



INTEGRATING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE SECONDARY EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study explored integrating ethical leadership and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. It aims to examine the relationship between ethical leadership (leadership integrity and accountability) and sustainable secondary education administration. The study adopted correlational research design. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population for this study consisted of 257 principals in 257 public senior secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample size used for this study was 257 respondents, representing 100% of the entire population using census sampling technique. The instruments for data collection are two self-structured questionnaires titled "Integrating Ethical Leadership Questionnaire" (IELQ) and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration Questionnaire (SSEAQ) with 40 items. A sample of 30 principals who share the same characteristics were drawn from Imo State for the reliability test. The reliability coefficient of integrating ethical leadership was .84 and sustainable secondary education Administration was .87 while leadership integrity was .86 and leadership accountability was .76 respectively using Cronbach method. Out of 257 copies of the questionnaire administered, 250 copies were properly filled out and retrieved, which represented 97.5% success. The research questions were answered using Pearson product moment correlation (r) statistics, while z-ratio was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that leadership integrity and leadership accountability are the components of integrating ethical leadership and there is a high positive relationship between integrating ethical leadership and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. It was recommended that principals in public senior secondary schools in Anambra State should encourage the use of leadership integrity and accountability for sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Keywords: Ethical, Leadership, Integrity, Accountability, Sustainable.

Introduction

Recently, the educational sector in Nigeria, especially in Anambra State, has encountered considerable challenges concerning ethical leadership. Examination malpractices, administrative corruption, and a decline in moral standards have been reported, compromising the quality of education and its contribution to national development. The rise of "Miracle Examination Centres" facilitating examination fraud has been documented, compromising the integrity of the educational system (Agwu

et al., 2023). Incorporating ethical leadership in secondary education administration is crucial for fostering enduring national progress in addressing these issues.

In the realm of education, ethical leadership encompasses the demonstration of moral decision-making, justice, and integrity by school leaders, so serving as exemplary for both staff and students. Furthermore, ethical leadership encourages effective governance inside educational institutions, which is critical to national growth. According to research, the absence of ethical leadership causes challenges such as corruption and poor governance, which impede sustainable development Mbonu et al. (2021). School leaders can improve the general efficiency and reputation of their respective institutions by encouraging ethical behaviour.

Ethical leadership in education has a major influence on sustainable national development. Good leadership produces a group of pupils who show moral integrity and academic excellence, therefore enhancing society's contributions. Moreover, ethical leadership improves government inside educational institutions, which is necessary for national growth. Studies show that lack of ethical leadership results in problems such as corruption and inadequate government which impede sustainable development (Jeko & Odigie, 2024). Thus, including ethical leadership into the management of secondary school helps to generate responsible citizens and promotes national development.

Statement of the Problem

Many secondary schools in Anambra State continue to struggle with unethical practices, despite the acknowledged significance of ethical leadership in fostering educational excellence and national development. These challenges are characterized by a general decline in moral values among students and staff, as well as examination malpractices and administrative misconduct. The continuation of these problems shows a lack in the efficient application of ethical leadership in educational systems. This study focuses on the impact of ethical leadership on long-term national development in Anambra State's secondary schools.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was integrating ethical leadership and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. Specifically, the objective sought to:

1. examine the relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.
2. assess the relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study

1. There is no significant relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Literature Review

Integrating Ethical Leadership in the School System

In education, ethical leadership is the technique wherein school leaders, acting as role models for staff members as well as pupils, show integrity, justice, and moral decision-making. This kind of leadership stresses the need to establish an atmosphere supporting moral values, openness, and responsibility. Ethical leaders model honesty, integrity, and justice (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019), therefore guiding the ethical actions of their subordinates. In education, ethical leadership is based on numerous fundamental ideas that direct leaders in creating a good and efficient learning environment. Integrity means keeping strong moral standards and making sure one's words and behaviour line up. By acting honestly and ethically, educational leaders show integrity and set standards for staff members as well as for pupils.

This integrity-based dedication encourages the school community to grow trusting (Kirk, 2024). Leaders who practice accountability must be liable for their decisions and actions, therefore promoting a culture in which duties are precisely understood and accepted. Educational leaders encourage a feeling of responsibility and ownership among staff and students by making themselves and others accountable, therefore fostering a more open and efficient learning environment (Leithwood, 2023). Educational leaders who live by these values will be able to properly steer their institutions toward academic success and ethical and supportive school environment. These ideas complement some of the Seven Principles of Public Life, which include selflessness, integrity, objectivity, responsibility, transparency, honesty and leadership (Robertleeforth, 2025).

Ethical leadership has been linked to the cultivation of school climates, which are characterized by clear expectations, consistent discipline, and supportive teacher-student relationships. Such environments have been shown to positively influence student behaviour and academic outcomes. Research by Karakose et al. in Da'as, (2023) show that ethical leadership styles subtly lower students' hostile attitudes, therefore creating an environment fit for academic performance. Stated differently, ethical leadership is favourably connected with several measures of school performance. Ethical leaders offer a good setting for learning and instruction, which can help to raise student performance. A study examining the ethical leadership practices of principals in Anambra State revealed that such practices are pivotal for goal attainment in public secondary schools (Obiekwe & Ezeugbor, 2019).

