



DYNAMICS OF ETHICAL BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT AND TEACHERS' SERVICE DELIVERY IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA



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Abstract

The study examined dynamics of ethical boundary management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study adopted correlation design. The population of the study was 6,174 teachers in 311 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State while the sample was 380 teachers using proportionate sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection were titled "Dynamics of Ethical Boundary Management Scale" (DEBMS) and "Teachers' Service Delivery Index" (TSDI). The instruments were validated by 3 experts in test and measurement and all their comments used to improve the face and content validity of the instruments. The reliability coefficients of dynamics of ethical boundary management Scale and teachers' service delivery Index were 0.87 and 0.79 using Cronbach method. Out of 380 copies of questionnaire administered, 374 were retrieved representing 98.5% success. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient while hypotheses were tested using transformed t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study had shown that ethical reciprocal management and ethical prompt decline management had independently has high correlation with teachers' service delivery. It was concluded that dynamics of ethical boundary management by assessing its components has a high correlation with teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Key Words: Dynamics, Ethical, Boundary, Delivery, Reciprocal, Decline

Introduction

Education is a deliberate engagement geared towards achieving certain objectives through the transmission of relevant knowledge that fosters character transformation. These objectives include the development of skills, rationality, patriotism and honesty which are carried out by teachers within the framework of ethical boundary management. The ethical boundary management involves care, respect, trust and integrity inspire members to uphold the honour and dignity of teaching profession, identify ethical responsibilities and commitment, guide decisions and actions and promote inclusiveness, diversity, public trust and confidence in the profession.

Ethics embody principles of trust and fair-mindedness. Teachers registration council of Nigeria uphold cognitive development, cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment. Boundary violations that harm students are unethical because they exploit the educator-student relationship, undermine student and community trust in educators and can irreparably damage students psychologically. Teaching professionals establish and maintain respectful relationships. They are understood the difference between professional and personal life and as such their behaviours affect students.



Teachers as character molders are friendly, but students must understand that having a friendly professional does not mean they are friends. In this context, the principles of due care and sound judgment guide professional practice. Teachers do not use their professional position to coerce, improperly influence, harass, threaten, abuse or exploit a student. Familiarity with students should be a strength that guides their learning and educators should continue to intervene professionally as needed. Teachers who are socially and emotionally competent develop supportive and encouraging relationships with their students. This deliberate positive engagement of teachers in the school system proves effective service delivery and promotes students' learning outcomes.

Teachers' Service Delivery

Maxwell and Schwimmer (2023) was of the view that teachers' service delivery involves teacher's abilities to prepare lesson note before going to classes which helps the teacher to always cover the scheme of work before the end of the term and master various subjects that he/she teaches. These type of teachers would not carry over old topics into a new week, always punctual to class activities and often comply with instructional time schedules while using instructional materials to create understanding. However, teacher participation in extra curriculum activities is very important in line with punctuality to school and prudent in the use of available resources for school goals. It is important that teachers give regular continuous assessment during classes, show regularity in class activities and showing positive team-spirit among colleagues (Madhusudan & Narayan, 2021).

From the above assertions, Gingma (2022) opined that students' participation in extra curriculum activities is the responsibility of teachers whose name will always be regular in staff attendance. General punctuality to school or other activities of the school outside school environment and never to be absent from school without permission are clear evidence of teachers' teachers' service delivery, In all teachers' endeavours, achieving productivity in teaching within the time and students passing their exams well without teachers carrying work home during weekend constitute teachers' service delivery.

Dynamics of Ethical Boundary Management

Dynamics of ethical boundary management is the limit which protects the space between the professional's power and the client's vulnerability; it is the border that marks the edges between a professional and a nonprofessional. It is the parameters that describe the limits of a relationship where one person entrusts their welfare and safety to a professional and often in circumstances where a power imbalance might exist. The emphasis on welfare, safety and power imbalance are clearly critical when the non-professional person in the relationship is likely to encounter boundary crossings.

Boundary crossings are departures from usual professional practice which may be exploitative in different ways. Although certain behaviors, when first commenced, may not breach the boundary of a professional teacher-student relationship, these behaviors may progress incrementally to a point that could result in violation of professional boundaries. For example, a teacher may share their personal difficulties with a student who is known to be experiencing similar personal difficulties at home. Whilst the teacher may believe they are assisting the student in these circumstances, being over-familiar with the student in this way may become part of the slippery slope of moving outside usual practice to an inappropriate practice which is harmful to the student or where the relationship shifts to serving the needs of the teacher and not the needs of the student.

Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their students, whether in school or non-school settings. This can be a particular risk for teachers who Work in close-knit regional or rural communities who may for instance unavoidably interact with students within that community outside of school. Incorporate social media as part of teachers professional practice with students constitute unethical boundary management. Ogeh et al (2023) identified elements of dynamics of ethical boundary management as ethical reciprocal management and ethical prompt decline management.

