



Ethical Leadership Practices of Principals and the Administration of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria: The Roles of Selflessness, Integrity and Accountability

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Abstract

This study investigated the ethical leadership practices of principals and their influence on the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, with particular focus on selflessness, integrity and accountability. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for examining existing phenomena and generalizing findings from a representative sample. The population comprised 7,184 academic staff, including 291 principals and 6,893 teachers, across 291 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 720 respondents, representing 10% of the population, was selected using proportionate stratified sampling from six local government areas across the three senatorial districts of the state. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire, Ethical Leadership Practices of Principals and the Administration of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ELPPAPSSQ), which was validated for face, content, and construct validity and achieved a reliability coefficient of .824. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tested the null hypotheses at a .05 significance level. The findings revealed that principals' ethical practices, (selflessness, integrity, and accountability) positively influenced administrative effectiveness, teacher morale, and the overall organizational climate of public secondary schools. The study concluded that promoting ethical leadership among school principals is critical for ensuring effective school administration, improving staff performance, and enhancing educational outcomes in Rivers State. The study recommended among others that principals should be encouraged to embrace selflessness as an ethical practice that predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Practices, Principals, Administration, Public Secondary Schools, Rivers State, Nigeria, Selflessness, Integrity, Accountability.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical leadership is a major component of effective school administration in contemporary educational systems. In public secondary schools, principals serve not only as administrative heads but also as moral leaders whose ethical behavior shapes the culture, decision-making processes and overall functioning of the school. Ethical leadership involves the demonstration of moral values, fairness, transparency and responsible decision-making that guide both teachers and students toward achieving educational goals (Bujang et al., 2025; Ololube, 2021, 2024).

Selflessness is an essential ethical attribute expected of school principals. It refers to the willingness of leaders to prioritize the welfare of the school community above personal interests. Principals who practice selflessness demonstrate commitment to the professional growth of teachers and the academic success of students (Strike, 2023). They make decisions that benefit the entire school rather than pursuing personal gain or favoritism. Selfless leadership encourages collaboration, fairness, and inclusiveness in school administration. In many educational settings, selfless principals are seen as servant leaders who devote time to mentoring teachers, supporting students, and fostering a supportive learning environment. Such leadership practices strengthen teacher morale and promote a culture of cooperation, which ultimately enhances the effectiveness of school administration (De Klerk & Mudadigwa, 2024).

Integrity is another fundamental dimension of ethical leadership in schools. Integrity involves honesty, transparency, and consistency between what leaders say and what they do. Principals who lead with integrity establish credibility and trust among teachers, students and parents (Ololube, 2024). When school administrators demonstrate integrity, they adhere strictly to rules and professional standards, ensuring fairness in decision-making and resource allocation. Research has shown that principals who exhibit integrity are more likely to build strong relationships within the school community and encourage ethical conduct among staff members (Oguyemi et al., 2025). Such leaders serve as role models, guiding teachers and students toward responsible behaviour and adherence to institutional values. Consequently, integrity contributes significantly to effective administration by fostering trust, cooperation, and professional commitment within the school environment (Msangya, 2025).

Accountability is also a vital ethical practice that influences the administration of public secondary schools. According to Ololube (2017, 2021), accountability refers to the obligation of principals as leaders to take responsibility for their decisions, actions, and the outcomes of school activities. In educational administration, accountability ensures transparency in financial management, staff supervision and student performance monitoring (Maimela, 2024; Ololube, 2014). Principals who uphold accountability create systems that promote openness and responsible management of school resources. They also encourage teachers and students to adhere to ethical standards and institutional regulations. Studies indicate that accountability strengthens administrative efficiency by ensuring that school leaders remain answerable to stakeholders such as government authorities, parents and the community (Hlongwane, 2024). In the same vein, accountability contributes to improved decision-making and the effective management of educational institutions (Ololube, 2024).

