



Principals' Management Strategies and School Community Relationship in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated principals' management strategies and school community relationship in public senior secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria. The study was guided by five research questions and five hypotheses. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design. The population of the study was made up of 15,957 Teachers. The sample size of 377 teachers was used. This was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1971) sample size determination table. Data were gathered using Principals' Management Strategies and School Community Relationship Questionnaire (PMSCRQ) and was validated by two experts in the field of Educational Administration and Planning. The validated copy was subjected to a reliability test, and the reliability index stood at 0.76 using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, mean and standard deviation for research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (r) at a 0.05 significance level for the null hypotheses. Findings indicated that Principals' leadership, participatory decision-making, Communication, Conflict management and Stakeholder engagement strategies enhanced school-community relationships in public senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Also, there was a significant relationship between principals' management strategies and the strength of school-community relationships in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals should consistently apply effective leadership strategies that promote openness, trust, and collaboration in order to further strengthen school-community relations in senior secondary schools.

Keyword: Principals' Management Strategies, School Community Relationship, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Educational institution such as school is located in a given locality known as community. This is because the community makes the location site and catchment area at the school. According to Pawla (2018), a community may be generally described as a collection of people living in a defined area, place or geo-political environment; it is a group of people located in a given geographical area. According to Okorji and Njoku (2020), community is often used to refer to the people living in the immediate locality in which a given school is located. In public secondary schools in Isuochi Abia state, it is obvious that every school relies on it community entirely for almost everything it requires such as teaching and non-teaching personnel, students, equipment, facilities funds and other resources. The school therefore does not exist in isolation of the community. UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (2023) emphasizes that successful schools recognize the importance of establishing harmonious relations with their communities. It highlights that community participation in school operations can enhance access and attendance rates.

According to EdGlossary (2020), a school community comprises a diverse network of stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, local residents, and partner organizations, whose collective engagement supports the welfare and sustainability of both the school and its surrounding environment. A symbolic or mutual relationship needs to exist between the school and its community as neither can they do not stand without each other (Okorie, 2020). The relationship between schools and their surrounding communities plays a crucial role in educational success. Kumar and Goel (2024) emphasizes the importance of community



involvement in fostering a positive school climate. They suggested that engaging all members of the community is crucial for successful school improvement efforts, advocating for collaborative, democratic decision-making processes that involve all stakeholders, including families and community members.

Effective school leadership is fundamental to the attainment of educational goals because it shapes the quality of teaching, learning, and stakeholder collaboration. Principals, as the chief administrators of secondary schools, are expected to employ appropriate management strategies that foster collaboration among teachers, parents, students, educational authorities, and the host community. Consequently, leadership, participatory decision-making, communication, conflict management, stakeholder engagement, and resource management have increasingly been recognized as essential management strategies for achieving sustainable school improvement. School-community relationship is an indispensable component of effective school administration because it facilitates cooperation between schools and their host communities in decision-making, resource mobilization, policy implementation, school security, and students' welfare.

Effective management strategies employed by school principals are pivotal in shaping the educational environment and improving educational outcomes. Various scholars have conceptualized principals' management strategies from different perspectives. Obi (2021) defines principals' management strategy as the planning of curriculum organization, procedures, leadership styles, and resources, arranging the school environment to maximize efficiency, monitoring students' and teachers' progress, and anticipating potential problems. Parks and Thift (2017) describe principals' management strategies as a multidimensional construct comprising instructional management, people management, and behaviour management. Similarly, Ogbonnaya (2019) emphasizes that effective management strategy involves coordinating human and material resources through planning, organizing, directing, and controlling activities to achieve predetermined educational goals.

Among these management strategies, participatory decision-making has received considerable attention because of its contribution to strengthening school-community relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2019) argued that participatory decision-making promotes relational trust among teachers, parents, and community members, thereby strengthening school-community relationships. Likewise, Leithwood and Jantzi (2019) reported that principals who adopt participatory leadership practices foster collaboration, diffuse conflicts, and create a sense of shared ownership, resulting in stronger community support for school initiatives. Extending this evidence, Leithwood et al. (2021) found that involving teachers, parents, and students in school decision-making enhances stakeholder commitment and improves relationships between schools and their communities. Murphy et al. (2023) similarly observed that participatory decision-making promotes collective responsibility and shared accountability for school success, thereby improving school-community relations. Consistent with these findings, Wang et al. (2024) reported that leadership strategies that build positive school culture increase teacher satisfaction, improve students' outcomes, and enhance community perception and involvement.

