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INTERPLAY BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the interplay between principals' social intelligence and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out the relationship between principals' social skills, principals' conflict management skills and the organizational climate of public secondary schools. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The correlational research design was adopted with a population of 297 principals in all 297 public secondary schools in Cross River State. The sample size was 134 principals selected through the stratified and purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Principals' Social Intelligence and School Organizational Climate Questionnaire (PSISOCQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Departments of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument had two (2) sections and the response scale was structured on a 4-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument which gave reliability indexes of 0.82 and .86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses. The result revealed a statistically significant relationship between principals' social skills, principals' conflict management skills and the organizational climate of public secondary schools. The study concluded that there is a statistical relationship between principals' social intelligence and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that the Ministry of Education

should organize regular workshops and leadership training for school principals to develop their social intelligence. This training should focus on key skills like empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, which will help foster a more inclusive, positive school environment.

Keywords: Social Intelligence, Principals' Social Skills, Conflict Management, Organizational Climate, Public Secondary Schools

Introduction

In Nigeria secondary education serves as the bridge between primary and tertiary education. It is at that level that students are prepared for both professional and vocational programmes at higher education level. The attainment of school goals at this level was divided into three categories namely: opportunity for higher education, knowledge acquisition and teaching/learning outcome (Etor, Obeten & Obona, 2019). For these goals to be realized, a conducive environment or positive school climate is essential. The school environment affects everyone within it, including students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders. A positive school climate not only fosters student success in all areas but also supports teachers, who are regarded as the most valuable assets (Obona & Etete, 2019) and key stakeholders in Nigerian secondary education. Such an environment enables teachers to effectively fulfill their roles in delivering quality education and promoting the holistic development of students.

They are diverse conceptions as to what constitute school climate. As used in this study, school climate refers to the general atmosphere and environment within a school, influenced by the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. It encompasses several aspects, including:

i. Physical environment: The state of the school's facilities and available resources.
ii. Emotional environment: The sense of safety, support, and respect felt by individuals within the school.
iii. Social relationships: The quality of interactions between students, teachers, and staff.
iv. Teaching and learning environment: The instructional methods, expectations, and support aimed at fostering student success.

Some researchers agree that school climate is a multidimensional concept encompassing physical, social, and academic dimensions. School climate consists of three key dimensions: physical, social, and academic. The physical dimension refers to the condition of school facilities, classroom organization, student-to-teacher ratios, resource availability, and overall safety and comfort. The social dimension emphasizes the quality of relationships between students, teachers, and staff, fairness of treatment, competition levels, and involvement in decision-making. The academic dimension focuses on the quality of instruction, teacher expectations, and the monitoring and communication of student progress (Freiberg & Stan, 2014). Olubunmi

(2016) defines school climate as the overall atmosphere or tone of the school environment. Freiberg and Stan (2014) describe it as the "heart and soul" of a school, motivating both students and teachers and fostering their daily participation. This metaphor highlights the essential role of school climate, which attracts and energizes its members, giving life to the school's values. A healthy school climate promotes safety, engagement, and respect, where students, families, and educators work together toward a shared vision. In such environments, educators' model positive attitudes toward learning, and all contribute to the operations and upkeep of the school (Adeniyi, 2014).

School climates can be classified as either open or closed. Open school climates emphasize expressive characteristics, where teachers are seen as collaborative, helpful, and respected. In such environments, teachers work together to ensure student success, resulting in greater teacher dedication and student academic achievement (Amura-Yusuf, 2023). In contrast, closed school climates are marked by a lack of commitment and productivity. In these settings, principals may be authoritarian and unsupportive, leading to teacher frustration and inefficiency. According to Alexandra in Amura-Yusuf (2023), some schools foster a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, while others may feel exclusionary and unsafe. These feelings and attitudes form the essence of school climate. The climate of a school directly influences students' ability to learn and their academic performance. A pleasant, conducive environment enhances focus and understanding, whereas a noisy, overcrowded one hinders concentration and lowers performance. A positive school climate enhances higher teacher morale, and overall school effectiveness. Conversely, a negative school climate can hinder student success and teacher performance.

