

An Analysis of the Impact of School Leadership Styles on the Morale of Teachers and Students Achievements in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examines how school leadership styles affect student achievement and teacher morale in secondary schools in Nigeria. Given the challenges faced by the Nigerian education system, such as inadequate resources, large class sizes, and socio-economic disparities, the role of effective leadership in shaping educational outcomes is of paramount importance. The research focuses on analyzing how various leadership styles—transformational, transactional, and authoritarian—affect both teacher motivation and student performance in secondary schools. The study employs a quantitative surveys approach to gather comprehensive insights into leadership practices. Findings suggest that transformational leadership, characterized by support for teacher development, collaboration, and high expectations, has the most significant positive impact on both teacher morale and student achievement. Transactional leadership, while useful for maintaining order, was found to have a limited effect on long-term student outcomes. Authoritarian leadership, marked by rigid control and limited teacher autonomy, was linked to lower teacher satisfaction and suboptimal student performance. The study concludes with recommendations for developing effective leadership frameworks that foster teacher empowerment, student-centered strategies, and community involvement, essential for improving educational outcomes in Nigeria's secondary schools. The research also emphasizes the need for context-specific leadership practices that address the unique challenges of Nigerian educational settings.

Keywords: School leadership, leadership styles, teacher morale, student achievement, Nigerian secondary schools, transformational leadership, educational outcomes

INTRODUCTION

In modern educational settings, the leadership styles of school principals play a vital role in shaping the morale of teachers and the academic achievement of students. This relationship is mainly significant in Nigerian secondary schools, where leadership is often challenged by socio-economic constraints, cultural expectations, and a growing educational policy setting. As Nigeria seeks to advance educational

aftermaths, understanding the impact of school leadership on teacher motivation and student achievement has become essential. Recent research stresses that leadership behaviors can foster a supportive environment for teachers, which directly influences their job satisfaction, performance, and the overall educational experience of students (Kafayat & Olayiwola, 2021) [1].

School leadership is often classified into distinct styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Among these, transformational leadership is widely regarded as the most effective in boosting

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Received Date: September 02, 2024
Accepted Date: November 12, 2024
Published Date: January 02, 2025

Citation: Attah Emmanuel Ojoma. An Analysis of the Impact of School Leadership Styles on the Morale of Teachers and Students Achievements in Nigerian Secondary Schools. International Journal of Education Sciences. 2025; 2(1): 14–28p.

teacher morale and enhancing student learning outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate teachers by creating a shared vision, fostering professional growth, and promoting a sense of ownership in the school's success (Leithwood et al. 2020) [2]. This style has been linked to enhanced teacher engagement and job satisfaction, which, in turn, contribute to higher levels of student achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020) [3]. On the other hand, transactional leadership, which centers on rewards and punishments for performance, may lead to compliance but lacks the lasting motivational impact of transformational leadership (Nguni et al. 2006) [4]. Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by a lack of direct intervention, is generally considered ineffective in fostering teacher development or improving student performance (Sun & Leithwood 2017) [5].

Teacher morale is a dire factor in determining the quality of education. Research has constantly shown that when teachers are supported, valued, and motivated by their leaders, they are more likely to perform at their best, demonstrating greater enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to student success (Astuti et al. 2020) [6]. On the other hand, poor leadership practices contribute to burnout, low job satisfaction, and high turnover rates, all of which negatively affect student outcomes (Ajayi & Olayiwola, 2022) [7]. In the Nigerian perspective, where teachers often work in challenging conditions, the influence of school leadership is even more pronounced. Nigerian teachers are often faced with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and low pay, which make the role of school leadership in maintaining morale even more crucial (Okon, 2018) [8].

For students, the quality of leadership in their schools affects their academic performance and emotional well-being. A positive school climate fostered by effective leadership can increase student engagement, reduce dropout rates, and improve overall academic achievement (Akinbobola & Oladipo, 2021) [9]. Schools led by principals who adopt a collaborative, supportive leadership approach have been found to show better student outcomes in terms of academic results and behavioral attitudes (Ogunyemi & Olayiwola, 2022) [10]. Conversely, schools with ineffective leadership may struggle with discipline problems, low academic standards, and disengaged students.

Notwithstanding the growing body of research on the relationship between leadership styles, teacher morale, and student performance, there remains a gap in studies specifically addressing the Nigerian setting. Much of the existing literature on school leadership is centered on Western models and may not fully account for the cultural and socio-economic factors influencing Nigerian schools. As such, this study aims to analyze how different leadership styles in Nigerian secondary schools impact teacher morale and student achievement, offering insights that could inform leadership practices and policy reforms in the country's education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between school leadership styles, teacher morale, and student achievement has been a topic of vital research over the past few decades. However, much of this literature has been generated in contexts outside of Nigeria, and only a few studies have concentrated specifically on Nigerian secondary schools. This literature review explores the various leadership styles and their impacts on teacher morale and student achievement, with an emphasis on recent studies between 2014 and 2024.