The administration of public secondary schools requires leaders who can demonstrate strong ethical leadership practices because schools operate within complex social and organizational environments where principals as leaders have to balance administrative responsibilities with moral obligations. Intrinsically, ethical practices such as selflessness, integrity and accountability help principals manage conflicts, promote fairness and maintain

discipline within the school system (Ololube, 2024). When principals demonstrate ethical practices such as selflessness, integrity, and accountability, they create a positive organizational climate that promotes trust, cooperation, and effective school administration (Msangya, 2025), and when ethical attributes are consistently practiced, they enhance trust among teachers, improve staff commitment and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders. Therefore, ethical leadership promotes enabling environment that supports effective teaching, learning and school management (Bujang et al., 2025; Strike, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, faces numerous challenges, including ineffective leadership, poor staff motivation, low student performance, and weak accountability mechanisms. Research indicates that the ethical practices of school principals significantly influence the quality of school administration, yet limited empirical evidence exists on the extent to which specific ethical leadership practices like selflessness, integrity and accountability are able to predict administrative effectiveness in this context. Many school leaders prioritize personal interests over collective welfare, make decisions inconsistently, or fail to uphold responsibility for outcomes, which undermines teacher commitment, resource management, and overall school performance. Without principled leadership, policies and educational objectives are poorly implemented, which invariably affects the quality of teaching and learning. Understanding how selflessness, integrity and accountability as ethical practices influence the administration of public secondary schools is therefore critical for developing strategies that strengthens school leadership, enhance staff morale, ensure transparency and improve educational outcomes in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine principal's ethical practices for effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

- Determine the extent selflessness as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Ascertain the extent integrity as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Fine out the extent accountability as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- To what extent does selflessness as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- To what extent does integrity as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

- To what extent does accountability as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses further guided the study:

- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which selflessness as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which integrity as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which accountability as principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Institutional Ethical Theory

Institutional theory was propounded by William Richard Scott in 1995. This theory states that organizations are “product of social reality that is constructed by human interaction and symbolic and relational systems, routines, and artifacts. It is a theory on the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure which considers the processes by which structures, including schemes; rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour. Different components of institutional theory explain how these elements are created, diffused, adopted, and adapted over space and time; and how they fall into decline and disuse (Foote, 2018).

Scott (2015) in defining institution stated that there is no single and universally agreed definition of an ‘institution’ (workplace) in the institutional school of thought. He asserted that institutions are “social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience. They are composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life. Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines, and artefacts. Institutions operate at different levels of jurisdiction, from the world system to localized interpersonal relationships. Institutions by definition connote stability but are subject to change processes, both incremental and discontinuous.

This theoretical framework is relevant to this study because of the uniqueness in ways of approach to the notion of promoting principal ethical practices in the school. It considers the processes by which structures, including schemes; procedures, standards, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour of the school principal which is the bases of his workplace ethics.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Selflessness and Effective Administration of Public Secondary School

Selflessness could be seen as an art of caring more about what other people need and want than about what you yourself need and want, which stimulates you to sustain decisions and drives towards achieving set goals. In order to flourish and survive, organizations such as the school must drive the need to concentrate on stimulating selflessness at school, and this must begin with the principal who is the chief administrative process of the secondary school (Fowers, 2018).

Selflessness is not influenced and imposed from Secondary Board Supervisors or Managers cannot be learnt, transferred and fulfilled overnight, rather it comes from principal's attitude. When the principal in the school have this attitude, it shapes and develops the culture of selflessness which will ultimately lead to increased performance or administration of the school (Maxwell et al., 2017).

Selflessness of a leader has been identified as one virtue that can strengthen ethical leadership in the administration of any organization. Ololube (2024) suggested that a leader can be "driven by either a sense of the common good or from a sense of selfishness, greed or blind ambition. What will determine that a leader will choose good over selfish motivation is his selfless nature or virtue he possess. Ololube (2024) further argued that leaders motivated by virtue as opposed to values are guided toward ethical behavior and decision making which yield better result. Consequently, selflessness as principal's ethical practices at the school is an optimistic determination and efforts which assists in developing certain traditions for guiding individual's feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts, activities and habits. These individuals have to do with students, teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as other stakeholders of the school. The lack of selflessness among principals may result to distressing thoughts, negativity and lack of enthusiasm at the school, which adversely affect performance of the teachers and the school administration at large.

