

**PRINCIPALS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION
OF LEGAL PROVISIONS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION
IN CROSS RIVER STATE OF NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the influence of principals' demographic variables on their awareness and utilization of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved the entire population of 306 principals from public secondary schools across the three educational zones (Calabar, Ikom, and Ogoja) in the state. Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire titled Legal Provisions and Secondary School Administration Questionnaire (LPSSAQ), comprising 96 items. The instrument was validated by experts and yielded a high reliability coefficient of 0.998 using Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-tests) were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that principals possessed a high level of awareness of legal provisions relevant to school administration, particularly regarding fundamental human rights and disciplinary procedures. However, the study showed that sex and marital status had low and very low influence, respectively, on the principals' utilization of these legal provisions. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between male and female principals in their awareness or application of legal provisions. The study concluded that while principals are generally aware of legal frameworks, demographic factors such as age and years of experience are more likely to influence their administrative practices than sex or marital status. The study recommended regular legal literacy training, provision of educational legal materials, and the inclusion of age and experience as criteria in the appointment of principals. These measures are aimed at enhancing effective, lawful, and rights-based school administration in Cross River State.

1. INTRODUCTION

The management of academic and administrative affairs of schools and students traditionally fall within the purview of the principal. Unerringly, formal education in Nigeria is rapidly changing to meet set goals (Nwaogu, 2013). The requirements of these set goals from the principal are centered on teachers and learners' discipline. Given this onerous task, principals as a matter of fact must understand their roles, the law and the hiccups that follow when they flaw.

Musgrave (2008) opined that a school as an institution for behaviour modification has various goals viz cognitive, moral or value, integrative and mobility goals. Principals must be trained and retrained on educational management concepts involving educational laws, crises, conflict and conflict resolutions and the constitution (Usman, 2014). The school system is faced with the challenges of how to manage and improve the students' learning. This can be made possible through the knowledge of morality and law and Principals' demographic variables. The laws of legal principles are guiding rules and procedures based on the laws of the land. They are common precepts, just and stable and sufficiently promulgated. Grotius (1999) puts them as rules of moral actions obliging to that which is right. Hobbes (2000) says legal principles or laws are to every subject those rules which the commonwealth hath recommended to make use for the distinction of right or wrong; that is to say what is contrary and what is not contrary. In Nigeria the principles of law are absolute, eternal and of universal validity and that these legal principles must be found not made.

Secondary school education provides the intermediate training for learners, following the primary education stage and preparatory to the tertiary level of training, It caters for children between the ages of 12 and 18 years (Onwuliri, 2008). According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) in Goshe (2008), secondary education refers to the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. It refers to someone who is in charge of its affair as the principal. Principals are the classroom teachers who by the dint of their qualifications, experience and hard work are assigned the responsibility of school management. The roles of the principal among others include planning, directing, coordinating and directing both human and material resources (Agabi, 2014). The principal is a professional educationist charged with the responsibility of educational development through the application of administrative and management skills which ensure goal attainment within the given school environment. Principals have holistic responsibilities – to the teacher, students, parents, community, school board, agencies and institution. It is pertinent to note that, the principal has a lot of people to work with. At one time or the other he needs to organize and control them. Adesanyan in Babayemi (2016:14) summarizes the importance of the principal: He said that “Over the years as a reporter, I have never seen a good school with a poor principal. I have seen unsuccessful schools turned around into successful ones, and, regrettably, outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline. In each case, the rise and fall could rapidly be traced to the quality of the principal.”

In Nigeria and specifically Cross River State, school principals no longer have the monopoly of decisions about school system (Bessong, 2002). The government directs the running of the school and makes decisions about syllabus, funds, equipment, staff appointment and types of programmes. This is why Ogbonnanya, (2015) buttressed that the principal must be disciplined, ready and willing to respect authority and observe conventional or established laws of education so as to condition the staff, the students and the community into orderliness, good conduct and a

habit of getting the best out of his school administration at any given time . In other words the achievement of educational goals is dependent on his ability to also respect higher authorities. The principal is actually put in charge to direct and control the system. Akpan (2013) posits that the principal' authority stems from not just the government but also the community where the school is situated. The principals are very often caught between a hierarchical bureaucracy expecting efficiency and the school which he is asked to efficiently control. Akpa (2002) maintains that principals today are paying dearly for undemocratic attitude and decisions to the learners which are increasing the rate of litigations against them. He added that most of such problems stems from tendencies to treat students as passive recipients of school choices. This implies that the students are not part of the decision making of their future.