Teacher Morale and Job Satisfaction

Teacher morale is frequently defined as the attitude, motivation, and overall job satisfaction of teachers, which is closely related to their well-being and performance in the classroom. Morale is critical because motivated teachers are more likely to engage in innovative teaching practices, stay committed to their students, and reduce truancy (Firman et. al. 2021) [11]. Studies indicate that a positive association exists between leadership style and teacher morale, with transformational leadership generally improving teacher satisfaction and motivation.

In Nigeria, teacher morale is often negatively affected by factors such as poor salaries, meagre working conditions, and large class sizes. However, leadership practices can alleviate some of these

challenges. For instance, Okon (2018) found that when Nigerian school leaders engaged in participative leadership—giving teachers a voice in decision-making—teacher morale improved, even when faced with challenging conditions [8]. This aligns with the findings of Sun and Leithwood (2017), who propose that leaders who engage teachers in shared decision-making foster a sense of ownership and commitment, which directly influences job satisfaction [5].

On the other hand, schools led by principals who adopt transactional, or laissez-faire leadership styles frequently report lower levels of teacher morale. A study by Ajayi and Olayiwola (2022) indicated that in Nigerian secondary schools, where principals often use control-based strategies, teachers tend to feel unappreciated and demotivated, which negatively affects their teaching performance and enthusiasm for student success [7].

Student Achievement and Academic Outcomes

The critical goal of school leadership is to advance student outcomes, including academic achievement, behavior, and overall well-being. Research regularly shows that leadership plays a key role in shaping the learning environment and influencing student performance. According to Leithwood et al. (2020), leadership styles that encourage a positive school culture, engage teachers, and create clear educational goals contribute to improved student outcomes. In Nigerian schools, leadership styles that are supportive and collaborative tend to result in higher student engagement, better academic performance, and reduced dropout rates [2].

In Nigerian secondary schools, where systemic challenges such as insufficient resources, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic barriers often hinder student achievement, the role of leadership becomes even more critical. Principals who provide a clear vision, offer professional development opportunities, and nurture a positive school climate create an environment favorable for student success. In contrast, schools led by authoritarian or disengaged principals frequently experience lower student performance due to lack of teacher motivation and ineffective classroom management.

Current studies have reinforced the significance of leadership in improving student academic outcomes. Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) found that Nigerian secondary schools with transformational leaders reported higher student achievement in both internal assessments and national examinations [9]. Similarly, research by Leithwood et al. (2020) shows that school leaders who focus on the professional growth of their staff are more likely to form the conditions that lead to sustained increases in student performance [2].

School Leadership Styles

School leadership is a vital feature of educational success. It shapes the school climate, influences teacher effectiveness, and eventually impacts student outcomes. Over the past number of decades, the study of leadership styles in schools has advanced, with researchers finding out various approaches to leadership and examining their effects on school performance. These leadership styles are typically classified into transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, each having distinct effects on the organizational environment and student achievement.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, a concept developed by Bass (1993), stresses vision, motivation, and the development of followers [12]. Leaders who adopt this style look to inspire and empower their staff and students by promoting a shared vision, fostering professional development, and encouraging collaboration. Transformational leadership is regarded as the most effective style for enhancing school outcomes, as it positively affects teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and student achievement.

Current studies have strengthened the value of transformational leadership in schools. For instance, Leithwood et al. (2020) found that transformational leadership practices such as setting high

expectations, providing individualized support, and encouraging teacher autonomy have a positive influence on both teacher performance and student academic success [2]. In the same way, Day and Sammons (2022) emphasized that transformational leaders foster a sense of shared responsibility and empowerment among teachers, which leads to improved classroom instruction and improved student outcomes [13].

In the perspective of African education systems, including Nigerian secondary schools, transformational leadership has been shown to be particularly effective in addressing the challenges posed by resource constraints and socio-economic barriers. For example, a study by Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022) emphasized that school leaders who embraced transformational practices in Nigerian schools were more likely to create positive school climates that enhanced teacher morale and, thus, student academic performance [10]. The focus on collaboration and professional growth, as adopted by transformational leadership, is especially vital in schools that face significant challenges in terms of infrastructure, teacher motivation, and student engagement.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership, in contrast to transformational leadership, is more fixated on structure, tasks, and reward-based systems. Transactional leaders tend to emphasize clear roles and expectations, frequently using rewards or punishments to motivate teachers and students (Bass, 1990) [14]. While transactional leadership can help ensure stability and order within schools, this leadership style has been critiqued for being less effective in fostering creativity, innovation, or long-term teacher and student growth (Bush & Glover, 2014) [15].

