



PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION AND SUPERVISORY PRACTICES AS CORRELATES OF CHILD-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated principals' communication and supervisory practices as correlates of child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for this study. The study population comprised all 462 principals in Delta State. The census sampling technique was used for the study, as the entire population of 462 principals is relatively small and manageable. A researcher-developed instrument titled "Principals' Communication and Supervisory Practices Questionnaire (PCSQ)" and "Child-Friendly Environment Scale (CFES)" were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts, comprising two experts in Educational Management and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded overall reliability indices of 0.83 for PCSQ and 0.79 for CFES, respectively. The instruments were administered by the researcher with the assistance of five research assistants, and a 99% return rate was achieved. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses. The study's findings revealed, among other things, that communication practices have a strong and significant relationship with a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. It was also found that supervisory practices have a moderate and significant relationship with the creation of a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among other things, that the Secondary Education Management Board should integrate supervisory practices into the existing in-service training programme for principals to improve their skills and knowledge of using supervision to create a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Principals, Communication Practices, Supervision Practices, Child-Friendly, Environment, Secondary Schools

1.1 Introduction

Education is an important instrument for producing skilled manpower that fosters rapid growth and development in society. It is also the means of inculcating the right values and

developing the skills required for individuals to promote their social, emotional, and mental well-being. Ekwesianya (2025) opined that education is the impartation of relevant skills, knowledge, and moral values to the learner, enabling them to lead meaningful lives. The author added that the educational process leads to the production of cultured, educated, refined, and useful citizens who are not just beneficial to themselves but also to society at large. Students receive education in formal learning institutions. One of the formal learning institutions where students receive education is the secondary school.

Secondary schools are post-basic learning institutions that offer academic and vocational learning opportunities, equipping students with the skills and knowledge required for success in all facets of life. Unuigbe and Ezikpe (2024) noted that secondary education serves as a stepping stone to higher education, providing primary school leavers with the opportunity to acquire more knowledge, develop skills, and prepare them to live effectively in a changing society. The education offered in secondary schools fosters the character development of students by exposing them to societal norms and values. The daily administration of a secondary school rests on the shoulders of the principal.

The principal is the chief executive officer who oversees the daily operations of activities to facilitate the implementation of educational policies in a secondary school. Eziuzo (2025) pointed out that the principal is the administrative head who oversees and coordinates the day-to-day activities of a secondary school. The principal is the custodian and manager of the available resources, facilitating the attainment of predetermined goals in secondary schools. As defined by Ebereonwu, Benstowe, and Suobite (2025), the principal is the administrative head of the secondary school, in charge of managing activities and programs, as well as available resources, to ensure productivity and quality outputs. Continuing, Ebereonwu et al asserted that the principal provides good leadership, proper direction, and effective coordination within the school to develop and maintain effective educational programmes and promote the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. The principal is responsible for leading staff activities to ensure the effective enforcement of educational policies. One of the mechanisms that principals can use in piloting affairs and coordinating staff is effective communication.

Communication is an act of passing messages, conveying thoughts and expressing feelings in a way that is understandable to others. Obi, Enwezor and Nzebude (2025) described communication as the dissemination of information and the sharing of ideas through spoken words, shared symbols, gestures, emotions, and written messages. Communication fosters mutual understanding, respect, cohesion, cooperation, and teamwork among staff members in secondary schools. Communication practices refer to the behaviours and ways in which principals disseminate and receive information in secondary schools. Agi and Obi-Chiorlu (2022) noted that principal communication practices encompass a variety of behaviours, processes, and technologies adopted by school administrators to ensure that information is passed to the intended recipients (Teachers, Students, and the school community). The principals' communication practices involve making announcements on the assembly ground, disseminating information in staff meetings, passing messages through notice boards, email, internal newsletters, WhatsApp, school websites,

and memos, among others. Effective communication is essential in the supervision process in secondary schools.

