

Emotional Intelligence, Age and Work Experience as Predictors of Administrative Practices of Public Secondary School Principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Vincent, Etienne Albert ¹, Inyang, Mfon Udobong ²

^{1,2} PhD, Department of Curriculum Studies, Educational Management and Planning, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Nigeria

E-mail: ¹ vincentetiene5@gmail.com, ² nehdu.14@gmail.com

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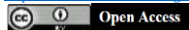
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ABSTRACT

The study examined the difference in administrative practices of principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' emotional intelligence, age and work experience. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The population of the study comprised all the 274 Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample size of this study comprised 163 Principal General, which represents 59.5% of the population. Two instruments entitled, "Emotional Intelligence, Age and Work Experience Questionnaire (EIAWEQ)" and "Administrative Practices Questionnaire (APQ)" were used to gather data for the study. The instruments were validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha Analysis with reliability coefficients of .86 for EIAWEQ and .87 for APQ. Mean and Standard Deviation were used in answering research questions 1 – 2, while Regression Analysis was used in answering research questions 3. Analysis of variance was used to test null hypotheses 1-2 while hypothesis 3 was tested using regression analysis. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed a significant difference in administrative practices of principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' age, work experience and emotional intelligence. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that: principals' age, principals' work experience and principals' emotional intelligence all significantly influence administrative practices of principals in public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was recommended, amongst others that, The State Ministry of Education should develop a clear policy for regular assessment of principals' administrative practices to identify areas where support is needed in decision-making, communication, supervision and staff motivation.

Introduction

Secondary education in Nigeria is the stage of education that follows primary education and precede tertiary education. It is designed for children aged 12-18 years and serves as a preparatory ground for useful living within society and for higher education. Secondary education in Nigeria is managed at different levels. While the Federal Government manages Federal Unity Colleges, State Governments are largely responsible for public secondary schools through the State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) and the Ministry of Education. The management of each secondary school is vested in the principal who serves as the chief executive and instructional leader (Udo and Akpan, 2023). The principal translates educational policies into action through administrative practices such as decision-making, communication, instructional supervision, staff motivation and maintenance of discipline (Okoro and Etuk, 2024). Therefore, the effectiveness of secondary schools largely depends on how effectively principals perform these administrative practices.

Administrative practices remain the bedrock upon which the success or failure of every secondary school rests. In the context of secondary education, administrative practices refer to the day-to-day

actions and strategies adopted by principals to coordinate human and material resources towards achieving school goals. These include decision-making, effective communication, instructional supervision, staff motivation, maintenance of school discipline, conflict management and proper record keeping (Udo and Akpan, 2023). Effective administrative practices create a conducive climate for teaching and learning, foster teacher commitment, and improve students' academic performance, while defective practices result in chaos, low morale, and institutional ineffectiveness (Bassey and Archibong, 2022).

Globally, there is an increasing recognition that effective school administration goes beyond technical and professional qualifications. In developed countries, attention has shifted from bureaucratic models of administration to human-centered and emotionally intelligent administration (Mayer *et al.*, 2024). However, in Nigeria, and particularly in Akwa Ibom State, the situation presents a worrisome picture. Despite several policy interventions by government such as the mandatory continuous professional development programmes for principals, and the provision of school management manuals by the State Secondary Education Board, reports still indicate poor administrative practices in many public secondary schools. The Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education (2024) and the Secondary Education Board (2023) reports lamented poor communication flow, autocratic decision-making where teachers are rarely involved, weak instructional supervision, poor handling of staff conflicts, and low staff motivation in many schools. This has resulted in several negative outcomes. Teachers' agitations, frequent misunderstandings between principals and staff, low commitment to duties, and poor students' performance in external examinations like WASSCE have been partly attributed to ineffective administrative practices of principals (Edet *et al.*, 2025; Ekaette and Sunday, 2023). Observations and informal interactions with teachers in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene senatorial districts show that many principals find it difficult to manage their own emotions under pressure, lack empathy for teachers' personal challenges, and are unable to manage emotional outbursts during conflicts. This points to a deficiency in a crucial psychological factor - emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence, as propounded by Salovey and Mayer (2022) and popularized by Goleman (2023), is defined as the ability to perceive, appraise, understand, regulate and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. It comprises five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. A principal who is emotionally intelligent is expected to be aware of his emotional state, control anger and frustration, motivate staff even in difficult times, show genuine concern for staff welfare, and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships (Akinola and Ogundele, 2024). Empirical evidence has shown that principals with high emotional intelligence demonstrate superior administrative practices, particularly in communication, conflict resolution and staff motivation, compared to their counterparts with low emotional intelligence (Ekaette and Sunday, 2023). However, most of these studies were conducted outside Akwa Ibom State, and their generalizability to the cultural and administrative context of Akwa Ibom remains questionable. In addition to psychological factors, socio-personal factors such as age and work experience have been considered critical in shaping administrative practices.