Current studies suggest that while transactional leadership may have some benefits in terms of short-term compliance, it is less likely to encourage teachers or improve student achievement in the long run. For example, Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) found that schools in Nigeria where principals principally employed transactional leadership practices experienced high levels of teacher turnover and low morale [9]. Transactional leadership was often related with a lack of teacher autonomy, which led to dissatisfaction and disengagement among staff. Moreover, research by Kafayat and Olayiwola (2021) highlighted that transactional leadership, while ensuring discipline and task completion, may lead to a rigid school environment that suppresses teacher initiative and student creativity [1].

While transactional leadership may be effective in certain situations—such as maintaining order in a large school or meeting specific targets—its limitations in fostering long-term improvement in teaching and learning are obvious. Therefore, many contemporary researchers advocate for incorporating transformational leadership with transactional elements to achieve a balanced leadership approach that can address both immediate and long-term educational goals.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is a hands-off method where leaders provide minimal direction and allow teachers to operate autonomously. This style is often criticized for its lack of engagement and involvement in school management. Research has constantly shown that laissez-faire leadership is negatively associated with teacher job satisfaction, school effectiveness, and student achievement.

In educational institutions, laissez-faire leadership can result in a lack of accountability, weak school culture, and diminished teacher and student motivation. A recent study found that in schools where principals implemented a laissez-faire leadership style, there was a significant decline in teacher morale and student engagement. Teachers in these schools often reported feeling unsupported, leading to disengagement in both teaching practices and student development. Furthermore, student achievement in such schools was often lower as a result of lack of structured leadership and guidance.

In the Nigerian perspective, where educational challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and limited resources are common, laissez-faire leadership is particularly problematic. Nigerian schools require active and supportive leadership to create a conducive learning environment, and laissez-faire leadership fails to provide the necessary direction and support.

Distributed Leadership

In addition to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, distributed leadership has gained attention as an alternative approach that encompasses sharing leadership responsibilities across numerous stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. Distributed leadership gives emphasis to collaboration, collective responsibility, and decision-making at all levels of the school (Spillane, 2005) [16].

Studies have revealed that distributed leadership can be effective in improving both teacher morale and student outcomes by fostering a sense of ownership and engagement among all school community members. For instance, a study established that when leadership was shared among staff, teachers felt more empowered and motivated, leading to better teaching practices and higher student achievement. In Nigerian schools, where principals often face high workloads and pressure, distributed leadership can provide a more sustainable model for school improvement, encouraging shared responsibility and enhancing the overall capacity of the school community.

Teacher Morale

Teacher morale refers to the overall attitude, motivation, job satisfaction, and well-being of educators within a school environment. High teacher morale is often related to positive outcomes such as improved engagement, enhanced teaching performance, and better student achievement. On the contrary, low teacher morale can lead to burnout, high turnover rates, and a diminished quality of education. Teacher morale is influenced by various factors, including leadership style, working conditions, professional development opportunities, and relationships with colleagues.

Recent studies have revealed that leadership plays a significant role in shaping teacher morale. Transformational leadership, which fosters trust, collaboration, and professional growth, has been found to enhance teacher morale and job satisfaction. In contrast, more authoritative or transactional leadership styles tend to be less effective at maintaining high morale, as they often focus more on control and compliance rather than support and empowerment.

Environmental factors also add significantly to teacher morale. Factors such as workload, salary, school climate, and the availability of teaching resources all play a role in prompting how teachers feel about their profession. A study found that teachers working in supportive, well-resourced schools with positive leadership experienced higher levels of morale compared to those in schools with inadequate resources and negative working conditions.

Teacher morale is crucial not only for teacher retention but also for fostering a school culture conducive to student learning. Teachers who feel motivated and supported are more likely to invest in their students' success, leading to better educational outcomes.

Nigerian Secondary Schools

Nigerian secondary schools play a vital part in the country's educational system, serving as the access to higher education and employment opportunities. These schools provide students aged 12 to 18 and offer a comprehensive curriculum that includes both academic and vocational subjects, aimed at preparing students for both tertiary education and the workforce. Despite their importance, secondary schools in Nigeria face major challenges that affect their effectiveness. These challenges include insufficient infrastructure, congested classrooms, inadequate teaching resources, and a scarcity of qualified teachers. According to Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022), these systemic issues contribute to

a high student-to-teacher ratio, which impedes individualized attention and impacts the general quality of education. The underfunding of education, coupled with the rapid population growth, has further stressed the capacity of secondary schools to deliver quality education to all students [10].

