



PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

Omojuwa Sunday Olalekan

Lagos State University, (LASU), Ojo, Lagos.

Department of Educational Management

Phone Number: 08057953050

E-Mail: Sunyxen@gmail.com

Prof. Ayodele Olasunkanmi Abari

Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Lagos.

Department of Educational Management

Phone Number: +234 803 722 2673

E-Mail: ayodeji.abari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on principals' problem-solving skills. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type. The population comprised principals of public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, from which a sample of 113 principals was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire on principals' administrative skills, while students' academic performance was obtained from school academic records. The instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed no significant relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance ($r = -0.153$, $p = .243$). However, a significant positive relationship was found between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance ($r = .328$, $p = .005$). The study concluded that while principals' administrative skills, considered as a composite construct, did not significantly influence students' academic performance, problem-solving skills constituted a critical administrative competency that positively contributed to improved academic outcomes. The study recommends continuous professional development programmes aimed at strengthening principals' problem-solving and other administrative competencies to enhance school effectiveness and students' academic performance.

Keywords: Principals' administrative skills, problem-solving skills, academic performance, public senior secondary schools.



Introduction

School leadership has long been recognised as one of the most influential school-based factors affecting educational quality and students' academic performance. While teachers directly influence classroom instruction, principals shape the conditions that enable effective teaching and learning through planning, supervision, decision-making, communication, resource management, and instructional leadership. Consequently, principals are increasingly expected to possess administrative skills that promote school effectiveness and improve students' learning outcomes (Akinola, 2013; Mohammed et al., 2019).

The rapidly changing educational landscape has expanded the responsibilities of school principals beyond routine administrative functions to include strategic planning, instructional supervision, digital leadership, staff development, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based decision-making. These competencies, often described as administrative skills, enable principals to respond effectively to educational reforms, technological innovations, accountability demands, and the increasing expectations of stakeholders. According to Dauda and Onibode (2025), instructional leadership has become a critical dimension of administrative effectiveness because it directly supports teachers' instructional practices and contributes to improved student learning outcomes. Students' academic performance remains one of the most widely accepted indicators of school effectiveness. It reflects the extent to which learners achieve prescribed educational objectives and is commonly measured through internal and external examination results. Although students' academic performance is influenced by several factors, including teacher quality, school resources, parental support, and students' socio-economic background, effective school leadership remains one of the most important school-controlled variables influencing students' success (Akinola, 2013).

Empirical evidence supports the assertion that principals' administrative competencies significantly contribute to students' academic achievement. Mohammed, Edu, and Etoh (2019) found that principals' administrative skills significantly predicted students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. Similarly, Egwu and Ekwe (2025) reported significant positive relationships between principals' leadership effectiveness, communication skills, decision-making ability, resource management, and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Likewise, Oni, Oyewole, and Ayeni (2026) established that principals' administrative behaviour significantly influenced teachers' attitudes to work and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Agege Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Despite sustained investments in educational reforms, teacher development, and school infrastructure, concerns over students' academic performance in Nigerian public secondary schools persist. Educational stakeholders increasingly expect principals to demonstrate administrative competencies capable of improving instructional quality, motivating teachers, managing resources efficiently, and promoting accountability. However, disparities in school leadership practices



continue to exist across schools, suggesting that differences in principals' administrative skills may partly explain variations in students' academic performance (Egwu & Ekwe, 2025).

Although several studies have examined principals' leadership styles, administrative behaviour, and instructional leadership, relatively few studies have investigated principals' administrative skills as a comprehensive construct in relation to students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. This gap in the literature necessitates further empirical investigation. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Students' academic performance remains a major concern among education stakeholders in Nigeria despite continuous reforms aimed at improving the quality of secondary education. School principals are expected to demonstrate administrative skills such as instructional leadership, strategic planning, effective communication, decision-making, resource management, and staff motivation to create school environments that support improved learning outcomes. However, variations in students' academic performance across public senior secondary schools in Lagos State raise concerns about whether principals possess the administrative competencies required to effectively manage schools in today's dynamic educational environment (Mohammed et al., 2019; Egwu & Ekwe, 2025).

