



## PRINCIPALS' FAITH-BASED ETHICAL TECHNIQUES AS PREDICTORS OF ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN RIVERS STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS



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### Abstract

*This study investigated the relationship between principals' faith-based ethical techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey design was adopted. The population consisted of 672 private senior secondary schools' principals in Rivers State, from which a sample of 251 was proportionally selected using multistage sampling across 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Data used in the study were collected using two validated instruments: The Faith-Based Ethical Techniques Questionnaire (FBETQ) and the Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ), with reliability coefficients of 0.89 and 0.81 respectively. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression. Findings revealed that principals' moral guidance techniques significantly predicted administrative effectiveness ( $r = .548, p < .001$ ), accounting for 30% of the variance. Similarly, community engagement techniques were also significant predictors ( $r = .473, p < .001$ ), explaining 22.3% of the variance. The study concluded that faith-based ethical leadership enhances administrative competence and institutional discipline. Based on the findings, this study recommended that moral guidance and community engagement should be deliberately integrated into leadership practices and training programmes to improve school governance and goal attainment.*

**Keywords:** Faith-based ethics, moral guidance, community engagement, administrative effectiveness, school leadership.

### Introduction

Secondary education plays a crucial role in preparing learners for meaningful living and further education. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), the goals of secondary education are to develop individuals who can contribute productively to society and pursue tertiary education. These goals are largely dependent on effective school leadership, particularly the role of the principal, who serves as the chief promoter of the school's values and ethical standards (Mendoza & Melchor, 2024). The principal is more than an administrative figure. He or she is a moral leader expected to model integrity and ensure a positive school climate. Effective principals foster ethical behaviour among staff and students, cultivate trust, and uphold the moral standards needed to guide the school community. Ujata (2024) emphasised that ethical behaviour is vital for national development, while



Amadi (2013) argued that students' everyday experiences in schools offer opportunities for moral development and life learning.

A critical component of such ethical leadership is the integration of faith-based ethical techniques into school administration. These techniques are grounded in religious beliefs and serve as moral compasses for decision-making and leadership. Mijah and Sirari (2024) explained that faith-based ethical strategies help students build responsibility, morality, and accountability. These strategies, when employed effectively, can strengthen a school's institutional culture, creating an environment marked by respect, mutual trust, and spiritual well-being (Ghanem as cited in Nyaga & Muasa, 2024).

Faith-based ethics refer to moral principles and values derived from religious doctrines and traditions. These values shape behaviour by offering a framework for distinguishing between right and wrong. When applied in educational leadership, faith-based ethics can support spiritual growth, personal discipline, and moral awareness among students. Yildrin and Durdaji (2020) observed that school principals who embrace these techniques can positively influence not only students' academic and moral development but also societal well-being. Principals who apply faith-based ethics foster inclusive school cultures where discipline, fairness, and responsibility are promoted. They also create spaces for spiritual and character development by incorporating moral teachings into curricular and extracurricular activities. Steyn (cited in Shula et al., 2022) noted that ethical school leadership is visible when trust, respect, and dignity are reflected in the interactions between staff and students.

Ethics can be broadly defined as the study of moral values rooted in culture, religion, and professional conduct. It guides the development of enduring principles such as fairness, honesty, and accountability. Unobunjo (2022) remarked that no society can progress without a moral foundation, and this applies equally to school systems. Therefore, when principals embed faith-based values in school operations, they not only uphold administrative order but also help students form ethical identities. A direct connection exists between faith-based ethical practices and administrative effectiveness. Principals who integrate spiritual values into school culture are better positioned to model appropriate behaviour, manage conflicts justly, and inspire both staff and students. Njoku (2016) affirmed that faith-based ethics promote moral and spiritual development, which are foundational goals of education. When teachers observe ethical leadership, their morale, commitment, and performance improve, further enhancing students' learning outcomes. In contrast, the absence of such moral leadership may result in disorganisation, reduced staff motivation, and poor student discipline. Wey-Amaewhule and Ogbonnaya (2024) remarked that principals who fail to supervise instructional practices ethically may demoralise teachers, leading to ineffective classroom delivery. Therefore, faith-based ethical techniques such as moral guidance and community engagement are strategic tools for school leadership.

