



ISSN: 1117-1669
e-ISSN: 2971-7841

*Journal of Science Education and
Humanities (JOSEH), 2023, Vol. 7 (2):
November, 2023. Full-text Available Online at
<https://www.akscoejoseh.org.ng>*



Influence of Principals' Coercive Power on Job Performance among Secondary School Teachers in Eket Educational Zone, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated how principals' use of coercive power predicts teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Eket education zone of Akwa Ibom State. Ex-post facto design was used for the study. One research question was raised and a hypothesis formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of all teachers in public secondary schools in Eket education zone with the population of 2436. The sample size of 372 teachers was selected through stratified random sampling technique from 62 public secondary schools out of 234. Data collection was done with the use of researcher's developed instruments tagged 'Principals Use of Coercive Power and Job Performance of Secondary School Teachers Questionnaire' (PUCPJPSSTQ) measured on 4 - point rating scale. The questionnaire had 27 items and a Cronbach reliable index of 0.67. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using correlation coefficient and Regression analysis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.5 level of significance. The finding of the study was that Principals' use of coercive power significantly predicts teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Eket Education zone of Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended from the study that Principals should exercise their coercive power with caution so as not to cause unrest, instability and rancour in the school system and that seminars, workshops and symposia be organized to train principals on proper use of power within the school system.

Keywords: Principal, Coercive, Power, Performance, School

INTRODUCTION

Work organizations are not only systems of hierarchical structure but also systems of social relationships, status and power. The leadership power of principals on teachers' effective teaching and performance has been an area of constant disputation and contestation. It is often

asserted and not refuted that schools are as good as their head teachers. According to Sergon (2005), schools' success depends largely on the teachers.

Effective leadership is crucial to the success of any organization. In fact, the success or otherwise of any organization is often traceable to the leadership of such organizations in terms of ability to inspire, moderate, guide, direct and listen to subordinates. These qualities set the ball rolling with regards to effective management of school personnel.

Managing a school is much more like navigating a ship through turbulent waters. It requires caution, focus, maximum clarity and distinctness, otherwise that ship may wreck. The principal is the captain of the ship. He is the most senior teacher, leader and manager of the school.

The success or failure of the school rests on his shoulder. He either works hard to succeed in his duties or buckle under the weight of responsibilities he bears. The school principal is the one who coordinates and controls the actions of his staff in order to achieve stipulated goals and objectives. According to Uyanga (1995), the principal through his managerial behaviour influences to a great extent, the ways and means by which goals are achieved in his school, the direction to be pursued, and the various priorities to be considered within the school system.

Power refers to the ability of an individual to influence others who are in a state of dependence. In order to exercise power, the actor requires some measure of authority. Authority is defined as the right to make decisions, direct others' work and give orders (Ekang, 2014).

Simon (1976) defines authority as "the power to make decisions which guide the actions of another". According to Weber (1947), authority is "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons". Authority helps to define relationship between or among organizational members. In the school system, according to Uyanga (1995), there are student-teachers relationships, teacher-principal relationships, superior-subordinate relationship and others.

Power revolves around the use of force by a superior officer to get things done despite protestations from the subordinates. Power is an indispensable ingredient of leadership and it is always the force behind any authority in management. Power is seen as a form of "raw energy" which is epitomized by involuntary compliance, non-compliance and resistance from the threats or the use of force, be it physical, economic, social or political. It should be noted however that in authority, compliance is voluntary and not by coercion as is the case with power.

Coercive power refers to the application of negative influences on employees. It results from the expectation of a negative reward if wishes are not obeyed. Power is the force behind every authority in any administrative set-up. Coercive power is the use of force to get things done. Subordinates comply only because of fear of punishment from the superior officers. It does not call for wilful compliance (Uyanga, 1995). The principals' power derive from a number of policy documents, for example, section 16A of the Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) which defines the duties and responsibilities of the principal with regards to their relation with the school governing body (RSA, 2007). Cartwright (1959) argues that the power of one person to influence another depends upon the role he or she occupies.