Although previous studies have examined principals' administrative competence, leadership styles, and administrative behaviour, limited empirical attention has been given to principals' administrative skills as a multidimensional construct influencing students' academic performance, particularly within the Lagos State context. This gap provides the basis for investigating the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What relationship exists between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. What relationship exists between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?



Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

School Administration

Administration is a systematic, continuous process of planning, organising, directing, coordinating, supervising, and controlling the human, financial, material, and informational resources of an organisation to achieve predetermined goals efficiently and effectively. It involves formulating policies, making strategic decisions, allocating resources, coordinating the efforts of individuals and groups, and evaluating organisational performance to ensure that objectives are achieved. The administration provides the framework within which organisational activities are carried out, promotes effective communication, ensures accountability, and facilitates the optimal utilisation of available resources in response to changing environmental conditions. In educational institutions, administration encompasses the management of personnel, students, curriculum, finance, facilities, and community relations to achieve educational goals and improve institutional effectiveness.

Administration is a broad concept that refers to the process of planning, organising, directing, coordinating, and controlling human, financial, material, and information resources to achieve predetermined goals efficiently and effectively. It involves making decisions, formulating policies, and ensuring that organisational objectives are accomplished through the coordinated efforts of people. School administration is a fundamental aspect of educational management that involves the coordination, direction, supervision, and control of human and material resources to achieve educational goals and objectives. It encompasses all activities undertaken by school leaders to ensure the effective functioning of educational institutions. School administration is concerned with planning, organising, directing, supervising, coordinating, and evaluating school operations to facilitate the realisation of educational objectives. In secondary schools, administration plays a crucial role in maintaining an environment that promotes effective teaching, learning, and overall school development (Okendu, 2021; Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2022).

The nature of school administration is dynamic, goal-oriented, and people-centred. It involves working collaboratively with teachers, students, parents, government agencies, community leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure the successful operation of schools. School administration is also continuous because administrative activities occur daily and require constant monitoring, supervision, and evaluation. Furthermore, it is collaborative in nature, as school administrators depend on the cooperation and support of various stakeholders to accomplish institutional goals. Effective school administration therefore requires leadership competence, communication skills, decision-making ability, emotional intelligence, and adaptability to changing educational environments (Akomolafe & Adegun, 2020).



Principal Administrative Skills

Principals are responsible for organising school resources, including personnel, facilities, instructional materials, and finances, to ensure efficient operations. Organising involves assigning responsibilities, establishing reporting relationships, and coordinating activities to promote smooth school functioning. According to Ibrahim and Bello (2021), effective organisation of school resources enhances productivity, minimises wastage, and improves institutional performance. Another important administrative function is supervision, which entails monitoring teachers' instructional practices, evaluating performance, and providing professional support to improve teaching effectiveness. Instructional supervision enables principals to identify strengths and weaknesses in classroom practices and recommend appropriate interventions; researchers have consistently reported that schools with strong supervisory practices often record higher levels of educational effectiveness and student performance (Akinwumi & Akinola, 2022).

Furthermore, principals are involved in decision-making, conflict resolution, staff motivation, resource management, monitoring and evaluation, and the implementation of educational innovations. Decision-making is central to administration because administrators regularly make choices concerning curriculum delivery, personnel management, financial allocation, and school development programmes. Conflict resolution helps maintain harmonious relationships among school stakeholders, while staff motivation encourages commitment, productivity, and professional growth (Nwosu & Eze, 2022). In the digital age, school administrators are increasingly expected to possess technological competencies that enable them to manage electronic records, facilitate online communication, support digital learning initiatives, and utilise educational technologies for administrative purposes. Technology has transformed school administration by improving efficiency, transparency, accountability, and information management; consequently, school administrators must continually update their skills to remain effective in rapidly changing educational environments (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2023).

