



PRINCIPALS' AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study determined principals' authentic leadership practices as predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 15,321 teachers (9,543 females and 5,778 males) in the 296 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 767 teachers (289 males and 478 females) drawn using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. Two sets of instruments titled "Authentic Leadership Practices Questionnaire (ALPQ)" and "Teachers' Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS)" were used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from the Department of Educational Foundations in the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach's alpha was used for a test of internal consistency of the instruments which yielded overall coefficients of 0.79 for ALPQ and 0.77 for TJSS, respectively. The researchers, together with five research assistants, collected data for the study using the direct approach method and a 98% return was recorded. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that principals' authentic leadership practices is a strong and significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It was also found out that principals' authentic leadership practices are a strong and significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that Commissions and Boards that oversee higher institutions running education and related courses should continue to invest in and expand authentic leadership development programmes to enable prospective principals to get acquainted with the requisite competencies and knowledge of managing schools to improve teachers' job satisfaction.

Keywords: Principals, Authentic, Leadership Practices, Teachers, Job Satisfaction, Schools

1. Introduction

Teachers are trained and certified persons who teach, nurture and assist learners to develop their potential in learning institutions. Enwezor and Odimegwu (2025) asserted that teachers are responsible for delivering instruction in the classroom to impart skills to learners, advance their knowledge, and positively shape their behavior, enabling them to act in accordance with the norms

and values of society. The teachers act as mentors, counsellors and role models who positively influence the lives of students in the classroom. Teachers are more likely to be dedicated in assisting the students to learn when they are satisfied with their work.

Teachers' job satisfaction is a positive emotional reaction to work demands and conditions. Teachers' job satisfaction is defined by Obi and Ebelechukwu (2024), as the extent to which a teacher is content with the condition of service as pertains to his or her teaching employment. Teachers who feel satisfied with their job feel happy, motivated and committed to carrying out their duties in a secondary school. Aluede and Obi (2024) described teachers' job satisfaction as a sense of happiness and fulfillment of teaching staff toward their work. Teachers' job satisfaction stems from the inherent enjoyment of a given situation. Teachers' job satisfaction is the feeling of happiness towards work roles and results in learning institutions. Teachers' job satisfaction is a degree of gratification and positive reactions to work roles and conditions.

Teachers who feel satisfied with their job feel happy, motivated and committed to carrying out their duties in a secondary school. Obi and Ebelechukwu (2024) noted that teachers who are satisfied with their job exhibit punctuality to work, efficiency, commitment, positive relationships with colleagues, both superior and equals, high productivity, good record keeping, coverage of the scheme of works and being regular to work, among others. Sinoy (2024) noted that teachers who are satisfied in their jobs bring excitement and dedication to class, are more engaged and productive, while dissatisfied teachers are unmotivated, feel burnout and become less productive, which leads to low quality of instruction. There are noticeable behaviours that indicate that teachers are unsatisfied with their job in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Nzekwe, Ikediugwu and Egboka (2025) noted that teachers' dissatisfaction possibly accounts for lateness to work, absenteeism and lack of interest in teaching, which tend to contribute to non-coverage of the syllabus at the due date and low performance in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Students and society probably suffer from laxities in work attitude and job satisfaction of teachers, as it could contribute to a high academic failure rate and deviant behaviour among students and shortages of skilled manpower to contribute to the development of Enugu State. Principals can promote the physical and mental well-being of teachers to improve their job satisfaction through engaging in authentic leadership practices

Authentic leadership practices are the act of exercising integrity, genuineness and transparency in controlling the operations of an organization. Authentic leadership practices are described by Oshia, Chukwudi and Obionu (2022), as the behaviour that promotes ethical conduct and transparency in communication, decision-making and interactions with followers. The principals who are transparent in communication, decision-making and interactions could improve teachers' job satisfaction. Authentic leadership practices are the demonstration of high moral standards and sincerity in leading the daily operations of an institution. According to Koon, Ciftci and Jufri (2023), authentic leadership practices involve the exhibition of genuineness, transparency and trustworthiness in handling affairs and leading the staff of an organization. Operationally, authentic leadership practices are the exhibition of self-knowledge, honesty with oneself and transparency in organizing and controlling the affairs of secondary schools.

Authentic secondary school leaders value sincerity and act honestly in running the affairs of their secondary schools. The dimensions of authentic leadership practices include: internalized

moral perspective, balanced processing, self-awareness, and relational transparency (Ahmad et al, 2024; Dawang and Genuba, 2024; Tahir and Arul, 2023; Shqairat, Shqairat and Jondi, 2023).