Supervision is an aspect of the administrative function that is concerned with overseeing, directing, and assisting staff members to effectively discharge their duties in secondary schools. Chukwudi and Ezeaku (2025) noted that supervision can be thought of as overseeing the work of teachers and providing professional guidance and advice to improve teaching and learning. Supervision extends beyond mere monitoring to encompass developmental support, professional guidance and systematic quality improvement initiatives (Mormah, 2025). It is geared toward refreshing and encouraging teachers to strive for excellence in the quality of their instructional delivery. Difoni, Imeh, Osha and Obona (2025) noted that principals' instructional supervisory strategies refer to the approaches and methods that school principals employ to oversee and support teachers' instructional practices. Furthermore, Difoni et al (2025) stressed that instructional supervision creates opportunities for teachers to update their skills and knowledge, enabling them to adapt to innovative instructional delivery methods. Supervision practices are means of providing clear direction and suggestions to improve the ways that teachers perform instructional tasks in secondary schools. Ekedum and Ifediorah-Okeke (2025) asserted that principals through supervision practices observe, direct and guide the activities of teachers in terms of the schemes of work, specific objectives of the lesson notes, lesson plan, class attendance, absenteeism and levels of hard work, set induction, class control, students' involvement in the lesson, class work, projects and class exercise, teachers conduct and dressing among others. Supervision involves providing support and guidance to staff and students, which can contribute to creating a child-friendly environment.

A child-friendly environment is an atmosphere where the physical, health and safety needs of children are given special attention. Guerrero, Espiritu, Oreta and Torres (2025) noted that a child-friendly environment is a learning institution that prioritises the overall well-being and development of students, acknowledging that quality education goes beyond textbooks and examinations. Sequentially, Guerrero et al. asserted that these learning institutions embody the idea that fostering a supportive and nurturing learning environment can significantly influence students' learning behaviour, thereby shaping their educational journey. A child-friendly environment prioritises the physical and emotional well-being of students. Naftal (2025) defined a child-friendly environment as one that recognises and respects the basic rights of children. Staff respect the rights of every child and share empathy toward them in a child-friendly environment. A child-friendly environment creates an inviting atmosphere that encourages students to actively engage in their academic activities. Okafor, Nnebedum and Ugwo (2025) noted that CFE is characterised by basic learning facilities, mutual interpersonal relationships among staff and learners, freedom from harm, a child-friendly environment that is free from violence, abuse, discrimination and bullying of students in learning institutions.

The learning environment is characterised by strict rules and regulations that create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, discouraging students from engaging in meaningful instructional activities in secondary schools in Delta State (James and Silas, 2024). The existing atmosphere of fear and intimidation among students may indicate a breakdown in communication

and a failure to guide learners through supervision in public secondary schools in Delta State. Aghware and Ogala (2024) noted that a communication breakdown leads to misunderstandings and the spread of rumours in public secondary schools in Delta State. Some principals seem to neglect their supervisory roles, which thereby gives freedom to professionally misbehave in public secondary schools in Delta State. Ekwevugbe (2025) asserted that supervisory visits are infrequent, feedback is poorly documented, and performance monitoring rarely leads to meaningful improvement in public secondary schools in Delta State. Omemu (2024) asserted that many administrators seem to be uncommitted to supervision, as there is a lack of effective monitoring of teachers' work behaviour and activities in public secondary schools in Delta State. Akporehe and Asiyai (2023) asserted that inappropriate adoption of teaching methods, poor use of teaching aids, and poor supervision of students' extracurricular activities, among others, are issues. It is this backdrop that prompted the investigation into the principals' communication and supervisory practices as correlates of child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate principals' communication and supervisory practices as correlates of child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the:

1. The relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environments in public secondary schools in Delta State.
2. The relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environments in public secondary schools in Delta State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

2. Methods

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised all 462 principals in public secondary schools in Delta State. The census sampling technique was used for the study, as the entire population of 462 principals is relatively small and manageable. A

researcher-developed instrument titled ‘‘Principals’ Communication and Supervisory Practices Questionnaire (PCSQ)’’ and ‘‘Child-Friendly Environment Scale (CFES)’’ were used for data collection. PCSQ, which gathered information on communication and supervisory practices, consisted of 27 items divided into two clusters, A and B. Cluster A, which focused on communication practices, contained 11 items, and Cluster B contained 16 items on supervisory practices. CFES, which was designed to measure a child-friendly environment, consisted of 20 items. The items of both PCSQ and CFES are rated on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with weights of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. placed on a four-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts, comprising two experts in Educational Management and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded overall reliability indices of 0.83 for PCSPQ and 0.79 for CFES, respectively.