Furthermore, ethical leadership fosters trust and collaboration among staff, reduces incidences of misconduct, and enhances the school's reputation within the community. Instructors report far higher levels of work satisfaction when ethical leadership is present. A trusting and committed workforce are the result of leaders that are trustworthy, fair, and care about their employees. According to Cansoy et al. (2021), the ethical atmosphere of the school mediates the association between ethical leadership and teachers' work satisfaction. This suggests that ethical leaders not only directly affect job satisfaction but also shape the corporate culture, thereby raising morale among teachers (Cansoy et al. 2021). Leaders who respect moral values are more likely to engage in major interactions with stakeholders, therefore strengthening cooperation and confidence among the school community. Negiş and Işık (2020) finds that ethical leadership is positively associated with school effectiveness evident in teachers' affective commitment and job satisfaction. This highlights the role of ethical leadership in promoting a consistent and effective government structure (Işık, 2020). Dealing with present problems and forward sustainable national development in Anambra State calls for including ethical leadership into the running of secondary education.

Incorporating ethical leadership in educational administration is essential in improving student performance, boosting teacher satisfaction and consolidating school governance. The importance of encouraging ethical practices among school leaders to foster sustainable and effective educational environments are shown from these findings.

Sustainable Secondary Education Administration

Secondary school administration in Anambra state of Nigeria encounters problems in relation to ethical leadership. Research findings have revealed mismanagement of resources, lack of transparency, and inadequate stakeholder engagement challenges. Obiekwe (2019) found that some principals in the

state have been implicated in misappropriation of funds intended for school improvement. In this study, Obiekwe reveals that there have been allegations of principals collecting illegal levies from students in public schools that led to the state governor's directives to return such levies or face sanctions. These unethical behaviours are associated with indifference from teachers and problems in attaining educational objectives. This study draws attention to the importance of ethical leadership in school administration and its impact on school effectiveness and teacher commitment. It is imperative for school principals to uphold ethical leadership principles to tackle these difficulties.

Leadership Integrity and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration

Leadership integrity is crucial in promoting sustainable administration within secondary education (Ughamadu & Ezinine, 2021). The effect of ethical leadership on school environments and outcomes has been examined in recent scholarly studies. Bujang et al. (2025) carried out a study on the significance of encouraging integrity among school administrators' ethical leadership through a systematic review. The three main topics that appeared from the PRISMA framework are Academic integrity and ethics in education, leadership and integrity in educational management, and character and value education in schools. The study concluded that all embracing programmes and administrative support are vital for encouraging integrity, and that effective leadership significantly influences a conducive school environment.

Similarly, a study by Obiekwe et al. (2021) investigated the ethical leadership practices adopted by principals for goal attainment in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. It was found that principals employed different kinds of ethical leadership practices, including climatic, communicative, behavioural, and decisional strategies, to achieve school goals. The study advocated for educational authorities encourage and train school administrators to exhibit ethical leadership practices to create a positive school climate conducive to goal attainment.

Enwereuzor et al. (2020) carried out a study on the mediating effect of perceived leader integrity in the relationship between ethical leadership and ethical atmosphere among teachers. The study revealed that ethical leadership has a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of their leaders' integrity, successively positive relationship with ethical climate in schools. This suggested that leaders who demonstrate ethical behaviour are perceived as having integrity, hence encouraging a positive ethical climate.

These studies stressed the key role of leadership integrity in encouraging sustainable administration in secondary education. They emphasized the need for complete programmes and training that support ethical leadership practices among school principals to create positive school environments and achieve educational goals.

Leadership Accountability and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration

Leadership accountability forms an important feature in attaining sustainable administration in secondary education. Contemporary scholarly literature has examined how accountable leadership practices affect the effectiveness and sustainability of educational institutions. Ughamadu and Ezinine (2021) conducted a comprehensive examination of effective leadership practices of principals for sustainable development in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The research emphasized that principals take on transformational leadership practices, including accountability measures, to encourage sustainable development. They recommended that educational authorities carry out capacity-building programmes to encourage principals' ability to apply instructional leadership practices effectively.

Adeoye et al. (2025) focusing on the connection of accountability with innovation and global citizenship, examined the inclusion of transformational leadership in the educational sector. It was recommended from the result of their findings that redefining accountability, encouraging innovative teaching practices, and including global citizenship into the curriculum are important approaches. The study underscored that successful transformational leadership involves stabilizing accountability with encouraging an environment favourable to innovation and universal awareness.

Ogundele et al. (2023) explored issues of accountability within Nigerian secondary education, pinpointing problems such as socio-economic crises and inflationary pressures that makes it difficult for effective accountability. The research concluded that accountability is essential for efficient school management and advocated for the involvement of stakeholders in the processes of educational planning and execution. Training principals and teachers in data and financial management was advocated to encourage accountability practices.