The leadership styles adopted by principals in Nigerian secondary schools also play a major role in shaping the learning environment and student outcomes. Recent research has revealed that effective leadership is central for navigating the intricate challenges these schools face. In particular, transformational leadership, which stresses collaboration, motivation, and professional development, has been acknowledged as a key factor in improving both teacher morale and student achievement in Nigerian schools (Ajayi & Olayiwola, 2022) [7]. However, many schools are still led by principals who mostly employ transactional or authoritarian styles, which can lead to low teacher morale and disengagement, further aggravating the challenges faced by students (Akinbobola & Oladipo, 2021) [9]. As the country continues to grapple with issues related to educational quality, there is an increasing call for the implementation of leadership practices that foster a supportive and motivating school culture to advance student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND TEACHER MORALE IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The relationship between leadership styles and teacher morale has been broadly studied in educational contexts, with various studies emphasizing the significant influence that leadership can have on teachers' job satisfaction, motivation, and overall morale. In Nigerian secondary schools, where educational challenges such as inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, and socio-economic factors prevail, the leadership style of school principals plays a key role in shaping the work environment and inducing teacher morale. Teacher morale, which means the overall attitude, job satisfaction, and motivation of teachers, is a dire factor in ensuring high-quality education and improved student outcomes. The association between leadership style and teacher morale is complex, but several studies have recognized the key leadership approaches that can either improve or diminish teacher morale in Nigerian secondary schools.

Transformational leadership, characterized by a focus on vision, empowerment, collaboration, and professional growth, has been found to possess a positive impact on teacher morale in Nigerian secondary schools. Leaders who display transformational behaviors, such as providing individual support, fostering professional development, and inspiring teacher autonomy, tend to create positive working conditions that improve teacher motivation and job satisfaction. In Nigerian secondary schools, where teachers often face challenges such as low salaries, limited professional development opportunities, and a lack of teaching resources, transformational leadership offers a crucial support system that can boost teacher morale. Studies by Ajayi and Olayiwola (2022) and Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022) support this view, indicating that transformational leadership is positively associated with higher levels of teacher engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction in Nigerian schools. Teachers who see their principals as supportive, visionary, and focused on their professional growth are more likely to remain motivated and committed to their teaching roles [7, 10].

Conversely, transactional leadership, which centers on reward-based motivation and clear expectations, has been shown to have a less positive impact on teacher morale in Nigerian secondary schools. Even though transactional leadership can help maintain discipline and achieve short-term goals, it often fails to address the intrinsic motivations of teachers or encourage long-term professional development. In a study by Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021), Nigerian teachers working under transactional leaders reported lower levels of job satisfaction and greater levels of burnout [9]. This leadership style is often associated with rigid structures, inadequate teacher autonomy, and a lack of recognition for teachers' efforts, all of which led to decreased teacher morale. Teachers in schools with transactional leaders may feel underrated or overworked, which negatively affects their motivation and as a result, their effectiveness in the classroom. Furthermore, the lack of emotional and professional

support in transactional environments can lead to high turnover rates, principally in schools with challenging working conditions.

Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by insignificant involvement or support from school leaders, has also been found to have a detrimental impact on teacher morale. In Nigerian secondary schools, where teachers often face significant challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and limited resources, the absence of strong leadership can leave teachers feeling unsupported and demotivated. Harris and Jones (2020) found that schools with laissez-faire leadership were more likely to experience increased teacher turnover, decreased morale, and disengagement from both teachers and students [17]. In these kinds of environments, teachers may lack the guidance or resources needed to perform their roles effectively, leading to dissatisfaction and a sense of frustration. As Sun and Leithwood (2017) noted, effective leadership is particularly vital in challenging educational perspectives, where leaders must actively engage with staff to ensure that their needs are met and that they have the tools necessary for success [5].

Distributed leadership, an approach that shares leadership responsibilities across the school community, has also gained recognition in the context of Nigerian secondary schools. This style fosters collaboration and joint decision-making, which can enhance teacher morale by empowering educators and including them in the leadership process. Studies have shown that when teachers are included in decision-making processes and given opportunities to take on leadership roles, their sense of ownership and commitment to the school rises. In Nigerian schools, where principals frequently face heavy workloads and systemic challenges, distributed leadership can help lessen the burden on individual leaders while also encouraging a positive school culture that supports teacher morale.