Age is a chronological measure of the number of years an individual lived since birth. Age is commonly measured in years and it serves as an important factor in various fields of study, including psychology, sociology, and education. It is often associated with maturity, emotional stability, patience and accumulated life wisdom, which are essential for handling complex administrative problems (Igwe and Nwankwo, 2023). Older principals may exhibit more consultative and composed administrative practices, while younger principals, though energetic, may be impulsive and lack the emotional restraint needed for effective administration. Work experience on the other hand refers to the duration, nature of a person's employment history, skills, knowledge and expertise people have gained through their work. It encompasses the practical knowledge and understanding acquired from previous job positions, tasks and responsibilities. It enables the principal to provide on-the-job learning, mastery of administrative routines, and have better problem-solving skills (Opara and Udom, 2024). Experienced principals are believed to have developed a repertoire of strategies for handling staff, students and parents, thereby showing more effective administrative practices than the less experienced ones (Edet *et al.*, 2025).

Nevertheless, findings on the influence of age and work experience on administrative practices have been inconsistent. While Bassey and Archibong (2022) and Opara and Udom (2024) reported that

work experience significantly predicts administrative effectiveness, Ibukun and Oyewole (2023) found no significant relationship between age, experience and principals' administrative performance in Ekiti State. This inconsistency suggests that the predictive power of age and experience may be context-specific. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical studies in Akwa Ibom State that jointly examine emotional intelligence, age and work experience as predictors of administrative practices. Most available studies in the state focused on academic qualification, leadership style and gender (Udo and Akpan, 2023; Okoro and Etuk, 2024). Therefore, there is a compelling need to investigate whether psychological factor (emotional intelligence) and socio-personal factors (age and work experience) jointly and individually predict administrative practices of secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that motivated this study is the persistent poor administrative practices observed among some public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State despite continuous government interventions. Evidence from the field indicates that many principals still adopt ineffective practices such as unilateral decision-making without teachers' input, poor communication of school vision and policies, irregular and fault-finding instructional supervision, inability to motivate staff and poor management of conflicts and discipline (Ministry of Education, Akwa Ibom State, 2024; SSEB, 2023).

This situation is worrisome because administrative practices directly affect teachers' job satisfaction, commitment and students' learning outcomes. When principals fail to communicate effectively and involve teachers in decision making, teachers may feel alienated and demotivated, leading to low productivity. Also, inability of some principals to manage their emotions and those of others can lead to escalation of minor conflicts into major crises in schools, creating unhealthy school climates. This suggests a gap in emotional intelligence. Moreover, it is not clear whether age and work experience, which are easily observable socio-personal factors, account for differences in administrative practices. Some older and more experienced principals still exhibit poor practices, while some relatively younger principals seem to perform better administratively, which contradicts the common assumption that age and experience automatically translate to better administration. This contradiction has not been empirically clarified in Akwa Ibom State context.

