Leader Characteristics and Teacher Productivity in Public Secondary Schools in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined leader characteristics as correlates of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed the level of teacher productivity, identified the predominant leadership characteristics exhibited by school principals, examined the relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity, and determined the relative contribution of each leadership variable to teacher productivity. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised all teachers in public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria, from which a sample of 1,500 respondents drawn from 75 schools was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using two self-designed instruments: the Leader Characteristics Questionnaire and the Teacher Productivity Questionnaire. Both instruments were validated and found to be reliable, with reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.78 respectively. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria was high across key indicators such as lesson preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and student engagement. The study also found that school leaders generally exhibited positive leadership characteristics, with discipline, integrity, and confidence ranking highest. A significant positive relationship was established between leader characteristics and teacher productivity. Furthermore, leadership variables jointly contributed significantly to teacher productivity, accounting for 30.7% of its variance. Among the leadership characteristics, integrity emerged as the strongest predictor of teacher productivity, while confidence and visionary leadership showed the least contribution. The study concluded that leadership characteristics are critical determinants of teacher productivity in public secondary schools and emphasized the importance of ethical and effective school leadership in enhancing educational outcomes.

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Introduction

The attainment of the educational goals outlined in Nigeria's National Policy on Education has long been recognized as being largely dependent on the availability and effectiveness of qualified educators. While educational reform efforts may introduce new institutions, restructure curricula, and recommend innovative teaching strategies and resources, the ultimate responsibility for implementation rests with teachers. Educators are the central agents who interpret educational objectives and translate them into meaningful knowledge, skills, and competencies that are imparted to learners in the classroom. Beyond instructional delivery, teachers are responsible for creating conducive learning environments by maintaining order, discipline, and appropriate classroom regulations, as well as observing and responding to students' emotional states and attitudes as reflected in their behavior.

Educators therefore perform a range of professional functions that determine their effectiveness in practice. These functions include planning lessons, setting clear instructional objectives, and teaching both large and small groups using carefully prepared materials (Wang, Degol & Zhang, 2023; Janelle, 2017). It is widely accepted that no educational system can rise above the quality of its human resources, both teaching and non-teaching. Institutional productivity is closely linked to employees' competence, commitment, and willingness to take initiatives that support organizational sustainability, often with encouragement from management (Sartain & Dabbs, 2021; Markos & Sandhya, 2010). In the school context, teachers constitute the most critical human resource, making their productivity a central concern in educational development.

Productivity generally refers to the effort directed toward achieving organizational effectiveness while utilizing available resources efficiently. It is often described as the ratio between outputs and the resources expended to achieve them (Abodunrin, 2013). In education, productivity serves as a key indicator of job performance. Teacher productivity can therefore be understood as the extent to which school goals are achieved through teachers' dedication, competence, and performance of their professional duties. Productivity levels may vary depending on the quality and quantity of effort invested by teachers and can be assessed through job evaluation processes and by measuring the degree to which institutional objectives are attained (Santibanez et al., 2022).

Observable characteristics of low teacher productivity include frequent absenteeism, persistent lateness, unauthorized absence from duty posts, and weak professional discipline. In practical terms, teacher productivity is often assessed through two major indicators: students' academic performance and teachers' instructional effectiveness. Concerns about declining productivity have become increasingly prominent, particularly as many secondary school graduates struggle to gain admission into tertiary institutions. Evidence from public examination outcomes suggests that teacher productivity in public secondary schools, especially in Southwest Nigeria, may be suboptimal. For instance, WAEC results from May/June 2020 showed that although 1,003,668 candidates obtained credits in five subjects including English Language and Mathematics, over 500,000 candidates failed to meet this benchmark, and failure rates have remained consistently high since 2016 (WAEC, 2022).

