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Teachers' Perception Regarding the Level of Principals' Ethical Leadership Behaviours in Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract:
This study determined the perception of teachers regarding the level of principals' ethical leadership behaviours in state government owned secondary schools in Anambra State. The study was guided by 4 research questions. The population consisted of 6,328 teachers in the 257-state owned government public secondary schools in the State. A sample of 672 teachers was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) which was adapted from Yilmaz (2006). The instrument was validated by three experts. Internal consistency reliability index of 0.72 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method. Data analysis was done using mean. The findings revealed that teachers' perception of the level of principals' communicative, climatic, decisional and behavioural ethical behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra State is high. The study recommended that secondary school principals should at all times imbibe ethical principles in their leadership behaviours.

Keywords: Leadership; ethical leadership; ethical leadership behaviours

1. Introduction

Ethics is a part of every decision a leader must make, and the ethical integrity of a leader guides every choice (Northouse, 2004). In fact, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasized that effective leaders must model appropriate actions and dispositions. Followers' perceptions of their ethical integrity correspond to the overall success of those leaders (Craig & Gustafson, 1998). These principles hold true in the school environment. In secondary schools, the principal gives the necessary leadership functions for the achievement of school goals. The roles and behaviours of the principal and the strategies he adopts play an important part in the achievement of the prospective goals and outcome, as well as affecting the attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours of teachers towards the principal. The leadership behaviours the principal engages in determine and set the school climate which may facilitate or hinder students' academic performance and achievement. Principals' leadership behaviour perceived as ethical are considered as a source of motivation for the school in the attainment of set goals (Arslantaş & Dursun, 2008).

An ethical leader is someone who esteems ethical values, gives importance to assessment of employees' ethical behaviour as a key factor and can integrate leadership abilities with ethical behaviours (Aydın, 2010). Based on ethical principles in their conduct, ethical leaders respect their employees' rights by treating them fairly. Moreover, they make efforts to develop the sense of justice in the organization by including their subordinates in the decision-making process (Demirdağ & Ekmekçiolu, 2015). Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, (2005), emphasised ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making. It can also reflect performing acceptable behaviours as an individual, in interpersonal communication, supporting staff and making decisions (Hansen, 2011).

Ethical behaviour is important to long-term organizational success, and conversely, unethical behaviour leads to a decrease in long-term organizational performance (Fritzsche, 2005). Being ethical is essential, and it is required in all level of organisations, especially for those leaders who act as role models to their staff such as the principals. Ethical leadership is a model for ethical conduct to the organization and to society, as leaders are the role-models for the employees in those groups. Ethical leadership builds trust, as people will follow a moral leader because they know they can trust him to take the right actions. Yilmaz (2005) in his study developed four ethical leadership dimensions which are; Climatic Ethics, Communicative Ethics, Behavioural Ethics and Decisional ethics.

According to Bağrıyanık and Can (2017), Climatic ethics is concerned with leaders creating an enabling environment for their staff to work, encouraging and motivating staff to do their job, establishing clear rules, genuinely caring about, respecting and supporting subordinates and where possible ensuring that their needs are met at all times.

Communicative ethics consist of behaviours such as the leader accepting his failures, not being selfish, being fair, being constructive in discussions, being patient, respectful, sincere and modest. Behavioural ethics consists of behaviours like self-awareness, being veracious, honest and courageous, protecting individual rights and being respectful for values (Yılmaz, 2005). Decisional ethics examines behaviours in terms of making morally correct decisions, being able to differentiate what is correct and what is wrong, and being ethical in making decision concerning the management of the organization (Turhan, in Bağrıyanık & Can 2017).

