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STAFF-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC LOWER BASIC SCHOOLS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated staff-related challenges and their impact on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the level of administrative effectiveness, identified the prevalence of internal and external staff-related challenges, and examined respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of each challenge dimension on administrative effectiveness. The study was anchored on General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and the target population comprised 34,000 teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools across Benue State. A sample of 380 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique comprising stratified, proportionate, and simple random sampling procedures. Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire, the Staff-Related Challenges and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (SRCAEQ), which was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Measurement and Evaluation and demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70. Means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, using a criterion mean of 2.50, while two null hypotheses were tested using chi-square goodness-of-fit tests at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the level of administrative effectiveness was low (composite mean = 1.60), whereas internal staff-related challenges (composite mean = 2.97) and external staff-related challenges (composite mean = 3.17) were highly prevalent, with salary arrears and school insecurity emerging as the most severe external challenges. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests indicated that respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of both internal, $\chi^2(6, N = 380) = 365.10$, $p < .001$, and external, $\chi^2(2, N = 380) = 447.75$, $p < .001$, staff-related challenges differed significantly from the expected frequencies, leading to the rejection of both null hypotheses. The study concludes that deficiencies in staff welfare, career progression, professional development, and school security were identified as major structural constraints to effective school administration in Benue State. It is recommended that the Benue State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) prioritise the prompt payment of salaries, institutionalise regular merit-based promotion, implement conflict-sensitive teacher deployment policies, and expand opportunities for the professional development of teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools.

Keywords: staff-related challenges; internal staff-related challenges; external staff-related challenges; administrative effectiveness; public lower basic schools.

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Introduction

Public lower basic schools (Year I–6) in Nigeria are mandated to deliver foundational education that equips learners with essential literacy, numeracy and social competencies (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013; Universal Basic Education [UBE] Act, 2004), yet in Benue State the operational realities of these schools are characterised by historically entrenched staff-related challenges that undermine the quality of administrative delivery required to fulfil this mandate. These challenges manifest in both internal dynamics – such as persistent staffing shortages, low morale, limited professional development opportunities and years-long delays in promotions for teachers and administrators – and external pressures, which include pervasive insecurity, infrastructural decay and financial instabilities, all deeply rooted in the state's localised socio-political and security contexts (Jato & Iornumbe, 2025).

Despite substantial efforts to bolster the workforce – the Benue State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) recruitment of over 9,000 primary school teachers in 2025 – significant gaps persist. Many recruits are reported to have been assigned to dilapidated or abandoned schools lacking essential facilities, perpetuating acute understaffing in rural and remote lower basic institutions while exacerbating urban-rural imbalances (Mbachii, 2025). This reflects a pattern in Nigeria's broader crisis, where public primary schools face a deficit of approximately 194,876 qualified teachers, contributing to overburdened schedules for administrators and compromised oversight in foundational education (Jide, 2025). Internal strains associated with staff-related challenges are exacerbated by chronic irregularities in settlement of salary arrears and prolonged stagnation in career progression. Teachers and administrators in Benue State have experienced prolonged salary arrears, partial payments and delayed settlements across multiple years. Historical backlogs include arrears of up to 10 months recorded in 2017, while more recent reports indicate outstanding obligations of 11 months in 2025 (Aar, 2025; Okere, 2023). These financial hardships are compounded by prolonged delays in promotion – as evidenced by teachers remaining on the same grade levels for nearly ten years before sporadic corrective measures were undertaken; as seen in mass demotions executed within payroll systems that reversed earlier promotions implemented in 2022 for the 2021 exercise; and as demonstrated by threats of industrial action issued by the Nigeria Union of Teachers, demanding the restoration of promotions and the payment of arrears (Abah, 2023; Vande-Acka, 2023) – all contributing to bolster the tendency for many employment-seeking tertiary graduates to view teaching appointments in public lower basic schools as a stopgap response to widespread unemployment. For such entrants, teaching at the lower basic level is often perceived less as a long-term professional commitment and more as a temporary means of income generation while they seek to leverage their salaries and work experience to secure higher-paying or more prestigious employment elsewhere.