The organizational climate of schools worldwide is crucial for the overall quality of education. Research indicates that many schools around the globe struggle with poor organizational climates and knowledge-sharing practices among teachers in schools, which pose major challenges such as strained relationships, weak leadership, and a generally negative environment (Thapa et al., 2013; Obona et al., 2024). Such conditions often lead to low morale among teachers, increased turnover rates, and diminished student performance. According to the researchers, schools with negative climates fail to meet the objectives of the National Policy on Education which seeks to equip students with the skills necessary for self-reliance after graduation (Obona et al. 2024). Likewise, Adejumobi and Ojikutu (2013) note that negative school climate is strongly associated with teacher dissatisfaction and reduced job effectiveness. According to Obona et al. (2021), the lack of essential skills, involvement in criminal activities, and widespread indiscipline among many secondary school graduates are clear indicators of a poor organizational climate. Furthermore, Yusuf et al (2020) remark that ineffective leadership fosters a toxic environment, disrupting both academic and

extracurricular activities and worsening the situation.

The situation is similar in public secondary schools in Cross River State, where many institutions face challenges such as inadequate communication systems and insufficient administrative support. These issues contribute to a demoralized teaching staff, conflicts of various dimensions, and declining student performance. To address these challenges, principals' social intelligence could play a crucial role in improving the school organizational climate. By effectively managing relationships, resolving conflicts, and fostering open communication, principals can create a more positive and supportive environment that enhances both staff morale and student outcomes.

Principals' social intelligence refers to their ability to effectively understand and manage interpersonal relationships within the school system. This includes their skill in handling social complexities, recognizing and addressing the emotional needs of both staff and students, and fostering positive interactions that promote a cooperative and supportive school environment. Social intelligence equips principals with the tools to build strong relationships, resolve conflicts, and inspire others to work toward the school's objectives. Goleman (2006) describes social intelligence as comprising two main components: social awareness (such as empathy and attunement) and social facility (including synchrony, influence, and concern). Principals play a crucial role in mentoring and supporting teachers, enhancing instructional strategies, and promoting professional growth, which, as noted by Okafor et al. (2024), together lead to improved educational outcomes and overall school well-being. When applied to educational leadership, these abilities enable principals to enhance teacher motivation, improve student behavior, and elevate overall school performance.

According to Emanghe et al. (2022), social intelligence entails understanding group dynamics, being aware of group situations, and effectively interacting with group members to accomplish predetermined objectives. It is often equated with social competence, which refers to "the ability to understand the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of others, including oneself, in interpersonal situations, and act appropriately on that understanding to reach a goal" (Bartz et al., 2018, p. 51). Social intelligence encompasses the necessary skills for a school leader to foster harmonious interpersonal relationships, manage social interactions within the school, and build trust among staff, students, and parents, ultimately influencing their actions and efforts toward the school's success.

Principals with strong social intelligence contribute greatly to a healthier school climate and higher levels of teacher satisfaction. This suggests that principals with high social intelligence are more likely to positively influence the behavior and actions of teachers and students, guiding them toward achieving the school's goals and objectives. Supporting this assertion, Adeyemo (2017) demonstrated that social intelligence has a positive impact on both teachers' commitment and students' academic outcomes. Emotional maturity,

situational awareness, and empathy for subordinates are key components of social intelligence that can enhance a school administrator's capacity to provide effective leadership (Bartz et al., 2018). However, social skills and conflict management skills are the dimensions of principals' social intelligence examined in this work.

Principals' Social skills and school organizational climate

Principals' social skills refer to their ability to communicate effectively, build relationships, and manage interactions within the school. These skills are crucial in shaping the school's organizational climate, which includes the overall atmosphere, culture, and interactions within the school. A positive climate is characterized by open communication, trust, and collaboration among staff, students, and the wider school community. In secondary schools, principals who demonstrate skills like empathy, active listening, conflict resolution, and team building have a direct impact on how teachers, students, and others perceive the school. These skills foster a supportive and productive environment, enhancing teacher morale, student engagement, and overall school success. Research indicates that principals with strong social skills contribute to healthier school climates, leading to greater job satisfaction, reduced conflict, and improved academic outcomes (Adeyemo, 2017; Goleman, 2006).

