

## ***Principals' Social Intelligence and Leadership Role Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria***

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined principals' social intelligence and leadership role performance in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. Seven hundred and sixty five (765) principals and vice principals were used as sample for this study. An instrument tagged "Principals' Social Intelligence and Leadership Role Performance Questionnaire (PSILRPQ)" was used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and Multiple Regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that principals' emotional maturity, situational skills and empathy for subordinate have significant relationship with leadership role performance in Abia State. Based on these findings, it was concluded that in order to improve the level of decision-making, boost staff morale towards high motivation in the school, enhance the level of instructional supervision and maintain high level of school discipline in public secondary schools in Abia State, there was need for principals to possess high level of social intelligence. It was recommended among others that principals should be encouraged to developed emotional maturity skills, given adequate training on situational skills for effective leadership roles performance in secondary schools in Abia State.*

**Keywords:** principal, social, intelligence, leadership, role

### **Introduction**

The effectiveness of schools is very significant to the development of any society. This is because schools are established for the purpose of equipping citizens with the desired knowledge, skills, competencies and aptitude that are needed to propel the growth and development process of the society. The twenty-first century society has shifted tremendously from the old industry-based economies where emphasis was placed on the accumulation of industrial infrastructure as a measure of development, to the contemporary knowledge-based economies where the progress, development and improvement of nations are measured by the quality of knowledge and ideas available to

the citizens, as well as the competencies of such citizens in knowledge re-construction and application (Asuquo, 2009). This scenario has heightened the quest for effective and quality schools in modern societies of the world, of which Nigeria is not an exception.

School leadership is a social, human-oriented and interactive phenomenon that demands a whole lot of social skills on the part of the school administrators. It appears to be an ongoing, dynamic, interactive and social process that needs effective human and social interaction competencies on the part of principals. Principals' social intelligence seems to be a critical factor in enhancing their abilities to carry out leadership roles better, in a school system. "Social intelligence has been found to be associated with enhanced social problem-solving abilities, experienced school leadership and positive interpersonal experience" in school organizations (Dong et al., 2008). This implies that a principal with high social intelligence is likely to attain high performance margin, in influencing the behaviour and directing the activities of staff, students and parents towards the realization of the school goals and objectives.

Social intelligence involves the understanding of group dynamics, awareness of group situations and the ability to get along with group members for the effective achievement of pre-determined purposes. Social intelligence is equated to social competence and relates to "the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding, in order to achieve a goal" (Bartz et al., 2018, p. 51). It involves all the skills needed by a school leader to create harmonious and interpersonal relationships in the school system, control social interactions among all the subjects in a school, build trust among staff, students and parents and influence their actions and practices towards the success of the school. Emotional maturity, situational ability, and empathy for subordinates seem to be critical social intelligence skills that can boost administrators' ability to maintain effective leadership in schools (Bartz et al., 2018).

Emotional maturity represents the capacity of a school administrator to manage, assess feelings and to assess another's feeling level so as to influence their verdict and deeds (Rafeedali, 2017). A school administrator who cannot exercise control over his emotions or behaviour seems to make quick and irrational decisions, is prone to anger and the use of abusive words on staff and students which are capable of arousing conflict in the school system. Situational ability is a key index of social intelligence that seems to be very useful in understanding the behaviour of people, the possible consequences of their actions and the best way to influence their behaviour to achieve a goal. Situational ability is classified as primary abilities of a school leader, made up of "situational awareness and situational response, and which are necessary for one's career success and effective leadership" (Rahim et al., 2018). This implies that a school administrator with poor situational ability may not be able to understand or perceive possible problems in the school or be able to work with people and make accurate decisions in the school system.

From the foregoing, it is quite clear that principals' ability to carry out effective decisions in school, curb conflict among the parties in the school system, heighten teachers'

motivation for effective performance of assigned tasks, establish good relationship with parents and other stakeholders for maintaining effective and conducive learning environment, and ensure disciplinary control among students for effective teaching and learning, may depend largely on their application of social intelligence skills. It is against this background that this study is set to investigate principals' social intelligence and leadership role performance in Abia State, Nigeria.

Emotional maturity relates to administrators' ability to exercise control over their behaviour, actions, sentiments and their perceptual judgment of their subordinates. Rafeedali (2017) researched the impact of self-idea and enthusiastic development on administration conduct of auxiliary school heads in Kerala, India. The examination attempted an investigation of idea and feeling and their impact on Leadership Behaviour of auxiliary schools with reference to their sex, age, insight and the kind of board of their school. The researchers examined 260 tops of the optional schools to gather data with respect to their self-idea, emotional development and leader behaviour. They discovered that the idea of individuals of optional schools does not have any critical impact on initiative conduct.