Communication and stakeholder engagement also constitute critical dimensions of principals' management strategies that influence school-community relationships. Auerbach (2019) found that principals who maintained effective communication, transparency, and collaborative decision-making significantly improved parental involvement and school-community partnerships. Similarly, Okendu (2019) reported that principals who consistently communicate school financial needs, expenditures, and development plans to community members receive greater external support for school development. In the Nigerian context, Adeyemi (2021) found that active involvement of community members and educational authorities in school decision-making reduced conflicts, improved students' discipline, and increased community participation in school development projects. Conversely, Okoroma (2021) observed that inadequate stakeholder engagement often resulted in poor parental participation, misunderstandings, and weak community support for school programmes.

Conflict management has equally been identified as an important management strategy for sustaining positive school-community relationships. Tjosvold (2020) reported that principals who adopt cooperative conflict resolution strategies characterized by open dialogue, active listening, and collaboration develop stronger relationships with community stakeholders. Similarly, Okotoni and Okotoni (2020) found that involving parents and community representatives in conflict resolution promotes mutual trust, shared responsibility, and stronger school-community relationships.



Despite the documented importance of effective school leadership and community participation, concerns continue to be expressed regarding the quality of management practices in many public senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Previous empirical studies in Nigeria have documented variations in principals' leadership practices with implications for school-community relationships (Yakubu, 2017; Opatunde & Oredein, 2023; Adebisi et al., 2025). Although existing studies have examined individual management strategies such as participatory leadership, communication, stakeholder engagement, and conflict management, empirical evidence on the combined influence of these management strategies on school-community relationships in public senior secondary schools in Abia State remains limited. Consequently, the extent to which principals' management strategies are associated with effective school-community relationships has not been sufficiently established. It is against this background that this study investigates the relationship between principals' management strategies and school-community relationship in public senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the management strategies employed by principals and examine how these strategies relate to the effectiveness of school-community relationships.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What leadership strategies do principals employ to enhance school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do principals adopt participatory decision-making in school administration to improve school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?
3. What communication strategy do principals adopt to foster collaboration in school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?
4. What conflict management strategy do principals adopt to strengthen school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?
5. How do principals adopt stakeholder engagement strategy to enhance school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between principals' adoption of participatory decision-making in school administration and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between communication strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Ho5: There is no significant relationship among principals' adoption of stakeholder engagement strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The population comprised 15,957 teachers in public senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2023). A sample of 377 teachers was selected for the study. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1971) sample size determination table, as cited in Bakwai (2014). Data were collected using a structured



questionnaire titled *Principals' Management Strategies and School-Community Relationship Questionnaire (PMSCRQ)*. The instrument consisted of 25 items developed on a modified four-point Likert rating scale.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by two experts in Educational Administration and Planning. Their observations regarding clarity, ambiguity, and wording of the items were incorporated to improve the validity of the instrument. Thereafter, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 25 teachers who were not included in the main study to avoid contamination of the study sample and enhance objectivity. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, which yielded a reliability index of 0.76, indicating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for the study.

For data collection, the researcher engaged three trained research assistants, one from each of the three educational zones in Abia State. The research assistants were adequately briefed on the purpose of the study and the procedures for administering and retrieving the questionnaires. Of the 377 questionnaires distributed, 350 were correctly completed and retrieved, representing a response rate of 92.8%, and these were used for the data analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making; mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted, while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as rejected. The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was retained when the p-value exceeded 0.05 and rejected when the p-value was less than or equal to 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What leadership strategies do principals employ to enhance school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Responses on Principal Leadership Strategy for School-Community Relations N = 350

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Actively involves community stakeholders (e.g., parents, local leaders) in school decision-making processes.	259	49	35	7	3.6	0.756	Very Effective
2	Promotes open and transparent communication between the school and the community	154	147	49	-	3.3	0.707	Very Effective
3	Adopts conflict resolution strategies to address disputes that may occur between the school and the community	182	161	7	-	3.5	0.544	Very Effective
4	Encourages and supports collaborative school-community programs (e.g., workshops, projects, and events)	112	196	28	14	3.16	0.768	Effective
5	Ensures that school resources are effectively managed to foster a positive strong school-community relations	168	140	42	-	3.36	0.693	Very Effective
	Sectional Mean/SD					3.38	0.694	Very Effective

Table 1 presents the result of the analysis of perception of the teachers on principal leadership strategies for the school community relationship. The result reveals that principal leadership style was efficient in building school-community relationship in Abia State, Nigeria as this recorded a sectional mean of 3.38 and SD of 0.694, which is above the threshold mean of 2.50.