Statement of the Problem

Public secondary schools in Cross River State are located in both Urban and Rural areas. These schools irrespective of their location are experiencing many problems arising from poor administration. Most of these school principals are found wanting in managing the available staff, students, parents and the community in Cross River State.

There also exists poor student management by the school authority. This is evidenced by student's demonstration over some issues in the school. Furthermore, some of the schools' principals in the recent past have had clashes with the communities especially over social issues. School administrators are often accused and sometimes found guilty of assault and battery by laws for administering corporal punishment that is immoderate leading to inflicting permanent injury on students. When a school administrator administers any form of punishment in anger, he/she may cause serious injury on the students thereby leading to litigation and if found guilty of the offence may be or asked to pay for damages. A Latin legal maxim explains " *secundum et intra legem*" the survival of every administration depends on law, rules and directions. The continuous growth of education is also dependent of discipline and its proper application (Fayokun, 2008), hence the need for effective knowledge of the laws of the land for efficient administration. Male and female, experienced and inexperienced, professionally qualified and non-qualified, young and old, married and unmarried principals carry out administrative practices in public secondary school in Cross River State. The outcome of the use of power by these calibres of principals has implication for the quality of education which at times is marred by conflicts and litigations.

It is the responsibility of the school authority to take decision, inform teachers as to possible classroom legal issues, attempt to resolve such legal issues that arise in schools and try to prevent these issues from getting to courts because *sic parvis magna* as it is from small things that great things are found. These can be achieved by instructing teachers as to the legally approved parameters of classroom discipline, appropriate and sometimes unpopular decisions of school policies (Galton, 2010). Abuses and other forms of official excesses in schools, crimes of all sorts still exist in our secondary schools. Property and life are not adequately protected. Thus, this study is necessitated by the urge to solve the enumerated problems above.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of principals' demographic variables on awareness of legal provisions and utilization in secondary school administration in Cross River State of Nigeria.

Specifically the purpose of this study is to determine:

- (1) The level of principals' awareness of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State.
- (2) The influence of principals' sex on the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary schools administration in Cross River State.
- (3) The influence of principals' marital status on the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are put forward to guide this study:

- (1) To what extent are principals of public secondary schools in Cross River State aware of the existence of legal provisions in public secondary school administration?
- (2) To what extent does the sex of principals influence the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State?
- (3) To what extent does the marital status of principals influence the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State?

Hypotheses

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

- (1) There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the male and female principals on the principals' awareness of the legal provision in public secondary schools in Cross River State.
- (2) There is no significant difference in male and female principals' mean scores on the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary schools in Cross River State.
- (3) There is no significant difference in the male and female principals' mean scores on influence of marital status of principals on the utilization of legal provisions in public secondary school in Cross River State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Managing school is like managing a state. So, the school principal must be politician, economist, psychologist and sociologist. Culture, ethnicity, gender and religion of the school population may diverse and customers of the school require satisfying their needs. This paper of characteristics of effective principal discusses how perfect school principals look like. There are nine self-assessment tips that principals can measure themselves. Farah (2013) derived these nine tips from the nine alphabet letters that the word principal consists of. Each alphabet letter of the common word given to school leader stands for good jobs required to be fulfilled by the principal. Principals will understand that their task is unique and require extra knowledge and standards to apply it. After reading books and articles written by different scholars, Ingle (2009) noted that leadership

and principalship are unique tasks that are not easy for all people to engage in.

The principal is the corner stone of the school and plays important role on development of education programs. It is necessary to equip principals with knowledge and skills to interact multiple changes and complex task of managing human being. Schools are the mirror of the life and birthplace of human resource so leaders of schools must be familiar with management skills and leadership styles. The main objective of the schools is to produce creative learners who will be leaders of tomorrow; hence principals must be role models that students and other people in the schools will learn from them (Touwen, 2011).

Leadership is a complex task and requires knowledge, experience and good skills. There is no generic definition of school principal but it concerns practices and operations of educational management. The field of educational management relates varying approaches and established disciplines including economics, general management, psychology, sociology and political science. Good health management is expected to produce planned work done with the help of assigned people, within the allocated budget and within the given deadlines.