It was shown that the impact of passionate development on administration conduct of heads for the all out example and sub-examples of guys, age bunch two, bunch one, bunch two and leaders of schools was huge though it was not critical on account of gender, age bunch one and leaders of helped schools. The examination additionally uncovered that the self-idea and enthusiastic development together contribute essentially in anticipating administration conduct of leaders of schools in Kerala. The level of joint commitment of self-idea and passionate development in anticipating administration conduct was 13.31 percent. The person commitments of self-idea and passionate development in anticipating initiative conduct were 0.024 percent and 13.14 percent separately. The examination suggested the requirement for getting sorted out different powerful preparing programme for tops of the school to improve their self-idea, enthusiastic development and initiative conduct.

Kaur (2015) examined the impact of emotional maturity on administrative leadership of college principals. The information needed for the research comprised of main and secondary data. Primary data concerned to emotional maturity which was gathered from the respondents. The indirect information enclosed the administrative skills of the principals of colleges of education which was collected from their teacher educators. Samples were collected from 100 colleges of education in Punjab. The investigator used the survey method as a main technique for investigation. The tool used for the study was Emotional Maturity Scale to collect primary data for the study. The result revealed that there was significant difference in the emotional maturity of the principals of colleges of education in Punjab. The results indicated that 44% of principals of colleges of education in Punjab were extremely mature, 40% were moderately mature, 15% were immature and only 1% of principals of colleges of education were extremely immature. It was also shown that the principals were moderately mature when they display good administrative

skills and that the level of immaturity in the principals of colleges of education decreased gradually as their human skills improved in the colleges. The implication of this finding for the present study is that as principals display or exhibit good human skills in schools, their level of emotional maturity improves, which can help to carry out effective leadership processes in schools.

Noe (2012) analyzed the connection between auxiliary school administrators' enthusiastic IQ, school culture, and understudy accomplishment. Quantitative information were gathered utilizing two study instruments and freely accessible government sanctioned test pass rate information from The School Culture Survey and The SOL test information. Halfway connection was led to analyze the level of connections between head's passionate IQ and school culture controlling for the impact of understudy accomplishment, and between head's enthusiastic IQ and understudy accomplishment controlling for school culture. A different relapse examination was used to look at the consolidated impact of head's enthusiastic IQ and school culture on understudy accomplishment. The outcomes showed head's passionate IQ was not altogether connected with school culture, and adversely connected with understudy accomplishment. Further, the mix of indicator factors, head's enthusiastic IQ and school culture, did not essentially anticipate understudy accomplishment.

Gogoi (2018) led a study on head's initiative adequacy of General Degree Colleges in Tinsukia District of Assam. The researcher set up that the chief assumes a significant part since he is the assigned head of the establishment, and that the degrees of participation from his associates, just as from different partners, depend by and large, on viability of Principal's administration conduct. The researcher directed the study to uncover a reasonable image of administration adequacy of administrators of the General Degree Colleges of Tinsukia District. The fundamental target of the study was to discover Leadership Effectiveness of Principals of the General Degree Colleges in Tinsukia as a rule and corresponding to area and the board specifically. The population of the study comprised of the entire population of instructors in the studied institution. A total of 88 instructors were chosen as sample for the study. The instrument utilized for gathering of information was Leadership Effectiveness Scale (LES). It was created by the researcher. Findings from the study were that the Leadership Effectiveness of most of the Principals was somewhat higher than the normal, no huge distinction between initiative viability of the administrators of the country and metropolitan general Degree Colleges, no critical contrast between authority adequacy of the directors of the provincialised and non-provincialised general Degree Colleges. This infers that the administrators had great initiative conduct, which perpetual quality implied they showed passionate development in planning endeavours towards school achievement.

Situational skills are the competencies that help a leader to understand the people, their aspirations at a particular time and instances, and the feasible leadership approach that can be adopted to influence their behaviour positively in the organization. The concept of situational skills stems from the situational and contingency theory of leadership which a leader is expected to base his leadership approach on a particular situation in the

organization. Ibukun et al. (2011) submitted that the “leader who adjusts his own individuality to fit the conditions of organization is said to be of the situational or contingency school of leadership effectiveness”. Situational skills then becomes handy in helping the administrator to understand the situations in the school system that demands certain leadership approaches, as well as exercising control over situations in the school system. Goleman (2008) explained the three elements in Fiedler's contingency theory that predict a leader's situational control. The three elements are the structure, leader and member relations, and positioning power. Situational skills are competencies that enhance an administrator’s ability to exercise situational control in a school. Situational control is situation favourableness, which occurs when the three dimensions - leader-member relations, task structure and leader position power - are high (Goleman, 2008). Goleman (2008) goes further to explain that the leader-member relationship is the degree of how much mutual trust, respect and confidence the leaders and members have for one another. Task structure refers to the extent tasks are clearly explained and structured.