Moral guidance entails modelling virtuous behaviour, setting clear expectations, and fostering a values-based school climate. Han (cited in Hakizayezu & Andala, 2022) noted that ethical leadership encourages transparency and trust, while Lilian and Afianmagbon (2025) argued that principals must integrate academic excellence with spiritual growth. This dual mandate makes administrative effectiveness a matter of both competence and character. Principals are expected to communicate ethical expectations clearly, apply rules justly, and address issues like bullying or dishonesty in ways that reflect both justice and compassion (Igbozuruike et al., 2017).

Community engagement is another vital ethical practice. It involves building inclusive partnerships between schools and their surrounding communities. Luchuo et al. (2022) defined it as a respectful collaboration that empowers stakeholders and supports positive development. Faith-based schools, in particular, often rely on religious networks and moral teachings to strengthen community ties. Through initiatives such as community outreach, parental involvement, and culturally responsive leadership, principals can make school management more transparent and responsive. Adogame (cited in Ifenatuora et al., 2021) asserted that integrating faith with leadership can promote discipline and shared values. Similarly, Galvin (2023) found that schools practicing faith-based ethics often benefit from strong family and community engagement. These partnerships reinforce moral values at home and in school, supporting students' emotional and social development.

Administrative effectiveness is realised when school leaders apply moral frameworks that support efficient decision-making, staff motivation, and student discipline. Nebo and Afianmagbon



(2025) defined administrative effectiveness as the ability to fulfil both academic and spiritual mandates. Principals who model honesty, fairness, and respect can influence school culture positively and support goal attainment. They also promote inclusivity, transparency, and a safe learning environment for all stakeholders. In Rivers State, there is growing concern about the decline in moral values among students and the apparent inability of some principals to uphold ethical standards (Igbozuruike et al., 2017; Amadi, 2013). The rising incidences of examination malpractice, drug abuse, dishonesty, and general indiscipline in secondary schools. These behaviours undermine the goals of secondary education and question the ethical leadership capacity of school administrators.

Despite the significance of moral guidance and community engagement, many principals appear to neglect their ethical leadership responsibilities. Nebo and Afianmagbon (2025) noted that moral failure among school leaders compromises both academic performance and spiritual development. Eremie and Amadi (2020) expressed discontent with the neglect of community-focused services that once cultivated honesty, diligence, and social responsibility in students. Similarly, Ozah (2024) criticised the lack of a moral evaluation framework among school principals, arguing that ethical lapses in leadership can lead to flawed policies and poor administrative outcomes. These concerns necessitate greater awareness and intentional adoption of faith-based ethical techniques by school leaders. Ethical school leadership must go beyond policy compliance; it should involve a lived commitment to values that build trust, foster inclusion, and support moral behaviour. When principals embrace these values, they can positively influence both staff performance and student discipline, ultimately enhancing school effectiveness. However, there appears to be a gap in the integration of faith-based ethical principles in school administration in Rivers State. This shortfall may be contributing to the erosion of moral standards and diminishing administrative effectiveness. A deliberate focus on moral guidance and community engagement, which are two essential faith-based ethical techniques, may help principals improve school governance. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between principals' faith-based ethical techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Statement of The Problem**

Principals are expected to provide ethical leadership that promotes integrity, discipline, and administrative effectiveness in schools. However, many secondary schools in Rivers State face rising cases of examination malpractice, substance abuse, indiscipline, and other forms of moral decline. These issues suggest a weakening of the moral foundation expected in schools, particularly those with a faith-based orientation. Admittedly, faith-based ethical techniques such as moral guidance and community engagement are essential tools for promoting ethical conduct and administrative order, however many school principals appear not to apply them effectively. This failure may be arising from a lack of awareness, inadequate training, or disregard for ethical leadership responsibilities. Without the integration of faith-based values into the curriculum and school culture, many schools may struggle to cultivate the discipline and accountability necessary for achieving educational goals. Moreover, administrative effectiveness is often compromised when ethical values are absent in school leadership practices. There is growing concern therefore, that the non-application of faith-based ethics may be contributing to the erosion of students' moral behaviours and poor governance in schools. Given these challenges, this study seeks to examine the relationship between principals' use of faith-based ethical techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent do principals' moral guidance techniques predict their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do principals' community engagement techniques predict their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State?