Ezeugbor and Akinwale (2018) examined administrators' managerial competencies for sustainable human resource management in secondary education in Enugu State in Nigeria. The study revealed that secondary school administrators often lack managerial competencies needed for effective student human resource management. The authors suggested including student human resource management into training programmes for schools' principals to advance more student-centred policies.

Collectively, these research work underscore the importance of leadership accountability in encouraging sustainable administration in secondary education. They indicate the need for capacity-building programs, stakeholder involvement, and the development of managerial competencies among school administrators to encourage accountability practices and gain sustainable educational outcomes.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. The population for this study consisted of 257 principals in 257 public senior secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample size used for this study was 257 respondents representing 100% of the entire population using census sampling technique. The instruments for data collection are two self-structured questionnaires titled "Integrating Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (IELQ) and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration Questionnaire (SSEAQ) with 20 items. A sample of 30 principals who share the same characteristics were drawn from Imo State for the reliability test. The reliability coefficient of integrating ethical leadership was .81 and sustainable secondary education Administration was .84 while leadership integrity was .85 and leadership accountability was .76 respectively using Cronbach method. Out of 257 copies of the questionnaire administered, 250 copies were properly filled out and retrieved, which represented 97.5% success. The research questions were answered using Pearson product moment correlation (r) statistics, while z-ratio was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Leadership integrity and Sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	Df	ΣXY	r	Decision
Leadership integrity (X)	12311	1515	250	248	2817	0.71	High PositiveCorrelation
Sustainable secondary education administration (Y)	11412	1302					

Result from Table 1 reveals a correlation coefficient = 0.71. This value is high and positive, indicating that there is a high and positive relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration. This implies that improvement in leadership integrity leads to corresponding improvement of sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Leadership Accountability and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration in Anambra State

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	Df	ΣXY	r	Decision
Leadership accountability (X)	22412	5022	250	248	6324	0.69	High Positive Correlation
Sustainable secondary education administration (Y)	11412	1302					

Result from Table 2 reveals a correlation coefficient = 0.69. This value is high and positive, indicating that there is high and positive relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration. This implies that leadership accountability leads to corresponding improvement of sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Table 3: Transformed z-ratio on the Relationship between Leadership Integrity and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration in Anambra State

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	df	ΣXY	r	z-cal	z-crit.	Decision
Leadership integrity (X)	12311	1515	250	248	2817	0.71	14.85	1.96	Sig. Rejected H_0
Sustainable secondary education administration (Y)	11412	1302							

Result from Table 3 reveals that there is a highly positive relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. To establish the significance of the relationship, a transformed z-value was computed and an index of 14.85 was obtained. This was compared to the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 248, indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Table 4: Transformed z-ratio on the Relationship between Leadership Accountability and Sustainable Secondary Education Administration in Anambra State

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	N	df	ΣXY	r	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Leadership accountability (X)	22412	5022							
			250	248	6324	0.69	11.12	1.96	Sig. Rejected H_0
Sustainable secondary education administration (Y)	11412	1302							

Result from Table 4 reveals that a high positive relationship exists between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. To establish the significance of the relationship, a transformed z-value was computed and an index of 11.12 was obtained. This was compared to the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 248, indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings of this study are as follows:

1. Table 1 and 3 revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. The hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.
2. Table 2 and 4 revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. The hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion findings of this study are presented as shown below:

Leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration

The study revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. This finding agreed with the finding of study conducted by Ahmed (2021) who pointed out that the challenges secondary schools in Anambra State are facing include lack of integrity and poor financial management in public institutions. Nwangwu (2015) stated that the foundation of education is frail when there is no integrity and the products of such foundation are weak intellectuals. When there were just few secondary administrators, government were able to supervise the schools, there has been massive increase in the number of secondary schools and in students' enrolment in Nigeria. This increase has gotten to the point where Government openly acknowledged that it can no longer saddle the responsibilities of schools alone. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between leadership integrity and sustainable secondary education administration is rejected.

Leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration

The study revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. This finding agrees with Wunti (2012) who believed that concern for leadership accountability in the development of education stems in part, from the recognition that in Nigeria, like other developing countries of the world, the



government is financially unable to provide the much-needed educational facilities for all its schools. For this reason, there is leadership accountability in terms of provision and maintenance of basic facilities necessary and required for implementation of a school curriculum. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between leadership accountability and sustainable secondary education administration is rejected.

Conclusion

In line with the findings from this study, it was concluded that leadership integrity and leadership accountability are the components of integrating ethical leadership and have positive relationship with sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State. Finally, there is a significant relationship between integrating ethical leadership (integrity and accountability) and sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Principals in public senior secondary schools in Anambra State should encourage the use of leadership integrity for sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.
2. The use of leadership accountability should be employed by principals for sustainable secondary education administration in Anambra State.

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