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PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Egwu, Joyce Uche, PhD
Phone: +2348037436665
Email: rkacademy2012@gmail.com

And
Ekwe, Ngozika Ijeoma
Phone: +234834317987
Email: ngoziknigerwest@gmail.com
Affiliation:
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined how principals' leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability and communication skills correlates with students' academic performance. The study was guided by four research questions and four null hypotheses. The correlational research design was adopted for the study, with a sample consisting of 52 SS 2 English Language teachers and 960 students from 20 selected public secondary schools in Awka and Nnewi Education Zones. Purposive sampling technique was employed which ensured the inclusion of schools with SS 2 English Language teachers and accessible academic performance records of SS 2 students in English Language. Data were collected using Principals' Administrative Competence Questionnaire and students' academic performance records. Data were collected using structured questionnaires for principals and academic records for students. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using test of significance of Pearson. The findings revealed significant positive relationship between principals' administrative competence variables and students' academic performance. Leadership effectiveness and decision-making ability showed the strongest correlation with academic performance, followed by communication skills and resource management skills. The study concluded that principals' administrative competence is a critical determinant of students' academic outcomes. The study recommended among others that principals should focus on improving their leadership effectiveness by setting clear academic goals, fostering a positive school culture and providing consistent support to teachers. This would help drive higher academic performance by promoting a collaborative and motivating environment.

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Introduction

Principals' administrative competence plays a crucial role in shaping the academic performance of students in public secondary schools. Effective school leadership ensures proper planning, organization, supervision and implementation of educational policies, creating an environment conducive to learning. When principals demonstrate strong administrative competence, they can efficiently allocate resources, manage teachers and students and foster a positive school climate, all of which contribute to improved student outcomes. Conversely, poor administrative practices may lead to inefficiencies, reduced teacher motivation and a decline in students' academic performance.

Students' academic performance is a critical aspect of the educational process that reflects the effectiveness of teaching, curriculum implementation, and the overall educational environment. It encompasses students' achievements in various subjects and is often measured through assessments, exams, and continuous evaluation (Ikegbusi, 2018). Understanding students' academic performance is essential for identifying areas of strength and areas requiring improvement, guiding educational policies and enhancing teaching strategies to foster better educational outcomes. The researcher defined students' academic performance as the measurable outcomes of a student's learning process, including their grades, test scores and overall achievement, which reflect their knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through education. Egwu (2022a) reinforced that effective internal quality assurance mechanisms play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic performance, as they ensure consistent standards in instructional delivery and evaluation practices within schools.

Students' academic performance emphasizes its central role in the education system, serving as a benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, learning, and curriculum delivery. Nwankwo and Adebayo (2024) asserted that academic performance reflects the extent to which students achieve their educational goals, which is often measured through standardized tests, classroom assessments, and other evaluative tools. It is influenced by various factors, including students' cognitive abilities, motivation, socio-economic background, and the quality of instruction provided by teachers. The importance of academic performance lies in its capacity to provide insights into students' learning progress and to guide policies and interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes. Egwu (2022b) further highlighted that educational management practices, particularly those aligned with modern pedagogical demands, significantly influence academic performance by enhancing curriculum relevance, teacher preparedness, and student engagement in 21st-century classrooms.

Academic performance can be understood as the degree to which students

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attain their educational objectives, typically measured through grades, test scores and other academic indicators. It reflects not only the measurable outcomes of students' learning but also the underlying processes, such as the acquisition and application of knowledge. Similarly, Ikegbusi (2018) maintained that academic performance encompasses students' achievement in examinations, serving as a reflection of their ability to understand, apply and synthesize learned material. Okwudishu and Onyebuchi (2019) emphasized the multifaceted nature of academic achievement, which extends beyond mere retention of information to include critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, Egwu (2022a) highlighted the importance of internal mechanisms for quality assurance in educational management, which ensures a well-structured approach to enhancing academic performance.

Students' level of success in various educational tasks, such as tests, assignments, and projects, plays a crucial role in determining academic performance. Akande (2021) explained that this perspective allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of students' capabilities, including their participation and mastery of academic activities. This broader view aligns with contemporary educational approaches that consider both the process and the product of learning. Academic performance is not only a measure of students' knowledge but also an indicator of their readiness to apply learned concepts in real-life situations. Additionally, Egwu (2022b) highlighted how effective educational management contributes to enhancing 21st-century pedagogy, fostering an environment where students can excel academically while developing practical life skills. Similarly, Ikegbusi and Adindu (2022) emphasized that assessing students' achievements through multiple academic activities provides a holistic understanding of their learning progress. They further stressed the importance of effective educational management in promoting developmental best practices, which create a conducive learning environment for improved academic performance and skill acquisition.