Werang and Lena (2014) carried out a study to explore the relationships between principals' leadership, the school organizational climate, and teachers' job performance. The research focused on a population of 164 teachers from State Senior High Schools in the Merauke regency. To ensure a representative sample, the researchers employed Krejcie's sampling table, which indicated that a sample size of approximately 113-118 would be suitable for a population of 160-170. Ultimately, they selected 118 teachers, representing 71.95% of the total population. Questionnaires were used as the main tool for data collection, and the data were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. The findings highlighted two important conclusions: a significant relationship exists between principals' leadership and teachers' job performance, as well as between the school organizational climate and teachers' job performance.

Jaidie et al. (2020) conducted a study to explore the relationships between principals' skills, organizational climate, and teacher performance. The study examined seven specific relationships, including the impact of principals' managerial and academic oversight skills on organizational climate and their effects on teacher performance, both directly and indirectly through organizational climate as an intervening variable. Utilizing a quantitative Ex-Post Facto design, the research involved 31 school respondents, with data collected via questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression through SPSS 26 for hypothesis testing. The findings revealed several significant relationships: principals' managerial skills correlated with organizational climate (path coefficient = 0.327), while academic supervision skills showed a stronger correlation with

organizational climate (path coefficient = 0.624). Additionally, there was a positive link between principals' managerial skills and teacher performance (path coefficient = 0.457), and academic supervision skills also correlated with teacher performance (path coefficient = 0.277). A relationship existed between organizational climate and teacher performance (path coefficient = 0.272), and an indirect effect of principals' managerial skills on teacher performance through organizational climate was observed (path coefficient = 0.5459). Similarly, academic supervision skills had an indirect effect on teacher performance through organizational climate (path coefficient = 0.4516).

Oguejiofor et al. (2022) examined the relationship between principals' social skills management and effective school organization in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, they sampled 236 principals from 295 schools through simple random sampling. Data were collected using two validated instruments, with reliability scores of 0.76 and 0.71. The study employed simple regression analysis and t-tests, revealing that principals' conflict resolution and interpersonal skills significantly contribute to effective school administration. In another study, Uzoejinwa (2022) explored the school climate challenges faced by principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design with a sample of 108 male and 148 female principals from a total population of 256. Data were gathered through a validated "School Climate Challenges Questionnaire" (SCCQ), with reliability confirmed through Pearson's product-moment correlation (coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.72). Key challenges identified included safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and the overall school environment, affecting both male and female principals similarly. Emanghe et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the connection between principals' social intelligence and their leadership role performance in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The researchers utilized a correlational research design with a sample of 765 principals and vice-principals. Data were collected using the "Principals' Social Intelligence and Leadership Role Performance Questionnaire" (PSILRPQ). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analyses were employed for data analysis. The results indicated that principals' emotional maturity, situational skills, and empathy for subordinates were significantly linked to their leadership performance. The study concluded that to improve decision-making, boost staff motivation, enhance instructional supervision, and maintain discipline, principals must exhibit a high level of social intelligence.

Principals' conflict management skills and school organizational climate

Conflict is inevitable in any workplace where multiple individuals are present. Often, conflicts arise due to poor interpersonal relationships. Developing, managing, and applying conflict resolution skills in secondary schools is especially beneficial, given the diverse ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and

varied life experiences of the individuals involved. Conflict resolution, as the term suggests, involves addressing and resolving significant concerns among employees that could lead to disagreements (Iyang, 2016). It is the process employed to resolve disputes between two or more parties to ensure a harmonious working relationship (Doyle, 2022).

Principals' conflict management refers to the strategies used by school leaders to resolve conflicts within the school, whether among staff, students, or other stakeholders. Common conflict management styles include collaborating to find a mutually beneficial solution, compromising for a middle ground, accommodating to prioritize others' concerns, avoiding to delay addressing the issue, and dominating by using authority to enforce a resolution. Principals' conflict management can be effectively understood through the lens of transformational leadership theory. According to Leithwood and Sun (2018) transformational principal tends to use collaborative and accommodating conflict management styles to foster a positive school climate. Principals who adopt transformational approaches to conflict management create more inclusive and supportive school environments. Okeke and Igwe (2020) posits that principals who successfully adjust their conflict management skills based on the circumstances are better able to maintain a positive school climate. Robinson and Morrison (2021) shows that positive exchanges between principals and teachers, driven by effective conflict management, contribute to a healthier organizational climate.

