



## **Gender Factors and Administrative Effectiveness of Secondary Schools Principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study sought to assess gender differences and administrative effectiveness of secondary schools principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design because it was aimed at exploring the opinions of respondents on various aspects of the subject under investigation. The population for the study was 1023 secondary schools teachers in public secondary schools in Uyo education zone. The sample for the study was 367 teachers. The teachers were chosen to rate the principals. In order to collect data for the study, the researchers made use of a developed instrument titled "Gender and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire". The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a test-retest procedure involving 20 Principals who were not part of the sample but part of the study population. The instrument was subjected to a reliability test which gave a coefficient of 0.75. The instrument was administered to the teachers within a 21 day period and retrieved. Data for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Result of analysis shows that both sexes of principals were found to be effective. However, when it comes to management of finances and staffs, female principals were more effective. Also, when it comes to schools discipline and supervision of instructional delivery, men were more effective. It was recommended among others that administrative or managerial qualification(s) and experience too should be the yardstick for appointing principals*

**Keywords:** male, female, organizational management, instructional supervision, gender differences

### **Introduction**

Literature on gender and administrative effectiveness of principals has largely focused on perceived differences between men and women in leadership styles and has considered issues such as inequalities in leadership assignment and opportunities as being fair and unfair; equitable or inequitable. The word gender as defined by Kimauru (2001) refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female and the relationship between women and men and girls and boys. It is also viewed as the relationship between women and those between men.

Those attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and one learned through socialisation process. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or man in a given context. Gender can also be viewed as a range of physical, mental and behavioural characteristics distinguishing between masculinity and



femininity. The term gender does not replace the term sex which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. The term gender is used to analyze the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of men and women in any given social context. Gender often plays an important role in determining how individuals behave in an organization. Males and females typically have different traits. Knowledge of these traits helps individuals, particularly those of opposite genders, work together effectively in an organization (Caleb & Comfort, 2017).

It is no longer strange to find women in leadership positions in society today, as such, more women are becoming school principals/administrators in public secondary schools. An administrator has a number of roles to perform in an organization most especially the school system. An administrator is the chief planner, organizer, coordinator, controller and the accounting officer of the school. School administrators according to Ehinola (2014) are expected to give professional leadership role in the planning of school programmes and assisting teachers in course of discharging their professional duties. In order for an administrator to achieve these stated goals, certain management and leadership traits are required in addition to years of experience in educational management. Unfortunately, gender gap remains an impediment to potential institutional improvements (Chliwnaik, 1997). Even though effective leadership is more behaviorally derived than gender based, gender remains an obstacle to women seeking and obtaining leadership positions.

Kanter, (1968) in Uzoma (2010) had stressed that rather than ability to lead being based on gender prescriptions, leadership effectiveness largely depends on understanding the structure of power in the organizational system. He further emphasized that the effectiveness of women leaders, like that of men is a response to both opportunities for power to favourable position in the power structure. It follows that power is not gendered where authority exists but that power when gendered bring about ineffectiveness in administration. Therefore, his assertion suggests that irrespective of the person in power whether male or female, ability to deliver largely depends on the power inherent in the authority he/she assumes. Nonetheless, gender issues has persisted and is still being used to measure administrators' effectiveness.

Three sets of concepts identified by Schmuck (1980) in Patrick (2015) that have been used to understand women's representation in senior posts such as principals: the socialization of women; organizational constraints on women promotion and theories relating to gender-based careers, especially in developing countries. Women in leadership confront barriers that men do not realize to exist. Some myths suggest that women cannot discipline older students, particularly males; females are too emotional; females are physically too weak; and males resist working with females (Whitaker and Lane, 1990). The scarcity of women in the role of secondary school principals is a worldwide phenomenon. While women make up at least two-thirds of secondary school teachers, they are in minority in secondary school administration.



Nonetheless, evidence suggest otherwise. Some men accuse women of having low intelligence and of poor management skills. On the contrary, Uzoma, (2010) asserted that women are “good savers and responsible borrowers”. This assertion tends to demystify the claim that women are poor financial managers. Some of these gender issues have continued to mar the position of women in leadership.

