

Personality Traits and Administrative Effectiveness of Secondary School Principals in Southwestern Nigeria

Adeniyi, W. O.

*Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling
Faculty of Education. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

The thrust of the paper was to investigate the personality traits and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria. This was with a view to improving administrative skills of secondary school principals. The sample size comprised of 53 principals and 821 teachers who were selected from 53 public secondary schools from four states in Southwestern Nigeria using multistage and purposive sampling techniques. Principals' Personality Traits Questionnaire" (PPTQ) and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire" (PAEQ) were the instruments used to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics and chi-square statistics were employed to analyse the data. The results showed that 65.8% of teachers indicated that their principals were very effective. The mostly exhibited personality trait as reported by principals (56.6%) was conscientiousness. Also, the result showed that there existed a significant relationship between personality traits and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals ($\chi^2 = 42.4, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that conscientiousness was the necessary personality trait which predisposed secondary school principals to be effective in discharging their administrative duties.

Key words: Personality traits, principals and administrative effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

In secondary schools in Nigeria, the administrative efforts of principals are necessary in realising schools' goals and objectives. To a considerable degree, principals play multifaceted roles in setting the direction of secondary schools. What they say, do or think may have a significant effect on school performance. This is because their abilities are central to the task of building schools that could promote effective teaching and learning for all students. Hence, they are at the central point within the schools to influence the quality of individual teachers, instruction, the level of students' performance, and the efficiency in the functioning of school.

The hallmark of achieving an effective school begins with creating conducive school environment. It is believed that school is essentially a co-operative organisation, in which every member big or small, high or low has vital role to play. In this situation, the responsibility lies on all stakeholders in the school to work together with their school principal in order to provide a safe school environment that will facilitate meaningful instructional activities. However, a principal cannot achieve this without being able to perform his internal relations and organisational roles effectively. It is believed that an effective principal should be someone who is able to promote an atmosphere of respect and trust and makes the teachers and students have a sense of belonging.

According to Adeniyi (2012), administrative effectiveness referred to as the ability of school principals to carry out administrative tasks related to instructional management, internal relations, organisation management, administration, students' performance and school community relations toward achieving the school goals and objectives. It is the degree to which

secondary school principals achieve goals and objectives of their schools. In view of this, the tasks of proactive principals involve, among other things, coordinating both human and material resources available and using them systematically for the achievement of educational objectives.

The study of Oyedeji and Fasasi (2006), regarded a school principal as the chief executive of the school, who is responsible for all that happens in the school. They are of the opinion that a "school growth plan" is directly related to the identification, attraction, development and appointment of high performing school principal. The position he occupies places him in a great position to coordinate the entire school operation and moves it forward. More importantly, it is the administrative responsibility of a school principal to strive at creating a climate that will foster students' and teachers' growth. As a principal in the school, he needs to work with teachers, empowers them and gets them involved in developing wholeness, connectedness at work, deeper values, initiative, and team spirit in a way which benefits the school as a whole.

Arising from the above salient points, it can be inferred that the administrative responsibilities of secondary school principals cannot be under-estimated. Principals are a responsible avenue for the smooth running of schools. Consequently, for any principal to excel in his official duties, such a principal must possess certain qualities. For instance, an effective principal must be someone who is pragmatic, dynamic, warm-hearted, attentive, emotionally mature and of pleasant personality. Besides, an effective and efficient principal is regarded as a standard-setter and a crucial component of the social system. However, a school without the right type of leadership can best be described as a scene of confusion and chaos. According to Ross and Gray (2006) and Ibukun (1997), when leadership in an organisation is effective, there is progress but when the leadership is defective, the organisation declines and decays.