Ghazzawi et al. (2017) conducted a study on “situational leadership and its effect on raising employee productivity in North Lebanon Organization”. The study was able to establish that leadership skill is a highly discussed and studied topic in the field of management due to its contribution in influencing employee’s productivity. Their study discussed the effect of head’s skills on worker activation. The aim was to make clarification on how situational leadership skills of organizational leaders affect the productivity of employees inside an organization. A reasonable data assortment approach was applied to contemplate the interaction among the two factors, where “150 members utilized at emergency clinics in North Lebanon filled an all around planned poll to cover various parts of conditional initiative abilities, segment being the initial segment of the survey”, trailed by conditional power act of the supervisors, and finishing with the last piece of the assessment, staff act. Information gathered was examined utilizing SPSS, to reveal the interaction among authority and worker adequacy. Relapse condition was created to discover how change in at least one factor influences the other one(s). As a last determination for this examination, a good interaction was located among initiative conduct and representative efficiency. This finding is associated to the recent research in that it established that the application of situational leadership behaviour or skills is related to leaders’ ability to raise the productivity of employees, which is the central concern of school leadership.

Garrett and Lynn (2015) carried out a multi-contextual investigation on the size of the school and the initiative practices of the four chiefs. This was accomplished through a subjective request of chief meetings, chief study, perception of an administrators' initiative group meeting, centre gathering meeting with the directors' authority group, and examination of the surviving writings: directors' time log for multi week, hierarchical diagram, and plan for an initiative group meeting. It was discovered that each of the four directors seemed to have six normal administration practices that were not dependent on the size of the school. It was noticed that while every one of the four directors showed their comprehension of the requirement for being apparent with understudies, being apparent with instructors, learning one’s understudies, and learning one’s workers, they

all perceived that these abilities would be simpler to create and implement in a little school contrasted with a huge school. Observation likewise showed that the two authority practices of looking for information and setting heading/limits seemed to balance another relying upon the extent of the region. They also reported that getting staff, understudies; knowing their necessities and goals are basic initiative conduct of chiefs. These practices are installed in situational abilities, which permit a school chief to comprehend and apply fitting conduct consistently for successful education and learning in school.

Vaculik et al. (2014) reviewed abilities that anticipate powerful initiative in an association. This investigation looked at the connection between authority viability and conventional and stable capabilities. Assignment related, individuals related and self-related capabilities were analyzed as indicators of initiative viability as estimated by four distinct measures: bunch execution, pioneer individuals related and self-related skills. The researchers reported that initiative variability did not anticipate administration development. The implication of the result to this present study is that task-related and people-related competencies are skills that allow an administrator to completely have control over the work situation in school. As the administrator becomes aware of the situations surrounding workers in terms of their needs and motivation, and the situation surrounding the work in school in terms of the work structure and the skills needed to accomplish them, he is able to select the right people and motivate them to carry out the tasks effectively in the school.

Larsson and Vinberg (2016) analyzed authority conduct in fruitful associations, to decide if all inclusive or circumstance subordinate administration conduct has a basic part in the production of effective associations. The effective associations for this research were two gathering institutions: one medical clinic and one retail activity. The idea analyses were acted regarding two administration research projects. They zeroed in on quality work, adequacy, working climate, subordinate wellbeing and impression of the authority. The basic initiative practices were assessed using a near plan. The distinguished basic initiative skills were then dissected according to the three-extent regulation model to assess circulations among assessment. Nine basic gatherings of practices were distinguished and portrayed. The subjective examinations showed that the recognized practices were in each of the three conduct assessment. The two additional components of construction and alter direction can be modified by heads as displayed by processes. This end infers that effective authority character encloses both diffused and possibly or circumstance constituents. This outcome infers that a school chief needs situational abilities to have the option to work successfully in the educational system.