Education institutions require management to plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate day to day activities to accomplish education goals through coordination education personnel and allocated budgets. (Fullan, 2011). A central part of being a great leader is cultivating leadership in others (Reuter and Hamilton, 1999). Principal is the leader and manager of school but this task needs experience and knowledge to differ from others. Planning is defined as a process of setting objectives and determining what should be done to achieve them. It is a decision-making activity through which, managers act to ensure the future success and effectiveness of their institutions and departments as well as themselves (Surya, 2011).

Planning helps educational managers to anticipate problems and opportunities, to think forward and to contribute efficacy of other managerial functions. Thus, “planning is a role of effective principal to provide a basis for control in a school and set priorities to focus their emergencies on important things first. The effective principle also focuses the attention of the teachers on objectives that can give a performance oriented sense of direction to the school”. (Surya 2011) “The process of educational management consists of three basic functions, namely planning, implementing and controlling. A manager uses these functions to achieve educational organization goals and objectives.”

Principals should respect the wishes of the school population, reply their requirements and listen- This means that the effective principal responds the enquiries of the school populations (i.e. teachers, students, parents and other staff of the school) and listens to their complaints. This is the characteristics of Total Quality Management Organization and the relations of the school population will be positive when the customers are listened and provided their requirements. “The power of knowledge management, particularly when compared to other changed efforts, it that it maintains focus on people-on faculty, staff and students-and their needs” (Petrides and Nudine, 2003).

Principals also indicate and command school population and never dictate orders- One of the leadership traits is to lead people in the organization through recommendations. The perfect leader does not impose hard orders to the staff but gives them mentoring and advice and staffs are delightful all the time. Like this, effective principal provides instructions and directions to the

school populations and invites them to participate in developing education programs. Principals play a major role in developing a professional community of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction (The Wallan Foundation 2013). He acts as networks to the school population and makes timely contacts- The effective principal has networking skills and makes early contacts with the school population. She/he is not passive but is proactive and aware what is going internal and external of the schools. “Co-ordination is the process whereby two or more people and organizations work together to deal collectively with a shared task. The responsibility for coordination may be assigned to a single individual or a team/group of individuals, in consultation with all the parties concerned. Co-ordination would the major responsibility of a project coordinator, heading a project team” (Khedekar, 2007)

Consults with school population and conducts constructive changes- The perfect principal consults with the people in the school and initiates constructive changes. He or She accepts the suggestions and good ideas from people, creates atmosphere that letting all participate in school development. “Paternalistic form is where the manager makes decisions in the best interests of the employees rather than the organization. The manager explains most decisions to the team members and ensures that their social and leisure needs are always met. This can help balance out the lack of staff motivation caused by an autocratic management style.

Attracts school population and motivates them to learn and teach hard- The effective principal attracts school population and motivates them to learn and teach hard. He or She motivates slow learners and rewards hard working and talented ones.” A positive school culture is the underlying reason why the other components of successful schools were able to flourish. For example, one principal seeking ways to increase reading comprehension asked for and valued teacher suggestions. As a result, suggestions were developed into action plans that were then implemented. Because the principal valued the expertise of the teachers and allowed the latitude to try new approaches, an unbroken cycle of continuous improvement was observed in the building. The culture was one where the teachers felt their opinions mattered and felt comfortable enough to take risks and try new methods. Therefore, the positive culture the principal created enabled continuous improvement to occur.” Habegger (2008).

Related Empirical Studies

Ogbodo (2002) in his study of administrative effectiveness of male and female principals in Akwa Ibom State. Objectively, the study which was a comparative analysis was to find out the administrative effectiveness of both male and female principals in the state. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The researcher used a 4-item Likert scale questionnaire of 92 items borne out of five research questions and five research hypotheses. The entire population of 153 male and 121 female principal across both public and private schools was analyzed using the Z-test analysis. The study revealed a significant distinction between the male and female principals in their administrative effectiveness in managing staff and students’ personnel. The result showed that 49.1% preferred a male principal and 54% of the women showed the opinion of only 2.2% of the men and 1.6% of the women preferred a female principal. The researcher opined that a major factor could account for this attitude- societal conception of women as sexual objects who must depend on others. It even added that the profession is making slow progress in achieving the status of a recognized class due to the large number of women. A research by Coffie (2005) was conducted on demographic characteristic and principals’ administrative effectiveness in Cross