Considering the above, it is assumed that the school needs leadership with proven characters, a principal who is cool-headed, collected and who is ready to carry along his subordinates in discharging his professional functions. However, the study has shown that some of the principals in secondary schools in some states in Southwestern Nigeria did not possess required skills and personal attributes in school management. For example, Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) remarked that the attitudes of school principals in Osun State in Nigeria have resulted in the prevailing administrative problems in most secondary schools in the state. According to these authors, the administrative ineffectiveness of secondary school principals has resulted in high rate of conflicts in secondary schools. In furtherance of this, Arikewuyo (2009) confirmed that principals' effectiveness has resulted in poor performance of students in their examinations. The above result suggests that there is a link between behavioural characteristics and the principals' performance. Based on this, it is pertinent to ascertain the extent of relationship between personality traits and principals' administrative effectiveness.

Owuamanam and Owuamanam (2002) defined personality as the attributes of the individual which make him unique and different from other individuals. To Klein (2002), personality is an individual's characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In agreement with the above definitions, Oladele (2004) opined that personality is the unique and distinctive characteristics which set a person apart from another. Warren (2002) concluded that personality should include how a person acts, the impression that a person creates in others, and the person's typical patterns of behaviour.

In their own submission, Saucier and Goldberg (1998) indicated that there are five models of personality traits. These dimensions are referred to as the "Big Five" and they consist of

openness; conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Every leader has one of these traits dominating his personality. The type of trait that is dominating in one's personality will determine his behaviour and more importantly, his administrative style. For instance, Weisenbach (2004) is of the opinion that a principal with highly dominant (extraversion) trait appears to be unable to create favourable school climate. Furthermore, Loos (2001) believed that the principal with open (openness) personality can increase the overall positive climate. Based on this, it is pertinent to find out which of the traits has the greatest influence on administrative effectiveness of a principal.

In their studies, Matthewson (1995) and Marzano (2003) indicated that personality traits have a relationship on the likelihood of school principals engaging in shared decision making. While in their own views, Coleman (2005) and Maciel (2005) established that leadership behaviour has positive impact on school effectiveness and the implementation of professional learning communities. To corroborate the above, Avery (2004) concluded that traits that appear effective within one situational context may be seen as ineffective in another situation. Hence, Reave (2005) summed it up by asserting that people who are effective as leaders tend to exhibit certain traits. From the above findings, it is believed that not all traits are equally effective in predicting administrative effectiveness of principals. Hence, it seems to be unclear as there are variations and contradictions in the empirical results regarding which of the particular personality traits can promote principals' effectiveness.

Also, Buckmaster (2008) opined that extraversion is related to leadership effectiveness. According to Buckmaster, people that are considered as extraverts are sociable, assertive, and energetic people. They enjoy interacting with others in their environment and demonstrate self-confidence. Because they are both dominant and sociable in their environment, they emerge as leaders in a wide variety of situations. He went further by saying that out of all personality traits, extraversion has the strongest relationship to both leader emergence and leader effectiveness. In addition, Buckmaster, (2008) believed that conscientiousness and leadership effectiveness are related. Again, Buckmaster (2008) revealed that conscientious people are organised, take initiative, and demonstrate persistence in their endeavours. They equally confirmed that conscientious people are more likely to emerge as leaders and be effective as leaders. However, Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt, (2002) submitted that some traits are negatively related to emerging as a leader and being successful as a leader. The scholars revealed that agreeable people possess the attributes of being modest, good natured and avoid conflict, hence are less likely to be effective in their administrative roles. It can be inferred from the above that not all traits are equally effective in predicting leadership potential across all circumstances. Some organisational situations allow leader traits to make a greater difference (House, & Aditya, 1997). For instance, in small, entrepreneurial organizations where the leaders have a lot of leeway to determine their own behaviour, the type of traits leaders have may make a difference in leadership potential. In large, bureaucratic and rule bound organisations such as the government and the military, a leader's traits may have less to do with how the person behaves and whether the person is a successful leader (Judge, et.al 2002).

Consequent upon this, the study was conducted to establish the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals as well as examine the influence of personality traits on the administrative effectiveness secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria.

Research Objectives

- a. determine the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria;
- b. investigate the personality trait that is mostly exhibited by secondary school principals; and
- c. examine the relationship between personality traits and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals.