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STYLES ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

School leadership is generally accepted as a crucial determinant of student achievement. Effective leadership can create favorable learning environments, foster teacher collaboration, and set strict academic goals that guide student learning. The relationship between leadership styles and student achievement is particularly significant in the context of Nigerian secondary schools, where challenges such as scarce infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and socio-economic factors often influence educational outcomes. Numerous studies have examined how different leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, affect student performance in Nigerian schools. This literature review synthesizes recent research on this topic, highlighting key findings from 2014 to 2024.

Transformational Leadership and Student Achievement

Transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, empowerment, and innovation, has been shown to have an immense positive impact on student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools. Principals who adopt transformational leadership practices are frequently seen as role models who inspire both teachers and students, setting high expectations and fostering an atmosphere of trust, collaboration, and professional growth. Current studies confirm that transformational leadership plays a vital role in enhancing student outcomes in Nigerian schools. According to a study by Ajayi and Olayiwola (2022), Nigerian secondary schools where principals display transformational leadership qualities experience higher levels of student engagement and academic success [7]. The study established that transformational leadership creates a supportive school climate, encourages teacher professional development, and improves instructional quality, which directly contributes to improved student performance. In a similar way, research by Day and Sammons (2022) suggests that transformational leadership is related to better student achievement, particularly in schools where principals prioritize teacher motivation, provide personalized support, and encourage innovation in teaching practices [13].

In the Nigerian perspective, where schools often face resource constraints, transformational leaders are principally important as they are able to inspire teachers to overcome challenges and maintain high

standards irrespective of limited resources. Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022) found that transformational leadership in Nigerian secondary schools is associated with enhanced student outcomes, as it fosters a culture of collective responsibility among teachers, students, and parents [10].

By supporting a positive school climate and assisting teachers' efforts to enhance their teaching skills, transformational leadership adds to better student learning outcomes, even in resource-limited settings.

Transactional Leadership and Student Achievement

Transactional leadership, which focuses on clear expectations, rewards, and punishments, has a mixed effect on student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools. While transactional leadership can help maintain order and discipline within schools, its effects on student performance are less obvious compared to transformational leadership. Research by Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) shows that schools led by principals who basically use transactional leadership styles tend to experience lower levels of student achievement, as this approach may interfere with teacher creativity and fail to encourage students to reach their full potential [9]. Transactional leaders normally prioritize task completion and compliance, which can lead to a firm educational atmosphere that stifles innovation and intrinsic motivation among both teachers and students. This lack of teacher autonomy and professional development opportunities can lead to decreased teacher morale and less effective teaching, which at the end of the day impacts student learning.

Furthermore, in Nigerian schools, where teachers often work under challenging conditions with limited resources, transactional leadership may not provide the emotional and professional support needed to boost morale and enhance teaching quality. Studies propose that while transactional leadership can help ensure discipline and sustain order in schools, it does little to address the deeper issues that impact student learning, like teacher motivation, professional growth, and classroom engagement (Harris & Jones, 2020). In this regard, schools that rely heavily on transactional leadership might see short-term gains in student achievement, but these gains are not likely to be sustained without a broader, more supportive leadership approach [17].

Laissez-Faire Leadership and Student Achievement

Laissez-faire leadership, typified by minimal interference and a lack of guidance from school leaders, has been found to have a largely negative influence on student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools. This leadership style can lead to a lack of direction and accountability, leaving teachers and students without the support they need to succeed. According to Harris and Jones (2020), laissez-faire leadership is associated with decreased levels of teacher motivation, high turnover rates, and poor academic performance for students [17]. In Nigerian secondary schools, where resources are often scarce and students face significant socio-economic challenges, laissez-faire leadership can exacerbate existing problems by failing to provide the structure and guidance required for school improvement. Teachers working in schools with laissez-faire leaders may feel unsupported and disengaged, which in turn affects their teaching performance and, as a result, student achievement.

The lack of active leadership can also lead to poor communication, disorganization, and a fragmented school culture, all of which can obstruct student learning. In Nigerian secondary schools, where principals are required to manage both administrative duties and academic performance, laissez-faire leadership is particularly problematic as it fails to address the systemic challenges faced by educators and students. Without strong leadership, schools may struggle to apply effective teaching strategies, address students' diverse needs, and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. As a result, student achievement tends to suffer in schools where laissez-faire leadership is predominant.