Maxwell et al. (2017) indicated that selfless attitude put up by school managers (principals) at school can be sustained by making sure that teachers are cleared about performance expectations in order to sustain their focus towards the accomplishment of work assigned to them.

A school benefit greatly when their leaders being the principal demonstrate an art of selflessness in the discharge of his duties. In fact, selflessness exhibited by principal at school promotes strong relationships to succeed and raises a work environment of commitment, dedication, keenness and devotion amongst the staff which ultimately results in improved performance of students and effective administration of the school (Abdulrahman, 2018).

Selflessness as an ethical practice of principal increases greater commitment of teachers and other staff to work without being coerced, compelled or intimidated, and it in turn promotes effective administration of the school (Arvey & Jones, 2020). Conversely, performance in the school can be affected adversely when individuals (both principal and teachers) are overwhelmed with greed, laziness, negligence, irresponsibility, favouritism, self-interest and lack of self-determination. Apparently, if principal and teachers are not selfless, the school will become a lawless community which will eventually affect performance and effective administration (Ogbonnaya et al., 2018), and where a new employee/individual joins the workforce in the school, they inevitably and habitually imbibes the culture of selflessness.

Integrity and Effective Administration of Public Secondary School

Integrity is an internalized set of values and principles that function as norms and standards that one lives by and that direct one's action and decision. The goal of any organization is to have employees behave in a manner consistent with the institutions mission and goals, hence aligning absolutely with the core values, adhering to a code of ethics and matching actions with beliefs across a variety of situations (Pattison & Edgar, 2021). Meanwhile, integrity play a fundamental role in managing schools such as the principal pattern of alignment, sound moral, ethical principles and organization productivity (Simons, 2020; Cleary et al., 2018). Integrity is the act of enforcing honesty by which the whole institution will be accommodated, in order to reduce the potential for dishonesty that will lead to the misuse of public office for personal or group gain (Global Ethics Network, 2018). Ethical leaders are courageous, bold and fearless in telling the truth at all times in all their dealings no matter the condition, disregarding the consequences. Integrity does not only end in being truthful and transparent but taking actions. This means that the principal as a leader has to be straight forward and transparent without having any questionable character, staying clear from cheating; being trustworthy, upright and fair (Okoroma, 2017).

Moreover, absenteeism, unwarranted breaks, stealing of organization property, converting office equipment for personal use, gossiping etc. are characteristics of unethical conducts and are liable to affect administration and productivity (Muafi, 2021; Qiu & Peschek, 2018; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Consequently, the school level of productivity in terms of effective administration is directly proportional to principal level of commitment in ensuring that the right things are done in the school, thus, the commitment becomes immaterial if it does not infused with integrity (Arnold, 2019; Bergman, 2016).

Integrating values of integrity into the day-to-day operation of the school will promote ethical behaviour amongst the teachers; prevent damaging lapses while tapping into human instincts for moral thought/action and as well enhanced sustained productivity (Bergman, 2016). Unlike developed societies like America, Canada and Britain, leadership problems in Nigerian institutions are mostly caused by dishonesty of leaders or leaders without integrity.

Dishonesty lead to corrupt practices and encourage negative reactions from staff members which does not promote the achievement of set group goals. Leaders with integrity exercise discipline, especially self-discipline which is a vital determinant of effective job performance of a principal and facilitates achievement of school goals. Their core values speak for them even when they are not around. Through their core qualities, they are able to inspire others to join in actualizing set goal.

Ethical leaders work on improving themselves, make personal efforts to achieve required results and set clear goals as they are aware that actualization of tasks can only be done through the involvement of team members. Ethical principals' are trust worthy and have integrity, when a principal lacks integrity, this negative quality tends to be adopted and dispersed round the staff and students. Thereby breeding and producing poor quality staff and students. This in turn affects the over- all school success. For example, a principal of school being involved in examination malpractice as it is currently trending in secondary schools both public and private, does not carry out this irresponsible act alone. Teachers are also involved by helping distribute answers to the students. The whole school becomes corrupted even to the gateman.