Previous studies have either examined emotional intelligence alone, or socio-personal factors alone, without integrating them into a single predictive model for administrative practices. There is also over-reliance on studies from other states and countries whose findings may not apply to Akwa Ibom due to cultural and systemic differences. Consequently, the extent to which emotional intelligence, age and work experience individually and jointly predict administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State remains largely unknown. This gap in knowledge is the problem this study seeks to address. The question therefore is, to what extent do emotional intelligence, age and work experience predict administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, based on principals' psychological and socio-personal factors. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. Determine the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' age.
- ii. Determine the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' work experience.
- iii. Determine the extent to which principals' emotional intelligence predict principals' administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' age?
- ii. What is the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' work experience?

iii. To what extent does principals' emotional intelligence predict administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' age.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' work experience.

H₀₃ Principals' emotional intelligence is not a significant predictor of administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research method

This study adopted ex-post facto research design. This design was considered appropriate because the study examined the difference in administrative practices based on principals' psychological factor (emotional intelligence) and socio-personal factors (age and work experience). These variables cannot be manipulated as they already existed. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of this study comprised all the 274 principals in all the 274 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State as at 2024/2025 academic year. Multi-stage sampling approach was used for the study. At first, cluster sampling technique was used to cluster the public secondary schools in the state into 3 senatorial districts: Akwa Ibom North East (9 L.G.A. and 97 schools; Akwa Ibom North West (10 L.G.A. and 99 schools) and Akwa Ibom South (12 L.G.A. and 78 schools). Simple random sampling with replacement was used in selecting 59.5% of schools in each L.G.A. This gave a total of 163 public secondary schools in the 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. Purposive sampling approach was used to select 652 teachers to rate principals based on their administrative practices. This is because they (teachers) do not constitute the population of the study. The reason for choosing four teachers per principal was as a result of need for uniformity in the number of teachers who rated each principal. The choice of 163 (59.5 %) principal generals, was in line with Yamane (1973) formula for sample size determination

Researcher' developed instruments titled "Emotional Intelligence, Age and Work Experience Questionnaire (EIAWEQ)" and "Administrative Practices Questionnaire (APQ)" were used for data collection in the study. EIAWEQ had sections A and B. Section A solicits for bio-data information of principals. This covered age, gender and work experience of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. Sections B contained ten (10) items on emotional intelligence. APQ contained 20 items on administrative practices. EIAWEQ was designed to obtain information from principals about their psychological factor (emotional intelligence) and socio-personal factors (age and work experience). APQ was designed to obtain information from teachers about principals' administrative practices. All the instruments were constructed on a declarative statement and were scored on a four points rating scales. EIAWEQ was cored as follows: All the Time (ATT) = 4 points, Most of the Time (MOT) = 3 points, Some of the Time (SOT) = 2 points and Not at All (NAA) = 1 point. APQ was cored as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point

The instruments were validated by three experts. The language, contents and the structure of the items were examined critically and necessary corrections and suggestions made by the experts were effected by the researchers. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the researchers administered the instrument to 30 principals and 120 teachers in the public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State who were part of the population but not part of the study sample. Data generated were subjected to analysis using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient Statistic. The reliability coefficient of .86 was obtained for EIAWEQ and .87 for APQ. These reliability coefficients were high enough to justify the use of the research instruments because Hussey *et al.*, (2025) recommended that, a coefficient value of .70 and above is adequate for any research work.

The instruments: EIAWEQ and APQ were administered to the respondents in their various schools by the researchers with the help of 3 research assistants within two weeks. This was preceded by a letter of introduction presented to the principals in their respective schools. Out of 815 copies of instruments (163 Emotional Intelligence, Age and Work Experience Questionnaire and 652 Administrative Practices Questionnaire) sent out, 810 (162 Emotional Intelligence, Age and Work Experience Questionnaire and

648 Administrative Practices Questionnaire) were returned. This represents 99.3% return. Out of 810 copies of instruments returned, 5 instruments were wrongly filled and were not useful for the analysis. The 99.3 % response rate was highly acceptable because it aligns with Sataloff and Vontela (2021) who opined that a response rate of at least 60% is deemed appropriate and responses exceeding 70% are considered excellent. All the completed and returned copies of the instruments were subjected to statistical analysis.