Socially, there are then different leadership designs for males and females which only differ in terms of position-power and influence-power. Uzoma (2010) asserted that while men possess position-power women are said to possess influence-power. Position-power describes the type of powers that are assigned to men either by constitution of just because of their position as male children in the family where they belong. For example, the men are made the head of the family from the societal perspective. They are socialized into accepting leadership positions just because of their biological make up as males. Similarly, influence-power refers to the type of power which is not pronounced but can be used to manipulate situations and decision of the men.

This analysis is suggestive that the manner of execution of leadership tasks and style of leadership are different and if well articulated can become vital for school effective leadership. They can serve a complementary role in administration rather than one being exclusive.

Furthermore, Women more than the men seem to possess more power to nurture and give care to other people. This inherent power according to psychologists makes women better listeners because they seem to be more in touch with their emotions. Cochran, (1980) affirmed that women principals were more effective at resolving conflicts, at motivating teachers and at acting as representatives rather than directors of a group. Adkison, (1981) was of the view that female compared to male principals were more likely to involve themselves in instructional supervision, to exhibit a democratic leadership style and to concern themselves with students. Such differences were confirmed by Shakeshaft’s analysis (1987) of women principals as educational leaders and master teachers compared with the male principals who are found to act as managers and administrators.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Increasing enrollment rates in secondary schools is not just piling pressure on facilities but also on school administrators. The head of a school administration is the principal. The problems of management by school principals could obviously become more complex as they have to deal with students, boards and staff as well, bearing in mind the goals of the curriculum. Some schools experience more conflicts than others in management of staff and other resources and this may be attributed among other things according to Adesina (1990) to the gender of the principal and his/her level of leadership. Managing staff, students and instructional goals calls for educational and leadership management skills. However, such skills as possessed by administrators are largely expressed differently between and among principals. It becomes a concern when male and female administrators are stereotyped to behave in a certain way. Such a dichotomy if it exists and if not well managed, may lead to conflicts between and among sexes and might lead to not just failure in school administration but deepen the gender woes society has been trying to manage.



### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to assess gender differences of secondary schools principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. To determine the difference in the instructional supervision effectiveness of female and male secondary schools principals on Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the difference in organizational management by female and male principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to give focus to the study.

1. What is the difference in the instructional supervision effectiveness of female and male secondary schools principals on Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
2. What is the difference in the organizational management by female and male principals in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design because it was aimed at exploring the opinions of respondents on various aspects of the subject under investigation. The population for the study was 1023 secondary schools teachers in public secondary schools in Uyo education zone. The sample for the study was 367 teachers. The teachers were chosen to rate the principals. In order to collect data for the study, the researchers made use of a developed instrument titled "Gender and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire". The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo. the reliability of the instrument was determined through a test-retest procedure involving 20 Principals who were not part of the sample but part of the study population. The instrument was subjected to a reliability test which gave a coefficient of 0.75. The instrument was administered to the teachers within a 21 day period and retrieved. Data for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

### **Presentation of Findings**

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the instructional supervision effectiveness of female and male secondary schools principals on Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?



Table 1: Mean Analysis of Instructional Supervision based on Gender of Principals

<b>how would you rate your male and female principals on the extent to which they perform the following Instructional supervision components?</b>	Gender	mean	std. dev
Principal in co-operation with the teachers define objective for the school and each department and unit	male	3.33	1.23
	female	3.45	0.89
Principal jointly with teachers select learning experience method and procedures to employ in achieving the objective	male	3.34	1.22
	female	3.42	0.99
Principal assign subject and class to teachers according to qualification and competence	male	3.25	0.78
	female	3.67	0.99
Principal allocates time to subjects	male	3.46	0.78
	female	3.33	0.89
Principals makes available facilities accessible to all teachers	male	3.34	1.11
	female	3.35	1.10
Principal ensures that the staff in different units and work position work co-operatively and not antagonistically for the common goal of the school	male	3.23	1.26
	female	3.78	1.33
Principal supervises the teachers' lesson plan	male	3.34	1.02
	female	3.68	1.42
Principal supervises teaching and learning activities in the class room	male	3.78	0.89
	female	3.67	0.77
Principal evaluates the planning and implementation of curriculum programmes	male	3.31	1.11
	female	3.67	1.89
Principal assist teachers to try new research findings	male	3.54	0.78
	female	3.45	1.11