Internalized moral practice is the exhibition of behaviour or actions that reflect core ethical standards or values. It is exemplified by administrators who uphold high ethical standards in running the affairs of secondary schools. Egboka and Onyeagba (2024) maintained that the principals who are regular and punctual in school, behave in accordance to school rules and diligently perform their managerial roles have applied internalized moral practices. Internalized moral practices portray actions that are consistent with the norms, values and beliefs of an organization.

Self-awareness is the understanding of one's thoughts, feelings and personality traits to regulate actions. Ayca (2023) pointed out that self-awareness means that the individual knows him or herself best and is aware of his/her personality traits, active and weak points, knowledge and abilities, instincts, life principles and values. Self-awareness practices are demonstrated through being aware of one's greatest strengths and weaknesses.

Relational transparency is a component of authentic leadership in which principals are honest, straightforward and open-minded in dealing with members of staff. Masimane, Ndambuki and Mulinge (2022) asserted that relational transparency is a behaviour of authentic leadership exhibited through openness and truthfulness in relationships. Staff can perceive relational transparency when leaders are accessible to all employees despite cadre, maintain an open-door policy and provide equal access to information (Gacheru and Kangu, 2023).

Balance processing practice is the act of gathering and evaluating information before making a decision. Ajiboye and Wasilu (2021) noted that balanced processing practice is the act of listening attentively to different views and opinions before decision-making. The principals demonstrate balance processing practice through embracing and incorporating the viewpoints of teachers into making decisions in secondary schools. The consultation of teachers before decision-making gives them a sense of belonging and spurs them to put in their best towards their task performance.

The notion of authentic leadership practices requires involvement of teachers in the decision-making process, prioritizing their needs and good behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State. Okemakinde (2025) noted that leadership practices geared toward the provision of direction to subordinates, support them to solve their problems, granting them work autonomy and encouraging ethical conduct can influence teachers' job satisfaction. On the contrary, Okemakinde added that a substantial number of teachers can be dissatisfied with their teaching work in secondary schools, where they receive less support and encouragement to make inputs during the decision-making process. Also, Obiakor, Oguejioffor and Nwigwe (2021) noted that bad leadership behaviour of principals have dampened staff morale and job satisfaction; stifled initiative and creativity; reduced the level of staff cooperation and commitment; bred unhappiness, stress and tension among teachers in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Therefore, principals who involve teachers in decision making, provide the needed support to them and show concern for their welfare could make them feel valued, which perhaps contributes to their job satisfaction irrespective of their gender.

Gender is the behavioural patterns, social expectations and cultural demands that are associated with being males and females. Okafor, Ughamadu and Enwezor (2025) described gender as the patterns of behavior, roles and expectations associated with being males and females. The delegation of work roles and rewards of teachers based on gender could influence their job satisfaction. Previous research undertaken by various scholars on the basis of gender in relation to teachers' job satisfaction yielded inconsistent results. Some scholars have reported that male teachers were more satisfied with their job than their female counterparts in schools (Bhayana, 2022; Maina, Kiumi & Githae, 2020). On the contrary, some scholars revealed that female teachers were more satisfied with their job than their male counterparts in schools (Iqbal, Muzamil & Shiraz, 2023; Mazhar, Ullah & Majeed, 2021; Khokhar, Ahmed and Mir, 2022). The need arose for further studies to take gender into consideration in this study.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate principals' authentic leadership practices as predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to investigate principals:

1. authentic leadership practices as predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. authentic leadership practices as predictors of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
3. authentic leadership practices as predictors of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?
2. What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?
3. What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Principals' authentic leadership practices are not a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Principals' authentic leadership practices are not a significant predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
3. Principals' authentic leadership practices are not a significant predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

2. Methods

A correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 15,321 teachers (9,543 females and 5,778 males) in the 296 public secondary schools

in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 767 teachers (289 males and 478 females) drawn using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. Two sets of instruments titled “Authentic Leadership Practices Questionnaire (ALPQ) and “Teachers’ Teachers’ Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS)” were used for data collection. PGLPQ was structured by the researcher based on intensive literature review. ALPQ was structured by the researcher based on intensive literature review. ALPQ has two sections, namely, A and B. Section “A” dealt with the demographic variables of the respondents, such as gender. Section B contained 30 items structured on a four-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. TJSS was adapted from Ibikunle and Afolakemi (2021). TJSS focused on teachers’ job satisfaction. TJSS has two sections, namely, A and B. Section “A” dealt with the demographic variable of the respondents, such as gender. Section B contained 22 items structured on a four-point rating of rating of Very Often (VO), Often (O), Not Often (NO), Never (N).