External stressors intensify these difficulties markedly. Decade-long armed conflicts in regions like Sankera (Katsina-Ala, Ukum, and Logo Local Government Areas) have caused displacement, property destruction, and economic disruption, resulting in decreased teacher motivation, frequent lateness and challenges in curriculum coverage (Jato & Iornumbe, 2025). Insecurity has rendered numerous schools non-functional or disrupted, with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) occupying facilities in areas such as Gwer-West, leading to closures, teacher relocations to safer zones, and heightened resistance to postings in inaccessible, high-risk terrains (PeriscopeNGA, 2025). These conditions foster unfavourable physical environments – often involving dilapidated, roofless structures, bushy surroundings, or makeshift arrangements – despite ongoing rehabilitation initiatives in select schools (Uzaan, 2025).

Collectively, these realities – manpower deficiencies despite large-scale recruitment, enduring salary backlogs, prolonged promotion stagnation, reluctance to serve in rural or conflict-affected areas, insecurity-induced disruptions and substandard infrastructure – present formidable barriers to effective administrative performance and the achievement of educational goals in Benue State's public lower basic schools. This study is justified by the critical need to systematically explore these staff-related challenges and their effects on administrative effectiveness. Through a differentiation of internal factors from external pressures in assessing their impacts, the study seeks to generate evidence-based insights capable of informing policy reforms, improving staff deployment and welfare, thereby strengthening school administration and promoting sustainable improvements in foundational education in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite sustained policy attention and investment in basic education, administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State remains uneven. School administrators are routinely assessed against performance expectations that presume stable staffing and predictable school environments. However, they operate in contexts marked by organisational constraints and external pressures that challenge conventional models of school administration. Existing policy and scholarly discussions have largely documented staff-related challenges without sufficiently examining how these challenges – when differentiated into internal and external dimensions – shape administrative effectiveness in practice. The absence of such empirical clarity has resulted in accountability frameworks and interventions that are often misaligned with the operational realities of schools, particularly those in rural and conflict-affected areas. The core problem of the study is not merely the presence of staff-related challenges, but the lack of systematic evidence on their differentiated impacts on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State. The research addresses this gap with a view to informing context-responsive

administrative reforms and evidence-based policy decisions.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the staff-related challenges experienced by teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria, and to assess their impacts on administrative effectiveness. The specific objectives were:

1. To establish the level of administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
2. To identify the internal staff-related challenges experienced by teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
3. To identify the external staff-related challenges that affect the work of teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
4. To examine the impact of external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
5. To examine the impact of internal staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?
2. What are the internal staff-related challenges experienced by teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?
3. What are the external staff-related challenges that affect the work of teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?
4. What is the impact of external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?
5. What is the impact of internal staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?

Null Hypotheses

While keeping Research Questions 1 – 3 descriptive, Research Questions 3 and 4 were adapted to Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of internal

staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on General Systems Theory (GST) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, which together provide a comprehensive lens for explaining how staff-related challenges influence administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria. General Systems Theory, advanced by von Bertalanffy (1968), conceptualises organisations – including schools – as open systems comprising interdependent components that interact dynamically with their external environment. Schools operate as systems with inputs (e.g., teachers, policies, resources), throughput processes (e.g., administrative coordination, supervision, staff deployment), and outputs (e.g., administrative effectiveness, educational outcomes). Disruptions in any subsystem, such as internal staff shortages, poor deployment, salary irregularities, or external factors like insecurity and infrastructural deficits, reverberate across the entire system, impairing overall functioning and equilibrium (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Elujekwute, n.d.). In the Nigerian educational context, GST highlights the holistic interdependence of internal and external staff-related factors, offering a framework to view administrative effectiveness not as isolated events but as emergent properties of systemic interactions (Mwangeka, 2020).

