Question

The study was guided by this research question:

1. To what extent do principals' relaxation strategies predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

This null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Principals' relaxation strategies do not significantly predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methods

A correlational research design was adopted for this study in order to examine the nature and extent of the relationship between relaxation strategies for stress management and principals' administrative effectiveness without manipulating any of the study variables. The population of the study consisted of all the 267 principals in the 267 public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Given the manageable size of the population, the entire population was used as the sample, thereby eliminating sampling bias and ensuring comprehensive representation.

Data for the study were collected through the use of two researcher-developed instruments, namely the *Relaxation Strategies for Stress Management Questionnaire (RSSMQ)* and the *Principals' Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (PAEQ)*. The instruments were carefully designed to reflect the variables under investigation and were subjected to both face and content validation by experts in educational administration and measurement and evaluation to ascertain their relevance, clarity, and adequacy. To further ensure the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted, and the internal consistency of the questionnaire items was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The analysis yielded a reliability



coefficient of 0.78 for cluster D, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency for the instrument.

The administration of the questionnaires was carried out directly by the researcher with the support of five trained research assistants to facilitate effective distribution and retrieval of the instruments. This approach helped to maximize the response rate and ensure accuracy in data collection. The data obtained were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis, which was employed to answer the research question and to determine the extent to which relaxation strategies for stress management predicted principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do principals' relaxation strategies predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1. Summary of Simple Regression Analysis with principals' relaxation Strategies as Predictor of their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State

	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	B	SE B	β
Constant				47.06	2.46	
Relaxation Strategies	.79	.62	.62	2.44	1.17	.79

Data in Table 1 indicates that principals' relaxation strategies is a strong predictor of their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is shown by the regression coefficient ($R = .79$) and the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .62$) which indicates that principals' relaxation strategies explained 62% of the variance in their administrative effectiveness.

Hypothesis 1: Principals' relaxation strategies will not significantly predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 2. Test of Significance of Simple Regression Analysis with Principals' relaxation strategies as Predictor of their administrative effectiveness

	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	B	SE B	β	t	F	P
Constant				47.40	2.46		19.26		.00
Principals' Relaxation Strategies	.79	.62	.62	2.44	.11	.79	20.93	43.17	.00

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the simple regression coefficient (R) is .79 while the R^2 is .62. The F-ratio associated with these is 43.17 and the P -value = .00, since the P -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, it was decided that principals' relaxation



strategies is a significant predictor of their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Principals' Relaxation Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness

The results of the simple regression analysis in table one indicated that principals' relaxation strategies strongly predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The test of hypothesis two in table nine showed that principals' relaxation strategies significantly predict their administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that principals in public secondary schools in the state agreed that taking short breaks, practicing deep breathing, engaging in physical activities, ensuring adequate sleep, taking time off, engaging in hobbies, and avoiding excessive workload improve their administrative effectiveness. The strong predictive power suggests that principals who intentionally prioritize self-care and rest are more focused, emotionally balanced, and resilient in their leadership roles. Relaxation reduces burnout, enhances concentration, and improves problem-solving abilities, all of which are critical for effective school administration. The finding is not surprising to the researcher because other related studies affirmed that relaxation strategies improve resilience, reduce stress, and enhance focus, all of which contribute significantly to effective administration.

These findings align with the study of Nwonkwo and Sam-Kalagbor (2023), which revealed that principals who adopt effective stress coping strategies, including relaxation strategies, demonstrate higher levels of administrative effectiveness. Their findings underscore the importance of self-care, work-life balance, and stress reduction in enhancing leadership performance and sustaining effective school administration. The present study reinforces the importance of work-life balance and self-renewal as key contributors to effective school leadership.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that relaxation strategies for stress management are significant predictors of principals' administrative effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study established that the adoption of relaxation strategies has a positive and meaningful relationship with principals' capacity to effectively plan and organize school activities, coordinate human and material resources, supervise teachers, and make timely and sound administrative decisions that enhance overall school management. The study concluded that the effective and consistent application of relaxation strategies for stress management contributes substantially to improved leadership outcomes within secondary schools. These outcomes include healthier interpersonal relationships between principals and staff, improved staff morale, the creation of more supportive and conducive teaching and learning environments, and greater efficiency in the execution of administrative responsibilities. By reducing stress-related challenges such as burnout and emotional fatigue, relaxation strategies enable principals to function more optimally in their leadership roles. In all, the findings imply that principals who consciously and proactively adopt



relaxation strategies for stress management are more likely to sustain high levels of administrative effectiveness in the management of public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Consequently, relaxation strategies emerge as a critical component of effective school leadership and a viable means of enhancing administrative performance in secondary education.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Anambra State Ministry of Education should design and implement structured training and capacity-building programmes aimed at equipping secondary school principals with practical skills for adopting effective relaxation strategies. Such programmes should emphasize the use of techniques including mindfulness practices, regular physical exercise, and the deliberate scheduling of work breaks as viable approaches for managing occupational stress. By developing principals' competence in these relaxation strategies, the Ministry would help reduce the incidence of stress-related burnout, enhance emotional balance and decision-making capacity, and promote sustained productivity and administrative effectiveness in the management of public secondary schools

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