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts suggested, among others, that some items should be reframed and vague items should be replaced. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach's Alpha method. The data used for the reliability test was obtained through a single administration of 50 copies of the instruments to 50 teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The data analyzed yielded coefficient values of 0.79 for ALPQ and 0.77 for TJSS, respectively. Thus, the researcher considered the instrument to be reliable for the study.

A direct method of data administration was utilized by the researchers, together with five research assistants. A total of 767 copies of instruments were distributed to 289 males and 478 females) and 754 (285 males and 469 females) copies of questionnaires were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating 98 percent return rate. The duly completed and successfully retrieved copies were used for data analysis. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. For decision on the research questions, the coefficient r and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the correlation coefficient by Alsagr (2021), as follows

Predictive Value	Interpretation
.00- .19	Very Weak Prediction
.20- .39	Weak Prediction
.40- .59	Moderate Prediction
.60- .79	Strong Prediction
.80- .99	Very Strong Prediction
1	Perfect

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if the p-value is equal to or less (\leq) than the significance value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected, but if the p-value is greater than ($>$), the significance value of .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

3. Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 1: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Predictor of Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Model	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Authentic Leadership Practices	754	.717	.514	.513	.38066	Strong

Result in Table 1 revealed that the predictive value between principals' authentic leadership practices and teachers' job satisfaction is 0.717 with a coefficient of determination of 0.514. This shows that principals' authentic leadership practices could explain 51.4% variation in teachers' job satisfaction. The regression coefficient r of 0.717 indicated that principals' authentic leadership practices is a strong predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Hypothesis One: Principals' authentic leadership practices is not a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 2: Simple Regression on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Predictor	n	R	R ²	F	P-value	Remark
Authentic Leadership Practices	754	.717	.514	795.425	.000	*S

*Significant

Table 2 indicates that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.717, while the R^2 is 0.514 showing that principals' authentic leadership practices could account for 51.4% variance in teachers' job satisfaction. The F ($1/754$) = 795.425 and the p -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the p -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' authentic leadership practices is a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 3: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Predictor of Male Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Model	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Authentic Leadership Practices	285	.724	.525	.523	.40973	Strong

Table 3 indicated that the predictive value between principals' authentic leadership practices and male teachers' job satisfaction is 0.724 with a coefficient of determination of 0.525. This shows that principals' authentic leadership practices could explain 52.5% changes in male teachers' job satisfaction. The regression coefficient r of 0.724 indicated that principals' authentic leadership practices is a strong predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Hypothesis Two: Principals' authentic leadership practices is not a significant predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 4: Simple Regression on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Significant Predictor of Male Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Predictor	n	R	R ²	F	P-value	Remark
Authentic Leadership Practices	285	.724	.525	312.537	.000	*S

*Significant

Table 4 revealed that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.724, while the R^2 is 0.525 showing that 52.5% variance in male teachers' job satisfaction could be attributed to principals' authentic leadership practices. The $F(1/285) = 312.537$ and the p -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the p -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' authentic leadership practices is a significant predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive value of principals' authentic leadership practices on female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 5: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Predictor of Female Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Model	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Authentic Leadership Practices	469	.714	.510	.509	.36386	Strong

Table 5 shows that the predictive value between principals' authentic leadership practices and female teachers' job satisfaction is 0.714 with a coefficient of determination of 0.510. This shows principals' authentic leadership practices make 51.0% alteration in female teachers' job satisfaction. The regression coefficient r of 0.714 indicated that principals' authentic leadership practices is a strong predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Hypothesis Three: Principals' authentic leadership practices is not a significant predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 6: Simple Regression on Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices as Significant Predictor of Female Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Predictor	n	R	R ²	F	P-value	Remark
Authentic Leadership Practices	469	.714	.510	485.542	.000	*S

*Significant

Table 6 reveals that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.714, while the R^2 is 0.510 indicating that 51.0% variance in female teachers' job satisfaction could be connected to principals' authentic leadership practices. The $F(1/469) = 485.542$ and the p -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the p -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' authentic leadership practices is a significant predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State