Components of executive integrity include refusing to be corrupted, being consistent in all cases, accepting responsibility for training and development of staff. Trevino, et al. (2018)

added putting into practice the norms and values of integrity in the school administration and management of staff, fairness and being responsible for learning and observing scholarship. The cases of integrity and the degree of corruption are directly and indirectly linked with leadership and academic integrity in Nigeria (Faniran & Akintayo, 2016).

Accountability and Effective Administration of Public Secondary School

Accountability is a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conducts to some significant other (Bovens, 2015). Accountability is often seen as transparency of information. Although accountability in the system of education is related to everyone involved in the system, it has mainly focused on the behaviors of school principal (Cooley & Shen, 2018).

In the context of accountability, school principals are expected to use school resources in the best possible manner and increase the success of the school (Cooley & Shen, 2018). As a matter of fact, in an age in which accountability is a dominant principle, not only the system but also the school principals should review a multitude of elements again, such as the goals of the school, its priorities, financial position, personnel, programs, educational learning resources, evaluation, and changes (Clarke et al., 2017). In the school setting principals are made to be responsible and accountable in the management of all the funds that are generated and expended by the school. It is the responsibility of the principal to be accountable and facilitate the execution of its statutory functions relating to the assets, liabilities, property and other fund management issues for effective administration.

Ethical principals' are accountable, they owe to the consumers and in particular their subordinates, the parents/guardians and the community to account for resources invested in it by government and humanity based on how much resources was provided and used in meeting school objectives.

Tims (1992) as cited in Bua and Adzongo (2014) observed that some principals or school managers are found to be inefficient in the way and manner they manage and account for the finances in their schools. Therefore, proper financial records have a lot of bearing on the effective administration of school. It provides a glance on:

- Whatever money withdrawn and what it has been used for;
- It provides the link between the budget specification and the allocation of funds towards the actualization of those specifications;
- The areas of recorded successes are mapped out in the budget;
- Areas where more attention is needed;
- The level of schools impress account.

Agabi (2002) as cited in Ojekudo (2020) emphasized the importance of accountability and encouraging principals that are in charge of account to keep and maintain proper material and financial records. This is because accurate record and periodic tendering of accounts are essential in promoting conducive atmosphere for learning, free from suspicion and accusation that may arise due to lack of accountability. In this case, Oboegbulem (2018) who in his investigation revealed that principals as chief accounting officers of their respective secondary schools are to generate funds internally to run their schools, they ensure that funds provided by stakeholders are properly accounted for. He also found that administrators of schools have clear understanding of

acceptable accounting procedures as laid down by the Ministry of Education and Post primary schools Board, they should check properly the account books, payment vouchers, bills, impress account books to make sure that information contained in them are correct before signing them.

In the same vein, Bua and Adzongo (2014) also found out that principals are responsible and accountable for school finance and business which includes preparation of school budget, accounting for all the petty funds generated within the school and funds from entertainment and any other records to be well kept within the school. Okoroma (2017) outlined four key areas of accountability: accountability for actions and deed, cash, things and accountability for results. Effective leaders in the educational institutions erect enduring ethical conducts that raises the conducts of every other individual in the school. Principals who are accountable make effective leaders because they will not squander, misappropriate or waste resources.

Prior research has also identified a number of ways in which principal accountability may improve the administration of public schools. Accountability as principal ethical practice could increase teachers and students performance in context-specific tasks, for example, duties in nonprofit activities (Kim & Lee, 2020) or performance appraisal accuracy (Moynihan & Ingraham, 2018). It can also improve school effectiveness in aspects such as rational budgetary decisions or policy implementation, for example, in performance based budgeting, school funding policy (Rabovsky, 2012), or contracting out (Amirkhanyan, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the ethical leadership practices of principals and the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted because it allows for the investigation of existing phenomena in their natural context and the collection of data from a representative sample to generalize findings.

The population comprised 7,184 academic staff, including 291 principals and 6,893 teachers, across all 291 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State (Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Port Harcourt, 2022). A sample of 720 respondents, representing 10% of the population was drawn using proportionate stratified sampling from six local government areas covering the three senatorial districts (Rivers South-East, Rivers West, and Rivers East).

Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled Ethical Leadership Practices of Principals and the Administration of Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ELPPAPSSQ). The instrument included demographic items and Likert-scale items rated from Very High Extent (4) to Very Low Extent (1). Three experts from the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education validated the instrument for face, content and construct validity.