Complementing this is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory), which differentiates between "hygiene factors" (extrinsic elements such as salary, working conditions, school policies, supervision, and security) that prevent dissatisfaction when adequately addressed but do not motivate when present, and motivator factors (intrinsic elements such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself) that actively drive job satisfaction and performance (Herzberg et al., 1959). In public lower basic schools, deficiencies in hygiene factors – prolonged salary arrears, years-long delayed promotions, unfavourable physical environments, and insecurity – generate widespread dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and reduced commitment among teachers and administrators. This diminishes the activation of motivators, leading to weakened morale, collaboration, and administrative leadership (Evans & Olamide Aluko, n.d.; Ajikere, 2024). The theory elucidates why staff-related challenges persist in eroding administrative effectiveness despite structural provisions.

Integrating these theories creates a synergistic framework: GST explains the systemic propagation of staff-related challenges across internal and external dimensions within the school organisation, while Herzberg's theory elucidates the motivational mechanisms through which these challenges impair staff performance and, consequently, administrative processes such as planning, supervision, resource management, and decision-

making. This dual approach guides the investigation into the differentiated impacts of internal and external staff-related challenges, providing theoretical grounding for evidence-based recommendations to restore systemic balance, enhance motivation, and improve administrative effectiveness in resource-constrained basic education settings.

Literature Review

The Concept of Staff-Related Challenges

Staff-related challenges refer to conditions associated with the availability, motivation, competence, deployment, and welfare of personnel that constrain organisational performance. In educational institutions, these challenges are commonly categorised into internal and external dimensions. Internal staff-related challenges originate within the organisation and include issues such as inadequate staffing levels, poor staff motivation, limited professional development opportunities, weak supervision, and role overload (Bush, 2011; Okeke & Eme, 2014). External staff-related challenges arise from factors outside the immediate control of school administrators, including government recruitment policies, irregular salary payments, insecurity, labour market pressures, and socio-economic instability (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). The distinction between internal and external staff-related challenges is analytically important as it clarifies locus of control and responsibility in addressing administrative problems.

The Concept of Administrative Effectiveness

Administrative effectiveness refers to the extent to which school administrators successfully coordinate human and material resources to achieve institutional goals efficiently and sustainably (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). It encompasses planning, organisation, supervision, communication, staff coordination, and policy implementation (Adeyemi, 2011). Effective administration is context-dependent, shaped by organisational culture, leadership practices, and environmental pressures (Bush & Glover, 2014). Persistent staff-related challenges compromise the ability of school leaders to maintain order, accountability, and instructional support.

Empirical Evidence on the Relationship Between Staff-Related Challenges and Administrative Effectiveness

Adeyemi and Ogunsola (2016) conducted a study in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria, and found that staff shortages and low morale significantly reduced administrative effectiveness, increasing workload and weakening supervision. Okorie and Ezeh (2016) examined public schools in Enugu State and reported that irregular salaries, delayed promotions, and limited professional development negatively affected administrators' capacity to coordinate staff and maintain instructional quality. Ogunode et al. (2021) investigated teacher welfare in Nigerian public schools and found that poor working conditions and inadequate incentives were strongly associated with diminished commitment and compliance with

administrative directives. Internationally, OECD (2019) conducted a multi-country study and found that schools with motivated, well-supported staff demonstrated higher organisational effectiveness, whereas systemic staff-related challenges correlated with reduced leadership performance and school outcomes.

However, these studies often examined staff-related challenges in aggregate, without distinguishing between internal and external factors or testing their separate effects on administrative effectiveness. This gap highlights the need for empirical analysis that systematically differentiates internal from external staff-related challenges and assesses their distinct impacts on school administration outcomes.

