



FACTORS INFLUENCING ETHICAL STANDARDS OF SUPERVISORS IN SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.



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Abstract

The study examined factors influencing ethical standards of supervisors of instruction in public secondary school in Anambra State Nigeria. Two research questions were answered in the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population comprised 1,200 public secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Using a proportionate sampling technique, 120 teachers were sampled as respondents. This represented 10% of the population. A 23-item questionnaire, constructed by the researchers, titled “Factors Influencing Ethical Standards of Supervisors Questionnaire” (FIESSQ) was used as the instrument for data collection. It was validated by three experts in education. The test of reliability of the instrument yielded a co-efficient of 0.88 and 0.84. Mean scores and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research question. Major findings of the study included that exploitative relationship, favouritism, discrimination, scapegoating, intolerance, derogatory treatment, conflict of interest, etc, were the factors that influence ethical standards of supervisors of instruction in Anambra State. The findings also revealed that fostering positive learning environment, setting clear guidelines, prompt response to issues, clear communication channels, well defined expectations, training programmes, amongst others, constituted ways by which supervisors can improve ethical standards in supervision of instruction in the state. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that both the Federal and the State government should provide ethical training programmes to educate supervisors in ethical principles, in order to promote ethical conducts, Government should establish clear guidelines and policies on ethical conducts for supervisors with full implementation, to ensure that supervisors understand their responsibilities and expectations. It was also recommended that the education system should conduct regular evaluation of supervisors’ performance and establish disciplinary procedures for ethical violation. Based on the findings, the researchers, finally concluded that there are factors that influence ethical standards of supervisors in supervision of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State and that these detrimental factors cannot be neglected. Ethical standards, being an important aspect of school, needs serious concentration. Hence proper approach is fundamental to the change because a good measure of ethics in supervisory practices will contribute to the achievement of a more just and sustainable national goal of education in the country.

Keywords: Factors, Influence, Ethics, Ethical Standards, Supervisors, Supervision, Instruction, Public Schools.



Introduction

Supervision in education ordinarily refers to improvement of the total teaching and learning situation and conditions that affect them. It is a social function designed to improve instruction by working with the teachers who are working with the learners. It is more so defined as an act of a superior person overseeing the work of the subordinate working at the lower level. The overseeing means directing, guiding, advising and helping the subordinates in performance, with the purpose of achieving established goals. Key supervisory roles include educating, coaching, sponsoring, counseling, improving, refreshing, encouraging and motivating the supervisee. In this context, principle effectiveness of supervision include supervisors identification of needs and strength-focusing of the supervisees, while the main goal is to improve their confidence and critical thinking, as they seek support and feedback for growth and development in their professional teaching.

It is important to remember that schools have never been islands as they ward off the effects of trends emerging with humane nature of man. It is equally important to understand that school are now subjects to the impacts of global changes to which the stakeholder require rapid local response. Supervision has been far from the novel concept. The reality is that its methodology and techniques have gone a long way from the past several decades and is still making several headways. Hence modern supervision as opposed to inspection in education, has become a concept where ethical standards of supervisors should trend higher, to promote professional growth of teachers' ability to effectively and efficiently teach in classroom setting for sustainable national development in education.

The term ethics is fashionable and is seen in almost every profession. The word is simply defined as the science of right and wrong, the science of moral judgment and conduct. It is a concept about moral values and rules. Ethics in education, especially in school, deals with moral principles that guide behaviours within the educational environment. Ethical standards in education reflects making decision that follows appropriate conducts and respect to others in the teaching learning situations. In school supervision, ethical standards are fundamental in guiding teachers. These standards ensure fairness, protection, accountability of teachers and their wellbeing, ultimately fostering positive and ethical teaching and learning. Supervisors ethical leadership is of great importance regarding growth and development of education. Some moral norms for right conducts are common to human kind as they transcend and constitute common morality such as not to: harm, suffer or punish the innocent; to be truthful, obey the law in nurturing the young. Thus, it is important to link ethical standards to supervision of instruction in Public secondary schools.