River State. The main purpose was to look at the behavioural and administrative patterns of both male and female principals and to determine their consistency ratio in administration and management. The design for the study was descriptive survey design. It used a four scale stratified item questionnaire gotten from five research questions and five null hypotheses. The study sampled 500 teachers representing 259 females and 241 males using the analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) to analyze the data. The study upheld that male principals are more effective in school administration and management compared to their female counterparts. In the same vein, it reported that no significant difference between them in respect to task of curriculum development and supervision of instruction; consequently a significant difference was found in the management of finance and physical facilities. Female principals were found out to adhere to rules of school plant management than their male counterparts.

Adie (2007) also conducted a research on the Principals' demographic Variables and the management of school plants in Public secondary schools in Cross River State. The design for the study was a descriptive survey design. It had a sample population of 1815 out of a population of 4012. The sample population used 717 married teachers and 1098 unmarried teachers. A 96 item four scale questionnaire was used for the study and the Independent T-test was used to analyze the data. In his findings, the married have the potential tendency of being liberal or magnanimous in applying laid down rules and laws. This was borne out of their experiences and responsibilities as parents who nurture children and understand human beings as possessing certain weaknesses and flaws. The effect of marital status influences in a great way its relationship with finance. The single were generally believed to be frugal and more conscious of the principles of spending and this could be unconnected from their numerous responsibilities and financial obligations; thus accountability and frugality are present. The findings added that being married and having a family was usually associated with compassion and lower rate of the use of laid down laws in the management of resources. Conversely, the use of laid down principles was higher among the singles. Data on the individual level confirmed that for each marital status group, married persons have lower rate of utilizing laid down laws, rules, regulations and procedures in an organization.

Theoretical Framework

Positive Discipline Theory of Authority (Alfred Adler, 1958)

Positive discipline is based on the theories of Alfred Adler who believes that human behaviours are motivated by the core need to feel a sense of belonging and significance. Positive discipline does not humiliate the students or the teachers. It has a principle of connection before correction, and also presents the opportunity to use discipline that teaches a healthy loving relationship. Positive discipline also incorporates kindness and firmness at teaching life competences. It integrates discipline and the development of life skills into the on-ongoing relationship based on mutual respect and dignity. The key skills in positive discipline are effective communication techniques, collaborative problem solving skills and focusing on solutions instead of the use of excessive punishment to correct students' indiscipline. This theory is relevant to this study because, when teachers build relationships with their students based on respect and dignity, it increases a sense of belonging and significance. Implementing positive discipline in the classroom is a process that involves teachers and students in true dialogue and the problem solving, on issue that are real and practical, they work together to solve problems, they learn to appreciate each other, to respect and understand their differences and to develop social interest by helping each

other. These can be done through class meetings, students taking part in decision making, such as student's council, free speech discussions, team work and debates on different topics. All these may help to empower students' with courage, confidence and life skills, such as communication skills, act of speaking kindly to one another, respect for others and good reading habits.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design, which enables systematic data collection and description of characteristics within a defined population. This design was appropriate for observing and analyzing data without manipulation, using questionnaires.

Area of the Study

The research was conducted in Cross River State, Nigeria, located in the South-South region. The state comprises 18 Local Government Areas and is ethnically diverse with major groups like Efiks, Ejaghams, and Quas. The people engage primarily in farming, fishing, trade, and civil service. It is rich in natural resources and has limited industrial establishments. Education is organized into three zones: Calabar, Ikom, and Ogoja, with 306 public secondary schools managed by SEB and STEB.

Population of the Study

The population consisted of 306 principals from all public secondary schools in Cross River State, and all were included in the study (no sampling).

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-structured questionnaire titled *Legal Provisions and Secondary School Administration Questionnaire (LPSSAQ)* was used. It had 96 items in two parts: personal data and six sections (A–F) covering awareness and utilization of legal provisions by principals based on sex, age, marital status, qualification, and experience. A 4-point scale (VHE, HE, LE, VLE) was used.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was validated by four experts from Ebonyi State University for content clarity and relevance. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test with 30 principals in Akwa Ibom State showed high internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.998.