The reliability of the instrument was tested with 20 respondents outside the study sample, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha index of .824, indicating high reliability. Eight hundred questionnaires were distributed, and 720 valid copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tested the three null hypotheses at a .05 significance level, with a criterion mean of 2.50. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28.

RESULTS

Answer to the Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent does selflessness as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents answer to selflessness and principal ethical practice

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Selflessness exhibited by principal motivates teachers to be proactive in the discharge of their duties.	3.0903	1.29358	High extent
2.	Selfless practice of principal guides the feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts of teachers in school administration.	2.8542	1.28416	High extent
3.	Principals selflessness influences teachers' compliance with administrative policies.	2.8625	1.31821	High extent
4.	Selflessness promotes commitment and sincerity of purpose in principal administrative duties.	2.7139	1.14769	High extent
5.	Selflessness as an ethical practice of principal increases greater commitment of teachers/other staff to work without being coerced, compelled and intimidated	2.6806	1.20183	High extent
6.	Selflessness among principals promotes enthusiasm school personnel, which affects performance of the teachers and students.	2.6500	1.16855	High extent
Grand total		2.8085	1.23567	High extent

Research question one states that “To what extent does selflessness as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria”? The reason for this research question was to determine the extent selflessness as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Information in Table 1 revealed that selflessness exhibited by principal motivates teachers to be proactive in the discharge of their duties, selfless practice of principal guides the feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts of teachers in school administration, principals selflessness influences teachers' compliance with administrative policies. The respondents agree to a high extent that selflessness promotes commitment and sincerity of purpose in principal administrative duties and selflessness as an ethical practice of principal increases greater commitment of teachers/other staff to work without being coerced, compelled and intimidated, also, they hold that selflessness among principals promotes enthusiasm in school personnel, which increases performance of the teachers and students. This is as reflected in the grand mean of 2.8085, with a standard deviation of 1.23567. On the whole, the respondents agree to a high extent that selflessness as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: To what extent does integrity as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents answer to integrity and principal ethical practice

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
7.	Integrity as principal ethical practice increases school sustained productivity.	2.5847	1.26185	High extent
8.	Integrity practice of principal promotes smooth day-to-day operation of the school.	2.5153	1.24911	High extent
9.	Principal's integrity prevents damaging lapses in the school administration.	2.7028	1.27149	High extent
10.	Principal's integrity prevents any questionable character and cheating among school personnel.	2.6403	1.29825	High extent
11.	Integrity reduces any form of potential dishonesty among member staff in the school.	2.7403	1.31136	High extent
12.	Integrity promotes self-discipline which influence job performance of principal and teachers.	2.5472	1.30389	High extent
Grand total		2.6217	1.28265	High extent

Research question two states “To what extent does integrity as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?” The justification for this research question was to ascertain the extent integrity as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools. Data in Table 2 depicts that integrity as principal ethical practice increases school sustained productivity, integrity practice of principal promotes smooth day-to-day operation of the school, and principal's integrity prevents damaging lapses in the school administration. The respondents also agree to a large extent that principal's integrity prevents any questionable character and cheating among school personnel, integrity reduces any form of potential dishonesty among member staff in the school, and integrity promotes self-discipline, which influences job performance of principal and teachers. Information from the grand mean 2.6217 and standard deviation of 1.28265 shows to a high extent that integrity as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: To what extent does accountability as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents answer to accountability and principal ethical practice

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
13.	Accountability practice of principal prevents misappropriation of school funds.	2.6333	1.34319	High extent
14.	Accountability minimizes wastages of school financial and material resources for effective administration of schools.	2.6153	1.28132	High extent
15.	Accountability facilitate principal and teachers execution of statutory functions relating to assets, liabilities, property and other fund management issues.	2.5306	1.33911	High extent
16.	Accountability promotes proper financial records for effective administration of schools.	2.4569	1.31360	High extent
17.	Accountability facilitate budget specification and allocation of funds for effective administration of schools.	3.0306	1.24324	High extent