Mean and Standard Deviation were used in answering research questions 1 – 2, while Regression Analysis was used in answering research questions 3. Analysis of variance was used to test null hypotheses 1-2 while hypothesis 3 was tested using regression analysis. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The decision rule by Schober *et al.* (2018) was applied while answering the research questions and testing the null hypotheses. However, on the mean summary, mean values were compared among the rank of other variables. The variable with the highest mean value was taken as having more effect on administrative practices of public secondary school principals. In testing the null hypotheses, the calculated P-values was compared with .05 alpha level of significance. When the p-calculated or sig. (2-tailed) values are greater than the .05 alpha level of significance, the formulated null hypotheses would be retained. When the p-calculated or sig. (2-tailed) values are equal to or less than the .05 alpha level of significance, the formulated null hypotheses would be rejected.

Results and discussion of findings

Results

Research Question 1: What is the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' age?

Table 1: Mean Analysis for Difference in Administrative Practices of Public Secondary School Principals in Akwa Ibom State based on Principals' Age

Items	Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
coordinates teaching activities in the school	<49yrs	44	3.59	0.76	*A
	50-55yrs	74	3.54	0.50	A
	56 & above	44	3.73	0.45	**SA
prepares school budget	<49yrs	44	3.32	0.98	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.39	0.76	A
	56 & above	44	3.77	0.42	SA
keeps accurate financial record	<49yrs	44	3.52	0.95	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.38	0.92	A
	56 & above	44	3.66	0.61	A
has cordial relationship with the staff	<49yrs	44	3.50	1.05	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.59	0.91	A
	56 & above	44	3.89	0.32	SA
maintains moral standard in the school	<49yrs	44	3.57	0.97	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.46	0.88	A
	56 & above	44	3.80	0.41	SA
appoints students into leadership positions in the school	<49yrs	44	3.45	1.11	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.62	0.49	A
	56 & above	44	3.45	0.66	A
provides incentives to motivate staff at school	<49yrs	44	3.82	0.58	SA
	50-55yrs	74	3.68	0.58	A
	56 & above	44	3.77	0.68	SA



Items	Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
manages the school's schedule	<49yrs	44	3.89	0.44	SA
	50-55yrs	74	3.70	0.82	SA
	56 & above	44	3.77	0.57	SA
enforces school discipline	<49yrs	44	3.86	0.63	SA
	50-55yrs	74	3.93	0.30	SA
	56 & above	44	3.86	0.55	SA
puts policies in place to ensure safety of teachers	<49yrs	44	3.39	1.22	SA
	50-55yrs	74	3.70	0.75	SA
	56 & above	44	3.70	0.70	SA
recognizes hard working staff	<49yrs	44	3.66	0.89	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.50	0.93	A
	56 & above	44	3.91	0.56	SA
provides a healthy working environment for teachers	<49yrs	44	3.45	1.17	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.89	0.31	SA
	56 & above	44	3.75	0.69	SA
provides instructional materials for teaching in the school	<49yrs	44	3.16	1.22	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.61	0.49	A
	56 & above	44	3.55	0.73	A
check teachers' lesson notes for corrections	<49yrs	44	3.43	0.93	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.61	0.49	A
	56 & above	44	3.50	0.73	A
exhibits fairness in evaluating staff	<49yrs	44	3.39	1.10	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.68	0.55	A
	56 & above	44	3.52	0.82	A
accepts constructive criticisms from staff	<49yrs	44	3.02	1.36	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.49	0.81	A
	56 & above	44	3.20	1.07	A
is quick to adapt to changes in the school environment	<49yrs	44	2.98	1.39	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.62	0.82	A
	56 & above	44	3.48	0.93	A
maintains a high level of service quality for students	<49yrs	44	3.45	1.17	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.72	0.88	SA
	56 & above	44	3.02	1.41	A
ensures communication channels within the school are highly effective	<49yrs	44	2.93	1.37	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.74	0.44	SA
	56 & above	44	3.68	0.47	A
is prompt in decision-making during times of uncertainty	<49yrs	44	3.59	0.76	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.54	0.50	A