Data Collection Method

All 306 questionnaires were distributed and retrieved through trained research assistants across the three educational zones, achieving a 100% return rate.

Data Analysis Method

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used for research questions, and t-tests were applied to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Mean scores were interpreted using a 4-point scale.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

To what extent are Principals in Public Secondary School in Cross River State aware of the existence of legal provisions in Public Secondary School Administration? The data collected from items 1-16 in the Section B of the research instrument were used to answer this research question 1 and the summary of the results of data analysis are presented below.

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the of Principals on the awareness of legal provisions in Public Secondary Schools administration in Cross River State.

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	DECISION
1.	Principals are aware of the right to life	3.13	0.34	HE
2.	Principals are aware of the right to dignity of human person	3.13	0.33	HE
3.	Principals are aware of the right to personal liberty	3.16	0.37	HE
4.	Principals are aware of right to fair hearing	3.19	0.39	HE
5.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom of religion	3.20	0.39	HE
6.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom of religion	3.24	0.42	HE
7.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom of Expression	3.23	0.41	HE
8.	Principals are aware of right to peaceful assembling	3.23	0.41	HE
9.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom of movement	3.26	0.43	HE
10.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom from discrimination	3.16	0.37	HE

11.	Principals are aware of the right to freedom of acquisitions of property	3.14	0.34	HE
12.	Principals are aware that punishment are not to be justifiable	3.13	0.33	HE
13.	Principals are aware that punishments are not to be excessive	3.17	0.37	HE
14.	Principals are aware that punishments are not to be too weighty than the gravity of the offence	3.16	0.36	HE
15.	Principals are aware that punishments are not be maliciously administered	3.13	0.33	HE
16.	Principals are aware that all corporal punishment must be entered in the corporal punishment book (log book).	3.13	0.34	HE
	Grand Mean (X)	3.17		HE

Key:

HE: High Extent

X: Mean

SD: Standard Deviation

The results of data analysis presented on Table 1 revealed that Principals to a high extent are aware of the legal provisions in the Cross River State School Laws and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. From the analysis of the Mean and the and the Standard Deviation on the table above which stand at 3.17 and 0.35 respectively indicate that the calculated mean score is greater than the mean score of 2.49 set for decision making. This shows that Principals of Public Secondary Schools are aware of legal provisions in school administration in Cross River State.

Research Question 2

To what extent does the sex of Principals influence the utilization of legal provisions in Public Secondary School Administration in Cross River State?

The data collected from items 17-32 in the Section B of the research instrument were used to answer this research question 2 and the summary of the results of data analysis are presented below.

Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the respondents on the extent to which sex of principals influence the utilization of legal provision in public secondary schools in Cross River State

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	DECISION
17.	The sex of Principals on the respect of the right to life	1.93	0.35	LE
18.	The sex of Principals in respecting the dignity of human person	1.94	0.33	LE
19.	The sex of Principals in giving liberty to persons	1.86	0.44	LE
20.	The sex of Principals in allowing individual right to private life	1.81	0.47	LE
21.	The sex of Principals in giving people the right to private life	1.93	0.34	LE
22.	The sex of Principals in giving people the right to freedom of religion	1.89	0.39	LE
23.	The sex of Principals in allowing individual right of expression	1.94	0.32	LE
24.	The sex of Principals on allowing individual right to freedom of movement	1.96	0.30	LE
25.	The sex of Principals on allowing individual right to freedom of movement	1.92	0.31	LE
26.	The sex of Principals on allowing individual right to freedom of discrimination	1.88	0.34	LE
27.	The sex of Principals on allowing individual right of freedom from discrimination	1.91	0.35	LE
28.	Punishment must be justifiable	1.92	0.32	LE
29.	Punishment not to be excessive	1.88	0.26	LE

30.	Punishment not too weighty than the gravity of the offence.	1.94	0.26	LE
31.	Punishment not be administered maliciously	1.88	0.33	LE
32.	That all corporal punishment must entered in the corporal punishment book (log book)	1.88	0.35	LE
Grand Mean (X)		1.90		LE

Key:

LE: Low Extent

X: Mean

SD: Standard Deviation

The results of data analysis presented on Table revealed that respondents do not accept that sex of the principals influences their utilization of legal provision in public secondary school administration in Cross River State. The grand mean of 1.90 is less than the mean 2.50 set as mean for decision making. Thus, this shows that to a low extent that sex does influence principals' utilization of legal provision in public secondary school administration in Cross River State.