Management of an organization such as the school by a leader with relevant moral values, norms, rules, integrity, and high sense of responsibility and discipline is important to ensure that teachers and students are inspired towards school organizational goal attainment. When principals are perceived to be ethical in the disposition of their duties, issues such as indiscipline, employee burnout, turnover and poor attitude to work are reduced. According to Fleet, (1999), unless a principal has the quality of personal honesty, he can never inspire his staff towards effectiveness and efficiency. Likewise, Arslantaş and Dursun, (2008) noted that leader's behaviours perceived as ethical are considered as a source of motivation for the staff, in terms of increasing their commitment, performance, trust and efficiency.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One of the responsibilities of principals is to create effective learning community, one that is built and sustained by ethical practices such as honesty, tolerance, modesty, determination, righteousness and flexibility. However, in secondary schools in Anambra state, it appears that most principals are characterised by various forms of unethical behaviours and practices. Some principals in Anambra State seem to arrogate powers to themselves. They in some cases fail to carry the teachers along in decision making and overall school management. Some principals in the state had been accused of mismanagement of financial resources that were meant for school improvement. These series of unethical behaviours from principals probably are the reason most teachers seem poorly involved in school activities. Some of the teachers in the state have been seen selling and marketing their private goods within the school. There are also cases of lateness to school, cheating, bullying, failure to do assignments, damage to school facilities and untidy dressing habits among the students. These situations may not be unconnected to principals' ethical leadership behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra State. It therefore became necessary to ascertain the perception of teachers regarding the level principals' ethical leadership behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the perception of teachers regarding the level of principals' ethical leadership behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study ascertained:

- The level of principals' communicative ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State.
- The level of principals' climatic ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State.
- The level of principals' decisional ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State.
- The level of principals' behavioural ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research question guided the study

- What is the level of principals' communicative ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State?
- What is the level of principals' climatic ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State?
- What is the level of principals' decisional ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State?
- What is the level of principals' behavioural ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State?

2. Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design According to Nworgu (2015) aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The study was guided by four research questions. The study was carried out in Anambra state on a population of 6,382 teachers in the six education zones of the state. The sample consisted 672 teachers drawn using multi-stage sampling technique. Questionnaire instrument titled Ethical Leadership Scale(ELS) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts. A reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained for the ELS using Cronbach's Alpha method. Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean.

3. Results

	Mean	SD	Remark
Communicative Ethical Behaviour	2.63	.29	High
Climatic Ethical Behaviour	2.84	.37	High
Decisional Ethical Behaviour	2.85	.31	High
Behavioural Ethical Behaviour	3.02	.35	High

Table 1: Mean Scores on the Level of Principals' Ethical Leadership Behaviours State (N=651)

The table above shows that teachers' perception of the level of principals' communicative, climatic, decisional and behavioural ethical behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra State is high. This is shown by the mean of the four dimensions of ethical leadership behaviour which were all above 2.50.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that teachers' perception of the level of principals' communicative, climatic, decisional and behavioural ethical behaviour in secondary schools in Anambra State is high. This finding is in line with that of Karaköse (2007) who in his study found that teachers perceive principals to demonstrate these behaviors at a very high level. This finding is consistent with Sungu and Sağlam (2015), their results indicated that teachers rated school principals' display of ethical leadership behaviors to be high is their schools. Likewise, Gülcan, Kılınç and Çepni (2012) who also found that school principals demonstrated ethical leadership behaviors in their schools according to teachers.

The findings of the present study are in line with the finding of Bellow (2012) and Yukl, Mathsud, Hassan, and Russia, (2013) who found that principals are perceived to be fair, sincere, trust worthy, open, moral decision makers and care for their staff as well as their students. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Ezeugbor (2015), her study showed that teachers perceived the four sub-scales (communicative ethics, climatic ethics, ethics in decision making and behavioural ethics) of principals' ethical leadership behaviours to be high.

The finding of this study however, is not in agreement with the findings of a number of other scholars such as Abg Hut (2005), Zulkafli (2008) and Mihelic, Lipicnik and Tekavcic, (2010). These scholars found that the level of ethical behaviour of leaders of the school remained at a low level. The difference between this finding and the findings of the present study could possibly be as a result of difference in time frame between the two studies. Over time principals of secondary schools in Anambra state appear to have participated in several developmental programmes in terms of seminars and workshop which may have improve their ethical consciousness in their leadership behaviours towards the teachers, students and other members of the school.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study presented, analyzed and discussed, the study concludes that teachers' perception regarding principals' ethical leadership behaviours in secondary schools in Anambra state is high. It is therefore imperative that secondary school principals should at all times imbibe and display ethical principles in their leadership behaviours in the school in order to gain the confidence of teachers in the school.

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