Several studies confirmed that conflict management styles significantly influenced and relate school organization climate (Villanueva & Moleño, 2022; Özkan & Ceylan, 2019; Okeke & Igwe, 2020; Thomas & Simmons, 2018). The way a principal handles conflicts plays a crucial role in shaping the school's organizational climate, influencing staff morale, teamwork, and overall school effectiveness.

Osei and Boadi (2022) investigated the relationship between principals' conflict management styles and the organizational climate in Ghanaian secondary schools. Using a quantitative approach, data were gathered from 280 teachers through structured questionnaires. The study revealed that principals who adopted integrative conflict management strategies, such as collaboration and accommodation, positively influenced the school climate by improving job satisfaction and fostering better teacher relationships. In contrast, competitive or avoiding styles were associated with low staff morale and student discipline issues. In a related development, Ali and Hassan (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study in Malaysian secondary schools to assess how principals' conflict management styles influenced school climate. Data were collected from 300 teachers, and the findings highlighted that collaborative and compromising strategies fostered trust and cooperation among staff, enhancing the organizational climate. On the other hand, avoidance and domination approaches led to frustration and reduced job satisfaction among teachers.

The review showed that extensive research on related variables has been conducted. However, no studies have specifically examined the interplay between principals' social intelligence and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Existing research adopted a global perspective, leaving a contextual gap. This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing on public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria, thereby contributing new insights to the knowledge bank.

Statement of problem

In every school system, a positive school climate is characterized by mutual respect, safety, inclusiveness, and a sense of community among teachers, staff, and students. It fosters collaboration, enhances teaching and learning experiences, and supports the personal and academic development of students. Teachers in a positive climate tend to feel more motivated, job satisfaction improves, and students are more engaged and disciplined, leading to better academic outcomes and overall school performance.

However, in many public secondary schools in Cross River State, researchers have observed that maintaining a positive school climate has been a significant challenge. Issues such as poor communication, low staff morale, student indiscipline, and a lack of collaborative spirit are common. These negative conditions hinder effective teaching and learning, leading to low academic performance, and high teacher turnover. This has also resulted to increased indiscipline, disengagement from school activities, and a decline in the school's ability to foster a safe and nurturing environment. Despite various interventions by the Cross River State government, including timely payment of salaries, wages and infrastructural development, these efforts have not successfully addressed the persistent issues surrounding the school climate.

Given these persistent challenges, this study suggests that principals' social intelligence could be a key factor in improving the school climate. Social intelligence, which involves understanding and managing social relationships effectively, may enable principals to better address conflicts, foster communication, and build a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment. Therefore, this study is poised to investigate whether there is a relationship between principals' social intelligence and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to examine the interplay between principals' social intelligence and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at examining the relationship between:

1. Principals' social skills and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Principals' conflict management skills and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions directed the study:

1. How do principals' social skills relate to organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State?
2. How do principals' conflict management skills relate the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

1. Principals' social skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Principals' conflict management skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Method