Thus, school administration remains a vital component of educational management because it provides the leadership, coordination, and organisational framework necessary for achieving educational goals. Effective school administration enhances institutional efficiency, improves teaching and learning processes, promotes stakeholder collaboration, and contributes significantly to students' academic success. Therefore, the quality of school administration largely determines the extent to which educational institutions accomplish their mission and objectives in society, and this holds particularly true for public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, which operate within one of the most densely populated and rapidly evolving educational systems in Nigeria.

Dimensions of Principals' Administrative Skills

Educational administration requires principals to possess diverse competencies that enable them to effectively manage schools in a dynamic, competitive, and technology-driven environment. These competencies are collectively referred to as administrative skills and are essential for achieving educational goals, enhancing teacher effectiveness, and improving students' academic outcomes. The increasing complexity of educational systems, coupled with rapid technological



advancement and accountability demands, has made it imperative for school leaders to develop multidimensional administrative competencies capable of addressing emerging educational challenges and fostering innovation (Bush, 2021; Hallinger, 2022).

One of the most important dimensions is digital and technological skills. Modern principals are expected to utilise digital technologies for communication, record management, instructional supervision, data analysis, strategic planning, and decision-making. The emergence of digital learning platforms, electronic record systems, virtual meetings, and online assessment tools has transformed educational administration globally, and principals who possess technological competence are able to improve administrative efficiency, facilitate communication, and support the integration of ICT into teaching and learning processes. According to UNESCO (2023), educational leaders who demonstrate digital competence are better positioned to promote innovation, support teachers' technological development, and enhance institutional effectiveness. Adebayo and Olatunji (2023) noted that technological literacy among principals contributes significantly to effective school management and improved educational outcomes.

Communication skills represent another critical dimension. Communication is the process through which information, ideas, instructions, and feedback are transmitted among individuals and groups within an organisation, and effective communication enables principals to interact successfully with teachers, students, parents, government agencies, and community stakeholders. Principals who communicate clearly and effectively are more likely to build trust, encourage collaboration, minimise misunderstandings, and facilitate the achievement of school objectives. Communication skills include active listening, report writing, public speaking, negotiation, and feedback provision. Adeyemi and Ojayi (2023) observed that effective communication contributes significantly to organisational productivity, stakeholder satisfaction, and educational effectiveness in secondary schools.

Decision-making skills constitute another important dimension of administrative competence. School administrators make decisions daily concerning staffing, curriculum implementation, student discipline, financial management, resource allocation, and school improvement initiatives. Effective decision-making requires analytical thinking, consultation, evidence gathering, and critical evaluation of alternatives. According to Bush (2021), successful school leaders rely on systematic and evidence-based decision-making processes that enhance accountability, transparency, and institutional effectiveness. Closely related is strategic planning skill, which involves establishing long-term goals, identifying priorities, allocating resources, and developing action plans to achieve desired outcomes. In an era characterised by educational reforms and rapid technological change, principals must possess the foresight to anticipate future challenges and opportunities; according to Hallinger (2022), strategic leadership and planning contribute significantly to school effectiveness because they provide direction, enhance accountability, and facilitate continuous improvement.



Problem-solving skills are equally indispensable in educational administration. Schools frequently encounter challenges relating to finance, personnel management, infrastructure, student discipline, curriculum implementation, and instructional delivery, and principals must therefore possess the ability to identify problems, gather relevant information, analyse alternatives, and implement practical solutions. Fullan (2021) emphasised that educational leaders who possess strong problem-solving abilities are more capable of managing change and sustaining school improvement efforts. Another critical dimension is conflict-management skills. Conflict is inevitable in educational institutions because individuals often have different interests, expectations, beliefs, and values, and principals are expected to manage such conflicts through dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and collaborative problem-solving. According to Robbins and Judge (2022), educational leaders who effectively manage conflicts create healthier work environments and improve organisational productivity.