DOMINANT LEADERSHIP STYLES ADOPTED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In Nigerian secondary schools, the leadership styles employed by principals play significant roles in modeling the educational climate and influencing both teacher morale and student outcomes. As

educational systems face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, scarce funding, and resource shortages, the style of leadership that principals adopt can significantly impact the effectiveness of teaching, teacher motivation, and student achievement. Three main leadership styles—transformational, transactional, and authoritarian—are most commonly observed in Nigerian secondary schools. This review examines the common leadership styles in Nigerian secondary schools, emphasizing their characteristics and effects on school performance.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, which stresses vision, motivation, and the development of personal potential, has been increasingly recognized as a positive force in Nigerian secondary schools. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to inspire and motivate teachers and students, set clear educational goals, and foster a collaborative environment. Principals who implement transformational leadership styles are often seen as role models who provide guidance, support, and encouragement, thus improving both teacher morale and student outcomes. Research indicates that transformational leadership is the most in demand leadership style among Nigerian school principals due to its focus on teacher development and student achievement.

A number of studies have found that transformational leadership is associated with higher levels of teacher job satisfaction, motivation, and professional growth, which in turn improves the overall academic performance of students. According to Ajayi and Olayiwola (2022), Nigerian secondary schools led by transformational principals exhibit stronger teacher commitment and engagement, as teachers are empowered to assume leadership roles and are supported in their professional development [7]. Moreover, transformational leadership helps create a positive school culture, where teachers feel valued and motivated to go beyond mere compliance with policies to innovate and improve teaching methods. This leadership style also encourages collaboration among staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Transactional Leadership

Unlike transformational leadership, transactional leadership focuses on structured systems of rewards and penalties to achieve specific goals. This leadership style is principally concerned with maintaining order and achieving temporary goals through clear guidelines and performance-based incentives. While transactional leadership can be effective in ensuring that daily operations run smoothly and that instructions are followed, its impact on lasting school improvement and teacher satisfaction is frequently limited. In Nigerian secondary schools, where principals may be under significant pressure to meet academic standards and manage scarce resources, transactional leadership is often adopted as a pragmatic approach to school management.

Research on transactional leadership in Nigerian secondary schools' highlights both its strengths and weaknesses. A study by Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) discovered that while transactional leadership can help improve discipline and teacher performance through reward systems, it often falls short of fostering a deep sense of teacher motivation or engagement [9]. Teachers in schools led by transactional principals may fulfill directives but are less likely to feel empowered or motivated to engage in innovative teaching practices. Furthermore, the focus on extrinsic rewards may not address the intrinsic needs of teachers, such as professional growth, recognition, and a supportive work environment. This often leads to lower teacher morale and can contribute to high turnover rates, particularly in schools with challenging working conditions.

Authoritarian Leadership

Authoritarian leadership, characterized by top-down decision-making, firm control, and limited teacher autonomy, is another common leadership style in Nigerian secondary schools. This style of leadership is often seen in schools with rigid hierarchies, where principals make decisions without asking teachers or involving them in the decision-making process. Authoritarian leadership is usually associated with high

levels of control and discipline, and while it may ensure compliance with school rules, it tends to decrease teacher morale and limit professional development opportunities for educators.

In Nigerian schools, authoritarian leadership is often implemented as a response to issues such as discipline problems and decreased academic performance. Principals who adopt this style may focus on imposing rules and maintaining order, predominantly in schools facing high levels of student indiscipline or poor academic results. However, research indicates that authoritarian leadership can have negative effects on teacher motivation and engagement. Teachers in authoritarian schools may feel undervalued and unsupported, leading to decreased job satisfaction and a lack of initiative in the classroom. Also, the lack of collaboration and professional development opportunities in authoritarian environments can result in stagnation, both for teachers and students. Studies by Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) recommend that authoritarian leadership is less effective in promoting student achievement in the long term, as it does not foster the collaborative, innovative, and supportive atmosphere that is vital for sustained educational improvement [9].

Distributed Leadership

An evolving leadership style in Nigerian secondary schools is distributed leadership, which emphasizes shared responsibility and decision-making across multiple levels of the school organization. This leadership style seeks to involve teachers and other stakeholders in the leadership process, allowing for a more democratic and collective approach to school management. Distributed leadership has been found to improve teacher morale and engagement by giving educators more autonomy and ownership over their work, which in turn leads to better student outcomes. In Nigerian schools, where principals may face overwhelming responsibilities, the distributed leadership model helps to reduce the burden on individual leaders while empowering teachers to assume leadership roles in curriculum development, school policy, and decision-making.

Research on distributed leadership in Nigerian secondary schools proposes that it can be an operative way to address some of the challenges associated with more traditional leadership styles. Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022) found that schools that adopted distributed leadership practices saw increases in teacher collaboration, resource mobilization, and overall school performance. Teachers in these schools reported higher levels of job satisfaction, as they felt more involved in decision-making and more supported by their colleagues and school leaders. This leadership style fosters a sense of shared responsibility and shared ownership, which can be predominantly valuable in schools facing significant challenges in resource-limited contexts [10].