18.	Accountability as principal ethical practice increase teachers and students performance in context-specific tasks for effective administration of schools.	2.8889	1.16933	High extent
Grand total		2.6926	1.28163	High extent

Research question three state that “To what extent does accountability as a principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria”? The reason for this research question was to determine the extent accountability as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools. Figures in Table 3 shows that the accountability practice of principal prevents misappropriation of school funds; accountability minimizes wastages of school financial and material resources for effective administration of schools, and accountability facilitate principal and teachers execution of statutory functions relating to assets, liabilities, property and other fund management issues. Respondents further noted that accountability promotes proper financial records for effective administration of schools, accountability facilitate budget specification and allocation of funds for effective administration of schools, and accountability as principal ethical practice increase teachers and students performance in context-specific tasks for effective administration of schools. This is mirrored in the grand mean of 2.6926 and a standard deviation of 1.28163, which shows to a high extent that accountability as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Test of Hypotheses

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) set at $p. < 0.05$ was employed to test the null hypotheses:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which selflessness as a principal’s ethical practices predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4: ANOVA Analysis of difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which selflessness as a principal’s ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.795	1	11.795	7.361	.007
Within Groups	1150.599	718	1.603		
Total	1162.394	719			

The One-way-analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted as shown in Table 4 above, using status (principals and teachers) as independents variables on items 1-6 of section B of the instrument as dependents variables shows that both principals and teachers have no significant difference between the mean scores on the extent to which selflessness as a principal’s ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The between groups and the within groups Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 7.361 and a Sig. of .007, shows that both principals and teachers hold that significant difference exist between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which selflessness as a principal’s ethical

practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. As a result hypothesis one was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which integrity as a principal's ethical practices predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which integrity as a principal's ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.085	1	9.085	5.630	.018
Within Groups	1158.643	718	1.614		
Total	1167.728	719			

The One-way-analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted as shown in Table 5 above, using status (principals and teachers) as independents variables on items 7-12 of section B of the instrument as dependents variables shows that both principals and teachers have no significant difference between their mean scores on the extent to which integrity as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The between groups and the within groups Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 5.630 and a Sig. of .018, shows that both principals and teachers hold that significant difference exist between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which integrity as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. As a result hypothesis two was rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which accountability as principal ethical practices predict administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 6: ANOVA Analysis of difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which accountability as principal ethical practice predict administration of public secondary schools

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.324	1	9.324	6.013	.014
Within Groups	1113.364	718	1.551		
Total	1122.688	719			

The One-way-analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted as shown in Table 6 above, using status (principals and teachers) as independents variables on items 13-18 of section B of the instrument as dependents variables shows that both principals and teachers have no significant difference between their mean scores on the extent to which accountability as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The between groups and the within groups Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 6.013 and a Sig. of .014, shows that both principals and teachers hold that significant difference exist between the

mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which accountability as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Consequently, hypothesis three was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Selflessness as a Principal Ethical Practice and the Administration of Public Secondary Schools

The evidence from the grand mean of 2.8085, and a standard deviation of 1.23567, shows that the respondents agree to a high extent that selflessness as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Likewise, the within groups Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 7.361 and a Sig. of .007, shows that both principals and teachers hold that no significant difference exist between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which selflessness as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Both the principals and teachers unanimously agreed to a high extent that selflessness as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State.

This study's findings are in line with Ololube (cf., 2024) who suggested that a leader can be driven by either a sense of the common good or from a sense of selfishness, greed or blind ambition. What will determine a leader to choose good over selfish motivation is the selfless nature or virtue they possess. Ololube (cf., 2024) further argued that leaders motivated by virtue, as opposed to values, are guided toward ethical behavior and decision making which yield better result. Consequently, selflessness as principal's ethical practices at the school is an optimistic determination and efforts which assists in developing certain traditions for guiding individual's feelings, conducts, behaviours, thoughts, activities and habits.

In the same vein selflessness is seen as an art of caring more about what other people need and want than about what you yourself need and want, which stimulates you to sustain decisions and drives towards achieving set goals. In order to flourish and survive, organizations such as the school must drive the need to concentrate on stimulating selflessness at school, and this must begin with the principal who is the chief administrative process of the secondary school (cf., Fowers, 2018). The lack of selfishness among principals may result to distressing thoughts, negativity and lack of enthusiasm at the school, which adversely affect performance of the teachers and the school administration at large.