Items	Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
Average Mean	56 & above	44	3.73	0.45	SA
	<49yrs	44	3.45	1.00	A
	50-55yrs	74	3.62	0.66	A
	56 & above	44	3.64	0.66	A

Mean Summary = 3.61 – high extent of relationship, Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

The result in Table 1 gives the summary of the item by item analysis of administrative effectiveness based on principals' age. The age distribution was less than 49 years (<49 years), 50-55 years as well as above 55 years. The result shows that on the 20 items on administrative practices, the mean range is 3.02-3.93. The standard deviation range is 0.44-1.36. This shows that the items are not too dispersed from each other. The result shows that all the items have mean responses above 3.0, the weighted mean. The summary average of difference in principals' administrative practices based on age shows that for principals less than 49 years of age, the average mean is 3.45. For 50-55 years principals, the mean response is 3.62 and the mean response for above 55 years is 3.64. The result shows that effectiveness increases with age and that principals above 55 years were better at administrative practices than the others.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' work experience?

Table 2. Mean Analysis for Difference in Administrative Practices of Public Secondary School Principals in Akwa Ibom State based on Principals' Work Experience

Items	Work Experience	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
coordinates teaching activities in the school	<24yrs	75	3.40	0.65	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.65	0.50	A
	>30yrs	47	3.70	0.46	SA
prepares school budget	<24yrs	75	3.52	0.83	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.15	0.80	A
	>30yrs	47	3.68	0.56	A
keeps accurate financial record	<24yrs	75	3.56	0.84	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.15	1.05	A
	>30yrs	47	3.68	0.59	A
has cordial relationship with the staff	<24yrs	75	3.63	0.94	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.48	1.01	A
	>30yrs	47	3.83	0.38	SA
maintains moral standard in the school	<24yrs	75	3.59	0.82	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.30	1.07	A
	>30yrs	47	3.81	0.40	SA
appoints students into leadership positions in the school	<24yrs	75	3.53	0.91	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.60	0.50	A
	>30yrs	47	3.47	0.65	A
provides incentives to motivate staff at school	<24yrs	75	3.77	0.53	SA
	25-29yrs	40	3.63	0.67	A
	>30yrs	47	3.79	0.66	SA
manages the school's schedule	<24yrs	75	3.89	0.48	SA
	25-29yrs	40	3.78	0.98	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.74	0.57	SA
enforces school discipline	<24yrs	75	3.89	0.53	SA
	25-29yrs	40	3.93	0.27	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.87	0.54	SA

Items	Work Experience	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remark
puts policies in place to ensure safety of teachers	<24yrs	75	3.55	1.00	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.85	0.53	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.53	0.95	A
recognizes hard working staff	<24yrs	75	3.72	0.78	SA
	25-29yrs	40	3.23	1.07	A
	>30yrs	47	3.91	0.54	SA
provides a healthy working environment for teachers	<24yrs	75	3.68	0.93	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.88	0.33	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.70	0.69	SA
provides instructional materials for teaching in the school	<24yrs	75	3.39	1.01	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.58	0.50	A
	>30yrs	47	3.51	0.72	A
check teachers' lesson notes for corrections	<24yrs	75	3.51	0.78	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.60	0.50	A
	>30yrs	47	3.51	0.72	A
exhibits fairness in evaluating staff	<24yrs	75	3.52	0.95	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.63	0.49	A
	>30yrs	47	3.55	0.80	A
accepts constructive criticisms from staff	<24yrs	75	3.12	1.25	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.63	0.49	A
	>30yrs	47	3.26	1.05	A
is quick to adapt to changes in the school environment	<24yrs	75	3.09	1.29	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.88	0.33	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.51	0.91	A
maintains a high level of service quality for students	<24yrs	75	3.52	1.11	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.98	0.72	SA
	>30yrs	47	2.89	1.45	A
ensures communication channels within the school are highly effective	<24yrs	75	3.24	1.15	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.78	0.42	SA
	>30yrs	47	3.70	0.46	SA
is prompt in decision-making during times of uncertainty	<24yrs	75	3.65	0.65	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.40	0.50	A
	>30yrs	47	3.70	0.46	SA
Average	<24yrs	75	3.65	0.39	A
	25-29yrs	40	3.56	0.78	A
	>30yrs	47	3.71	0.87	SA