Research Questions

1. How effective are the secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria in discharging their administrative duties?
2. Which of the personality traits is mostly exhibited by secondary school principals?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between personality traits and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population for the study consisted of principals and teachers in secondary schools in Southwestern Nigeria. The sample size comprised of 53 principals and 821 teachers who were selected from 53 public secondary schools. The multistage and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select the study sample. Four states were selected from the six states in Southwestern Nigeria using simple random technique. From each state, five local government areas (LGAs) were selected using simple random sampling technique. Three schools were selected from each LGA using purposive sampling technique making a total of 53 schools. The principals and teachers were selected from 53 schools using purposive sampling technique. Purposive technique was used because only the principals and the teachers who have spent at least two years in their current schools could qualify for the study. Two research instruments used to collect data were: Principals' Personality Traits Questionnaire" (PPTQ) and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire" (PAEQ). PPTQ was a 40- item instrument adapted from Martson (1928), while PAEQ contained 48 items and was adapted from Arikewuyo (2007), Orange County Schools (2008) and Grissom & Loeb (2009). The Spearman Brown Coefficients and Spearman Brown Split-half reliability tests conducted on the instruments showed that PPTQ yielded results of 0.71 and 0.83 while, PAEQ had 0.95 and 0.90. Both at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive statistics and chi-square statistics were employed to analyse the data.

Research Question 1: How effective are the secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria in discharging their administrative duties?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Principals' Administrative Effectiveness
Principals' Administrative Effectiveness

	Frequency	Percentage %
Not Effective	34	4.1
Moderately Effective	41	5.0
Effective	206	25.1
Very Effective	540	65.8
Total	821	100.0

Table 1 shows the responses of teachers on the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals. The Table reveals that 65.8% of the teachers reported that their principals were very effective, 25.1% indicated that their principals were effective. On the whole, 5.0% of the respondents reported their principals to be moderately effective and the remaining 4.1% of the respondents revealed that their principals were not effective. This descriptive analysis shows that majority of the teachers reported that their secondary school principals were very effective in their administrative duties.

Research Question 2: Which of the personality traits is mostly exhibited by secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria?

Table 2a: Descriptive Analysis of Personality Traits Mostly Exhibited by Principals (Principals' Perspective)

Personality Traits	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Extraversion	8	15.1
Agreeableness	4	7.5
Conscientiousness	30	56.6
Neuroticism	2	3.8
Openness	9	17.0
Total	53	100.0

From Table 2a, 56.6% of the principals revealed that they usually exhibited conscientiousness trait. Nine of the principals, representing 17.0% reported that they possessed openness trait and 15.1% believed that they belonged to extraversion group. Also, 7.5% and 3.8% of the respondents indicated that they exhibited more of agreeableness and neuroticism traits.

Table 2b: Descriptive Analysis of Personality Traits Mostly Exhibited by Principals (Teachers' Perspective)

Personality Traits	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Extraversion	302	36.8
Agreeableness	123	15.0
Conscientiousness	270	32.9
Neuroticism	39	4.8
Openness	87	10.6
Total	821	100.0

Table 2b shows that 36.8% of the teachers believed that extraversion was the trait that was mostly exhibited by their principals. The teachers who indicated conscientiousness as the mostly exhibited trait were 32.9%. Also, 15.0% of the respondents reported that agreeableness trait was prevalent with their principals, while 10.6% and 4.8% disclosed openness and neuroticism as the prevalent traits among the secondary school principals.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between personality traits and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis on Responses of Teachers to the Relationship between Personality Traits and Principals' Administrative Effectiveness

	Ext	Agr	Con	Neu	Ope	χ^2	p
Not Effective	6 17.6%	9 26.5%	5 14.7%	7 20.6%	7 20.6%	42.4	<0.05
Moderately	11 26.8%	6 14.6%	11 26.8%	6 14.6%	7 17.1%		
Effective	71 34.5%	26 12.6%	79 38.3%	6 2.9%	24 11.7%		
Very Effective	213 39.4%	86 15.9%	171 31.7%	20 3.7%	50 9.3%		
Total	302 36.8%	123 15.0%	270 32.9%	39 4.8%	87 10.6%		