Experiential observations further reveal that reduced teacher productivity is often reflected in inadequate classroom attendance, poor lesson preparation, weak instructional delivery, limited or inappropriate use of instructional materials, ineffective classroom management, low commitment to student discipline, insufficient mastery of subject matter, poor communication skills, and an apparent lack of professional commitment. Some teachers exhibit excessive confidence in their abilities, leading them to neglect lesson preparation or repeatedly use outdated lesson plans without updating content or adapting to students'

developmental levels. In some cases, lessons are poorly sequenced and delivered in an unstructured manner, which may undermine students' understanding and engagement.

There is also evidence that some teachers rely on uniform teaching methods across all topics, making lessons monotonous and disengaging. Research suggests that effective learning is more likely to occur in classrooms that emphasize active instruction and meaningful student participation (Patall et al., 2023). However, when teachers fail to use language appropriate to students' level of understanding or neglect to involve learners actively in the lesson, classroom disruptions may increase, further reducing instructional effectiveness. Resistance to innovation and creativity, inappropriate selection or non-use of instructional materials, and poor classroom control can lead to student disengagement, indiscipline, and loss of interest in learning.

Teacher absenteeism also poses a serious challenge to productivity, as it often results in student restlessness and behavioral problems. Persistent absence from school or classrooms disrupts learning continuity and negatively affects student achievement, which in turn reflects poorly on overall teacher productivity (Miller, 2012). These challenges suggest that declining productivity is not solely a function of individual teacher behavior but may also be linked to broader organizational and leadership factors within schools.

School leadership plays a critical role in shaping teacher commitment and productivity. The quality of leadership within secondary schools significantly influences teachers' motivation, discipline, and dedication to their professional responsibilities. School administrators are responsible for supervising teachers, evaluating instructional effectiveness, and ensuring that learning outcomes are achieved. Leadership attributes have been shown to exert a strong influence on teacher productivity (Lai et al., 2014), with principals serving as key determinants of how effectively teachers perform their duties. The role of the principal is therefore central to the successful functioning of schools and the enhancement of teacher productivity (Machuma & Kaitila, 2014).

Leadership is fundamentally a process of social influence through which leaders motivate and guide followers toward the achievement of shared goals (Omima, 2013). In the school setting, effective leadership involves the ability to influence teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and commitment in ways that promote goal attainment and institutional effectiveness. Leadership qualities such as integrity, confidence, discipline, accountability, decisiveness, vision, and communication skills are particularly important in fostering an environment that supports high levels of teacher productivity and improved educational outcomes.

The study examined leader characteristics as a correlate of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

   i. examined the level of teacher productivity in public secondary schools;
  ii. investigated the predominant leader characteristics which are exhibited in public secondary schools;
 iii. examined the relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools;
  iv. determined which of the leader characteristics variables best contribute to teacher productivity in public secondary schools.

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

   1. What is the level of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?
   2. What are the predominant leader characteristics exhibited in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?

The following hypotheses were generated for the study:

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1. There is no significant relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools.
2. Leader characteristics variables will not significantly contribute to teacher productivity in public secondary schools.

Methods and Materials

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for investigations in which variables are not manipulated because their occurrences have already taken place. Descriptive research focuses on systematically observing, describing, and interpreting existing conditions as they naturally occur. In this study, the design was considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to examine leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria as they exist, based on respondents' perceptions and observable practices. Survey research was particularly relevant because it allows data to be collected from a large population through a representative sample, thereby making it possible to draw valid inferences about the defined population. The study therefore conformed to the essential features of survey research by gathering firsthand information from respondents within their natural school environments.

The population for the study comprised all teachers in public secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria, a region consisting of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States. At the time of the study, there were 2,722 public secondary schools with a total of 72,334 teachers in the region. From this population, a sample of 1,500 respondents drawn from 75 public secondary schools was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Simple random sampling was first used to select three states from the six in the region. Proportionate stratified sampling was then applied to select 25 local government areas from the chosen states. Subsequently, three schools were selected from each local government area using stratified random sampling, while 20 teachers were selected from each school through simple random sampling. In addition, one principal from each sampled school was purposively selected to assess teacher productivity.