## **Hypotheses**

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 significance level

1. There is no significant predictive relationship between principals' moral guidance techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant predictive relationship between principals' community engagement techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. The design was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to examine the relationship between principals' faith-based ethical techniques, with focus on moral guidance and community engagement, and their effects on principals' administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The target population for this study comprised all 672 principals of registered private secondary schools across the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Rivers State (Rivers State Ministry of Education, 2025). Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 251 principals was determined. To ensure equitable geographical representation, 15 LGAs were purposively selected, and the sample of principals was proportionally drawn from population. Accordingly, Obio/Akpor and Khana LGAs contributed 37 and 27 principals respectively. Emohua contributed 20, Etche 19, Ahoada East 16, and Ahoada West 15. In addition, Keana and Port Harcourt contributed 16 principals each, Gokana 15, Andoni and Abua/Odual 14 each, Asari-Toru 12, Degema 11, Eleme 10, and Akuku-Toru 9 principals. A multistage sampling technique was adopted. The researchers compiled private secondary school lists in each of the 15 selected LGA. Each school was coded, and a simple random sampling method was employed to select proportional number of schools from which the principals were drawn. This process produced a final sample of 251 respondents.

Two validated, self-developed instruments were used for data collection: The Faith-Based Ethical Techniques Questionnaire (FBETQ) and the Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (AEQ). The FBETQ consisted of Section A, which contained items used to obtain demographic information of the respondents, and Section B, which comprised 14 items used to assess principals' use of moral guidance and community engagement. AEQ contained 12 items used to measure administrative competence, leadership effectiveness, and school operational efficiency. Both instruments were validated by experts in educational management and psychometrics in University of Port Harcourt. Their reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded coefficients of 0.89 for FBETQ and 0.81 for AEQ, indicating strong internal consistency. A total of 251 copies of the instruments were distributed, and 243 valid responses were retrieved and used for data analysis. The data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the strength of the relationships, and simple linear regression analysis to assess the predictive influence of the faith-based ethical techniques on administrative effectiveness. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. To interpret the strength of the relationships observed, the correlation coefficients were assessed using the scale recommended by Schober, Boer, and Schwarte (2018): .00–.10 = negligible correlation, .11–.39 = weak correlation, .40–.69 = moderate correlation, .70–.89 = strong correlation, and .90–1.00 = very strong correlation.

**Research Question One:** To what extent do principals' moral guidance techniques predict their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State?



**Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis for Moral Guidance Techniques as Predictor of Administrative Effectiveness**

Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error B	β	t	p	
Moral Guidance Techniques	.548	.300	.296	10.52	1.58	.548	8.57	.000**

Dependent Variable: Administrative effectiveness.

Table 1 presents a regression analysis showing how principals’ moral guidance techniques predict their administrative effectiveness. The correlation coefficient ( $R = .548$ ) suggests a moderate positive relationship, while the  $R^2$  value (.300) indicates that 30 percent of the variation in administrative effectiveness is explained by moral guidance techniques. The standardized beta value ( $\beta = .548$ ) reflects the strength of the predictor, and the t-value (8.57) is statistically significant at  $p < .001$ , confirming the predictor’s importance.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant predictive relationship between principals’ moral guidance techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 2: Test of Moral Guidance Techniques as a significant Predictor of Administrative Effectiveness**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8133.315	1	8133.315	73.441	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	18937.610	241	110.746		
Total	27070.925	242			

a. Dependent Variable: Administrative effectiveness  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Moral guidance techniques

$P < 0.05$

Table 2 provides the ANOVA result testing the predictive significance of moral guidance techniques. The F-statistic (73.44) and the p-value (.000) confirm that the model is statistically significant. This indicates that moral guidance techniques meaningfully explain variance in administrative effectiveness, justifying their inclusion in the model.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent do principals’ community engagement techniques predict their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis for Community Engagement Techniques as Predictor of Administrative Effectiveness**

Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error B	B	β	t	p
Community Engagement Techniques	.473	.223	.219	11.09	0.91	.473	7.01	.000**

Dependent Variable: Administrative effectiveness.