Leadership and team-building skills are fundamental dimensions of administrative competence. Principals serve as leaders who inspire, motivate, and guide staff toward the attainment of educational goals, and effective leadership involves vision creation, motivation, empowerment, supervision, and performance management. Team-building skills enable principals to encourage collaboration, participation, and collective responsibility among teachers and other school personnel; Ibrahim and Mohammed (2023) found that collaborative leadership practices contribute significantly to school effectiveness, teacher productivity, and students' academic achievement. Collectively, the dimensions of principals' administrative skills, digital literacy and technological skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, strategic planning skills, problem-solving skills, conflict-management skills, leadership and team-building skills, data-driven management skills, innovation and change-management skills, and emotional intelligence skills enable principals to function effectively in educational environments and achieve institutional goals. As educational systems continue to evolve, the acquisition and application of these skills remain indispensable for effective school leadership, organisational effectiveness, and improved students' academic performance, particularly within the demanding and technologically dynamic environment of Lagos State public senior secondary schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type to examine the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population comprised principals of public senior secondary schools in Lagos State. A sample of 113 principals was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire titled Principals' Administrative Skills Questionnaire (PCASQ), while students' academic performance was obtained from school academic records. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation and yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.



Result and Discussion

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

To assess the hypothesis, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) was performed to examine the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The scores from responses regarding principals' administrative skills were calculated and utilised as a singular variable for correlation with the students' academic performance. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

Variable	M	SD	N	R	P	Remark
Principals' Administrative Skills	2.97	0.83	113	-0.153	0.243	Not Sig.
Students' academic performance	54.85	14.57	60			

The descriptive statistics show that the mean score for principals' administrative skills was 2.97 (SD = 0.83, N = 113), indicating a moderate level of administrative skills among principals. Meanwhile, students' academic performance has a mean score of 54.85 (SD = 14.57, N = 60), suggesting a moderate level of academic performance among students, with a relatively wide variation in performance as reflected by the higher standard deviation.

From Table 1, the correlation analysis reveals a very weak negative relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance ($r = -0.153$). This implies that increases in principals' administrative skills are associated with a very slight decrease in students' academic performance. Furthermore, the p-value ($p = 0.243$) is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is not statistically significant. Based on the findings, it means that principals' administrative skills do not significantly influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, is hereby not rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

To test the null hypothesis, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) was conducted to determine the relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students'



academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between Principals' Problem-Solving Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

Variable	M	SD	N	R	p	Remark
Principals' Problem-Solving Skills	3.12	0.71	113	.328	.005	Sig.
Students' Academic Performance	54.85	14.57	60			

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 show that principals' problem-solving skills had a mean score of 3.12 (SD = 0.71, N = 113), indicating a relatively high level of problem-solving skills among principals in the sampled public senior secondary schools. Students' academic performance recorded a mean score of 54.85 (SD = 14.57, N = 60), indicating a moderate level of academic performance with considerable variation among schools.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance ($r = .328$). The associated p-value (.005) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This finding implies that schools headed by principals with stronger problem-solving skills tend to record better students' academic performance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between principals' problem-solving skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, is rejected. The finding suggests that principals' problem-solving skills are significantly associated with students' academic performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between principals' administrative skills and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that principals' administrative skills, when considered as a composite construct, did not have a statistically significant relationship with students' academic performance. This suggests that the overall administrative competence of principals alone may not be sufficient to influence students' academic achievement, as students' performance is often determined by several interacting factors, including teachers' instructional effectiveness, learning resources, students' motivation, parental involvement, and the overall school environment.

However, the study found that principals' problem-solving skills had a significant positive relationship with students' academic performance. This indicates that principals who effectively identify, analyse, and resolve administrative and instructional challenges are more likely to create school environments that support improved teaching and learning, thereby enhancing students' academic outcomes. The study therefore concludes that although administrative skills as a whole did not significantly relate to students' academic performance, problem-solving skills constitute a



critical administrative competency capable of promoting improved academic achievement in public senior secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational authorities should organise regular leadership development programmes that strengthen principals' problem-solving competencies, enabling them to respond effectively to administrative and instructional challenges in schools.
2. The Lagos State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and the Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM) should integrate practical problem-solving and decision-making modules into principals' professional development and leadership training programmes.
3. School principals should adopt collaborative and evidence-based problem-solving approaches involving teachers and other stakeholders in addressing academic and administrative challenges to improve students' learning outcomes.

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