Research Question 3

To what extent does the marital status of Principals influence the utilization of legal provisions in Public Secondary School Administration in Cross River State?

The data collected from items 33-48 in the Section B of the research instrument were used to answer this research question 3 and the summary of the results of data analysis are presented below.

Table 3: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the respondents on the extent marital status of principals influence the utilization of legal provision in public secondary schools in Cross River State

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	DECISION
33.	The marital status of Principals on the respect of right to life	1.38	0.56	VLE
34.	The marital status of Principals in respecting the right to dignity of human person	1.25	0.49	VLE
35.	The status of Principals in giving liberty to persons	1.38	0.56	VLE

36.	The marital status of Principals in allowing individual fair hearing	1.39	0.54	VLE
37.	The marital status of Principals in allowing individual right to private life	1.23	0.49	VLE
38.	The marital status of Principals in giving people the right to freedom of religion	1.36	0.53	VLE
39.	The marital status of Principals in allowing individual right to freedom of expression	1.35	0.53	VLE
40.	The marital status of Principals in allowing individual right to freedom of movement	1.37	0.54	VLE
41.	The marital status of Principals in allowing individual right to freedom of movement	1.33	0.50	VLE
42.	The marital status of Principals in allowing Individual right to freedom from discrimination	1.31	0.49	VLE
43.	The marital status of Principals In allowing Individual right to freedom of acquisition of property.	1.32	0.50	VLE
44.	Punishment must be justifiable	1.36	0.52	VLE
45.	Punishment not to be excessive	1.29	0.50	VLE
46.	Punishment not too weighty than the gravity of the offence.	1.37	0.43	VLE
47.	Punishment not be administered maliciously	1.31	0.53	VLE
48.	That all corporal punishment must be entered In the corporal punishment book (log book).	1.23	0.43	VLE
Grand Mean (X)		1.32	0.53	VLE

Key: VLE: Very Low Extent; X: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

From the data analysis on Table 3, the responses revealed that the respondents do not accept that the marital status of principals influences their utilization of legal provision in public secondary school administration in Cross River State. The grand score of 1.32 is less than the mean 2.50 set as mean for decision making. Thus, this shows that to a very low extent that marital status does influence principals' utilization of legal provision in public secondary school administration in Cross River State.

Research Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' mean scores on principals' awareness of legal provision in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State.

Data collected from items 1-16 of the research instrument were used to test the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1

Status	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	α	Decision
Female	96	3.00	0.000	305	1.417	1.960	0.05	Accept H ₀₁
Male	210	3.20	0.397					

The level of awareness of legal provisions by male and female principals is not significantly different in terms of Cross River State educational laws for Secondary School administration and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The statistical analysis technique utilized to test the hypothesis was the t-test and it was carried out using each of the items.

The result of the analysis on Table 7 showed that male respondents has a higher t-value than the female, that is, 3.20 and 3.00 respectively for the awareness variable. The difference in the mean scores is statistically not significant at 1 degree of freedom and at 0.05 alpha level of significance. On the basis of the result, the null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is no significant difference between male and female principals mean scores on awareness of legal provisions in public secondary school administration in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' mean scores on the influence of sex of principals on the utilization of legal provision in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State. Data collected from items 17-32 of the research instrument were used to test the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

Status	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	α	Decision
Female	96	2.00	0.000	305	-2.415	1.960	0.05	Accept Ho ₂
Male	210	1.90	0.425					

Summary of results presented on Table 8 indicated that there is no significant difference in the male and female principals' mean scores on the influence of sex. The calculated t-value of -2.415 is less than the critical t-value of 1.960. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is no significant difference between male and female principals' mean scores on the influence of sex of principals on the utilization of legal provision in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 3

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between male and female principals' mean scores on the influence of marital status of principals on the utilization of legal provision in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State. The statistical analysis technique used to test the hypothesis was the independent t-test on items 33-48. The results as presented on Table 9.