The analysis in Table 4 showed a correlation coefficient of  $R = .473$ . The result indicates a moderate positive relationship. The  $R^2$  value of .223 shows that community engagement techniques account for 22.3% of the variance in administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant predictive relationship between principals’ community engagement techniques and their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State.



**Table 4: Test of Community Engagement Techniques as a significant Predictor of Administrative Effectiveness**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6047.789	1	6047.789	49.192	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	21023.136	241	122.942		
Total	27070.925	242			

a. Dependent Variable: Administrative effectiveness  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Community engagement techniques

P < 0.05

Table 4 contains the ANOVA result for community engagement techniques. The F-value (49.19) and p-value (.000) show that the regression model is statistically significant. This supports the hypothesis that community engagement techniques are a meaningful predictor of administrative effectiveness among principals.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from the regression analysis indicate that principals’ moral guidance techniques significantly predict their administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The observed Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r = .524$  signified a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that when principals adopt and consistently apply moral guidance practices such as ethical decision-making, fairness in leadership, value-based supervision, and integrity, they are more likely to be administratively effective. This result confirms the theoretical expectations that moral guidance serves as a cornerstone for school leadership effectiveness. Principals who demonstrate moral clarity and fairness in their conduct often foster a climate of trust, mutual respect, and accountability, all of which are central to school effectiveness. When leadership is value-driven, it transcends superficial compliance and promotes behavioural transformation in both staff and students.

This finding is in line with Wey-Amaewhule and Ogonnaya (2024), whose study affirmed that ethical leadership techniques driven by fairness and open communication enhance teachers’ morale, foster professional trust, and improve institutional effectiveness. They also reported that principals who displayed respect and upheld moral standards during supervision activities were more likely to encourage high teacher-performance and achieve desired educational outcomes. The current result of this study reinforces their assertion by providing statistical evidence affirming that moral guidance positively influence administrative behaviour.

In the same vein, Nwabueze (2022) reported that principals’ ethical attributes such as diligence, honesty, and accountability have meaningful associations with improved administrative outcomes in secondary schools in Enugu State. His study revealed that leaders who consistently model ethical behaviour inspired similar behavioural standards among staff, thereby contributing to operational stability and coherence. Thus, the finding in this present study supports his claim that moral grounding is essential to effective school management.

Furthermore, Hakizayezu and Andala (2022), observed that principals who are guided by ethical frameworks anchored in fairness, honesty, and justice are better able to manage their institutions with effectiveness. This correlation becomes even more relevant within the context of Rivers State, where reports from Weli and Emelole (2023) highlighted a moral decline among students manifested in examination malpractice, drug use, and other unethical behaviours. The present result implies that moral guidance by school heads can serve as both a preventive and corrective force in combating such challenges.

By contrast, in school systems where leadership is primarily administrative without a strong ethical foundation, it is common to witness lapses in accountability and inconsistent rule enforcement. This is echoed by Unobunjo (2022) who observed that administrative systems that lack moral clarity are unlikely to sustain developmental progress. Hence, the moderate predictive strength ( $r = .524$ ) recorded in this study validates the strategic importance of moral leadership in achieving not only institutional



goals but also social transformation among students. The result of this study further showed revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r = .458$  and a  $p$ -value of  $.000$ , indicating a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between principals' community engagement techniques and their administrative effectiveness. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirmed that community engagement is a significant predictor of administrative effectiveness among principals in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