The Gap in the Literature

Despite extensive scholarship on school administration and staff management, there is a conceptual and empirical gap in the disaggregated analysis of staff-related challenges. Limited studies have examined both internal and external staff-related challenges simultaneously and assessed their differential effects on administrative effectiveness using statistical methods. This is particularly true for public lower basic schools in Nigeria, where structural, economic, and labour-market pressures uniquely shape staff behaviour. The present study addresses this gap by empirically analysing these differentiated challenges and linking them to administrative effectiveness.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate staff-related challenges and their impact on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The target population comprised approximately 34,000 teachers and administrators, from which a sample of 380 respondents was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table and a multi-stage sampling technique involving stratified, simple random, and proportionate sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire, the *Staff-Related Challenges and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (SRCAEQ)*, consisting of five sections rated on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher and trained assistants following ethical procedures. Data were analysed using means and standard deviations to answer the research questions on administrative effectiveness and the prevalence of internal and external staff-related challenges, with a criterion mean of 2.50 as the decision benchmark. The two hypotheses on the effects of internal and external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness were tested using the chi-square goodness-of-fit test at the 0.05 level of significance.

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Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Ratings of Administrative Effectiveness*

Item	Administrative Effectiveness Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	School administrative activities are carried out in an organised and timely manner.	1.68	1.19	Low
2	The school head effectively coordinates teachers' duties and responsibilities.	1.57	1.05	Low
3	Communication between administrators and staff is clear and consistent.	1.51	0.93	Low
4	Staff supervision is regularly conducted in this school.	1.59	1.09	Low
5	School rules and policies are effectively enforced by the administration.	1.45	0.93	Low
6	Instructional activities are adequately monitored by school administrators.	1.78	1.17	Low
7	Administrative decisions are implemented efficiently in this school.	1.57	1.05	Low
8	Records and documentation are properly managed by the school administration.	1.69	0.91	Low
9	Conflict among staff is effectively managed by the school leadership.	1.72	1.08	Low
10	Overall, the administration of this school is effective.	1.45	0.93	Low
Composite Mean (Overall Administrative Effectiveness)		**1.60**	**1.00**	**Low**

Source: Data from researcher's fieldwork (analysed with IBM SPSS Version 22, 2026)

Table 1 shows that the mean scores for all administrative effectiveness items ranged from 1.45 to 1.78, which were below the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest-rated item was instructional monitoring by school administrators (M = 1.78, SD = 1.17), while the lowest-rated items were the enforcement of school rules and policies and the overall effectiveness of school administration (M = 1.45, SD = 0.93, respectively). The composite mean score of 1.60 (SD = 1.00) was also below the criterion mean, indicating that the overall level of administrative effectiveness in the sampled schools was low.

Research Question 2: What are the internal staff-related challenges that affect the work of teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?

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Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Internal Staff-Related Challenges Experienced by Teachers and Administrators in Public Lower Basic Schools in Benue State, Nigeria (N = 380)*

S/N	Internal Staff-Related Challenges	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate staffing in the school	3.13	1.26	High
2	Teachers' multiple-class responsibilities resulting from staff shortages	3.03	1.08	High
3	Delays in staff promotion	3.08	0.68	High
4	Limited opportunities for in-service training	2.54	1.19	High
5	Frequent staff absenteeism	2.68	0.91	High
6	Conflicts among staff members	3.43	1.03	High
7	High staff workload	3.04	1.03	High
8	Ineffective internal staff communication	2.91	0.86	High
9	Resistance to administrative directives among staff members	2.85	1.04	High
10	Inadequate supervision of staff within the school	2.99	0.62	High
Composite Mean (Overall Administrative Effectiveness)		**2.97**	**0.97**	**High**

Source: Data from researcher's fieldwork (analysed with IBM SPSS Version 22, 2026)

Table 2 shows that the mean scores for the internal staff-related challenge items ranged from 1.47 to 1.86, all of which were below the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest-rated challenge was conflicts among staff members (M = 1.86, SD = 1.21), while the lowest-rated was inadequate supervision of staff within the school (M = 1.47, SD = 0.95). The composite mean score of 1.65 indicates that the overall level of internal staff-related challenges experienced by teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State was low.