Zander, Cohen and Scotland (1959) focus more on a person's perception of his or her power. These scholars contend that power stems from a number of sources with the most common of these being the status differentials implied or explicitly defined by society, the nature and value of the functions included within his or her role and the responsibility he or she has to others or that they have him or her. The major responsibilities of a principal include making decision about the management of the school and coordinating the activities within and outside the school.

A school's ability to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by the leadership of its principal. The principal possesses pervasive disciplinary power within the school.

However, the principals' role as a leader in the school is constrained by the context and culture of the school milieu. External factors include issues like the influence of the neighborhood and the immediate community, societal influences that disrupt the curriculum, students' conflict and violence in schools, demography, the geographical location of the school and the socio-economic status of the school community. Internal factors include issues like teachers' and their behaviour, teachers' qualifications, resources, work ethic and teachers' union. Some of these issues will be explored in this study. An important question to ask is how these factors affect the official position and ability of school leaders to influence quality education. Other aspects that will be examined in this study are whether principals are able to use their supposed powers and how principals perceive the powers given to them. Are the principals really able to use their powers to enhance teachers' job performance in Eket Education zone of Akwa Ibom State? This study will attempt to provide answers to this question.

Statement of the Problem

The role of school principals in influencing the performance of teachers is critical for the overall success of the educational system.

However, the use of coercive power – where principals rely on threats, punitive measures, or authoritative control – can have significant consequences on teachers job satisfaction, motivation and ultimately, their performance. Despite potential impact, there is limited empirical research specifically examining how principals' coercive power influences job performance among secondary school teachers in the Eket Education on Zone, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This study seeks to bridge the gap by exploring the extent of which coercive power impacts teacher's effectiveness, work attitudes and educational outcomes in this region.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To determine the extent of the use of coercive power by principals in secondary schools in Eket education zone
- (ii) To examine the relationship between principals coercive power and teachers' job performance

- (iii) To assess the effects of principals' coercive power on students' academic performance as an indirect measure of teachers' job performance.
- (iv) To suggest possible strategies for minimizing the negative impacts of coercive power in school administration.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

- (i) To what extent do principals in the Eket Educational Zone use coercive power in managing secondary schools?
- (ii) What is the relationship between the use of coercive power by principals and the job performance of secondary school teachers?
- (iii) How does principals' coercive power affect teachers' job satisfaction and motivation?
- (iv) What is the impact of principals' coercive power on students' academic performance as influenced by teachers' job performance?
- (v) What strategies can be implemented to reduce the negative impacts of coercive power in school management?

Research Hypothesis

- (i) HO₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' coercive power and the job performance of secondary school teachers in the Eket Education zone.
- (ii) HO₂: Principals' coercive power does not significantly affect teachers' job satisfaction and motivation in secondary schools.
- (iii) HO₃: The use of coercive power by principals does not significantly impact students' academic performance through its influence on teachers' performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used for this study was ex-post-facto research design. This design was considered most appropriate for the research as it attempted to check the already existing relationship of the independent variable (the principals' use of coercive power) on the dependent variable (job performance of secondary school teachers). In this type of design, the researcher cannot manipulate the effect but just obtain the effect on already existing natural course of events.

The study population consisted of all public secondary school principals and teachers in Eket Education Zone. They were made up of 234 principals and 2436 teachers respectively. The sample for the study was made up of 32 teachers and 62 principals which is 26% of 62 schools in the study area. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the 6 teachers with the principal from each school in Eket Education Zone. The balloting system was used in selecting the sample.

The instrument used by the researcher for this study was a research questionnaire. The questionnaire tagged "Principals Use of Coercive Power and Job Performance of Secondary

School Teachers' Questionnaire" (PUCPJPSSTQ) was used to collect data. Section A measured items on the demographic data of the respondents while Section B measured items on the independent variables. To ensure the validation of the research instruments, the items in the questionnaire were properly worded to meet the respondent's level of understanding, and each variable was properly measured.

In order to establish the reliability of the research instrument, Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used in order to test the internal consistency of measuring instrument. From the analysis, the reliability coefficient of 0.67 was arrived at which was high enough to justify the use of the instrument.