Mean Summary = 3.64 – high extent of relationship, Source: Researcher's Field Data (2024)

Table 2 presents the summary of the item by item analysis of administrative effectiveness based on working experience. The result shows that on the 20 items on administrative effectiveness, the mean range is 2.89-3.98. The standard deviation range is 0.33-1.25. This shows that the items cluster around the mean. The working experience was less than 24 years (<24 yrs), 25-29 years as well as above 30 years. The result shows that all the items have mean responses above 3.0, the weighted mean. The summary average of difference in principals' administrative practices based on work experience shows that for principals with less than 24 years of experience, the average mean is 3.65. For 25-29 years working experience, the mean response is 3.56 and the mean response for above 30 years is 3.71. The result shows that administrative effectiveness increases with working experience. Furthermore, principals with over 30 years of experience were more effective administrators than other working experience groups.

Research Question 3: To what extent does principals' emotional intelligence predict administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

Table 3. Summary of Regression Analysis for the extent to which Principals' Emotional Intelligence predict Administrative practices of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Variable	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Remark
Emotional Intelligence Administrative Practices	.361	.131	13.1%	Low Extent

The output in Table 3 shows the strength of relationship R and the determination of the extent to which emotional intelligence predicts administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The R value of .361 indicates a low extent of relationship between the two variables. The calculated R² of .131 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that only 13.1% of principals' administrative practices in public secondary schools is determined by emotional intelligence. This implies that 13.1% of the variation in administrative practices of principals is due to principals' emotional intelligence

Research Hypotheses

H0₁ There is no significant difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' age.

Table 4. Summary of Analysis of Variance Test for difference in Administrative Practices of Principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on Principals' Age.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	Sig of F
Between Groups	4.165	2	2.083	5.555	.005*
Within Groups	59.612	159	.375		
Total	63.778	161			

*Significant at $p < .05$

Table 4 presents the summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for difference in administrative practices in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' age. The result shows that the probability value (p-value) is .005. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' age. Based on the observed difference, a post hoc test is carried out to determine the direction of the significance.

Table 5. Summary of Scheffes's Post Hoc Test for significance in Administrative Practices of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State Based on Principals' Age.

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<49yrs	50-55yrs	-.17629	.11657	.132	-.4065	.0539
	56 & above	-.43182*	.13054	.001	-.6896	-.1740
50-55yrs	<49yrs	.17629	.11657	.132	-.0539	.4065
	56 & above	-.25553*	.11657	.030	-.4857	-.0253
56 & above	<49yrs	.43182*	.13054	.001	.1740	.6896
	50-55yrs	.25553*	.11657	.030	.0253	.4857

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Summary of the post hoc test for multiple comparisons is presented in Table 5. The result shows a significant difference between principals with less than 49 years and above 55 years old ($p < .001$) and also principals between above 55 years old and 50-55yrs ($p < .030$). This implies that administrative practices of principals with ages below 49 years is significantly different from those above 55 years. This implies that administrative practices improve with age and that principals above 55 years were better at administrative practices than the lower age groups.

H0₂ There is no significant difference in administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria based on principals' work experience.

Table 6. Summary of ANOVA Test for difference in Administrative Practices in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State based on Principals' Work Experience.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	Sig of F
Between Groups	4.307	3	1.436	3.814	.011*
Within Groups	59.471	158	.376		
Total	63.778	161			

**Significant at $p < .05$*

Table 6 presents the summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for difference in administrative practices in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' work experience. The result shows that the probability value (p-value) is .005. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in administrative practices in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' working experience. Based on the observed difference, a post hoc test is carried out to determine the direction of the significance.