Data for the study were collected using two self-designed instruments: the Leader Characteristics Questionnaire and the Teacher Productivity Questionnaire. The Leader Characteristics Questionnaire consisted of two sections, covering respondents' background information and 35 items measuring leader characteristics such as integrity, confidence, discipline, accountability, decisiveness, vision, and communication. Items were structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The Teacher Productivity Questionnaire comprised three sections that gathered biodata of principals and teachers and assessed teacher productivity in areas such as lesson preparation, instructional delivery, use of instructional resources, classroom discipline, subject mastery, and communication skills. A five-point rating scale ranging from Excellent to Poor was used. Both instruments were subjected to face and content validity through expert review, ensuring clarity, relevance, and adequacy of items. Reliability was established using the test–retest method, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.78 respectively.

The administration of the instruments was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of six trained research assistants who were adequately briefed on the study objectives and procedures. Follow-up visits were conducted to ensure proper completion and retrieval of questionnaires. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and charts, were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics such as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis one was tested using correlation analysis, while multiple regression was used for the second hypothesis. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria N= 1469

N	Items	Excellent (%)	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Fair (%)	Poor (%)	Mea	SD
1.	Classroom activities of the teacher	122 (8.3)	782 (53.2)	459 (31.2)	106 (7.2)	0 (0.0)	3.63	0.74
2.	Teacher has mastery of the subject matter	130 (8.8)	734 (50.0)	593 (40.4)	12 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	3.67	0.64
3.	Students' comprehension in the classroom when taught by the teacher	13 (0.9)	468 (31.9)	923 (62.8)	41 (2.8)	24 (1.6)	3.28	0.61
4.	Teacher makes learning relaxed for the students	30 (2.0)	524 (35.7)	855 (58.2)	45 (3.1)	15 (1.0)	3.35	0.62
5	Preparation of note of lesson by the teacher	138 (9.4)	708 (48.2)	575 (39.1)	32 (2.2)	16 (1.1)	3.63	0.73
6.	Presentation of lesson by the teacher	15 (1.0)	539 (36.7)	915 (62.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.39	0.51
7.	Strategies adopted by the teacher when teaching	123 (8.4)	757 (51.5)	544 (37.0)	45 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	3.65	0.68
8.	Participation of the teacher in other school activities	365 (24.8)	504 (34.3)	524 (35.7)	76 (5.2)	0 (0.0)	3.79	0.88
9.	Classroom evaluation skill of the teacher	318 (21.6)	488 (33.2)	588 (40.0)	60 (4.1)	15 (1.0)	3.70	0.89
10.	Monitoring of students' work by the teacher	235 (16.0)	408 (27.8)	780 (53.1)	46 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	3.57	0.79
11.	Implementation of lesson's objectives by the teacher	0 (0.0)	674 (45.9)	764 (52.0)	31 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	3.44	0.54
12.	Firmness of the teacher in decision making	0 (0.0)	645 (43.9)	746 (50.8)	78 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	3.39	0.59
13.	Leadership skills of the teacher in the classroom	0 (0.0)	371 (25.3)	1004 (68.3)	94 (6.4)	0 (0.0)	3.19	0.53
14.	Display of passion by the teacher in	0 (0)	647	777	30	15	3.4	0.5

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No.	Item						Mean	SD
	and outside the classroom		(44.0)	(52.9)	(2.0)	(1.0)	0	9
15.	Performance rate of students taught by the teacher	30 (2.0)	413 (28.1)	996 (67.8)	30 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	3.30	0.54
16.	Ability of the teacher to use student-centred approach of learning	45 (3.1)	372 (25.3)	1007 (68.6)	45 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	3.28	0.57
17.	Disciplinary ability of the teacher	30 (2.0)	617 (42.0)	747 (50.9)	75 (5.1)	0 (0.0)	3.41	0.62
18.	Coverage of syllabus by the teacher	101 (6.9)	760 (51.7)	578 (39.3)	30 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	3.63	0.64
19.	Devotion of the teacher to teaching	30 (2.0)	585 (39.8)	764 (52.0)	90 (6.1)	0 (0.0)	3.38	0.63
20.	Attention to students in the classroom by the teacher	0 (0.0)	389 (26.5)	945 (64.3)	120 (8.2)	15 (1.0)	3.16	0.60
21.	Record keeping ability of the teacher	137 (9.3)	815 (55.5)	442 (30.1)	60 (4.1)	15 (1.0)	3.68	0.74
22.	Ability of the teacher to provide solution to students' problem	124 (8.4)	832 (56.6)	468 (31.9)	45 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	3.70	0.66
23.	Provision of feedback to students taught by the teacher	14 (1.0)	570 (38.8)	795 (54.1)	90 (6.1)	0 (0.0)	3.35	0.61
24.	Participation of the teacher in extracurricular activities	15 (1.0)	568 (38.7)	751 (51.1)	120 (8.2)	15 (1.0)	3.31	0.68
25.	Follow-up skills of the teacher	125 (8.5)	755 (51.4)	527 (35.9)	62 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	3.64	0.70
						Average Mean	**3.98**	