Students' academic performance is intrinsically linked to principals' administrative competence, as the quality of school leadership directly impacts the teaching and learning environment. Principals play a pivotal role in setting the tone for academic excellence by fostering a conducive learning atmosphere, ensuring effective curriculum implementation and managing school resources efficiently (Ikegbusi, 2016). Their administrative competence is crucial in influencing teachers' effectiveness and students' academic outcomes. Effective administration ensures that policies and practices align with the school's vision and goals, ultimately promoting students' success.

Principals' administrative competence refers to the ability of school leaders to perform managerial and leadership tasks that enhance the overall functionality of the school. It encompasses skills such as planning, organizing, coordinating and supervising activities to achieve educational objectives. Udeh and

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Anyanwu (2022) affirmed that administrative competence is the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable principals to lead schools effectively and ensure positive educational outcomes. Similarly, Ikegbusi (2016) defined it as the capacity of school principals to manage human and material resources to create an environment that supports teaching and learning. These definitions underscore the importance of principals' roles in shaping the educational environment and driving performance. The researcher defined principals' administrative competence as the ability of school leaders to effectively plan, organize, coordinate and supervise school activities and resources to create an environment that fosters teaching efficiency and enhances students' academic achievement.

Principals' administrative competence is the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable school leaders to effectively manage resources, foster a positive learning environment and achieve educational goals. Several recent authors have provided definitions and insights into this concept. For instance, Lambert and Bouchamma (2019) described administrative competence as the capacity of principals to adapt to changing educational needs while ensuring the smooth functioning of school activities. Menteşe (2019) highlighted it as the ability to implement strategic leadership practices that balance administrative and instructional responsibilities. Principals' administrative competence entails the strategic application of managerial and leadership skills to achieve educational objectives, including planning, organizing and supervising activities. This competence involves the effective management of both human and material resources to create an environment that supports teaching and learning. Authors such as Onyejekwe (2024) emphasized the significance of these skills in fostering school effectiveness and enhancing student outcomes.

There are different components of principals' administrative competence that influence students' academic performance and the overall effectiveness of schools. These components include leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability, communication skills, conflict resolution, strategic planning, delegation skills, organizational skills, conflict resolution Skills and instructional supervision (Eze & Nwafor, 2023). Each of these elements plays a significant role in ensuring that school operations are efficient, goals are achieved and a conducive environment for teaching and learning is maintained. However, the present study would concentrate on four of these components, which are leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability and communication skills.

Leadership effectiveness refers to the ability of a principal to inspire and guide teachers and students toward achieving educational goals. Effective principals establish clear visions, set attainable goals and motivate their teams to pursue academic excellence. Eze and Nwafor (2023) asserted that effective leadership involves providing direction, fostering collaboration and maintaining high standards of performance. When principals demonstrate strong leadership, they create a

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positive school climate that encourages student engagement and academic performance

Resource management skills involve the ability to allocate, monitor and utilize resources effectively to support the school's objectives. Principals with strong resource management skills ensure that financial, human and material resources are used efficiently to enhance teaching and learning. Egwu and Mbonu (2023) highlighted that, well-managed resources directly contribute to improved academic performance by providing adequate facilities, teaching aids and professional development for teachers.

Decision-making skills are the capacity of a principal to analyze situations, consider alternatives and implement solutions that address the needs of the school. Effective decision-making requires critical thinking, collaboration and a thorough understanding of the educational context. Udeh and Anyanwu (2022) emphasized that principals who make informed decisions foster a sense of trust and confidence among teachers and students, which positively impacts the school's overall performance.

Communication skills are vital for principals to effectively convey information, expectations and feedback to teachers, students and other stakeholders. Clear and open communication promotes transparency, builds relationships and resolves conflicts efficiently. Ikegbusi and Egwu (2024a) emphasized that principals with excellent communication skills foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, which enhances the school's academic environment and students' performance.

The researchers were motivated to undertake this study due to persistent reports of declining academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State despite government efforts to improve the quality of education. These concerns were highlighted by periodic assessments and reports from the Anambra State Ministry of Education, which pointed to issues such as ineffective leadership, poor resource management and inadequate decision-making practices by school principals. Furthermore, feedback from teachers and parents often emphasized the negative impact of communication gaps and the lack of administrative competence on the overall learning environment and student performance.