Empathy for subordinates is one of the measures that enhance principals' ability to coordinate the efforts of all in the school processes on the smooth attainment of all the goals of the school system. Gentry et al. (2007) submitted that empathy is the administrators' ability to experience and relate to the thoughts, emotions, or experience of others in the school system, and that empathy is more than simple sympathy, which is being able to understand and support others with compassion or sensitivity. According to these researchers, empathy is also a core section of feeling brilliant that has been seen to

be significantly critical to being an effective leader. Empathy seems to be a powerful attribute of a school administrator that is feasible in the development of learning relationship and promoting academic achievement of students and staff in that it (empathy) is often communicated non-verbally through facial expression and body language between administrators and subordinates in the school setting (Cote, 2015).

MacDonald (2015) added that empathy is understanding the emotional needs of others and using this comprehension to make better decisions and communicate more effectively for the betterment of the person and organization. Bariso (2014) denoted that a leader with empathy would take time to relate to how a subordinate may feel and how this might affect one's work and relationships or interactions with others, and that leaders who demonstrate empathy to individual team members will help encourage them to perform at their best.

Kamran (2018) examined the effect of pioneers' sympathy on representatives' condition of inspiration to work in Lidl in Sweden. The investigation pointed toward understanding representatives' inspiration to work and to know the effect of Leaders' compassion on their condition of inspiration. This examination embraced a subjective way to deal with information assortment. The information was gotten through normalized meetings of Managers of Lidl Sverige AB, and self-directed polls filled by the representatives of Lidl Sverige AB. Members were chosen using convenience sampling. Grounded Theory was utilized to break down the information collected. The discoveries were that money related prizes have no impact on representatives' condition of inspiration, while pioneers' sympathy had mending impact on workers' inspiration. It was additionally reported that in light of pioneers' sympathy, the roused representatives showed high interest just as obligation in their work. The researcher prescribed that there is a need to broaden the meaning of sympathy from work level to singular even out and give a model that can accommodate hole in the existent writing with respect to representatives' inspiration and effect of pioneers' compassion on the general execution of associations. This concurs with Krasny (2014) who believed that the proper chiefs at job are the ones who set aside some effort to pay attention to their representatives, see other's points of view, and comprehend where a worker might be coming from, and having sympathy is the most ideal way a pioneer can get and give precise data from subordinate in an association.

Rahman and Castelli (2013) investigated the effect of compassion on initiative viability among business pioneers. They averred that worldwide business sectors have expanded the difficulties looked by business associations making them deal with their representatives across shifting societies, diverse time regions, and complex hierarchical designs, and that more powerful administration abilities are needed to improve business endurance and coherence. The scientists repeated that compassion is a crucial initiative instrument in the present worldwide market. This study explored the effect of compassion on authority viability by testing four theories to decide the connections between sympathy, initiative adequacy, and pioneers' experiences utilizing an example of 216 trades pioneers situated in the countries. Davis' IRI was utilized to quantify compassion and to assess the effect of sympathy on authority adequacy in the countries. The outcomes showed that

trades pioneers have altogether higher sympathy than nation trade pioneers, and that pioneers with maximum compassion have all the earmarks of being more compelling. The researchers prescribed that associations need to foster pioneers with high compassion abilities for successful administration of the association. The implication of this finding to the current study is that school overseers with high compassion abilities might be exceptionally successful in school initiative than others with less sympathy abilities.

Terrasi (2015) investigated sympathy as a fundamental characteristic in 21st century corporate initiative. The researcher averred that in a field overwhelmed by diverse initiative styles, pioneers have the ability to impact specialist encounters and hierarchical results, which requests human abilities. This study looked at specific initiative qualities that may impact the hierarchical climate. In particular, the research recommended that compassion is huge for compelling initiative. Eighteen innovators in different businesses took part in semi-organized meetings with respect to their practices and points of view. The outcomes portrayed an accumulation of developing topics just as information discoveries with respect to explicit spaces of request. Five significant classifications were found seeing compassion as a part of 21st century initiative: industry-based points of view, generational socioeconomics, innovation, representatives as people first and labourers second, and the connection among sympathy and usefulness. Moreover, four significant classifications were found with respect to how sympathy is set up in hierarchical culture: preparing programmes/workshops, authoritative achievement measures, day by day correspondence propensities/association, and work exercises/customs. The outcomes show that compassion is a fundamental attribute for 21st century authority and past. This concurs with Mahsud et al. (2010) who reported that compassion empowers pioneers to have a superior comprehension of new friendly environmental factors, and assists them with learning and adjust to new conditions. Along these lines, sympathy abilities additionally assist pioneers with having an uplifting outlook towards adjusting to new conditions and patterns which make a collective climate.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions were stated to guide the research:

1. To what amount do principals display emotional maturity in public secondary schools in Abia State?
2. To what extent do principals exhibit situational skills in public secondary schools in Abia State?
3. To what extent do principals have empathy for subordinate in public secondary schools in Abia State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses directed this research:

**Ho1:** Principals' emotional maturity has no significant interaction with leadership role result in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline.