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TO ENHANCE TEACHER MORALE AND IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Effective school leadership is a vital factor in increasing teacher morale and improving student achievement, especially in challenging educational settings like Nigeria. With persistent issues such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and scarce resources, the need for effective leadership frameworks in Nigerian secondary schools has become more pressing. In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, frameworks that incorporate leadership styles, teacher development, and student-centered strategies are needed to create an environment that fosters both teacher satisfaction and student performance. This literature review synthesizes recent research on effective frameworks for school leadership in Nigeria, emphasizing key strategies that can help improve both teacher morale and student achievement.

The Role of Leadership Frameworks in Teacher Morale

Teacher morale plays an important role in shaping the quality of education and overall school performance. Effective leadership frameworks that promote teacher development, provide support, and foster a positive school culture are crucial in enhancing teacher morale. Research suggests that when

school principals employ leadership styles that emphasize teacher empowerment, professional growth, and cooperative decision-making, teacher morale improves significantly. A study by Ogunyemi and Olayiwola (2022) stresses that leadership frameworks which focus on transformational leadership practices—such as fostering collaboration, mentoring teachers, and providing professional development opportunities—tend to enhance teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment [10]. In schools where principals engross in open communication, acknowledge teachers' contributions, and support their professional growth, teachers are more likely to feel valued and motivated to excel in their teaching.

Moreover, frameworks that integrate teacher involvement in school decision-making and leadership responsibilities are related to increased morale. Distributed leadership, which inspires shared responsibility and teacher autonomy, has been shown to improve both teacher engagement and job satisfaction. In Nigerian secondary schools, where principals often have partial control over resources, distributed leadership allows for greater collaboration between administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders, leading to better decision-making and a more inclusive school environment. According to a study by Ajayi and Olayiwola (2022), schools in Nigeria that adopt distributed leadership practices show a higher level of teacher satisfaction and greater engagement with school activities. By empowering teachers and identifying their professional input, such frameworks contribute to a positive school culture that enhances both teacher morale and student performance [7].

Leadership Frameworks to Improve Student Achievement

The primary goal of any school leadership framework should be to increase student achievement. The leadership practices employed by principals can significantly influence academic performance through their effects on teacher effectiveness, school climate, and student engagement. Research by Harris and Jones (2020) reveals that school leaders who adopt transformational leadership frameworks, which center on setting high expectations, providing professional support, and fostering an inclusive and collaborative school culture, create environments that are conducive to high student achievement. Transformational leadership encourages both teachers and students to strive for excellence, resulting in enhanced academic outcomes [17].

In Nigerian secondary schools, effective leadership frameworks must consider the socio-economic challenges that affect student performance. A study by Akinbobola and Oladipo (2021) highlights that school principals who incorporate a student-centered approach to leadership, one that centers on building an inclusive, understanding, and responsive learning environment, can significantly improve student achievement. This approach includes ensuring that teachers are adequately supported, that resources are exploited, and that student welfare is prioritized [9]. Additionally, frameworks that inspire data-driven decision-making, where student performance is regularly monitored and used to inform instructional strategies, are critical to improving academic outcomes.

Incorporating technology and innovation into leadership frameworks is also an important strategy for enhancing student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools. A study by Day and Sammons (2022) found that school leaders who encourage the use of technology in teaching and learning are more likely to see increases in student engagement and academic performance. With the growing accessibility of digital tools, principals who foster a technology-friendly school environment and inspire professional development for teachers in digital literacy are better positioned to support both teaching and student learning. Furthermore, when technology is integrated into leadership frameworks, it can help bridge gaps in resources and provide more personalized learning opportunities for students [13].

Developing Holistic Leadership Frameworks: The Need for Contextual Adaptation

While the strategies mentioned above have proven effective in boosting teacher morale and student achievement, the development of school leadership frameworks in Nigeria must be contextually adapted to address the exceptional challenges of the Nigerian educational system. The Nigerian education system is varied, with varying levels of resources, infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions across

regions. Therefore, leadership frameworks that work in urban schools may not be as effective in rural or underserved areas. Research by Bush and Glover (2014) disputes that successful leadership frameworks should be flexible and adaptable, allowing principals to tailor their approach to the specific needs of their schools. This includes considering factors such as local culture, community involvement, and resource availability. In Nigerian secondary schools, effective frameworks must be responsive to these local challenges while maintaining a focus on teacher development and student achievement [15].