The Problem

Problems of supervision of instruction can be dimensional. Several of them plague the supervisors, hindering the ability to effectively render their supervisory duties. Dozens of articles and chapters had been written on supervision of instruction and its subsidiaries, but very scanty of them, if not none, treated the practice of ethics as a component for achieving instructional supervision efficiency and effectiveness. Many related literatures in the study revealed the gap of ethical consideration as an area of one of the serious factors affecting efficiency in supervision of instruction. Many of the previous research works have not touched the area of ethical standards that are required to enhance supervisory services in schools. Factors like insufficient funding, lack of resources, resistance of teachers, excessive workload of the supervisors, and the likes, were common in the findings of most previous researchers such as Adesina (2001), Kamido (2006), Olatuye (2006), Eya et al (2012), Anuna (2024) and Danladi et al (2019), among numerous others. None of the aforementioned studies were found to relay the ethics of research involving human object as a factor in achieving successful supervision of instruction in schools. None were concerned with the principles of respect of persons, beneficence and justice. This showed that many former researchers have not delved into most of the critical ethical issues in supervision of instruction. Comments that did follow their findings failed to observe the ethical principle as a constituent to achieving successful instructional supervision. Even in some theoretical frameworks in the field by such authors as Okoli (2006), Throne (2020), Onele et al (2016) and others. The concept that reflects the ethics issues or debate about disability and feasibility of ethics

were yet to gain discussions, in as much as no book of reading in exhaustive. To strengthen this gap of omissions, a study By Izham et al (2024) found that till date, teachers have not been really satisfied with the instructional supervisory services carried out in schools. The entire school organization in the country Nigeria and the public secondary Schools in Anambra State seemed not to be exempted in the face of this ugly situation of the supervisory services practiced by supervisors. According to Gordean et al (2001) ethical issues are part of everyday life, therefore, are integrated and intertwined with professionalism. Anytime one compromises ethics, one damages the organization's reputation. In this present time, education managers have started to feel more pressure on their arms when ethical complex situation arise. Moreso, in the recent years, ethics is becoming a popular topic in many professional fields and education stands at the cross of the road. In order to continually maintain good instructional supervision, there is need to incorporate ethical standards. Hence a systematic approach to ethical issues that may influence supervisors in supervision of instruction in th public secondary schools in Anambra State need to be investigated. Addressing the ethical delima in the supervision of instruction in public secondary school in Anambra State is what this Paper sets out to do.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to access ethical standards in supervision of instruction in the public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study aimed at:

1. Finding the common factors influencing supervisors ethical standards in supervision of instruction in the public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.
2. Proffering solution to resolving the factors as problems influencing supervisors' ethical standards in supervision of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.
3. Integrating ethical Standards while carrying out instructional supervision in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
4. Establishing and maintaining high ethical standards for supervisors of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors influencing supervisors ethical standards in instructional supervisory practices in the Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State?
2. How can the ethical Standards of the supervisors of instruction in the Public Secondary School in Anambra State be Improved?

Literature

Markkular (2023) posited that well founded ethical standard prescribes what human ought to do usually in terms of right, obligations, fairness and its benefit to the internal and external perspective. Code of conduct for instructional supervision (2021) highlighted that ethical supervision shares crucial information, transparent communication, and clear explanation of what is expected of the supervisees. According to Kokaba and Karakosa (2004) ethical codes expected of school supervisors included due care, confidentiality, fostering positive relationship, building trust and help to develop the supervisees' skills to achieve learning objectives. Similarly, Kutahya(2009) noted that the first ethical responsibility of supervisors is to: have ethical perception of instructional supervion, reflect on the practices and behave ethically while doing the job. Moreover, Gidado (2022) also observed that supervisors have ethical responsibilities beyond enforcing educational policies and obeying laws. Instead, it priotises teachers' and student's wellbeing, ensuring a safe and equitable learning environment for all. Nevertheless, ethical standards are not static; they should be reviewed and updated regularly, to reflect the evolving need of school supervision.