This declining trend has raised critical questions about the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance. While some schools have shown consistent academic excellence under effective leadership, others have lagged significantly, underscoring the need for a deeper investigation into the role of principals' competencies in influencing student success. The variability in performance among schools with similar socio-economic and infrastructural contexts further amplified the need to explore how principals' administrative capabilities directly or indirectly shape academic outcomes. Hence, this study addressed a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic

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performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Anambra State has been a growing concern despite various government efforts to enhance educational quality. Reports from the Anambra State Ministry of Education have highlighted persistent challenges such as ineffective school leadership, poor resource management, inadequate decision-making and weak communication practices among principals. These administrative shortcomings have been linked to declining student outcomes, raising concerns about the role of principals' administrative competence in fostering academic success.

Principals' administrative competence plays a vital role in creating a structured and supportive learning environment. Effective leadership ensures proper planning, resource allocation, curriculum implementation and teacher supervision, all of which contribute to improved student achievement. However, inconsistencies in students' academic performance across schools with similar infrastructural and socio-economic conditions suggest variations in the administrative effectiveness of school principals. While some schools excel due to strong leadership, others continue to struggle, indicating a potential gap in principals' administrative competence and its relationship with students' academic performance.

Although previous studies have examined general factors affecting student achievement, limited research has specifically addressed how principals' administrative competence, particularly in leadership effectiveness, resource management, decision-making and communication, relates to academic performance in Anambra State's public secondary schools. This gap in knowledge necessitates an in-depth investigation into the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance. Therefore, this study sought to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance, offering valuable insights for educational stakeholders in enhancing school administration and academic outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. investigate the relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. explore the relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. assess the relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

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4. examine the relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of this study included all public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The content scope focused on examining the relationship between principals' administrative competence of leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability and communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
3. What is the relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
4. What is the relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following Null Hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. There is no significant relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
4. There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Literature Review

Principals' Administrative Competence

Principals' administrative competence is a critical determinant of effective school management and a major factor influencing students' academic performance. Administrative competence refers to the ability of school leaders to efficiently plan, organize, direct, and control school activities to achieve institutional goals. It encompasses a range

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of professional skills, knowledge, and behaviours that enable principals to address the complexities of school administration effectively. Udo and Okeke (2023) explained that administrative competence is not only about technical expertise but also involves interpersonal skills, strategic thinking, and the ability to adapt to changing educational environments. This multifaceted competence enables principals to manage diverse challenges, from resource allocation to stakeholder engagement, fostering a positive and productive school climate. As Egwu et al, (2021) observed, the competence of school heads significantly impacts human resource management and job performance, particularly in resource-constrained environments, thus reinforcing the need for capable leadership in promoting sustainable school development.

In the educational context, administrative competence also entails the capacity to interpret and implement educational policies in a way that aligns with the unique needs of a school. Nwankwo and Obi (2024) noted that principals with high administrative competence demonstrate the ability to create and sustain an environment conducive to learning by ensuring that teaching and non-teaching staff are well-coordinated, motivated, and focused on achieving shared goals. This requires a deep understanding of organizational behaviour and the ability to leverage human and material resources effectively. Moreover, such competence is essential for handling the increasing demands of accountability and performance metrics in modern educational systems. Egwu and Okafor (2022) affirmed that managing secondary education for student employability and competitiveness in today's global context requires school leaders to demonstrate administrative agility, resource optimization, and visionary planning, all of which are hallmarks of effective administrative competence.

Administrative competence in school leadership is further characterized by the ability to innovate and drive continuous improvement. Adetayo and Olalekan (2022) emphasized that competent school principals are not only managers but also change agents who inspire their teams to adapt to emerging trends in education, such as the integration of technology and the promotion of inclusive practices. They argued that administrative competence is demonstrated through proactive problem-solving, effective delegation, and a commitment to professional development for both the principal and their staff. This dynamic approach ensures that the school remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its students and the broader community. In this vein, Egwu and Ekwe (2024) highlighted the importance of strategic leadership in creating roadmaps that enhance institutional effectiveness and student employability, underscoring that strong administrative capacity is indispensable for aligning school goals with societal expectations in a competitive and evolving educational landscape.

Furthermore, effective administrative competence involves the capacity to balance multiple priorities and make decisions that enhance organizational efficiency and academic outcomes.