The researcher identified the respondents, administered and retrieved copies of the questionnaire for analysis. The items were classified according to the variable measured. Items in the instruments were scored independently. For each sub-variable, scores were obtained by summing up the responses. Each of the respondents therefore, received a separate row of data which was used for data analysis. The responses to the items in the questionnaire were on four-point rating scales of strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point).

The data obtained was analysed using multiple R and R square and simple linear regression analysis. The calculated values were compared with the critical values for test of significance or non-significance of the result at .05 alpha.

RESULTS

The results of the study was presented and discussed based on the research question and the hypothesis that guided the study. The research question was answered using the correlation coefficient, while the null hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression. The results are presented in table 1 and table 2.

Research Question

What is the relationship between Principals' Use of Coercive Power and Job Performance of Teachers?

Table 1: Result of multiple R and R square coefficients for the relationship between Principals' Coercive Power and Job Performance of Teachers.

VARIABLE	R	R SQUARE	ADJUSTED R SQUARE	STD ERROR OF THE ESTABLISHMENT
Principals' Coercive Power	.970	.941	.940	.246765

Entries in Table 1 reveal the strength of the relationship between the independent variable (Principals Coercive Power) and the dependent variable (Job Performance of Teachers). R, the correlation coefficient (.970), is the linear correlation between the observed and model-predicted value of the dependent variable (Job Performance). Its high value indicates a strong positive relationship. R², the coefficient of determination (.941) is the squared value of the correlation coefficient. It shows that 94 per cent variation in job performance of teachers is explained by the independent variable (Principals Coercive Power). The result means that there is a very high corresponding linear relationship between Principals' Coercive Power and Job Performance of Teachers.

Hypothesis

Principals' use of coercive power does not significantly predict teachers' job performance.

Table 2: Results of simple linear regression analysis for the prediction of principals' coercive power on teachers' job performance

VARIABLE		SUM OF AREAS	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Principals' Coercive Power	Regression	5875.996	1	5875.996	964.969	.000
	Residual Total	365.358	60			
		6241.355	61	6.089		

Significant at 0.5 alpha levels; df = F1, 60, Critical F = 4.00; N=62

Table 2 shows the calculated F-value of 964.969 at .05 with 1 and 60 degrees of freedom and critical F-value of 4.00. Since the calculated F-value is greater than the critical F-value, it means that principals' coercive power significantly predict the criterion variable which job performance of teachers. This therefore leads to rejection of the null hypothesis that principals' use of coercive power does not significantly predict teachers' job performance. Meaning that, changes in principals' coercive power scores also cause changes in teachers' job performance.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of data in the hypothesis showed a significant relationship due to the fact that the obtained F-value (964.969) was greater than the critical F-value (4.00) at .05 level with 1 and 60 degrees of freedom. This result implies that there is significant relationship of principals' coercive power on teachers' job performance. The significance of the result is in agreement with the findings of Zamani (2012) who concluded that if a manager moderates his/her use of coercive power employees will be committed and satisfied with their job and the organization. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld.

A study was conducted by Iffon (2009) on The Effects of Principals' Power on the Performance of Secondary School Teachers' in some selected schools in Tanzania. The researcher adopted ex-post facto design for the study and used a simple random sampling technique to draw 300 respondents. From the results of the analysis, it was revealed that principals' power has significant effects on the performance of secondary school teachers in some selected schools in Tanzania.

In another study conducted by Bromley (2010) to assess the influence of power-style of the principal as a driving force to achieve organizational objectives of public secondary school in New York, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 500 respondents. It was observed that organizational objectives of any public school are significantly dependent on power style of the principal. According to Bromley (2010), as part of conclusion, principals' power, though vital to the effective and efficient management of school goals has been implicated in the literature as a major contributor to school problems.