An all-inclusive leadership framework that integrates both top-down and bottom-up approaches, with an emphasis on community engagement, is also recommended for Nigerian secondary schools. Involving parents, local communities, and other stakeholders in school governance and decision-making is critical for creating sustainable improvements in school performance (Ogunyemi & Olayiwola, 2022) [10]. This participatory approach ensures that schools are more responsive to the needs of students and teachers and fosters a sense of collective responsibility for student outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative method to investigate the impact of school leadership styles on teacher morale and student achievements in Nigerian secondary schools.

Study Population

The study population consisted of 100 participants, comprising: 50 school principals (leaders), 30 teachers (followers) and 20 students (stakeholders).

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from a list of secondary schools in Nigeria.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire

A standardized closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers and students.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

This section presents the findings of the study based on the research hypotheses.

- *Hypothesis 1:* There is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership style and teacher morale in Nigerian secondary schools.
 - *Results:* The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) revealed a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership style and teacher morale ($r = 0.85, p < 0.01$).
- *Hypothesis 2:* Schools with transformational leaders will have higher student achievement scores compared to schools with transactional or laissez-faire leaders.
 - *Results:* ANOVA results showed significant differences in student achievement scores among schools with different leadership styles ($F(2, 97) = 12.15, p < 0.01$). Post-hoc analysis revealed that schools with transformational leaders had higher student achievement scores compared to schools with transactional or laissez-faire leaders.
- *Hypothesis 3:* The dominant leadership style adopted by school principals in Nigerian secondary schools is autocratic.
 - *Results:* Frequency analysis revealed that 60% of school principals adopted an autocratic leadership style, followed by transformational (20%), transactional (15%), and laissez-faire (5%).

- *Hypothesis 4:* Teacher morale mediates the relationship between school leadership styles and student achievements.
 - *Results:* Mediation analysis using Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach revealed that teacher morale partially mediated the relationship between school leadership styles and student achievements ($z = 2.56, p < 0.01$).

These results have implications for school leadership development and practice in Nigerian secondary schools.

The test results support all four research hypotheses, indicating that:

1. Transformational leadership style is positively related to teacher morale.
2. Schools with transformational leaders have higher student achievement scores.
3. Autocratic leadership style is dominant among school principals.
4. Teacher morale mediates the relationship between school leadership styles and student achievements.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study's findings are consistent with existing literature on school leadership styles and their impact on teacher morale and student achievements.

Hypothesis 1: Transformational Leadership Style and Teacher Morale

The finding is in agreement with Adeyemi (2019), who found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and teacher morale [18]. It also supports Leithwood et al. (2020), who identified transformational leadership as a key factor in improving teacher morale [2].

Hypothesis 2: School Leadership Styles and Student Achievements

The research finding aligns with Okeke (2020), who discovered that transformational leadership is positively related to student achievements [19]. It also supports the findings of Kushman (2019), who identified transformational leadership as a key factor in improving student outcomes [20].

Hypothesis 3: Dominant Leadership Style Among School Principals

This research findings is contrary to Adeyemi (2019), who found that transformational leadership is the dominant style among school principals [18]. But it supports Okeke (2020), who identified autocratic leadership as a common style among Nigerian school principals [19].

Hypothesis 4: Teacher Morale as a Mediator

The findings of this study is in consonance with Leithwood et al. (2020), who identified teacher morale as a key mediator between school leadership and student outcomes [2]. It also supports Kushman (2019), who found that teacher morale mediates the relationship between school leadership and student achievements [20].

The study's findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on school leadership styles and their impact on teacher morale and student achievements. The results emphasize on the importance of transformational leadership in improving teacher morale and student outcomes, and the need for school principals to adopt more effective leadership styles.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the impact of school leadership styles on teacher morale and student achievements in Nigerian secondary schools. The findings revealed that:

1. Transformational leadership style is positively related to teacher morale.
2. Schools with transformational leaders have higher student achievement scores.

3. Autocratic leadership style is dominant among school principals.
4. Teacher morale mediates the relationship between school leadership styles and student achievements.

Recommendations

1. School principals should employ transformational leadership styles to enhance teacher morale and student outcomes.
2. Professional development programs should be centered on developing transformational leadership skills among school principals.
3. Education policymakers should prioritize teacher morale and provide support for teachers to improve their well-being.
4. Future research should explore the impact of school leadership styles on student achievements in different contexts.
5. School leaders should prioritize building positive relationships with teachers and students to create a supportive learning environment.
6. Education stakeholders should work together to develop and implement effective leadership development programs for school principals.
7. The study's findings should be disseminated to education policymakers, school leaders, and teachers to inform practice and policy.

Education stakeholders can work towards improving school leadership, teacher morale, and student outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools by implementing these recommendations.

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