Integrity as a Principal Ethical Practice and the Administration of Public Secondary Schools

From the findings of this study and from the information from the grand mean of 2.6217 and that of the standard deviation of 1.28265 shows to a high extent that integrity as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Data from the ANOVA analysis provided that the Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 5.630 and a Significant level of .018, shows that both principals and teachers hold that no significant difference exist between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which integrity as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. These results revealed that both the principals and the teachers

agree to a high extent that integrity as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The results from this study are in line with that of Pattison and Edgar (cf., 2021) who agreed in their study that integrity is an internalized set of values and principles that function as norms and standards that one lives by and that direct one's action and decision. The goal of any organization is to have employees behave in a manner consistent with the institution's mission and goals, hence, aligning absolutely with the core values, adhering to a code of ethics and matching actions with beliefs across a variety of situations. Meanwhile, integrity play a fundamental role in managers such as the principals pattern of alignment, sound moral, ethical principles and organization productivity (cf., Simons, 2020; Cleary et al., 2018). Consequently, the school level of productivity in terms of effective administration is directly proportional to principal level of commitment in ensuring that the right things are done in the school, thus, the commitment becomes immaterial if it does not infused with integrity (cf., Arnold, 2019; Bergman, 2016).

Accountability as a principal ethical practice and the administration of public secondary schools

The results mirrored in the grand mean of 2.6926 and a standard deviation of 1.28163, which shows to a high extent that accountability as a principal ethical practice predicts administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, and the Sum of Squares, Mean Square, and F-ratio of 6.013 and a Sig. of .014, shows that both principals and teachers hold that no significant difference exist between the mean scores of principals and teachers on the extent to which accountability as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Both the principals and teachers agreed to a high extent that accountability as a principal's ethical practices predicts the administration of public secondary schools.

These findings are in line with the studies of Bovens (cf., 2015) and Cooley and Shen (cf., 2018) who found that ethical principals' are accountable, they owe to the consumers and in particular their surrogates, the parents/guardians and the community to account for resources invested in it by government and humanity based on how much resource was provided and used in meeting school objectives. Accountability is a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conducts to some significant other. Accountability is often seen as transparency of information. Although accountability in school systems is related to everyone involved in the system, it has mainly focused on the behaviors of school principal and changing their job requirements by adding new responsibilities to their previous roles (cf., Huskey, 2017).

In addition, Cooley and Shen (cf., 2018) and Clarke et al. (2017) found that in the context of accountability, school principals use school resources in the best possible manner to increase the success of the school. As a matter of fact, in an age, accountability is a dominant principle, not only in the school system but also the school principals review a multitude of elements, such as the goals of the school, its priorities, financial position, personnel, programs, educational learning resources, evaluation, and changes. In the school settings, principals are made to be responsible and accountable in the management of all the funds that are generated and expended by the school. It is the responsibility of the principal to be accountable and facilitate the

execution of its statutory functions relating to the assets, liabilities, property and other fund management issues for effective administration.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that ethical leadership practices of principals vis-à-vis selflessness, integrity and accountability play significant role in the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. School leaders who demonstrate selflessness prioritize the welfare of teachers and students, fostering collaboration, fairness, and a supportive school environment. Integrity in leadership builds trust, credibility, and adherence to professional standards, promoting ethical conduct among staff and students. Accountability ensures that principals take responsibility for their decisions, actions, and school outcomes, enhancing transparency and effective resource management. The findings indicated that when these ethical attributes are consistently practiced, they positively influence teacher commitment, organizational climate, and overall administrative effectiveness. Therefore, the promotion of ethical leadership among school leaders is crucial towards the improvement of school governance, staff motivation and positive educational outcomes.

Recommendations

The following were put forward as result of the findings from this study:

- Principals should be encouraged to embrace selflessness as an ethical practice that predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Principals should be stimulated to clinch on integrity as an ethical practice that predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Principals should be motivated to embrace accountability as an ethical practice that predicts the administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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