The correlational research design was adopted with a population of 297 principals in all 297 public secondary schools in Cross River State. The sample size was 134 principals selected through the stratified and purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Principals' Social Intelligence and School Organizational Climate Questionnaire (PSISOCQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Departments of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument had two (2) sections and the response scale was structured on a 4-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Three teachers were purposively selected from each school to respond to the items on the questionnaire since they interact with principals regularly and can provide valuable feedback on how the principals' social skills affect the school climate, morale, and overall environment. The research instruments were administered to the respondents after due permissions were obtained from their respective school authorities. The researchers recruited 5 additional research assistants who were guided for the exercise to ensure timely completion of the data collection process. After some hours, they went round to retrieve the questionnaires back from the respondent and all copies where successfully retrieved signifying 100% return rate. However, the researchers discovered that out of 145 questionnaires copied retrieved, only 134 were correctly responded to and those were used for the analysis while those not properly responded to were discarded. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument which gave reliability indexes of 0.82 and .86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. The hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: How do principals' social skills relate to organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State? The result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/No	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	The principal's effective communication with the teachers fosters a positive organizational climate.	2.52	.90	High
2.	The principal's ability to listen to teachers' concerns enhances teamwork in the school.	2.65	.67	High
3.	The principal's interpersonal skills contribute to a collaborative school environment.	2.48	.84	Low
4.	The principal's empathy towards staff influences the overall school climate positively.	2.51	.81	High
5.	The principal's approachability improves the working relationships among staff members.	2.50	.85	High
6.	The principal's personality helps in creating a more harmonious school environment.	2.31	.82	Low
7.	The principal has the ability to build trust among staff.	2.56	.90	High
8.	The principal's social interactions improve staff job satisfaction	2.62	.89	High
	Overall Mean Score & Std. Dev.	**2.52**	**.84**	**High**

Analysis of data in Table 1 revealed that items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 were rated above 2.50 of the acceptable mean score by the teachers to show their agreement with all these statements. This showed the perceptions of teachers regarding the relationship between principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The results indicate that the respondent's perception of: principal's effective communication with the teachers, ability to listen to teachers' concerns, empathy towards staff, approachability, ability to build trust among staff, and social interactions improve staff job satisfaction, was high. However, items 3 and 6, were rated below 2.50 of the acceptable mean score by the teachers to show their disagreement with these statements. This indicates that the respondent's perceptions of: principals' interpersonal skill to contribute to a collaborative school environment, and in creating a more harmonious school environment in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria, was low.

Research Question 2: How do principals' conflict management skills relate the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State? The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/No	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	The principal addresses conflicts among staff members promptly.	2.52	.80	High
2.	The principal's conflict resolution strategies create a productive school environment.	2.65	.87	High
3.	The principal ensures that conflicts between staff are resolved fairly.	2.68	.94	High
4.	The principal's approach to handling disputes reduces tension among staff.	2.51	.86	High
5.	The principal actively involves teachers in finding solutions to conflicts in the school.	2.50	.71	High
6.	The principal's conflict management skills help to maintain a cooperative school climate.	2.41	.82	Low
7.	The principal resolves conflicts in a way that strengthens relationships among staff members.	2.56	.92	High
8.	The principal uses clear procedures to manage conflicts, which enhances trust in the school.	2.32	.87	Low
	Overall Mean Score & Std. Dev.	**2.51**	**.85**	**High**

Analysis of data in Table 1 revealed that items 1, 2,3,4, 5, and 7 were rated above 2.50 of the acceptable mean score by the teachers to show their agreement with all these statements. This showed the perceptions of teachers regarding the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The results indicate that the respondent's perception that: principals address conflicts among staff members promptly, create a productive school environment, ensures that conflicts between staff are resolved fairly, approach to handling disputes reduces tension among staff, actively involves teachers in finding solutions to conflicts in the school, and resolves conflicts in a way that strengthens relationships among staff members was high. However, items 6 and 8, were rated below 2.50 of the acceptable mean score by the teachers to show their disagreement with these statements. This indicates that the respondent's perceptions of: principal's conflict management skills help to maintain a cooperative school climate, and principal's uses clear procedures to manage conflicts, which enhances trust in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria, was low.

Hypothesis one: Principals' social skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result presented in table 3.

Table 3 showed the correlation coefficients between principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State. The correlation

coefficient was statistically significant for organizational climate of public secondary schools (r = .72, p<.05). Since *p*(.000) is less than *p*(.05), hypothesis was is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State (N=134)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.
Principals' social skills	19.56	3.33		
Organizational climate of public secondary schools	19.40	3.09	.72*	.000

*Significant at p<.05 df=132

Hypothesis two: Principals' conflict management skills do not have any statistically significant relationship with the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result presented in table 4.