The researcher, with the assistance of ten research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Delta State, administered copies of the questionnaires to the teachers directly. Out of 462 copies of the instruments distributed, 457 were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating a 99% return rate. The copies of the questionnaire that were distributed, duly filled out, and successfully retrieved were used for data analysis. Data collected was analysed using Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. For the decision on the research questions, the coefficient (r) and the size of the relationship were interpreted using the correlation coefficient by Schober, Boer and Schwarte (2018), as follows

Coefficient	Relationship
.00- .10	Negligible correlation
.11- .39	Weak correlation
.40- .69	Moderate correlation
.70- .89	Strong correlation
.90- .99	Very strong correlation
1.00	Perfect

When making decisions on the null hypotheses, the p-value and alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$) were compared to determine whether to retain or reject the null hypotheses being tested. When the precise probability value is less than or equal to the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected; but when the exact probability value is more than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

3. Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Pearson (r) on Relationship Principals' Communication Practices and Child-Friendly Environment

Variables	N	Principals' Communication Practices	Child-Friendly Environment	Remarks
Principals' Communication Practices	457	1.00	0.813	Strong Positive Relationship
Child-Friendly Environment	457	0.813	1.00	

Result on Table 1 showed a Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of 0.708. This shows that there is a strong positive relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This indicated that an improvement on principals' communication practices will strongly contribute to child-friendly learning environment.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Pearson (r) on Relationship Principals' Supervisory Practices and Child-Friendly Environment

Variables	N	Principals' Supervisory Practices	Child-Friendly Environment	Remarks
Principals' Supervisory Practices	457	1.00	0.627	Strong Positive Relationship
Child-Friendly Environment	457	0.627	1.00	

Table 2 showed a Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of 0.627. This shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly

environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This indicated that an improvement on principals' supervisory practices will moderately account for child-friendly learning environment.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 3: Pearson (p-value) on the Significant Relationship between Principals' Communication Practices and Child-Friendly Environment

Variables	N	Principals' Communication Practices	Child-Friendly Environment	P-value	α	Remarks
Principals' Communication Practices	457	1.00	0.813	0.000	.05	Rejected
Child-Friendly Environment	457	0.813	1.00			

Result in Table 3 revealed that the p -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the p -value is less the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is significant relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Pearson (p-value) on the Significant Relationship between Principals' Supervisory Practices and Child-Friendly Environment

Variables	N	Principals' Supervisory Practices	Child-Friendly Environment	P-value	α	Remarks
Principals' Supervisory Practices	457	1.00	0.627	0.000	.05	Rejected
Child-Friendly Environment	457	0.627	1.00			

Result in Table 3 revealed that the p -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the p -value is less the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there

is significant relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

4. Discussion

The finding of this study indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. The possible explanation for this finding is that principals' communication practices enable students to have access to information about the expected behaviour that strongly fosters a friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This agreed with the finding of Johler (2022) which showed that there was a strong relationship between communication and a friendly learning environment. Principals who engage in regular communication with students make them feel valued and respected, which can contribute to the strong relationship and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. It was also found that there is a significant relationship between principals' communication practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This also affirmed the findings of This agreed with the finding of Johler (2022), which showed that there was a significant relationship between communication and a friendly learning environment. The principals' communication practices reduce misunderstandings and prevent conflicts which could explain the significant relationship with a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