Table 1 shows the summary of the responses of teachers on the instructional supervision of principals based on their gender. The item analysis reveals that female principals co-operate more with the teachers define objective for the school and each department and unit than their male counterparts. This is evident in the higher mean response of 3.45 for female principal as against 3.33 for their male counterparts. Furthermore, female principals also seem to work with teachers select learning experience method and procedures to employ in achieving the objective as well as assign subject and class to teachers according to qualification and competence. However, when it comes to supervising teaching and learning activities in the class room, the male principals were more effective than their female counterparts. Overall, female principals are more effective in instructional supervision than their male counterparts.

**Research Question 2:** Table 2: Mean Analysis of Organizational Management based on Gender of Principals



<b>How would you rate your male and female principals on the extent to which they perform the following Organizational management components?</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
Developing a safe school environment	male	3.45	1.11
	female	3.21	1.23
Dealing with concerns from staff	male	3.33	0.98
	female	3.67	0.88
Managing budgets & resources	male	3.32	1.01
	female	3.87	1.00
Managing student services (e.g. records, reporting)	male	3.12	1.23
	female	3.33	1.03
Managing personal, school-related schedule	male	3.56	0.88
	female	3.56	0.99
Maintaining school facilities	male	3.37	1.11
	female	3.43	1.05
Managing non-instructional staff	male	3.33	1.08
	female	3.33	1.02
Fulfilling special education requirements	male	3.38	1.12
	female	3.36	1.04
Managing school schedules	male	3.45	0.98
	female	3.47	0.89
Managing student discipline	male	3.67	0.87
	female	3.03	1.02

Table 2 shows the summary of the ratings of male and female principals by teachers on their organizational management effectiveness. The result shows that the female principals are more effective in maintaining school facilities, dealing with concerns from staff and managing student services. However, the result also shows that male principals are more effective in managing student discipline, fulfilling special education requirements and developing a safe school environment. Furthermore, the result also shows that male and female principals are jointly effective in managing non-instructional staff and managing personal, school-related schedule.

**Discussion of Findings**

This study found that the instructional leadership skills needed by principals for effective school administration include: principal co-operation with teachers in defining objectives for the school, selecting learning experiences, methods and procedures to achieve the objectives; assigning subjects and classes according to qualification and competence, allocating time to subjects; making facilities accessible to all teachers according to need. The skills also included principals ensuring that all staff work co-operatively for the common goal of the schools, supervising lesson plan, teaching and learning activities, evaluating the



plan and implementation of curriculum programmes and assisting teachers to try new findings. The study also established that female principals are more effective in instructional leadership than their male counterparts. This findings is buttressed by Thomas and Inkson (2004) which averred that research has demonstrated that there are far more similarities than differences in the leadership behaviors of women and men, and that they are equally effective. Still, women are less likely to be pre-selected as leaders, and the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a male than to a female. The result also shows that female principals are more effective in organizational management than their male counterparts. This findings is in line with Bunyi (1985) in Eunice, Selpher & David M.(2015) which found that when males were in the majority, they emerged as leaders 100% of the time. When females were in the majority, females did emerge as leaders but not beyond the expectations one would have on the basis of chance. In contrast, Schneier (1980) observed that the likelihood that a female would emerge as a leader did increase as the number of women in the group increased. Kent (1994) argued that women were slightly more likely than men to be perceived as leaders by group members when the percentage of women per group was controlled statistically.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to assess the administrative effectiveness of principals based on their gender. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that both sexes of principals were found to be effective. However, when it comes to management of finances and staff, female principals were more effective. Also, when it comes to schools discipline and supervision of instructional delivery, men were more effective.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. Administrative or managerial qualification(s) and experience too should be the yardstick for appointing principals.
2. Sustained action through sensitization should be embarked upon by the ministry of education on gender sensitization to help dispel stereotypes formed in people's mind about gender.
3. Government should make provision for sponsoring principals and organizing conferences for them to serve as a means for professional growth as well as incentives to the principals.

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