Ethical Reciprocal Management

Ethical reciprocal management is concern with teacher's ability to identify red lines during teaching and while spending time with their students. Proximity and time enable teachers to know their students well and to address their individual learning needs. Teachers require greater self-awareness and sensitivity to the conditions which give rise to the possibility for overstepping boundaries in class, online or in any learning or supervisory situation. Teachers owe a high duty of care to their students. Teachers act to ensure that the physical and emotional wellbeing of students is safeguarded at all times and that their own behaviour is guided by duty of care principles. Bird (2023) opined that teachers can work in collaboration to maintain ethical standards through the following:

1. Understand that tolerance of the behaviour by others is not relevant.
2. Be aware of the teacher who may be too close to one student.
3. Be aware of the teacher who shows too much attention towards a student or who is too solicitous towards a student.
4. Be prepared to consult a trusted supervisor or colleague about concerning conduct/behaviour of colleagues.
5. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of implement and comply with student protection policies as they apply in their workplace.
6. Be prepared to report any boundary violations of teachers to their Principal, the Police, their Parents and/or teacher regulatory authority, as the case may require.

Ethical understanding is a key context for development of professional identity and behaviours, pre-service training is an important mechanism for promoting understanding of preventing breaches. There is a growing concern that teachers' ethical understanding was inadequate and there is need to incorporate training within teacher education (Mahony, 2022). Teachers need to be intentional in their efforts to negotiate and establish professional boundaries with students such that they can connect with and demonstrate care towards students, while protecting both themselves and their students (Government of South Australia, 2023). Clear intentions and understandings regarding boundaries help teachers make positive and timely decisions when boundaries become blurred, helping them to avoid the risk of a boundary transgression, breach or violation.

Ethical prompt decline management

Ethical prompt decline management is the act of a teacher to recognised when to say no to temptations and demands from students from time to time. Ethical prompt decline management is critically important across all individuals that are involve working with people particularly within the educational field. Professionalism remains the very competence or skill expected of a teacher. For instance, ethical prompt decline management is the competence and skills he/she has to display effectively within and outside the classroom with high integrity and excellence. Ethical prompt decline management shows the real or imaginary line that marks the limit a teacher can go in providing assistance to the students.

Ethical prompt decline management are rules and guidelines workers implement for themselves, which shows the limit of what is acceptable or thought to be possible from one in a professional role. In other words, it is the point at which one's feeling, idea quality, value and rights stops and another starts. Boundaries are very major in any human endeavour, this is because it service as direct mechanism of control that actually directs people on what to do, when to start and where to stop in order not to exceed their extent, avoid potential toxic or unhealthy environment.

Statement of Problem

Teachers' service delivery remains the central hub for every academic engagement or activity in the education industry. Therefore, teachers are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that educational goal is achieved through their capability and ability to effectively deliver services, especially the teaching and learning processes. With close attention and assessment in the deplorable state of secondary education in Nigeria, especially public senior secondary schools in recent times, such

as; the rate at which female students are being impregnated by their male teachers, the increased number of female teachers who engage their students into buying and selling during the school hours.

There are situations where some teachers send some of their students to their individual farms to work without the school consent and outside school hours; in some occasions, whereby some teachers become friends with some of their students instead of being friendly to them, treat them in friendly manner and others have hindered teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State hence dynamics of ethical boundary management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aims and Objectives

The study investigated dynamics of ethical boundary management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives sought to:

1. find out the correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. establish the correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

1. What is the correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance in this study

1. There is no significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted correlation design. The population of the study was 6,174 teachers in 311 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State while the sample of the study was 380 teachers using proportionate sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection were titled "Dynamics of Ethical Boundary Management Scale" (DEBMS) and "Teachers' Service Delivery Index" (TSDI). The instruments were validated by 3 experts in test and measurement and all their comments used to improve the instruments, this was to ensure that both instruments have both face and content validity. The reliability coefficients of dynamics of ethical boundary management Scale and teachers' service delivery Index were 0.87 and 0.79 while the subscale are .88 for ethical reciprocal management and .86 for ethical prompt decline management using Cronbach method of statistics. Out of 380 copies of questionnaire administered, 374 were retrieved representing 98.5% success. The research questions of this study were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) while hypotheses were tested using transformed t-test at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) was adopted and tables were constructed in respect of the various research questions and hypotheses of the study.

Results

Research question 1: What is the correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?



Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	df	ΣXY	r	Remark
Ethical reciprocal management (X)	20312	4125	374	372	3016	.84	High correlation
Teachers' service delivery (Y)	34611	1197					

Result from Table 1 reveals a correlation coefficient of .84. This value is high, indicating that there is high correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery. This implies that adherence to ethical reciprocal management leads to corresponding improvement in teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Research question 2: What is the correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	df	ΣXY	r	Remark
Ethical prompt decline management (X)	27541	7585	374	372	3862	.79	High correlation
Teachers' service delivery (Y)	34611	1197					

Result from Table 2 reveals a correlation coefficient of .79. This value is high, indicating that there is high correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery. This implies that adherence ethical prompt decline management leads to corresponding improvement in teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: transformed z-value on the correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	df	ΣXY	r	z-cal	z-crit.	Remark
ethical reciprocal management (X)	20312	4125	374	372	3016	.84	3.21	1.96	Rejected
Teachers' service delivery (Y)	34611	1197							

Result from Table 3 reveals that a high positive correlation exists between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery. To establish the significance of the correlation, a transformed z-value was computed and an index of 3.21 was obtained. This was compared to the critical z-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 372, indicating that there is a significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery (calculated $z = 3.21 < \text{critical } z = 1.96$ at $p < 0.05$ and $df = 372$). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery is rejected

in favour of the alternative that there is a significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: transformed z-value on the correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variable	Σ	Σ^2	n	df	ΣXY	r	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remark
Ethical prompt decline management (X)	27541	7585							
Teachers' service delivery (Y)	34611	1197	374	372	3862	.79	4.61	1.96	Rejected

Result from Table 4 reveals that a high positive correlation exists between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery. To establish the significance of the correlation, a transformed z-value was computed and an index of 4.61 was obtained. This was compared to the critical z-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 372, indicating that there is a significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery (calculated $z = 4.61 < \text{critical } z = 1.96$ at $p < 0.05$ and $df = 372$). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery is rejected in favour of the alternative that there is a significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Summary of Findings

1. Table 1 show that there is a correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery.
2. Table 2 show that there is a correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery.

Discussion of Findings

Ethical Reciprocal Management and Teachers' Service Delivery

Table 1 show that there is a correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The finding is in agreement with the study of Ojekudo (2023) who revealed that supervision of ethical reciprocal management of teachers and classroom activities provide effective service delivery in Delta State and help teachers to perform their duties better. Ethical reciprocal management improves and facilitate effective teaching in the classroom setting, improves the performance of human resources in the organization, provides technical assistance for teachers when required and serves as a quality control tool.

Drawing upon work from ATRA (2021) stated that ethical reciprocal management is breached when a teacher misuses the power imbalance in the teacher student relationship such that the student's welfare is compromised. Bird (2023) suggested that breaches include both boundary crossings and boundary violations. Referring Bird's conceptualization, the differences between boundary crossings and violations can be understood as follows:

- Boundary crossings are departures from usual professional practice that are not necessarily exploitative. On occasion, a boundary may be consciously crossed with the intention of actually assisting a student; for example, a self-disclosure intended to be empathic and supportive. However, at other times, boundary crossings may occur as part of a 'slippery slope' of moving from outside usual practice to inappropriate practice that is harmful to the student.

- Boundary violations are transgressions that harm the student in some way. Boundary violations are unethical and unprofessional because they exploit the teacher-student relationship, undermine the trust that students and the community have in teachers, and can cause profound psychological harm to students.

However, the above distinctions have not been widely adopted in the educational sector and the various terms (boundary breaches, crossing, transgressions and violations) are often used interchangeably by different jurisdictions and tend to all be interpreted as ethical reciprocal management. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between ethical reciprocal management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Ethical Prompt Decline Management and Teachers' Service Delivery

Table 2 show that there is a correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The finding is in consonance with the study of Kaufman and Erooga (2021) who opined that ethical prompt decline can be managed by breaching the factors that can facilitate abuse and major on the mechanisms that may be most helpful in assisting teachers to develop and maintain appropriate boundaries and comply with their professional and ethical responsibilities.

Drawing from the above finding, O'Leary et al. (2023) were of the view that the best practice in relation to perpetrators of child sexual abuse is improve ethical prompt decline management system through screening mechanisms, improved reporting mechanisms, training for children and support for staff in shifting perspectives and making connections with different bits of evidence when making decisions. Similarly, mechanisms to prevent opportunistic perpetrators include tightening child safe policies and ensuring that the policies are reflected in practice such that opportunities for boundary crossing are reduced. Boundaries can also be supported by improved reporting by students, colleagues and training for both students and staff.

Parkinson and Cashmore (2023) believed that ethical professional development workshops may help staff identify potential concerns earlier. The mechanisms best suited to prevent situational perpetrators and blurred boundaries, particularly in relation to young teachers, seem to be professional boundary guidance, including social media guidance, pre-service training in ethical decision-making, better all-round professional wellbeing support and mentoring for new teachers to the profession. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between ethical prompt decline management and teachers' service delivery in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study had investigated dynamics of ethical boundary management by assessing its components in relation to teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings of the study had shown that ethical reciprocal management and ethical prompt decline management had independently has high correlation with teachers' service delivery in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

1. The school administrators should be trained alongside with the teachers to identify when ethical reciprocal management is required to avoid abuse of teachers-students relations imbalance power in the school system.
2. Teachers should be sensitive as to when there is need for ethical prompt decline to some request of their students in the cause of teachers-students relations in the school system.

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