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Ekpenyong and Udo (2023) emphasized that principals with strong administrative skills excel in aligning short-term objectives with long-term strategic goals, ensuring that their schools maintain a trajectory of sustained improvement. This balance requires not only a clear vision but also the ability to communicate that vision effectively to all stakeholders, thereby fostering trust, collaboration, and a sense of collective responsibility. As Onuh et al., (2024) observed, in today's complex educational landscape, leveraging innovative management strategies, including technological tools and adaptive leadership, strengthens administrative coordination and drives overall institutional performance.

The concept of administrative competence is foundational to achieving school effectiveness, as it influences the quality of leadership, the strategic use of resources, and the overall organizational culture. Principals who possess high levels of administrative competence create environments where teachers are empowered to deliver high-quality instruction and students are motivated to achieve their best (Ikegbusi, 2016). By cultivating these capabilities, school leaders can ensure that their institutions thrive academically and organizationally, meeting both local and global educational standards. Key dimensions of principals' administrative competence include leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability, and communication skills. These components collectively determine a principal's ability to lead, inspire, and implement strategies that improve students' academic performance. Ezugoh et al., (2025) emphasized that enhancing administrators' skill levels in critical areas such as supervision, planning and professional communication significantly boosts institutional outcomes and student success, especially in competitive and evolving educational environments.

Leadership effectiveness is central to principals' administrative competence and directly impacts the quality of education provided in schools. Effective leadership entails the ability to inspire, guide, and influence teachers, students, and other stakeholders toward achieving educational goals. Principals who exhibit strong leadership effectiveness create a shared vision, foster collaboration, and set clear expectations for academic success. Nwankwo and Obi (2024) emphasized that effective leaders serve as role models and catalysts for change, motivating teachers to deliver high-quality instruction and students to achieve their full potential. Furthermore, leadership effectiveness ensures a positive school climate where discipline, respect, and mutual accountability prevail. Effective principals also adapt their leadership styles to the needs of their schools, employing transformational approaches to drive innovation and inspire commitment or transactional approaches to maintain structure and order when necessary. Egwu and Okafor (2022) reinforced this perspective by noting that visionary school leadership is indispensable in navigating educational challenges and embedding entrepreneurial thinking that fosters innovation, adaptability, and sustainable academic advancement.

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Resource management skills are another critical component of principals' administrative competence. These skills involve the effective allocation, utilization and optimization of human, financial and material resources to enhance teaching and learning. Principals who excel in resource management ensure that schools are adequately staffed, facilities are well-maintained and instructional materials are readily available (Ikegbusi, 2016). Okafor and Ekpenyong (2023) asserted that resource management is essential for creating a conducive learning environment, as it determines the availability and quality of resources that directly impact students' academic performance. Additionally, competent resource managers prioritize teacher professional development, recognizing that investing in the continuous improvement of educators translates to better instructional practices and improved student outcomes. Principals also play a crucial role in mobilizing resources from external sources, such as community partnerships, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, to supplement the school's budget and enhance its capacity to deliver quality education. Effective resource management not only addresses immediate needs but also ensures the sustainability of school programs and initiatives.

Decision-making ability is another hallmark of principals' administrative competence and plays a decisive role in determining the success of a school. Decision-making involves analyzing complex situations, evaluating alternatives and selecting the most appropriate course of action to address challenges or achieve objectives. Principals are often required to make decisions that affect curriculum implementation, teachers' assignments, students' discipline and resource allocation, among other critical areas. Nwankwo and Obi (2024) argued that principals with strong decision-making abilities demonstrate analytical thinking, strategic planning and an understanding of educational policies, enabling them to make informed choices that enhance academic performance. Moreover, participatory decision-making, which involves teachers, students and other stakeholders, fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, thereby strengthening the school's governance and effectiveness. Adebayo and Onyekwere (2023) highlighted that decision-making is not only about resolving problems but also about anticipating future challenges and proactively addressing them, ensuring the smooth functioning of the school and the continuous improvement of student outcomes.

Communication skills are equally essential in defining principals' administrative competence and directly influence the overall effectiveness of school management which contributes to students' academic performance. Communication skills encompass the ability to convey information clearly, listen actively and engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue. Effective communication enables principals to articulate their vision, goals and expectations, ensuring that all members of the school community are aligned with the institution's objectives. Chukwu and Eze (2022) observed that principals with strong communication skills build trust and foster open channels of communication,

allowing for the free flow of information, feedback and ideas. This creates an inclusive and supportive environment where teachers feel valued and empowered and students feel heard and motivated. Additionally, effective communication is instrumental in resolving conflicts, addressing concerns and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, which enhances the overall school climate and academic performance. Principals who prioritize clear and transparent communication also facilitate better relationships with parents and the wider community, strengthening their support and involvement in school activities.

Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance is a crucial indicator of educational success, reflecting the extent to which students achieve their learning objectives across cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. It serves as a measure of how effectively schools fulfil their mission of equipping learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for personal and societal development. Academic performance is influenced by various factors, including the quality of instruction, resource availability, student motivation and the overall school environment. Nwankwo and Obi (2024) posited that the academic performance of students is a vital benchmark for assessing educational systems, determining the efficacy of instructional practices and guiding policy formulation in the education sector.

The quality of teaching and learning remains one of the most significant factors affecting students' academic performance. Teachers' competence, dedication and the use of innovative instructional strategies are essential in helping students comprehend concepts, develop critical thinking skills and achieve academic excellence. Oludare (2023) emphasized that teachers who are well-supported by their school leadership and provided with adequate teaching resources are better positioned to deliver high-quality education that improves student. Additionally, the incorporation of project-based learning and student creativity has been shown to significantly enhance academic performance and general achievement in schools (Ikegbusi & Egwu, 2024b). Furthermore, the availability of teaching aids, libraries, laboratories, ICT tools and conducive classroom environments positively impacts students' learning experiences, enabling them to perform at optimal levels. Ikegbusi (2021) highlighted that teachers' exposure to ICT as a pedagogical tool significantly enhances their ability to deliver effective instruction, thereby improving students' academic performance.

Resource availability and utilization are fundamental to fostering improved academic outcomes. Schools that are well-equipped with modern facilities, adequate instructional materials, and functional infrastructure provide students with opportunities to explore and deepen their understanding of academic content. Mabovula (2023) posited that ensuring that schools are adequately resourced requires effective planning, strategic allocation, and proactive maintenance, all of which are central to achieving academic success. Inadequate resources often hinder students' ability to fully engage with learning

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activities, limiting their academic potential. Supporting this view, Ikegbusi et al., (2021) emphasized that the effective deployment of educational technologies and learning resources enhances instructional delivery and fosters deeper student engagement, particularly in a post-pandemic context where access to digital tools plays a crucial role in academic achievement.

Parental involvement and socio-economic factors also significantly influence academic performance. Parents who actively participate in their children's education by providing moral support, monitoring progress, and collaborating with teachers create an enabling environment for academic success. Okeke and Eze (2022) noted that socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and lack of access to educational resources, can negatively impact students' ability to perform well in school. However, schools with effective administrative structures often implement strategies to mitigate such challenges by offering support programs, scholarships, or community-based initiatives that improve students' academic opportunities. In alignment with this, Ikegbusi et al., (2024) highlighted how addressing basic welfare concerns, such as food insecurity, through school-based interventions can improve both staff motivation and student outcomes, demonstrating that socio-economic support mechanisms are integral to educational equity and performance.

The link between students' academic performance and principals' administrative competence is critical. Principals with high administrative competence ensure that all elements of school management, ranging from resource allocation to staff supervision and policy implementation, align to support teaching and learning. As Mabovula (2023) highlighted, a principal's ability to effectively manage school resources, address challenges and foster collaboration among stakeholders directly enhances students' academic performance. Competent principals create a structured, supportive and well-organized school environment where teachers and students can thrive academically. By ensuring that all systems function harmoniously, principals play a pivotal role in facilitating the attainment of educational goals and improving academic outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Robert K. Greenleaf Servant Leadership Theory **(**1977**).** Servant Leadership focused on the principle that leaders prioritize the needs of others, particularly their followers, over their own self-interest. This theory emphasized the importance of empathy, stewardship, collaboration and the ethical use of power to foster a supportive and growth-oriented environment. Servant leaders act as mentors, encouraging the development of both teachers and students, which contributes to improved academic performance.

In the context of principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance, Servant Leadership Theory is highly relevant. It emphasized the role of school leaders who focus on serving their staff and students by promoting a positive, nurturing and inclusive school environment. Principals who exhibit

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servant leadership qualities, such as active listening, fostering collaboration and empowering teachers, create a school culture that supports academic excellence. By prioritizing the development and well-being of both educators and students, servant leaders enhance the overall effectiveness of the school, leading to better academic performance for students.