Research Question 2: To what extent do principals adopt participatory decision-making in school administration to improve school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Responses on Participatory Decision-Making for School-Community Relations N = 350

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
6	Involves community members in key decision-making processes	196	105	42	7	3.4	0.782	Very Effective
7	Seeks input from stakeholders before implementing school policies	147	154	7	42	3.16	0.955	Effective
8	Encourages collaborative planning to address school challenges	112	224	-	14	3.24	0.657	Effective
9	Fosters an inclusive environment where stakeholders' voices are valued in administrative decisions	91	231	21	7	3.16	0.618	Effective
10	Encourages decision-making positively impacts school-community relations	224	98	28	-	3.56	0.644	Very Effective
	Sectional Mean/SD					3.3	0.731	Effective

Table 2 presents the result of the analysis of perception of the teachers on principal participatory decision making for the school community relationship. The result reveals that principal participatory decision making was efficient in building school-community relationship in Abia State, Nigeria as this recorded a sectional mean of 3.30 and SD of 0.731, which is above the threshold mean of 2.50.

Research Question 3: What communication strategy do principals adopt to foster collaboration in school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Responses on Principal Communication Strategy for School-Community Relations N = 350

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
11	Maintains open and transparent communication with teachers	203	133	14	-	3.54	0.579	Very Effective
12	Utilizes meetings and newsletters to engage stakeholders	140	168	35	7	3.26	0.723	Effective
13	Actively listens to concerns from the school community and responds effectively	210	84	42	14	3.4	0.857	Very Effective
14	Encourages regular feedback from parents and community members to improve school policies and programs	175	126	25	14	3.32	0.819	Very Effective
15	Fosters a culture of collaboration by promoting respectful and inclusive communication	203	126	21	-	3.52	0.614	Very Effective
	Sectional Mean/SD					3.41	0.718	Very Effective

Table 3 presents the result of the analysis of perception of the teachers on principal communication strategy for the school community relationship. The result reveals that principal communication strategy was effective in fostering collaboration in school-community relationship in Abia State, Nigeria as this recorded a sectional mean of 3.41 and SD of 0.718, which is above the threshold mean of 2.50.

Research Question 4: What conflict management strategy do principals adopt to strengthen school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Responses on Conflict Management Strategy for School-Community Relations N = 350

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
16	Promotes mediation to resolve conflicts between the school and the community	168	154	28	-	3.4	0.639	Very Effective
17	Ensures that grievances from teachers, students, and community members are addressed fairly and promptly	154	140	49	7	3.26	0.777	Very Effective
18	Adopts a collaborative approach to conflict resolution by involving all relevant stakeholders in decision-making	175	140	35	-	3.4	0.67	Very Effective
19	Implements policies that prevent and minimize conflicts within the school and the community	154	175	21	-	3.38	0.602	Effective
20	Encourages a culture of respect and understanding to maintain a positive school-community relationship	196	112	42	-	3.44	0.705	Very Effective
	Sectional Mean/SD					3.38	0.679	Very Effective

Table 4 presents the result of the analysis of perception of the teachers on principal conflict management strategy for the school community relationship. The result reveals that principal conflict management strategy was effective in strengthening school-community relationship in Abia State, Nigeria as this recorded a sectional mean of 3.38 and SD of 0.679, which is above the threshold mean of 2.50.

Research Question 5: How do principals adopt stakeholder engagement strategy to enhance school-community relations in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 5: Responses on Principal Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for School-Community Relations

N = 350

S/N	Items	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
21	Involves parents, local leaders, and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes	217	77	49	7	3.44	0.812	Very Effective
22	Organizes regular meetings and forums to engage stakeholders in discussions about school development	161	112	56	21	3.18	0.919	Very Effective
23	Collaborates with community organizations to improve school programs and facilities	91	175	84	-	3.02	0.714	Effective
24	Encourages stakeholder participation in school activities such as mentorship programs, fundraising, and volunteering	119	119	98	14	2.98	0.892	Effective
25	Values and implements suggestions from stakeholders to enhance school-community relations	140	147	63	-	3.22	0.737	Effective
	Sectional Mean/SD					3.17	0.815	Effective

Table 5 presents the result of the analysis of perception of the teachers on principal stakeholder engagement strategy for the school community relationship. The result reveals that principal stakeholder engagement

strategy was effective in enhancing school-community relationship in Abia State, Nigeria as this recorded a sectional mean of 3.17 and SD of 0.815, which is above the threshold mean of 2.50.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' leadership strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary Data of PPMCC for Relationship between Principals' Leadership Strategy and School Community Relationship

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	r	Sig.	Decision
Principal Leadership Strategy and		3.38	0.496				Significant
	350			348	0.646	0.000	
School Community Relationship		3.42	0.614				

Significant at $P < .05$

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Table 6 shows that the correlation coefficient (r) is significant at $P < .05$ ($r = 0.646$, $P < .05$). This indicates that the null hypothesis of **no significant relationship between** principals' leadership strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria is not accepted. This implies that there was **significant relationship between** principals' leadership strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' adoption of participatory decision-making in school administration and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 7: Summary Data of PPMCC for Relationship between Principals' Adoption of Participatory Decision-Making and School Community Relationship

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	r	Sig.	Decision
Principal Adoption of Participatory Decision-Making and		3.30	0.466				Significant
	350			348	0.731	0.000	
School Community Relationship		3.42	0.614				