This result resonates strongly with the idea that community engagement is a strategic component of faith-based ethical leadership. Schools that actively involve parents, religious stakeholders, community leaders, and civic institutions tend to enjoy stronger institutional trust and social capital. According to Lucho et al. (2022), community engagement supports mutual respect, social justice, and responsiveness to stakeholders' expectations, all of which are essential for effective school administration. Adogame, as cited in Ifenatuora et al. (2021), further emphasized that community participation in educational processes enhances student behaviour and builds collective responsibility. Their study established that where school principals intentionally foster partnerships with the community, discipline issues decrease while accountability and transparency increase. Galvin (2023) reported that family and community involvement significantly impacts students' mental well-being, social adjustment, and academic resilience. Galvin's work observed that in schools where parents were empowered and seen as partners, there was a notable and greater alignment between home and school values, leading to improved institutional performance. The current study aligns with this, confirming that community engagement is not a peripheral task but a structural pillar of leadership success in private schools. Conversely, Matovu and Atim (2020) observed that lack of proper community engagement by school leadership often results in increased resistance to school policies, low parental involvement, and weak communal trust. This reaffirms that community disengagement can become a risk factor for ineffective administration. When school leaders fail to cultivate mutual partnerships with their communities, they not only lose moral support but may also face difficulty enforcing behavioural expectations among students.

Additionally, Ghanem, as cited in Nyaga and Muasa (2024), contended that school leaders who emphasize inclusive engagement tend to build morale and loyalty among staff and students. The benefits of such a positive atmosphere tend to transcend the school compound, as it helps in shaping perceptions of the school in the broader society. Thus, the significance of the correlation ( $r = .458$ ) in this study mirrors this broader observation, affirming that a well-engaged school community can serve as a critical driver for administrative cohesion and image building. The findings of this study also corroborate the views of Steyn (as cited in Shula et al., 2022), who observed that effective school administration is nurtured when principals support both internal and external relationships with dignity, trust, and compassion. His work particularly emphasized the role of community engagement in enhancing not only students' conduct but also teachers' job satisfaction and commitment.

It is important to note that in the context of Rivers State, where private schools operate within highly dynamic and culturally diverse communities, engagement strategies must be deliberate and context-sensitive. Ozah (2024) raised concerns about school heads who fail to develop frameworks for evaluating the ethical and social implications of their policies. Such oversight weakens their leadership credibility and compromises administrative outcomes. In this light, strengthening community ties is essential, as it not only helps to improve school-community relationships, communication, and decision-making, but also enhances the legitimacy of the school and the principal in the eyes of the public. This strengthens the idea that community engagement should not be limited to consultation or public relations, but must include genuine partnership, where schools work collaboratively with their communities to co-create moral standards and behavioural expectations. When principals actively promote school-community interaction such as through parent forums, religious events, and social outreach programs they not only enhance transparency but also model the values they wish to instil in students (Manafa, 2020; Womemi, 2024). Therefore, this moderate but statistically meaningful relationship between community engagement and administrative effectiveness provides a compelling case for embedding community-based strategies into principal leadership training. Rather than perceiving community interaction as a public relations task, educational policymakers and private



school proprietors in Rivers State should prioritize it as an indispensable part of value-based school leadership.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that moral guidance and community engagement as faith-based techniques significantly influence principals' administrative effectiveness in private secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings revealed moderate and statistically significant relationships, indicating that principals who integrate ethical values rooted in faith demonstrate stronger leadership performance. The results affirm that faith-based ethical leadership enhances not only institutional discipline but also enhanced administrative outcomes. Therefore, incorporating moral principles into school leadership is vital to promoting holistic development and achieving educational goals.

### Recommendation

Based on the recommendations, the following findings are proffered.

1. Principals should integrate faith-based moral guidance into daily administrative decisions to promote fairness, integrity, and discipline across the school environment.
2. School proprietors and education stakeholders should prioritize training programmes that strengthen principals' ethical leadership capacity, especially in faith-based moral education and community engagement.
3. Private secondary schools should establish structured platforms for community involvement, including parent forums and local partnerships, to reinforce mutual accountability and support.
4. Education policymakers should develop guidelines that encourage ethical leadership practices, ensuring that school heads align administrative goals with moral and spiritual values.

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