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey research. 120 teachers were selected from 1,200 teachers in the public secondary schools in the State.

The instrument for data collection was a self designed structure questionnaire titled “Factors Influencing Ethical Standards of Supervisors Questionnaire” (FIESSQ). The instrument had two sections A-B. Section A contained 12 questions on supervisors attitude towards supervision of instruction, while Section B has 11 items that sought information on how supervisors can improve their ethical standards in supervision of instruction. All the items were structured on a 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively.

The face validation of the instrument was determined by three experts in the faculty of education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State. The questionnaire reliability was ascertained through a pilot study. The data collected were analysed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method, which yielded coefficient values of 0.88. The reliability analysis on the obtained data yielded a score of 0.85 for internal consistency which was considered adequate for the study. Out of 120 questionnaire administered, 110 were duly filled and returned. This represented 95% retrieval rate.

The data generated from the questionnaire were analysed using Mean ($\bar{M}$) and Standard Deviation (SD). The Mean value was used to answer the research questions and the Standard Deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise, of respondents’ ratings. The items with Mean score between 2.50 and above were Agree, whereas those with Mean score below 2.50 were Disagree.

Results

Research question 1

What are the factors influencing Supervisors ethical standards in instructional supervisory practices in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1:

Respondents’ Mean rating on Factors Influencing Ethical Standards of Supervisors in Supervision of Instruction in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

s/n	Factors Influencing Ethical Standards of Supervisors in Supervision of Instruction Include:	Rating		
		$\bar{M}$	SD	Remark
1	Exploitative relationship with the supervisees; either financially, emotionally or in any other way.	3.36	0.87	Agree
2	Favouritism: partiality/bias/being unfair, unjust or subjective in evaluation.	3.24	0.78	Agree
3	Non transparent communication in sharing crucial information and giving supervisees an opportunity to be heard.	3.20	0.83	Agree
4	Discrimination against vulnerable supervisees	3.22	0.85	Agree
5	Upholding power structure at the detriment of valuable considerations.	3.33	0.83	Agree
6	Shifting responsibilities unto the supervisees instead of addressing the problem.	3.45	0.90	Agree
7	Assigning blames to supervisees for things not done well.	3.12	0.79	Agree
8	Scapgoating supervisees for self sustaining competence	3.22	0.82	Agree
9	Intolerance of supervisees’ views, opinions and ideas.	3.35	0.78	Agree
10	Derogatory treatment of supervisees by not recognizing their values, worth and dignity.	3.41	0.89	Agree
11	Disclosure of personal information of the supervisee.	3.07	0.74	Agree
12	Conflict of interests.	3.32	0.85	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.26		Agree

Table 1 highlighted the Mean responses of the respondents on the factors influencing supervisors' instructional supervision in public secondary schools. The results showed that the whole items fall within the Mean ranging between 3.07 and 3.45 with standard deviations ranging between 0.74 and 0.90. This revealed that the listed items constituted factors influencing ethical standards of supervisors of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

The Cluster Mean of 3.26 revealed that exploitative relationship, favouritism, non-transparent communication, discrimination, power structure, shifting responsibilities, assigning blames to supervisees, scapegoating, intolerance derogatory treatment, disclosure of personal information of supervisees and conflict of interests constituted supervisors' attitudes that influence their ethical standard in supervision of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research question 2

How would the ethical standard of supervisors of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State be improved?

Table 2:

Respondents' Mean rating on how ethical standards of Supervisors of instruction in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State can be improved.