Method

This study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. According to Ikegbusi (2022: 264), this design effectively investigated the strength and direction of naturally occurring relationships between variables, ensuring the integrity of the data. Anambra State was selected due to its diverse educational environments, providing a suitable setting to explore how principals' administrative competence relates with students' academic performance.

The population for the study comprised all SS 2 English Language teachers and SS 2 students in public secondary schools in Awka and Nnewi Education Zones of Anambra State. Awka Zone has 64 schools, 174 SS 2 English Language teachers and 4,688 SS 2 students, while Nnewi Zone has 49 schools, 93 SS 2 English Language teachers and 2,933 SS 2 students.

The study adopted purposive sampling to select the two education zones, Awka and Nnewi, as they were specifically chosen for their representation of diverse socio-economic settings and educational environments, which aligned with the objectives of the study. Similarly, purposive sampling was used to select 20 schools, 10 from each zone, ensuring the inclusion of schools with SS 2 English Language teachers and accessible academic performance records of SS 2 students in English Language. This approach according to Obi et al (2022: 92) ensured that the selected schools provided relevant and reliable data for the investigation. The sample for the study comprised all SS 2 English Language teachers and students in the 20 selected schools. This consisted of 52 teachers (30 from Awka Zone and 22 from Nnewi Zone) and 960 students (580 from Awka Zone and 380 from Nnewi Zone).

Two instruments were used for data collection: Principals' Administrative Competence Questionnaire (PACQ), a self-structured instrument designed to measure principals' administrative competence. The questionnaire focused on four sub-variables: principals' leadership effectiveness, principals' resource management skills, principals' decision-making ability and principals' communication skills. The PACQ consisted of 40 items, equally distributed across the four sub-variables and utilized a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The second instrument was the Academic Performance Record (APR), which assessed students' academic performance in English Language using their most recent exam scores from termly examinations. These scores were retrieved from school records to ensure objectivity and reliability.

Both instruments were reviewed by experts from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, to ensure content validity, clarity and relevance.

To ensure the reliability of the Teacher Questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted in Aguata Education Zone, which shares similar characteristics with the selected zones. The pilot test involved 10 SS 2 English Language teachers from two purposively selected public secondary schools. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients for the Principals' Administrative Competence Questionnaire (PACQ) were as follows: Leadership Effectiveness: 0.86, Resource Management Skills: 0.84, Decision-Making Ability: 0.82 and Communication Skills: 0.80. The overall reliability coefficient for PACQ was 0.83, indicating good internal consistency and reliability.

The data collection process spanned four weeks. Research assistants distributed the Teacher Questionnaire to all the 52 SS 2 English Language teachers in the selected schools, providing guidance to ensure clarity and completeness. Students' academic performance data were directly retrieved from the school records of the 20 selected schools. Permissions were obtained from school administrators and education authorities to facilitate seamless data collection.

The collected data were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The rationale for employing PPMCC was to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between principals' administrative competence (e.g., leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability and communication skills) and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This analysis provided understanding into how effectively these administrative competencies correlate with students' academic performance.

Test of significance of Pearson was utilized to test the null hypotheses, which posited no significant relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance. The decision rule for hypotheses testing was based on the significance level (p-value). If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the variables. Conversely, if the p-value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted, implying no statistically significant relationship.

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Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson r on Principals' Leadership Effectiveness and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Leadership Effectiveness	Academic Performance	Remarks
Leadership Effectiveness	52	1.00	0.912	Strong
Academic Performance	52	0.912	1.00	

The results in Table 1 revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.912 between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance. This indicated a very strong positive relationship between the two variables. The positive correlation suggests that as principals exhibit high leadership effectiveness, there is a corresponding significant improvement in students' academic performance. The value 1.00 along the diagonal represents the perfect correlation of each variable with itself, which is standard in a correlation matrix. The strong correlation (r = 0.912) underscores the critical role of principals' leadership effectiveness in fostering academic success. Principals who provide clear direction, efficiently allocate resources, motivate staff, and implement data-driven decisions create a conducive learning environment that enhances student outcomes. These findings emphasize the necessity of strengthening leadership development programs for principals to improve students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson r on Principals' Resource Management Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Resource Management Skills	Academic Performance	Remarks
Resource Management Skills	52	1.00	0.879	High
Academic Performance	52	0.879	1.00	

The results in Table 2 revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.879 between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance. This indicated a very high positive relationship between the two variables. The positive correlation suggests that as principals demonstrate effective resource management skills; there is a corresponding significant improvement in students' academic performance. The value 1.00 along the diagonal represents the perfect