There exists findings where coercive power was not associated with employees satisfaction (Lee and Tui, 2008), thus suggesting no statistical significance between the two variables. Afza (2005) also found no significant influence of coercive power on employees' satisfaction. Despite these results, researchers are agreed that extensive use of this power does not lead to employees' satisfaction (Rahimi, 1988, Hinkin and Schriesheim 1989). Similar relationship was found in a study by Burke and Wilcox (2001) that indicated a negative relationship between coercive power and job satisfaction consistent with these findings; the results of Elangovan and Xie (2000) that use of coercive power by the supervisor lowers employees' satisfaction with the job and also the commitment level. Burke and Wilcox (2001) further revealed that coercive power produces least degree of employees' satisfaction.

Similarly, Zamani (2012) in his study concluded that if a manager increases his/her use of coercive power, employees will be least committed and satisfied with their job and organization. However, this is not always the case, as a study by Nadaee (2012) indicated a significant positive relationship with referent, expert and legitimate powers but it showed no significant relationship with reward and coercive powers. Richmond and Hannes (1986) findings revealed that coercive and legitimate powers are negatively associated with job satisfaction whereas reward-power had little impact on job satisfaction. Coercive power is not perfectly correlated with legitimate power. Lower level organizational members can also apply their own share of coercion. For instance, in a work-to-rule strike action that slows down productivity by adhering religiously to organizational procedures are usually organized and carried out by low-level organizational members. The use of coercive power to control workers' behaviour is usually very problematic because of emotional side effects. Thus, it is not surprising that when managers use coercive power, it is generally ineffective and can provoke considerable employees' resistance. Mitsubishi plant was imposing lots of coercive power on its employees and the results were most unwelcoming. Coercive power finds expression in the ability of a person to provide someone with the things he does not desire and to remove those things which he desires. In coercive leadership, subordinates are grounded mainly on fear, threat and force and hence it is labelled

negative. The leader insists on strict obedience of rules and regulations and in some cases is not prepared to bend procedures to accommodate peculiar needs of the organization's members. Workers engage in eye service and neglect their work in the leader's absence. (Ekang, 2014).

Coercive use of power may be favourably disposed in organizations when subordinates are new on the job and have no experience either in the managerial decision making process or performing without active supervision, it can increase efficiency and get quicker results especially in a crisis or emergency situation when the decision must be taken promptly; and when the subordinates are not interested in seeking responsibility or when they work better under clear and detailed directives and when the chain of command and division of work is clear and understood by all.

On the other hand, coercive use of power can culminate in one-way communication which may lead to misunderstanding and communications breakdown due to lack of feedbacks; it may create a distance between leaders and organizations' members which discourages an exchange of points of view and may create tensions and antagonisms which may remain latent in normal times and emerge when challenges ensue; it is unsuitable when the workforce is knowledgeable about their jobs and or when the job calls for teamwork and cooperative spirit; since it limits workers freedom, it fails to enhance their commitments to school's goals and objectives and finally it leads to low employee morale which may result in poor productivity in the long run. Coercive power tends to be the most obvious but least effective form of power as it builds resentment and resistance within targets of coercive power.

Ekang (2014) opines that power means getting other people to do something they would not have done under normal circumstances. Exercising this kind of power is usually accompanied by sanctions of some kind.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the leadership practices in secondary schools within Eket education Zone, Akwa Ibom State:

- (i) Promote transformational leadership
- (ii) Involve teachers in decision making
- (iii) Professional development for principals.
- (iv) Establish clear communication channels.
- (v) Create a supportive work environment
- (vi) Regular assessment and feedback mechanisms
- (vii) Strengthen teacher – principal relationships in the schools system

Conclusion

The study highlights the detrimental effects of principals' coercive power on the job performance, satisfaction and motivation of secondary school teachers in the Eket Education

Zone, Akwa Ibom State. It underscores the importance of adopting more positive and inclusive leadership approaches to create a conducive work environment that enhances teacher effectiveness and ultimately improves student outcomes.

The findings suggest that a shift from coercive power to transformational and participatory leadership could significantly improve the overall performance of schools in Eket Educational Zone of Akwa Ibom State.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) for funding this scholarly research article under the Journal of Science, Education and Humanities [JOSEH] for the 2023 ARJ Intervention at Akwa Ibom State College of Education Afaha Nsit.

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