Significant at $p < .05$

Key: Ext = Extraversion, Agr = Agreeableness, Con = Conscientiousness
 Neu = Neuroticism Ope = Openness

Table 3 shows the responses of the teachers on the relationship between each of the personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals. It could be observed from the Table that 26.5% of the principals who had agreeableness trait were not effective, while 14.7% of the principals with conscientiousness trait were also classified not to be effective. Also, 39.4% and 31.7% of the principals with extraversion and conscientiousness traits were considered as being very effective in their administrative duties. The chi-square result of $\chi^2 = 42.4$, $df = 12$, $p < .05$ indicated that there is a significant relationship. Hence, the hypothesis that

states that there is no significant relationship between personality traits and administrative effectiveness of principals is, therefore, rejected.

DISCUSSION

One of the major findings of this study is that the secondary school principals were very effective in discharging their administrative functions. This result buttressed Adeniyi's (2012) studies that most of secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria were very effective. However, the studies that had previously conducted in Osun and Kwara States by Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) and Arikewuyo (2009) found that most secondary school principals were not effective in their administrative functions. Copland (2001) in his explanation believed that the principals are the leading figures in whatever happens in their schools. To this end, Tirozzi (2001) affirmed that for effective realisation of school policies, the management responsibilities should not be major task of the principal. Therefore, the problem of indiscipline in school goes beyond the ineffectiveness of principals. Principals alone should not be blamed for the state of the problems in secondary schools nowadays. Rather, the problems should be shared by all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, principals and government) in secondary education. More importantly, leadership in education sector is a dynamic process where an individual is not responsible to shoulder the group duties, but actively enjoys the partnership and dedication of all the stakeholders in achieving schools goals and objectives. Hence, schools must be seen as an ecosystem where several stakeholders work together to build successful schools. Where there is no teamwork, the effective management of schools is impeded because the principal efforts only are not enough in producing the required result in the school. The major factor is that every stakeholder should develop a positive mindset to contribute its quota towards the realisation of school goals and objectives.

It has been shown in this study that conscientiousness and extraversion were the most prevailing personality traits among the secondary school principals. The results collaborate Martin's (2004) findings that leaders who are extraverted and conscientious are usually effective in their duties. In supporting this statement, Buckmaster (2008) believed that conscientious people are more likely to emerge as leaders and be effective as leaders. The above provides the credibility to the earlier established fact that most secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria were very effective. Arising from this finding, it is important to note that despite the fact that some traits are good in producing effective leaders, the traits such as agreeableness and neuroticism are negatively related to emerging as a successful leader. In view of this, it is good to identify the traits that differentiate leaders from non-leaders and use this for appointment purposes.

Finally, the results of the analysis of hypothesis show that there is a significant relationship between personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness) and administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals. This implies that personality trait is a major determinant of leaders' work performance. This study established the fact that principals with extraversion and conscientiousness traits are considered to be more effective than principals with other traits. However, studies conducted by Judge et al. (2002) and Yeager (2005) revealed no significant relationship. Also, Martin (2004) observed that there is no significant relationship in the personality and the trust people have in their principals. This finding also tallies with the result that emanated from the students that there is no significant relationship between personality traits and principals' administrative effectiveness. But Martin (2004) equally believed that personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness are needed by leaders for effective performance. Confirming this statement, Ibukun et al. (1997), Reave (2005) maintained that people who are effective as

leaders tend to exhibit certain traits. Consequent upon this, it is good to note that some traits become relevant in specific situations. This assertion is supported by Avery's (2004) findings that behaviours that appear effective within one situational context may be seen as ineffective in another situation. From the foregoing, it is believed that personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness were more relevant to the principals' administrative effectiveness than the other three. However, the relevancies are situational.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that secondary school principals in Southwestern Nigeria were very effective in discharging their administrative duties. It is believed that most of the principals had personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness which gave them the required skills for school management. By and large, the task of school administration is a collective effort, therefore, it requires the collaborative effort of every stakeholder (government, parents, students, teachers and principals) with positive mindset in order to produce positive results in schools.