Hypothesis 3

Status	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	A	Decision
Female	96	2.00	0.000	305	0.911	1.960	0.05	Accept Ho ₃
Male	210	1.10	0.464					

The independent t-test statistical measure showed the responses of respondents of their mean rating on the influence of marital status of principals on the utilization of legal provisions on school administration. The difference in the mean scores of male and female are statistically not significant and are 1.10 and 2.00 respectively. The calculated t-value of 0.911 is less than the table value of 1.960 at 1 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the null hypothesis be accepted which states that There is no significant difference between male and female principals' mean scores on the influence of marital status of principals on the utilization of legal provision in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State

DISCUSSIONS

Extent of Principals' Awareness of Legal Provisions in Public Secondary School Administration in Cross River State.

Data analysis of research question 1 revealed that principals' awareness of legal provisions in Secondary School administration is significantly high. It is healthy development as principals are aware of these legal provisions in secondary school administration. Farah (2013) maintained that principals in public and private secondary schools in Cross River State are to a high extent aware of legal provisions in school administration. This conforms with Barrel (2000) who maintained that teachers are properly aware of rights and wrongs that pertain to their roles of being in loco parentis. This is not in consonance with Ajayi (2004) observation that most principal are not aware of the availability of these laws.

Extent of Influence of sex on Principals' Utilization of Legal Provisions in Public Secondary School Administration in Cross River State.

The findings of the study with regard to research question two on Sex revealed the extent to which sex influences principal in the utilization of legal provisions in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State. The results on Table 2 show that sex to a low extent influences principals in their utilization of legal provisions. Also, Table 8 on research hypothesis 2 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of both male and female principals on the influence of sex on their utilization of legal provisions. The findings are in line with that of Barter (2001) who found out that both male and female principals are equal in administrative ability and personal qualities. The findings are also in conformity with that of Adie (2007) who carried out a comparative of performance of male and female principals and observed that both of them perform averagely in their role. The findings are also in consonance with Akpan and Eno (2006) who carried out a study aimed at comparing male and female secondary school principals' administrative competence. The findings showed that male principals are not significantly better in administration than their female counterpart. Ugboko and Adediruwa (2012) maintained that there is difference with the management and administrative strategies used by both sexes.

Extent of Influence of marital status on Principals' Utilization of Legal Provisions in Public Secondary School Administration in Cross River State.

The findings showed that marital status does not statistically significantly influence principal in the utilization of legal provisions in Public Secondary School administration in Cross River State. In a study conducted by Heilman (2005) on the "relationship between marital status and compliance with and enforcement of all applicable civil laws, rules and regulations" among workers, maintained marital status of the individual to a high degree influenced the use laws in managing an organization. But Barr (2006) pointed out that marital status has a lower influence on principals in utilizing laid down laws in a school. Umoh (2007) also emphasized the marital status of an individual has no bearing to his awareness and obedience of laid down rules.

Conclusion

In the light of the research findings of the study, it could be concluded that principals' level of awareness of legal provisions in secondary school administration is significantly high. It could

also be concluded that a number of principals' demographic viz age and years of job experience influence principals' utilization of legal provisions in secondary school administration. In other words, Age and Years of Job Experience are predictors that could affect principals in their administration. In the same vein, male and female principals do not have any significant disparity in their responses. In another development, it could also be concluded that Sex, Marital Status and academic Qualification are not variables that influence principals in their utilization of legal provisions. In addition to this, male and female principals do not have any significant difference in their responses on these variables.

Moreover, principals are to apply control mechanism such as proper supervision and motivation to curb the troubles of litigations. It is also pertinent for principals to create a good tripartite relationship with teachers, student and parents by keeping a good communication network devoid of bias but rapport.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Principals and other teachers should be provided with constitutional and legislative materials relating to education administration and employment as to acquaint them on legal issues to guide against future litigations by students and parents in Cross River State.
2. Principals must strive to operate in conformity and within the confines of laid down principles or procedures to avoid sanctions from their employers.
3. The government of Cross River State should consider age, job experience and character as yardsticks for appointment.
4. Provisions should be made for in-service training, regular workshops and seminar of school principal to help them upgrade their knowledge on legal provisions.
5. Principals should adopt a positive approach to the utilization of legal provisions and use it wisely and willingly in the administration of secondary school regardless of self interest and desires.

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