Research Question 3: What are the external staff-related challenges experienced by teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics for External Staff-Related Challenges Affecting the Work of Teachers and Administrators in Public Lower Basic Schools in Benue State, Nigeria*

S/N	External Staff-Related Challenges	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Demoralising salary arrears of over nine months	3.36	1.10	High
2	School insecurity	3.36	0.76	High
3	Inadequate school buildings and facilities	2.98	0.79	High
4	Uneven government teacher deployment	3.28	0.61	High
5	Insufficient government funding	3.06	0.48	High
6	Political interference in school administration	3.34	1.11	High
7	Economic hardship affecting staff attendance	3.26	0.83	High
8	Temporary or dilapidated school structures	3.06	0.70	High
9	Community-related disruptions to school activities	2.91	1.01	High
10	Teacher deployment to schools without adequate facilities	3.05	0.53	High
Composite Mean (Overall External Staff-Related Challenges)		**3.17**	**0.79**	**High**

Source: Data from researcher's fieldwork (analysed with IBM SPSS Version 22, 2026)

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Table 3 shows that the mean scores for the external staff-related challenge items ranged from 2.91 to 3.36, all of which were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest-rated challenges were demoralising salary arrears of over nine months (M = 3.36, SD = 1.10) and school insecurity (M = 3.36, SD = 0.76), while the lowest-rated challenge was community-related disruptions to school activities (M = 2.91, SD = 1.01). The composite mean score of 3.17 indicates that the overall level of external staff-related challenges affecting the work of teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools in Benue State was high.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 4: *Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test of Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Internal Staff-Related Challenges on Administrative Effectiveness in Public Lower Basic Schools in Benue State, Nigeria*

Variable	χ^2	df	*P*	Decision
Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Internal Staff-Related Challenges on Administrative Effectiveness	365.10	6	< .001	Reject H_{01}

Source: Data from researcher's fieldwork (analysed with IBM SPSS Version 22, 2026)

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test revealed a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of internal staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria, $\chi^2(6, N = 380) = 365.10$, $p < .001$. Since the probability value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that the observed pattern of perceptions differed significantly from the expected distribution. Therefore, internal staff-related challenges were perceived by teachers and administrators as having a significant impact on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of internal staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

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Table 5: *Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test of Perceptions Regarding the Impact of External Staff-Related Challenges on Administrative Effectiveness in Public Lower Basic Schools in Benue State, Nigeria*

Variable	χ^2	df	*P*	Decision
Perceptions Regarding the Impact of External Staff-Related Challenges on Administrative Effectiveness	447.75	2	< .001	Reject H_{02}

Source: Data from researcher's fieldwork (analysed with IBM SPSS Version 22, 2026)

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test revealed a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of perceptions among teachers and administrators regarding the impact of external staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria, $\chi^2(2, N = 380) = 447.75$, $p < .001$. Since the probability value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. The observed frequencies showed that the majority of respondents agreed (n = 320) that external staff-related challenges affect administrative effectiveness, compared with only 12 respondents who strongly disagreed and 48 who strongly agreed. This indicates that teachers and administrators perceived external staff-related challenges as having a significant impact on administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State, Nigeria

Discussion

The finding that administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State was uniformly low, yielding a composite mean of 1.60 against a criterion mean of 2.50, is consistent with a broad pattern documented across Nigeria. Umeozor and Eziuzo (2020) found that inadequate funds, infrastructural deficits, and the absence of consistent staff training were among the primary factors constraining the efficiency of primary school administrators in Anambra State, while Mohammed et al. (2021) similarly identified teacher shortages, poor supervision, and insecurity as challenges converging to impair effective school administration nationwide. Adeyemi and Ogunsola (2018) confirmed in Ogun State that where staff-related and resource constraints are pervasive, the overall administrative capacity of school leaders is substantially weakened. What the current study contributes beyond these prior findings is a systematically disaggregated picture: by separately assessing internal and external staff-related challenges and submitting each to inferential analysis, it demonstrates that both categories independently and significantly correspond with diminished administrative processes, rather than functioning merely as an undifferentiated background of difficulty.