It thus recommended that for principals to be able to manage their schools well, such principals need to first of all understand that they have great influence within the schools and outside the schools. Hence, it is recommended that principals should have the necessary knowledge of their subordinates and also try to establish pleasant social interactions with them. In doing this, principals should know that they should not create unnecessary familiarity or be too rigid in the schools.

References

- Adeniyi, W. O. (2012). Personality traits, emotional intelligence and administrative effectiveness of principals of secondary schools in Southwestern, Nigeria. *Unpublished Ph.D. (Ed.) Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.*
- Arikewuyo, M.O. (2009). Professional training of secondary school principals in Nigeria: A neglected area in the educational system. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, Summer 2009(2) 73-84.*
- Avery, G. C. (2004). *Understanding leadership: Paradigms and Cases.* London: Sage Publication.
- Buckmaster, J. (2008). How does he manage? *Classified Web Site Boss. ManagementToday, 15.*
- Coleman, C.H. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of administrative leadership styles and schools as professional learning communities (*Unpublished doctoral dissertation*). University of New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Copland, M. (2001). The Myth of the Super Principal. *Phi Delta Kappa, 82(7), 528-533*
- Goldberg, L. R. (1998). The structure of phenotypic personality traits. *American Psychologist, 48, 26-34.*
- House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo vadis? *Journal of Management, 23(3), 409-473.*
- Ibukun, W.O. (1997). *Educational management theory and practice.* Lagos: Greeline Publishers.
- Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Hies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87, 765-780.*
- Klein, S. B. (2002). The cognitive neuroscience of knowing one's self. In M. S. Gazzaniga (Ed.), *The Cognitive Neurosciences III.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Loos, M.W. (2001). Improved leadership through a Myers-Briggs Analysis: Personality styles of principals and teachers at the secondary level (*Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*). University of San Francisco, California.
- Maciel, R.G. (2005). Do principals make a difference? An analysis of leadership behaviours of elementary principals in effective schools. *Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas – Pan American, Edinburg, Texas.*
- Martin, D.F. (2004). Principal personality and school trust (*Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*). Oklahoma State

University, Stillwater, OK.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; and Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). What works in schools: Translating research into action. Alexandria, VI: *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*.

Matthewson, H.A. (1995). The relationship between principal perceived success in the implementation of shared decision-making programs and personality type for elementary school principals from a rural Northern California County. *Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California*.

Okotoni, O & Okotoni, A. (2003). Conflict management in secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 12(1), 23-38 (2003).

Oladele, J.O. (2004). *Fundamentals of educational psychology*: Lagos, Johns-Lad Publishers Ltd.

Owuamanam, D.O & Owuamanam, T.O. (2004). *Fundamentals of psychology*. Lagos. Bolabay Publications.

Oyedeki, N.B. & Fasasi, Y.A. (2006). Dynamics of educational leadership. In J.B. Babalola, A.O. Ayeni, S.O. Adedeji, A.A. Suleiman, & M.O. Arikewuyo (Eds.).

Reave, L. (2005). Spiritual Values and Practices Related to Leadership Effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. (16), 5, 655-688.

Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). Transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organisational values: The mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 179-199.

Tirozzi, G. N. (2001). The artistry of leadership: The evolving role of the secondary principal. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(6), 434.

Warren, R. (2002). ACT Profile. Psychtests.com. <http://hr.psychtests.com/archprofile/stats/act.pdf>

Weisenbach, J.L. (2004). An investigation of the relationship between principal's personality and a school's organisational climate in Lutheran Elementary Schools in Michigan (*Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*). Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

Yeager, E.L. (2005). Relationships between leadership behaviours of Texas high school principals and campus accountability measures. (*Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*). Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi, Texas.