Significant at $P < .05$

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Table 7 reveals that the correlation coefficient (r) is significant at $P < .05$ ($r = 0.731$, $P < .05$). This indicates that the null hypothesis of **no significant relationship between** principals' adoption of participatory decision-making in school administration and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria is not accepted.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between communication strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 8: Summary Data of PPMCC for Relationship between Principal Communication Strategy and School Community Relationship

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	r	Sig.	Decision
Principal Communication Strategy and		3.40	0.554				Significant
	350			348	0.783	0.000	
School Community Relationship		3.42	0.614				

Significant at $P < .05$



Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Table 8 show that the correlation coefficient (r) is significant at $P < .05$ ($r = 0.783$, $P < .05$). This implies that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between communication strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria is not accepted.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 9: Summary Data of PPMCC for Relationship between Conflict Management Strategy and School Community Relationship

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	R	Sig.	Decision
Conflict Management Strategy and		3.38	0.434				Significant
	350			348	0.791	0.000	
School Community Relationship		3.42	0.614				

Significant at $P < .05$

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Table 9 show that the correlation coefficient (r) is significant at $P < .05$ ($r = 0.791$, $P < .05$). This implies that the null hypothesis of **no significant relationship between** conflict management strategy adopted by principals and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria is not accepted.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between principals' adoption of stakeholder engagement strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 10: Summary Data of PPMCC for Relationship between Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and School Community Relationship

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	r	Sig.	Decision
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and		3.17	0.625				Significant
	350			348	0.783	0.000	
School Community Relationship		3.42	0.614				

Significant at $P < .05$

Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Table 10 show that the correlation coefficient (r) is significant at $P < .05$ ($r = 0.783$, $P < .05$). This indicates that the null hypothesis of **no significant relationship between** principals' adoption of stakeholder engagement strategy and school community relationship in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria is not accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that principals' management strategies significantly enhanced school-community relationships in public senior secondary schools in Abia State. Specifically, effective leadership strategies promoted trust, collaboration, mutual respect, and shared purpose among teachers, parents, and community members. Principals who demonstrated strategic direction, ethical conduct, and responsiveness to stakeholders fostered inclusive school governance and strengthened relationships between schools and their host communities. This finding is consistent with Wang et al. (2024), who reported that effective leadership practices improve teacher performance, school culture, stakeholder satisfaction, and community involvement.

The study further established that participatory decision-making strengthened school-community relationships by encouraging shared ownership, accountability, and transparency in school administration. Involving teachers, parents, and community representatives in decision-making promoted collaboration and enhanced community commitment to school development. This finding agrees with Murphy et al. (2023), who



emphasized that participatory leadership promotes collective responsibility and shared accountability for school success, thereby improving school community relations.

Similarly, communication strategies were found to facilitate collaboration between schools and their communities. Effective communication enabled principals to articulate school goals, manage stakeholder expectations, and minimize misunderstandings, thereby strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. This finding corroborates the study of Auerbach (2019), who reported that principals who maintained effective communication, transparency, and collaborative decision-making significantly improved parental involvement and school-community partnerships.

The findings also showed that constructive conflict management strategies strengthened school-community relationships by promoting fairness, dialogue, cooperation, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Likewise, stakeholder engagement strategies enhanced community participation, mobilized local support and resources, strengthened public confidence, and encouraged collective responsibility for school development. These findings align with the study of Okotoni and Okotoni (2020) found that involving parents and community representatives in conflict resolution promotes mutual trust, shared responsibility, and stronger school-community relationships. Also, Adeyemi (2021) found that active involvement of stakeholders in school decision-making reduced conflicts, improved students' discipline, and increased community participation in school development projects.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that principals' leadership strategies are pivotal in enhancing school-community relations in public senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. It found that practices such as participatory decision-making, effective communication, conflict management and stakeholder engagement significantly strengthened collaboration, trust, and mutual understanding between schools and their communities. Overall, the strong and supportive school-community relationships established through effective leadership were shown to play a significant role in sustaining a productive and healthy school environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended based on the findings:

1. Ministry of Education should sustain and further strengthen principals' leadership strategies through regular leadership training and capacity-building programmes to continuously enhance school-community relations.
2. Principals should formally adopt and institutionalize participatory decision-making processes by involving teachers, parents and community stakeholders in key school decisions to further strengthen school-community relations.
3. Principals should maintain and improve open, transparent and consistent communication channels between schools and communities to sustain collaboration.
4. Principals should adopt structured and proactive conflict management strategies, including mediation and dialogue mechanisms, to sustain harmonious relationships within the school and with the community.
5. Principals should continue to broaden stakeholder engagement by actively involving parents, community leaders and other partners in school programmes and activities to further enhance school-community relations.

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