Table 7. Summary of Scheffes's Post Hoc Test for significant in Administrative Practices of Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State based on Principals' Work Experience

(I) Work Experience	(J) Work Experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1-5yrs	6-10yrs	-.22481	.13566	.099	-.4928	.0431
	11-15yrs	-.07329	.14198	.606	-.3537	.2071
	>15yrs	-.40920*	.12947	.002	-.6649	-.1535
6-10yrs	1-5yrs	.22481	.13566	.099	-.0431	.4928
	11-15yrs	.15152	.14511	.298	-.1351	.4381
	>15yrs	-.18440	.13289	.167	-.4469	.0781
11-15yrs	1-5yrs	.07329	.14198	.606	-.2071	.3537
	6-10yrs	-.15152	.14511	.298	-.4381	.1351
	>15yrs	-.33591*	.13934	.017	-.6111	-.0607
>15yrs	1-5yrs	.40920*	.12947	.002	.1535	.6649
	6-10yrs	.18440	.13289	.167	-.0781	.4469
	11-15yrs	.33591*	.13934	.017	.0607	.6111

**. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

Summary of the Scheffes's post hoc test is presented in Table 7. The result shows a significant difference between the 1-5 years and the above 15 years of work experience of principals ($p < .002$) and also between above 15 years of work experience of principals and 11-16 years ($p < .017$). This implies that administrative practices of principals with work experience above 15 years is significantly different from those of others.

H0₃ Principals' emotional intelligence is not a significant predictor of administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 8. Summary of ANOVA test for Principals' Emotional Intelligence as a significant Predictor of Administrative Practices

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	Sig of F
Regression	8.330	1	8.330	24.037	.011*
Residual	55.448	160	.347		
Total	63.778	161			

**Significant at $p < .05$*

Table 8 presents the summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for Principals' emotional intelligence as a significant predictor of administrative practices. The result shows that the probability

value (p value) is .001. Since the p value is less than the alpha level ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, Principals' emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are presented based on the research questions answered and the null hypotheses tested.

- i. Effectiveness in administrative practices increases with age and that principals above 55 years were better at administrative practices than the others.
- ii. Effectiveness in administrative practices increase with work experience. Furthermore, principals with over 30 years of experience were more effective administrators than other working experience groups.
- iii. Emotional intelligence to a low positive extent predicts administrative practices of principals.
- iv. There is a significant difference in administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' age.
- v. There is a significant difference in administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' work experience
- vi. Principals' emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of findings

Difference in Administrative Practices of Principals Based on Age

The result of analysis reveals that principals who are less than 49 years of age, had average mean of 3.45. For 50-55 years old principals, the mean response was 3.62 and the mean response for principals above 55 years was 3.64. This result shows that administrative practices improve with age and that principals above 55 years were better at administrative practices than the lower age groups. The corresponding hypothesis tested revealed that there is a significant difference in administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State based on principals' age. This result must have come out this way for reasons that, the older the principals, the better their administrative practices as they would have had better experiences to approach issues and deal with human relation issues better. It could also be as a result of the fact that, older principals might have been attending conferences, seminars, workshop and training which seem to impact on their experiences and make them perform better in their administrative practices than the young principals. Therefore, Age, an interwoven thread of experience, wisdom and perspective, becomes a force of nature in the hands of an elder leader.

This finding of this study support Campos-García and Zúñiga-Vicente, (2020) who discovered that leaders in their fifties have superior administration abilities than those below their fifties. The finding of this study further reinforces the study by Karakose *et al.* (2021) who observed that older principals are more viable than younger administrators due to experiences they gather over the years. It is believed that the young principals are always faced with the problem of confidence and managerial skills when it comes to leadership roles. This is because secondary school administration requires the application of sense of maturity in the exercise of their statutory duties. Arop, (2018) observed that principals' above 60 years should not retire since mental, physical and grasp of professional knowledge dwindle with aging. This invariably affects the administrative effectiveness of the principal. In a world where change is constant and challenges abound, the mature and seasoned principal stands as a pillar of strength, a beacon of stability in the administrative practices in school