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correlation of each variable with itself, which is standard in a correlation matrix. The high correlation **(**r = 0.879**)** underscores the crucial role of principals' ability to efficiently allocate financial, human, and material resources in creating an enabling learning environment that enhances student outcomes. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening principals' resource management competencies to foster academic excellence in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 3: Pearson r on Principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Decision Making Ability	Academic Performance	Remarks
Decision Making Ability	258	1.00	0.902	High
Academic Performance	258	0.902	1.00	

The results in Table 3 revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.902 between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance. This indicated a very strong positive relationship between the two variables. The positive correlation suggests that as principals demonstrate effective decision-making abilities, there is a corresponding significant improvement in students' academic performance. The value 1.00 along the diagonal signifies the perfect correlation of each variable with itself, which is standard in a correlation matrix. The high correlation **(**r = 0.902**)** underscores the critical role of principals in making timely, informed, and inclusive decisions that contribute to a stable and productive learning environment, directly enhancing students' academic performance. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening principals' decision-making competencies to drive academic success in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 4: Pearson r on Principals' Communication Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	N	Communication Skills	Academic Performance	Remarks
Communication Skills	258	1.00	0.889	High
Academic Performance	258	0.889	1.00	

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The results in Table 4 revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.889 between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance. This indicated a very high positive relationship between the two variables. The positive correlation suggests that as principals exhibit effective communication skills, there is a corresponding significant improvement in students' academic performance. The value 1.00 along the diagonal represents the perfect correlation of each variable with itself, which is standard in a correlation matrix. The high correlation (r = 0.889) underscores the crucial role of principals' ability to communicate goals, expectations, and feedback effectively in fostering collaboration, understanding, and a positive school culture. These factors directly support students' academic success. These findings highlight the importance of strong communication skills among principals in achieving improved academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 5: Test of Significance of Pearson on the Relationship between Principals' Leadership Effectiveness and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Leadership Effectiveness	0.902a	0.814	0.812	3.865	1124.348	0.000b	Sig.

As shown in Table 5, the results of the test of the test of the significance of Pearson for testing the hypothesis revealed that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was not upheld. This indicated a significant relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.814 indicated that leadership effectiveness accounted for 81.4% of the variation in students' academic performance. The findings demonstrated that principals' leadership effectiveness significantly correlate with students' academic performance. Principals who display strong leadership skills, such as clear goal setting, resource optimization and fostering a collaborative environment, create conditions conducive to student success. These results underscored the critical role of leadership effectiveness in driving academic excellence in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

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Table 6: Test of Significance of Pearson on the Relationship between Principals' Resource Management Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Resource Management Skills	0.889a	0.790	0.788	4.132	843.567	0.000b	Sig.

As shown in Table 6, the results of the test of significance of Pearson for testing the hypothesis revealed that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was not upheld. This indicated a significant relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.790 indicated that resource management skills accounted for 79.0% of the variation in students' academic performance. The findings demonstrated that principals' resource management skills significantly relate with students' academic performance. Principals who effectively manage human, financial and material resources create a supportive learning environment that directly impacts students' academic success. These results highlighted the critical role of resource management in achieving educational excellence in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 7: Test of Significance of Pearson on the Relationship between Principals' Decision-Making Ability and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Decision-Making Ability	0.881a	0.776	0.774	4.256	798.346	0.000b	Sig.

As shown in Table 7, the results of the test of significance of Pearson for testing the hypothesis revealed that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was not upheld. This indicated a significant relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.776 indicated that decision-making ability accounted for 77.6% of the variation in students' academic performance. The findings demonstrated that principals' decision-making ability significantly correlate with students' academic performance. Principals who make timely, effective and inclusive decisions ensure

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efficient school operations and enhance the learning environment, which directly impacts students' academic success. These results emphasized the importance of decision-making skill in achieving positive academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 8: Test of Significance of Pearson on the Relationship between Principals' Communication Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Communication Skills	0.889a	0.790	0.788	4.132	843.567	0.000b	Sig.