Table 4 showed the correlation coefficients between principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State. The correlation coefficient was statistically significant for organizational climate of public secondary schools (r = .87, p<.05). Since *p*(.000) is less than *p*(.05), hypothesis was is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State (N=134)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.
Principals' conflict management skills	19.16	3.38		
Organizational climate of public secondary schools	19.40	3.09	.87*	.000

*Significant at p<.05 df=132

Discussion of Findings

The finding of research hypothesis one revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between principals' social skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This may be explained by the role social skills play in shaping interactions, communication, and relationships within the school. Principals with strong social skills, such as effective communication, empathy, and conflict resolution abilities, are better able to create a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment. This encourages collaboration among staff, reduces conflicts, and increases

trust, which enhances the overall organizational climate. The implication of this finding is that school systems should focus on developing and improving principals' social skills, since they are critical to fostering a healthy school climate that supports both teacher and student performance.

The finding gives credence to the conclusions of Adeyemo (2017) and Goleman (2006) that principals with strong social skills contribute to healthier school climates, leading to greater job satisfaction, reduced conflict, and improved academic outcomes. It is similar to the findings of Werang and Lena (2014) that a significant relationship exists between principals' leadership and teachers' job performance, as well as between the school organizational climate and teachers' job performance. The finding also corroborate that of Jaidie et al. (2020) principals' managerial skills correlated with organizational climate (path coefficient = 0.327). It is in tandem with the findings of Emanghe et al. (2022) who conducted a study to explore the connection between principals' social intelligence and their leadership role performance in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The study concluded that to improve decision-making, boost staff motivation, enhance instructional supervision, and maintain discipline, principals must exhibit a high level of social intelligence.

The finding of research hypothesis two revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between principals' conflict management skills and organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This may be possibly because of principal's ability to effectively address and resolve conflicts plays a crucial role in shaping a positive school environment. Principals with strong conflict management skills can prevent disputes from escalating, ensure fairness in handling disagreements, and promote collaboration among staff. This reduces tension and creates a more cohesive, peaceful atmosphere where teachers and students can thrive. The implication is that educational leadership training should emphasize conflict resolution techniques for principals, as these skills are vital for maintaining a productive and harmonious organizational climate in schools.

The way a principal handles conflicts plays a crucial role in shaping the school's organizational climate, influencing staff morale, teamwork, and overall school effectiveness. This finding is similar to the submission of Okeke and Igwe (2020) that principals who successfully adjust their conflict management skills based on the circumstances are better able to maintain a positive school climate. The findings also corroborate the findings of Villanueva and Moleño (2022); Özkan and Ceylan (2019); Okeke and Igwe (2020); Thomas and Simmons (2018) who confirmed that conflict management styles significantly influenced and relate school organization climate.

The finding also aligns with that of Osei and Boadi (2022) who revealed that principals who adopted integrative conflict management strategies, such as

collaboration and accommodation, positively influenced the school climate by improving job satisfaction and fostering better teacher relationships. The finding is in agreement with that of Ali and Hassan (2021) collaborative and compromising strategies fostered trust and cooperation among staff, enhancing the organizational climate.

Conclusion

Based on the findings that indicate a statistically significant relationship between principals' social skills, conflict management skills, and the organizational climate of public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria, this study concludes that principals' social intelligence plays a critical role in shaping a positive organizational climate. Principals who effectively utilize social intelligence, particularly in managing interpersonal relationships and resolving conflicts, contribute to a more conducive and harmonious school environment. This underscores the importance of enhancing principals' social intelligence as a strategy for fostering a productive and collaborative atmosphere within schools, ultimately leading to improved overall school effectiveness.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings, the study recommends that:

1. The Ministry of Education should organize regular workshops and leadership training for school principals to develop their social intelligence. This training should focus on key skills like empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, which will help foster a more inclusive, positive school environment.
2. In principal recruitment, the state government should prioritize social intelligence as a critical skill. This can be evaluated through interviews, psychological assessments, or certifications, ensuring that school leaders are capable of promoting a healthy organizational climate.
3. School management boards should implement continuous monitoring and support systems to aid principals in developing their social intelligence. This could include regular assessments, peer mentoring, and counseling to help them manage challenges and sustain a positive school climate.

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