Difference in Administrative Practices of Principals Based on Work Experience

The result of analysis of difference in administrative practices of principals based on work experience showed that for principals with less than 24 years of experience, the average mean was 3.65. For 25-29 years working experience, the mean response was 3.56 and the mean response for above 30 years was 3.71. The result showed that administrative effectiveness increased with work experience. Furthermore, principals with over 30 years of experience were more effective administrators than other working experience groups. The hypothesis test indicated a significant difference in administrative practices based on principals' work experience. This result could be attributed to the fact that experience promotes job effectiveness. The more experienced principals gather as a result of long years of service,

the higher their performance. Also, each passing year provides opportunity for principals to gain deeper understanding of their role. In this same vein, the principal who have much work experience will become stronger and more effective.

Some studies have widely acknowledged principals' years of work experience as a significant factor affecting the extent of their administrative practices. For instance, Gümüş *et al.* (2024) revealed that principals' years of experience had a significant relationship with students' academic achievement. Specifically, schools administered by a principal with greater experience had the best results. McHenry-Sorber *et al.* (2023) agreed that seasoned principals act from a broader and more advanced knowledge base because of their years of working experience. The result of this finding is at variance with Feyisa *et al.* (2016) who found that principals' experience does not significantly correlate with their leadership effectiveness. Graham *et al.* (2020) observed that, experience breeds instinct, instinct yields perspective, and perspective begets intuition, all hallmarks of the elder principal's administrative prowess. This is to say that, the more experienced the principal, the better he is able to adopt an effective leadership style which improves and promote administrative practices

Emotional Intelligence and Administrative Practices of Principals'

The result of analysis revealed that emotional intelligence has a low positive predictive influence on principals' administrative practices. The corresponding hypothesis indicated that Principals' emotional intelligence has a significant prediction on administrative practices in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This result could be attributed to the fact that principals with emotional intelligence are empowered to lead with both their heads and their hearts. It is also assumed that emotionally intelligent principals are better at navigating and resolving conflicts in school. They can foster a positive team culture, encourage open communication, and build strong relationships among team members. This leads to increased collaboration, productivity, and a more cohesive work environment. They are also able to inspire and facilitate self-conscious and organizational culture by adopting the values of understanding, trust, prospect, achievement and effectiveness and combining emotions, beliefs, vision and values in a flexible manner.

The finding of this study is in line with the study of Obiekwe and Ogbo, (2020) who indicated that there is a medium significant relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and their performance in public secondary schools. The finding is also in agreement with Miwori *et al.* (2024) who revealed that emotional intelligence significantly predicts principals' administrative effectiveness. Emotional intelligence plays critical role in effective leadership. Principals who demonstrate high emotional intelligence skills are better equipped to handle challenging situations, communicate effectively with stakeholders, and create a positive school environment conducive to learning. It is evident that emotional intelligence is a key factor in successful leadership in the educational setting.

Conclusion

The study revealed that emotional intelligence, age and work experience are critical determinants of administrative practices of public secondary school principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. If administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools are to be enhanced, emotional intelligence, age and work experience of principals should be considered before appointing principal as the head of school. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that: principals' age, principals' work experience and principals' emotional intelligence all significantly influence administrative practices of principals in public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

- i. The State Ministry of Education should develop a clear policy for regular assessment of principals' administrative practices to identify areas where support is needed in decision-making, communication, supervision and staff motivation.
- ii. The Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) should organize regular training, workshops and seminars on emotional intelligence for principals. This will help them improve self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and relationship management which are critical for effective administrative practices.

iii. The Ministry of Education should consider age and maturity in the appointment of principals. Principals within the middle age bracket who have demonstrated emotional stability and administrative competence should be given priority, while younger principals should be mentored by experienced ones.

The State Government should ensure that only teachers with adequate years of teaching and work experience are appointed as principals. Appointment of principals should not be based on favoritism but on years of cognate experience to guarantee mastery of administrative practices.

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