Mean Cut-Off: 3.00

Table 1 showed the item analysis of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria. Based on the mean cut-off mark of 3.00, all the 20 items were accepted. This implies that the level of teacher productivity in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria, was high.

Research Question 2: What are the predominant leader characteristics exhibited in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?
Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of leader characteristics exhibited in public secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria.

S/N	Leader Characteristics	Mean	S.D.	No of Items	Average Mean	Rank
1.	Integrity	14.72	1.61	5	2.94	2nd
2.	Confidence	14.66	1.72	5	2.93	3rd
3.	Discipline	14.85	1.68	5	2.97	1st
4.	Accountability	13.73	2.10	5	2.75	5th
5.	Decisiveness	13.68	2.11	5	2.74	6th
6.	Visionary	13.50	2.05	5	2.70	7th
7.	Communication	14.34	1.84	5	2.87	4th
	Mean Average				2.84	Good

Mean Cut-Off: 2.50

The analysis above assesses various leader characteristics, including integrity, confidence, discipline, accountability, decisiveness, visionary leadership, and communication skills. Integrity emerges as one of the most prominent leader characteristics, with a mean score of 14.72, closely followed by confidence and discipline, which have mean scores of 14.66 and 14.85, respectively. These high mean scores indicate a positive perception of these attributes among leaders in public secondary schools. Additionally, accountability, decisiveness, visionary leadership, and communication skills also receive favourable ratings, with mean scores ranging from 13.50 to 14.34, suggesting a generally positive assessment of these qualities. Overall, the mean average for all leader characteristics is calculated to be 2.84, indicating an overall positive perception of leader characteristics among respondents". This assessment surpasses the mean cut-off point of 2.50, signifying that all assessed characteristics are rated above the acceptable threshold.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools

Table 3: Relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	P-value
Leader Characteristics	1469	99.48	5.11	0.508*	0.000
Teacher Productivity	1469	86.90	5.62		

*P<0.05

Table 3 showed that the r-cal value of 0.508 is significant at 0.05 level of significance because the p-value (0.000) < 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: Leader characteristics variables will not significantly contribute to teacher productivity in public secondary schools

Table 4: Contribution of leader characteristics variables to teacher productivity

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	R	R²	F
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
	(Constant)	85.811	2.945		29.137			
1	Integrity	.937	.092	.511	10.185	0.554	0.307	5.127
	Confidence	.059	.086	.018	.694			

Discipline	.682	.088	.324	7.751
Accountability	.733	.089	.412	8.236
Decisiveness	.356	.070	.219	5.086
Visionary	.053	.072	.021	.729
Communication Pattern	.698	.088	.332	7.932

a. Teacher Productivity

Table 4 indicates that the F-cal value of 5.127 is significant at 0.05 level; the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. Hence, leadership characteristics variables significantly contributed to teacher productivity in public secondary schools. All leadership characteristics variables such as integrity, confidence, discipline, accountability, decisiveness, visionary and communication pattern accounted for 30.7 percent variation in teacher productivity in public secondary schools (R^2= 0.307). The result showed that all the leadership characteristics variables positively contributed to teacher productivity with integrity having a beta weight of (β = 0.511, $p<0.05$), confidence (β = 0.018, $p>0.05$), discipline (β = 0.324, $p<0.05$), accountability (β = 0.412, $p<0.05$), decisiveness (β = 0.219, $p<0.05$), visionary (β = 0.021, $p>0.05$) and communication pattern (β = 0.332, $p<0.05$). The table also shows that integrity is the highest contributor to teacher productivity in public secondary schools while confidence is the least contributor to teacher productivity in public secondary schools.