S/N	Ethical standards of supervisors of instruction can be improved by;	Rating		
		M	SD	Remark
1	Fostering positive learning environment by addressing potential conflicts proactively.	3.30	0.87	Agree
2	Creating comprehensive and well clear instructions and discussing them with supervisee.	3.22	0.85	Agree
3	Providing clean guidance for the supervisees.	3.43	0.91	Agree
4	Responding quickly to questions and clarification of issues.	3.48	0.92	Agree
5	Establishing clear communication channels to facilitate fair hearing.	3.12	0.76	Agree
6	Avoidance of dual relationship in supervision (Intimacy).	3.17	0.84	Agree
7	Specifying well defined expectations from the supervisees.	3.24	0.70	Agree
8	Undergoing training programmes for effective mentoring and acquisition of current trends in supervisory practices.	3.33	0.86	Agree
9	Clarification of boundary problems for better relationship with supervisees.	3.35	0.89	Agree
10	Commitment to ethical practices.	3.22	0.86	Agree
11	Being a good role model	3.11	0.80	Agree
	Cluster Mean	3.24	0.87	Agree

Data in Table 2 showed the Mean responses on how ethical standard of supervisors of instruction in public secondary schools in Anambra State could be improved. All the items achieved Mean ratings between 3.12 – 3.48 with standard deviation ranging between 0.70–0.92. This means that all the listed items were the ways through which ethical standards of supervisors of instruction in the public Secondary Schools in Anambra State could be improved. The Cluster Mean of 3.24 indicated that the supervisors ethical standards could be improved by fostering positive learning environment through addressing potential conflicts proactively, creating comprehensive plans to set clear instructions and discussing openly with supervisees, providing clear guidelines for the supervisees, responding quickly to questions and clarification of issues, establishing clear communication channels to facilitate fair hearings, avoidance of dual relationships, specifying well defined expectations from supervisees,

undergoing training programmes for effective mentoring and acquisition of current trends in supervisory practices, clarification of boundary problems for better relationship with supervisees and commitment to ethical practices.

Discussion

Results of Research question one established that supervisors' poor attitudes are the factors that influence their ethical standards in supervision of instruction in the public secondary schools in Anambra State. This result is in line with the studies of Bevere (2023), Szamet (2024) and Carey and Peck (2022), who discovered that such attitudes of unfair treatment of any kind, non recognition of values, dignity and worth of persons, among others, constituted poor ethical standards of supervisors in school supervision. Similarly, discrimination, favouritism, violating professional standards and so on were highlighted in the similar studies of Manley (2018), Breach et al (2012) and Chris (2021). Even the studies of Khan (2024) and Claudio (2019) listed: compromising professional judgment, conflict of interest, etc, as factors of unethical behaviour committed by school supervisors. The result also aligned with Wisco (2023) and Alexander (2024) who found that supervisors' ethical standards are lowered with poor interaction and strained relationship. These poor attitudes are characterized by tension, discomfort and breakdown in effective communication between individuals, often due to unresolved conflicts or unmet expectations.

The second finding of this study indicated that supervisors' ethical standards could be improved through some meaningful ways. The findings agree with Chrysos (2025) in a study on how to improve ethical leadership skill, where he discovered that the ingredients included making decisions based on values, providing ethical training, clear communication and instruction, impartiality in dealing with supervisory matters, transparency, and lots of others. In the same vein, Thorne (2020), writing on Ethical Issues in Supervision, identified that avoidance of dual relationship by way of intimacy with the supervisee, clarifying boundaries in supervisees relationship, specifying expectations and clear guidance, etc, go a long way to improve supervisors' ethical standards in their job.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers draw the conclusion that there are factors that influence ethical standards of supervisor in supervision of instruction in secondary schools, therefore these determinantal factors can not be neglected. Ethical standards is important aspect in schools that needs serious concentration. A proper approach is fundamental to change the supervisors' perceptions which can influence their attitudes towards supervision of instruction. A good measure of ethics in supervision of instruction will get the supervisors committed to upholding the highest ethical standards that will contribute to the achievement of a more just and sustainable nation goal of education in the country.

Recommendations

The researchers make the following recommendations based on the findings: -

1. The Federal and State Government should provide ethics training programmes that aim to educate supervisors and other stakeholders in school on ethical principles, values and guidelines, to enhance awareness of ethical ideal and promote ethical conduct.
2. Government should establish a clear guideline and policies on ethical conduct for supervisors as well as making full implementation to ensure that supervisors understand their responsibilities and expectations.
3. The education system should conduct regular evaluation of supervisors' performance and establish disciplinary procedures for ethical violations.

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