4. Discussion of Findings

The result of the study revealed that principals' authentic leadership practices are a strong predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. The possible explanation for the finding is that authentic leadership practices of principals create a work atmosphere of transparency, ethical behaviour, trust and respect, which strongly lead to teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This affirmed the finding of Arriagada-Venegas et al (2022), which showed that authentic leadership practice was strongly correlated with job satisfaction of employees. This also supported the finding of Hitchcock (2019), which revealed that a strong relationship existed between authentic leadership practice and job satisfaction of teachers. The studies were conducted in the same level of education using teachers as the participants and this could explain the agreement in the findings. This disagreed with the finding of Wedajo (2023), which showed that authentic leadership practices had a negative relationship with job satisfaction of the followers. The disagreement in the findings could be attributed to the fact that the studies were conducted in different organizations and using varied participants. Authentic leadership practices are exhibited by principals through maintaining mutual relationship with members of staff, internalized moral perspective, ability to process information objectively

and make decisions that promote the well-being of teachers, which contribute to the strong prediction of their job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Further results showed that principals' authentic leadership practices are a significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This upheld the finding of Arriagada-Venegas et al (2022) revealed that there was a significant relationship between authentic leadership practice and job satisfaction of employees. This also agreed with the finding of Hitchcock (2019), which revealed that a statistically significant relationship existed between authentic leadership practice and job satisfaction of teachers. This contradicted the finding of Wedajo (2023) which showed that authentic leadership practices had an insignificant relationship with job satisfaction of the followers. The contradiction could be connected to differences in organizations and participants.

The result of the study revealed that principals' authentic leadership practices are a strong predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Principals demonstrate authentic leadership practices through engaging in genuine and transparent interactions with their subordinates, which could contribute to the strong prediction of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This refuted the finding of Aleemi, Qureshi and Rathore (2018), which revealed that there was a moderate relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction of male employees. The difference in time span, organization and geographical location could account for the disagreement with the findings. The honesty and sincerity in leading subordinates that are associated with authentic leadership practices of principals build trust and respect that strongly improve male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Further result showed that principals' authentic leadership practices are a significant predictor of male teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This disagreed with the finding of Aleemi, Qureshi and Rathore (2018) which showed that there was an insignificant relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction of male employees. The possible explanation for the disagreement in findings is the difference in organizations and geographical locations. Principals as authentic leaders genuinely care about their personal and professional development of male teachers, which lead to their increased job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

The finding of the study revealed that principals' authentic leadership practices is a strong predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Principals' authentic leadership practices demonstrated through high moral standards, open communication and prioritization of the well-being of female teachers might be responsible for the strong predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This is in line with the finding of Ullah et al (2022) which reported that there was a strong relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction of female employees within organizations. This is contrary to the finding of Penger and Cerne (2014) which showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between authentic leadership and female employees' job satisfaction. This disagreement in findings could be attributed to the difference in time span of 11 years, which is accompanied with changes in policies that influence how female employees are treated in the workplace. Principals as authentic leaders set a positive example through their

sincerity and transparency in their interactions with female teachers, which inspires them to be more committed and satisfied with their job in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

It was also found that principals' authentic leadership practices is a significant predictor of female teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This supported the finding of Ullah et al (2022), which reported that there was a significant relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction of female employees within organizations. This contradicted the finding of Penger and Cerne (2014) which showed that there was an insignificant relationship between authentic leadership and female employees' job satisfaction. Principals as path-goal leaders set challenging goals and expectations for male teachers and provide them with the essential supports that foster professional growth and self-actualization, that might contribute to the significant predictor of their job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that authentic leadership practices are positive and significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Teachers who are under the guidance and support of principals who practice authentic leadership are more likely to be innovative, productive and happy with their work and thereby contribute to the success of secondary schools. In other words, teachers who experience authentic leadership practices of principals are more likely to get genuine care, support and direction in secondary schools, which positively impacts their satisfaction with their jobs.

6. Recommendations

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

1. Commissions and Boards that oversee higher institutions running education and related courses should continue to invest in and expand authentic leadership development programmes to enable prospective principals get acquainted with the requisite competencies and knowledge of managing schools to improve teachers' job satisfaction.
2. Principals should organize periodic interactive sessions with members of teaching staff as a platform for regular assessments and feedback mechanisms on their authentic leadership practices to ensure consistent job satisfaction of male and female teachers.

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