The resulting regression equation is given as:

$Y = 85.811 + 0.937X_1 + 0.059X_2 + 0.682X_3 + 0.733X_4 + 0.356X_5 + 0.053X_6 + 0.698X_7$

where:

Y	=	Teacher Productivity
X_1	=	Integrity
X_2	=	Confidence
X_3	=	Discipline
X_4	=	Accountability
X_5	=	Decisiveness
X_6	=	Visionary
X_7	=	Communication Pattern

Discussion

The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools. This study agrees with the findings of Mehdipour and Balaramulu (2017) emphasized the importance of leadership characteristics in fostering academic achievement, suggesting that it positively influences job productivity. Similarly, Romera (2017) and Varas-Hernandez (2016) found significant correlations between leadership characteristics such as integrity and job productivity, indicating that professionals are acting with integrity and experience through long-term success. Similarly the finding of this study support the findings of Ibrahim and Al Falasi (2014) which highlighted the significant role of leader characteristics in enhancing productivity". This was also supported by Martensen and Gronholdt (2016) and Tomic (2018), who found positive relationships between leader characteristics and job productivity. Ebuara and Coker (2012) and Gina (2011) found "strong correlations between discipline as a variable of leader characteristics and teacher productivity.

In the same vein Brundrette and Rhodes (2017) highlighted the importance of accountability as leader characteristics in improving student achievement, which indirectly impacts job productivity. Communication as leader characteristics also emerges as a crucial factor influencing teacher productivity. Kibe (2014) found significant relationships between communication processes and organizational performance, suggesting its importance in

enhancing job productivity. Similarly, Asiyai (2011) highlighted the role of effective communication in maintaining a conducive school environment, indirectly impacting teacher productivity. The finding of this study implies that there was a significant relationship between leader characteristics and teacher productivity in public secondary schools, with various aspects of leader characteristics influencing job productivity positively.

The study revealed that leader characteristics variables significantly contributed to teacher productivity in public secondary schools. Integrity was the highest contributor to teacher productivity in public secondary schools while confidence was the least contributor to teacher productivity in public secondary schools. The findings of this study corroborate Mehdipour and Balaramulu (2017) who in their study revealed the importance of teachers' integrity, punctuality, and confidence in influencing students' academic achievement. They suggest that integrity plays a crucial role in fostering long-term success and positively impacts educational output and job productivity. Similarly, Romero (2017) found a strong correlation between integrity and job productivity, with over 60% of the variance in integrity linked to student outcomes such as graduation status and GPA. The implication of this current finding suggests that fostering a culture of integrity among educational leaders and teachers can enhance teacher productivity and ultimately improve educational outcomes in public secondary schools

Conclusion

It was concluded that leadership characteristics were determinants of teacher productivity in public secondary schools except confidence and visionary skill. Specifically, integrity emerged as the highest contributor to teacher productivity, highlighting the importance of ethical leadership in fostering a conducive work environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should sustain and further enhance teacher productivity through continuous professional development, effective supervision, and provision of adequate teaching and learning resources.
2. Regular leadership training should be organized for principals to strengthen key leadership attributes such as integrity, discipline, accountability, decisiveness, and communication, which significantly influence teacher productivity.
3. The appointment and promotion of school principals should be based on demonstrated leadership competence and ethical standards rather than seniority alone, given the strong link between leader characteristics and teacher productivity.
4. Targeted capacity-building programmes should be introduced to improve weaker leadership attributes, particularly confidence and visionary leadership, to further boost teacher productivity in public secondary schools.

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