The high composite mean of 2.97 for internal challenges, with inter-staff conflict (M = 3.43), inadequate staffing (M = 3.13), and promotion delays (M = 3.08) rated highest, resonates with established Nigerian findings on the organisational consequences of staffing deficits and career stagnation. Umeozor and Eziuzo (2020)

showed that poor teacher cooperation and understaffing were associated with eroded administrative coordination capacity in Anambra primary schools. On promotion specifically, Okolie et al. (2023) found that teachers in Rivers State remained in active service without promotion for extended periods, a condition linked to distorted career mobility and disengagement, while Nwokeoma et al. (2023) demonstrated that promotion was a strong predictor of teacher job engagement and that its denial corresponded with reduced dedication and compliance. Onah (2022) further found delayed promotion to be significantly associated with job stress among secondary school teachers in Enugu State. These empirical findings are also consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), which suggests that deficiencies in hygiene factors such as promotion opportunities and working conditions generate dissatisfaction that may reduce employees' commitment and performance. This theoretical expectation helps contextualise the increased inter-staff conflict and resistance to administrative directives (M = 2.85) evident in the current data. High workload (M = 3.04) and multiple-class responsibilities (M = 3.03) are equally consistent with prior evidence: Bawalla and Adenugba (2021) found in Ogun State that excessive workload combined with salary-related dissatisfaction was associated with lateness, absenteeism, and reduced cooperation with administrative directives — all of which bear directly on the coordinating functions of school heads. Several earlier studies examined these internal challenges in aggregate and measured their effects on instructional quality rather than on administrative effectiveness as a distinct construct; the present study's focus on planning, supervision, coordination, and decision-making as outcome variables therefore adds analytical specificity that the existing literature has largely lacked.

The external challenges registered a higher composite mean (M = 3.17) than the internal challenges, with salary arrears (M = 3.36) and school insecurity (M = 3.36) jointly rated highest, followed by political interference (M = 3.34) and uneven deployment (M = 3.28). On salary arrears, Bawalla and Adenugba (2021) reported a strong positive relationship between prompt salary payment and teacher job commitment in Ogun State, with the corollary that salary irregularities and owed months of pay were linked to a significant decline in professional dedication. Atafar et al. (2024) found in North Central Nigeria that irregular salary payment may adversely affect curriculum implementation — a consequence that bears on the supervisory and monitoring functions of school administrators. These findings are structurally convergent with Benue's documented history of arrears extending beyond ten months (Aar, 2025; Okere, 2023). On insecurity, Uwakwe et al. (2025) found across four North Central states that it was significantly associated with disrupted monitoring, evaluation, and the teaching-learning process, while a study drawing on a population of 6,792 administrative staff in North Central Nigeria concluded that insecurity was linked to impaired staff supervision, student discipline, and community-based

administrative partnerships (International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, 2025). These findings are mirrored in the current study's chi-square result for external challenges, $\chi^2(2, N = 380) = 447.75$, $p < .001$, where 320 of 380 respondents affirmed that external challenges significantly affect administrative effectiveness. On uneven deployment, Iganibo and Ugolo (2025) found in Bayelsa State that ineffective deployment strategies were associated with urban-centred teacher concentration and acute rural neglect driven by teachers' reluctance to accept postings in areas lacking social amenities, a pattern similarly documented in Kwara State by Unterhalter et al. (2015). In the Benue context, where newly recruited teachers were reportedly deployed to dilapidated or abandoned facilities in remote and conflict-affected areas (Mbachii, 2025), administrators are left with skeletal, demoralised staff — conditions that may render planning and supervision structurally impaired regardless of their own administrative competence.