The result of this study indicate a moderate positive relationship between principals' supervisory practices and a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. Principals' supervisory practices provide a platform for students to receive guidance and support that contribute to the child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This affirmed the finding of Wambugu, Kimiti, and Mulwa (2024), which showed a strong relationship between instructional supervision and the promotion of a child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools. This also supported the finding of Sumini, Minsih and Endang (2023) which indicated that the implementation of academic supervision had a strong relationship with child-friendly elementary schools. Supervisory practices enable principals to offer constructive feedback to students, which may moderately create a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. It was also discovered that there is a significant relationship between principals' supervisory practices and child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. This upholds the finding of Wambugu, Kimit and Mulwa (2024), which showed a significant relationship between instructional supervision and the promotion of a child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools. This finding also concurred with that of Sumini, Minsih, and Endang (2023), which indicated a significant relationship between the implementation of academic supervision and child-friendly elementary schools. The possible explanation for this finding is that principals use supervisory practices as a mechanism for monitoring students' activities and caring about their well-being, which significantly contributes to a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

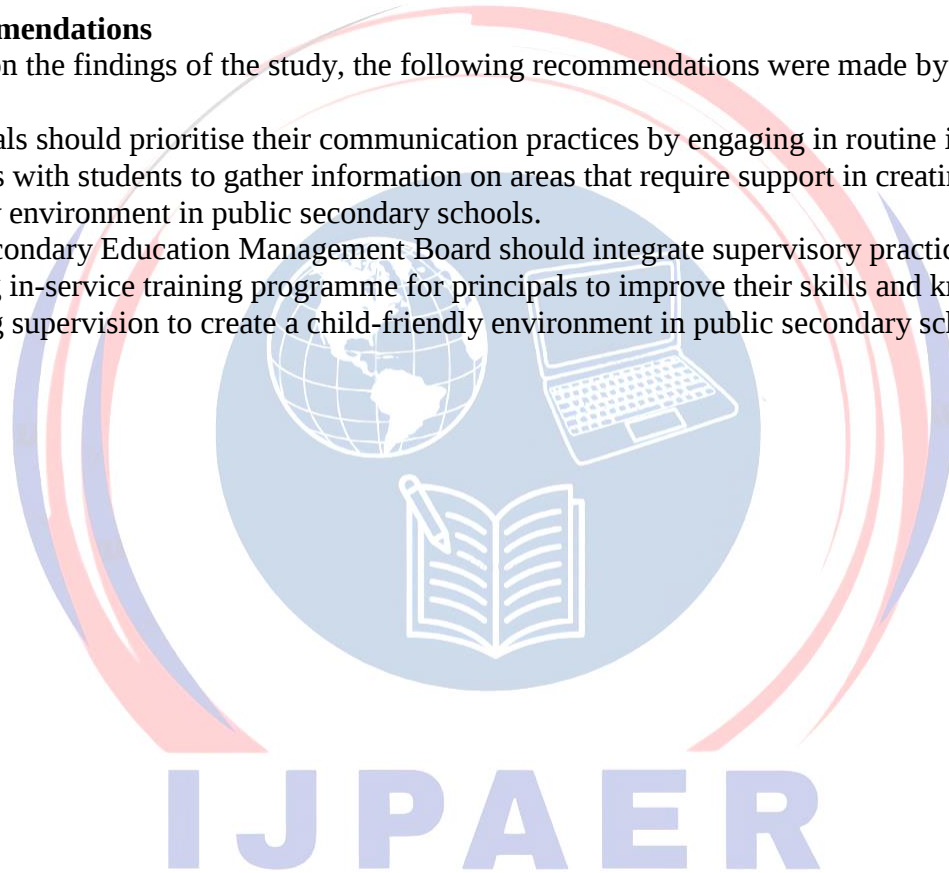
5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that principals' communication and supervisory practices had a positive and significant relationship with a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State. It is through communication and supervisory practices that provide clear instructions, receive information, and offer support that create a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Delta State.

6. Recommendations

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

1. Principals should prioritise their communication practices by engaging in routine interaction sessions with students to gather information on areas that require support in creating a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools.
2. The Secondary Education Management Board should integrate supervisory practices into the existing in-service training programme for principals to improve their skills and knowledge of using supervision to create a child-friendly environment in public secondary schools.



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