As shown in Table 8, the results of the test of significance of Pearson for testing the hypothesis revealed that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was not upheld. This indicated a significant relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.790 indicated that communication skills accounted for 79.0% of the variation in students' academic performance. The findings demonstrated that principals' communication skills significantly relate with students' academic performance. Principals with strong communication abilities ensure effective collaboration with teachers, parents and students, thereby fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment that enhances academic outcomes. These results stressed the critical role of communication in achieving high academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 revealed a significant positive relationship between principals' leadership effectiveness and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.912) indicated that as principals demonstrated effective leadership practices, there was a corresponding improvement in students' academic performance. Leadership practices such as setting clear academic goals, fostering a supportive learning environment and ensuring the effective use of resources contribute significantly to enhancing student outcomes. These findings aligned with the studies conducted by Adeyemi and Akinola (2024) and Oludare (2023), who emphasized that effective school leadership positively influences academic achievement through improved decision-making, resource management and curriculum implementation. In contrast, Nwosu (2024) argued that while leadership effectiveness

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is crucial, schools facing infrastructural and financial challenges often experience limited positive outcomes despite good leadership practices.

The findings of study in Table 2 revealed a significant positive relationship between principals' resource management skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0. 879) indicated that effective management of school resources by principals is strongly associated with improved student academic outcomes. Resource management practices such as efficient allocation of teaching materials, effective budgeting and proper utilization of financial and human resources contribute significantly to enhancing students' academic performance. These findings are consistent with the study by Okechukwu (2022), who emphasized the critical role of resource management in supporting academic excellence in schools. Similarly, Ojo (2023) highlighted that resource management enables principals to provide a conducive learning environment, which fosters better students' academic performance. Conversely, Obasi and Eze (2024) argued that while resource management is essential, its impact is limited when schools face severe financial and infrastructural challenges, affecting the implementation of effective management practices.

The findings in Table 3 showed a significant positive relationship between principals' decision-making ability and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0. 902) indicated that effective decision-making by principals significantly impacts student academic outcomes. Principals who make well-informed and strategic decisions in areas such as curriculum implementation, resource allocation and student support create a supportive environment that enhances academic performance. These findings are in line with the study by Nwosu and Eze (2024), who emphasized the role of effective decision-making in fostering academic success. Similarly, Chukwu (2024) highlighted that, principals with strong decision-making skills are better equipped to address challenges and implement initiatives that promote academic excellence. However, Okafor (2024) argued that while decision-making is crucial, its effectiveness may be constrained by external factors such as inadequate funding and limited resources, which can hinder the implementation of well-thought-out decisions.

The findings in Table 4 showed a significant positive relationship between principals' communication skills and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0. 889) indicated that effective communication by principals positively correlates with students' academic performance. Principals who excel in communication foster an environment where information flows seamlessly, ensuring that students, teachers and parents are engaged in the educational process, which enhances academic performance. These findings are consistent with the study by Nwankwo and Adebayo (2024), who emphasized that principals with strong communication skills promote

collaborative learning environments that boost student performance. Similarly, Okonkwo (2024) noted that effective communication leads to better teacher-student interactions and resource distribution, which contribute to improved academic performance. However, Ugochukwu (2023) argued that while communication is crucial, its impact may be limited in schools with inadequate resources or a lack of administrative support.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between principals' administrative competence and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between principals' administrative competence, specifically leadership effectiveness, resource management skills, decision-making ability and communication skills and students' academic performance. Principals who demonstrated strong leadership effectiveness were better equipped to create a vision for academic excellence, fostering an environment conducive to improved student performance. Effective resource management ensured the proper allocation of resources, enhancing teaching and learning processes, which directly contributed to higher academic performance. Additionally, principals with strong decision-making abilities were able to make informed choices that positively impacted academic performance, while effective communication skills facilitated better collaboration among teachers, students and stakeholders, leading to enhanced student success. These findings highlighted the importance of developing and strengthening principals' administrative competence to elevate students' academic performance and ensure the overall success of public secondary schools in Anambra State.The study therefore concluded that principals' administrative competence is a critical determinant of students' academic outcomes.

Recommendations

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

1. Principals should focus on improving their leadership effectiveness by setting clear academic goals, fostering a positive school culture and providing consistent support to teachers. This would help drive higher academic performance by promoting a collaborative and motivating environment.
2. Public secondary school principals should develop their resource management skills by efficiently allocating financial, material and human resources to ensure optimal utilization. Effective resource management would support teaching and learning, thereby enhancing students' academic performance.
3. Principals should engage in regular professional development to strengthen their decision-making ability. By making informed and timely decisions, principals can create a stable and supportive

environment that positively impacts students' academic performance.

4. Principals should prioritize clear and transparent communication with teachers, students and stakeholders. Organizing regular communication channels such as parent-teacher meetings, student councils and staff discussions would encourage open dialogue and boost academic performance.

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