The chi-square test for internal challenges, $\chi^2(6, N = 380) = 365.10$, $p < .001$, equally confirms that internal disruptions are significantly associated with diminished administrative effectiveness, corroborating findings by Isong et al. (2021) in Cross River State that the absence of adequate promotion, salary, and motivation was linked to negative work attitudes that inhibit coordinated administrative functioning, and by Adebowale and Nma (2025) in Ogun State that delayed promotion, heavy workload, and limited professional development were associated with reduced teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness. The current findings thus indicate that internal staff-related challenges — including promotion delays, staff conflict, and workload — and external challenges — including salary arrears, insecurity, and uneven deployment — collectively correspond with low administrative effectiveness. This pattern is consistent with General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), which posits that disruptions in one part of an organisational system can affect the functioning of the whole: internal and external challenge sets, rather than operating in isolation, appear to interact as mutually reinforcing sources of administrative dysfunction in the sampled schools. The present study extends previous research by complementing descriptive findings with chi-square goodness-of-fit analyses, thereby providing additional statistical evidence regarding respondents' perceptions of the impact of staff-related challenges on administrative effectiveness. Earlier Nigerian studies, including those by Umeozor and Eziuzo (2020), Bawalla and Adenugba (2021), and Mohammed et al. (2021), examined staff-related challenges primarily through descriptive methods; the robust rejection of both null hypotheses at $p < .001$ in the present study therefore strengthens the evidentiary basis for the conclusions drawn and generates findings capable of informing SUBEB policy decisions on teacher welfare, conflict-responsive deployment, and the structural conditions necessary for effective foundational education governance in Benue State.

Conclusion

This study established that administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools in Benue State is low and that both internal and external staff-related challenges are highly prevalent and have a statistically significant association with perceptions of administrative effectiveness. The findings indicate that deficiencies in staff welfare, career progression, professional development, and school security constitute major constraints to effective school administration. These findings are consistent with the propositions of General Systems Theory, which emphasises the interdependence of organisational subsystems, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which highlights the importance of adequate working conditions and career advancement in promoting employee motivation and organisational effectiveness. The findings underscore the need for the Benue State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and other relevant government agencies to move beyond recruitment-focused interventions by addressing the systemic factors that undermine administrative effectiveness. These include the prompt payment of salaries, regular staff promotion, equitable and conflict-sensitive teacher deployment, continuous professional development, and the provision of adequate school infrastructure and security. Furthermore, administrative accountability frameworks should be aligned with the operational realities of schools, particularly those located in rural and conflict-affected communities. Addressing these structural challenges is essential for strengthening administrative effectiveness and enhancing the capacity of public lower basic schools in Benue State to deliver quality foundational education.

Recommendations

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

1. The Benue State Government should prioritise the prompt and consistent payment of teachers' and administrators' salaries, including the clearance of all outstanding arrears, as a foundational condition for restoring staff morale and sustaining administrative effectiveness in public lower basic schools.
2. SUBEB should institutionalise a regular, transparent, and merit-based staff promotion schedule that eliminates prolonged career stagnation, ensuring that promotion exercises are conducted at due intervals and that outcomes are implemented without undue delay or reversal.
3. Government should develop and implement conflict-sensitive teacher deployment policies that provide adequate incentives – including hazard allowances, housing support, and priority promotion – for teachers and administrators serving in rural, remote, and insecurity-affected local government areas, in order to address the acute urban-rural staffing imbalances documented in this study.
4. SUBEB and the Benue State Ministry of Education should

expand access to in-service training and continuous professional development programmes for teachers and administrators in public lower basic schools, prioritising schools in underserved areas where such opportunities have been most limited.

5. The Benue State Government should intensify the rehabilitation of dilapidated school infrastructure and ensure that newly recruited teachers are not deployed to facilities that are structurally unfit for educational use, as physical working conditions were found to constitute a significant external challenge to administrative effectiveness.
6. Relevant security agencies and community stakeholders should collaborate with school authorities to develop and implement school-level security frameworks that protect staff, students, and facilities, particularly in local government areas affected by protracted armed conflict and communal crises, so as to reduce the disruption to school administration that insecurity currently causes.
7. Administrative accountability frameworks at the state and local government levels should be redesigned to reflect the operational realities of schools in rural and conflict-affected communities, including the adoption of context-sensitive performance indicators that do not hold administrators to standards that presuppose stable staffing and resources they do not have.
8. Future researchers are encouraged to build on this study by employing longitudinal and mixed-method designs that can track changes in administrative effectiveness over time and provide deeper qualitative insight into the lived administrative experiences of school heads in Benue State's public lower basic schools.

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