**Ho2:** Principals' situational skills have no significant interaction with leadership role performance.

**Ho3:** Principals' empathy for subordinate has no significant interaction with leadership role performance in Abia State.

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this research was the correlational design. The population of this research comprised all principals and vice principals in all public schools in Abia State, which according to the Abia State Secondary Education Board (2019) is seven hundred and sixty five (765). The census sampling technique was therefore adopted for the study, which meant that the entire 765 principals and vice principals in the study area participated in the study.

The instrument used for data gathering in the research was a questionnaire titled "Principals' Social Intelligence and Leadership Role Performance Questionnaire" (PSILRPQ). The questionnaire comprised of three sections – 'A', 'B' and 'C'. Section A elicited information on the socio-demographic data of the respondents. Section B included three sub-scales of five questions each. The first sub-scale measured principals' emotional maturity, the second measured principals' situational skills, and the third sub-scale measured principals' empathy for subordinates. The third section of the instrument, Section C, included ten (10) items that measured the leadership role performance of the principals. The questionnaire was five-point Likert-scaled, ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagreed (SD). For positively worded items, SA was scored 5 and SD scored 0, while the reverse was the case for the negatively worded items, with SA scoring 0 and SD scoring 5.

The instrument was vetted for face and content validity by professionals in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. It was also tested for reliability using the Cronbach alpha reliability test, with reliability coefficients ranging between 0.85 and 0.87, which indicate a high reliability of the instrument. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were applied to assess the information that were generated from the questionnaire, while Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) and Multiple Regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

### **Presentation of results**

**Ho1:** Principals' emotional maturity has no significant interaction with leadership role performance in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline.

The two variables in this hypothesis are principals' emotional maturity and leadership role performance. Principals' leadership role performance was measured in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. To assess this model, PPMC assessment was applied to the data. The outcome of the evaluation is placed in table 1.

**Table 1:** Summary of correlations between principals' emotional maturity and leadership role performance in Abia State (N=733)

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D	$r_{xy}$	Sig.
Principals' emotional maturity ( $x_1$ )	18.03	1.94		
Decision-making ( $y_1$ )	17.34	2.65	.780*	.000
Staff motivation( $y_2$ )	17.27	2.37	.552*	.000
Instructional supervision ( $y_3$ )	17.23	2.20	.609*	.000
School discipline ( $y_4$ )	16.67	2.03	.520*	.000
Principals' overall leadership role performance ( $y_{1-4}$ )	62.29	8.05	.718*	.000

Significant at  $P < .05$   $df=731$  Critical  $r = .062$

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients between principals' emotional maturity and leadership role performance in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. The result shows that the correlation coefficients ranged from .520 ( $p < .05$ ) for school discipline, .552 ( $p < .05$ ) for staff motivation, .609 ( $p < .05$ ) for instructional supervision, to .780 ( $p < .05$ ) for decision-making. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for all individual principals leadership role performance variables and for their overall leadership role performance .718 ( $p < .05$ ). Based on this outcome, hypothesis one is unaccepted on the overall and in terms of each of the principals' leadership role performance variables of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. This means that there is a significant interaction among principals' emotional maturity and leadership role performance in Abia State.

**Ho2:** Principals' situational skills has no significant interaction with leadership role result in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline.

The two variables in this hypothesis are principals' situational skills and leadership role performance in Abia State. Principals' leadership role performance was measured in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. To assess this model, PPMC assessment was applied to the data. The outcome of the evaluation is placed in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of correlations between principals’ situational skills and leadership role performance in Abia State (N=733)

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D	$r_{xy}$	Sig.
Principals’ situational skills (x <sub>2</sub> )	18.03	2.44		
Decision-making (y <sub>1</sub> )	17.34	2.65	.502*	.000
Staff motivation(y <sub>2</sub> )	17.27	2.37	.561*	.000
Instructional supervision (y <sub>3</sub> )	17.23	2.20	.416*	.000
School discipline (y <sub>4</sub> )	16.67	2.03	.554*	.000
Principals’ overall leadership role performance (y <sub>1-4</sub> )	62.29	8.05	.585*	.000

Significant at P<.05 df=731 Critical r =.062

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between principals’ situational skills and leadership role performance in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. The result shows that the correlation coefficients ranged from .416 (p<.05) for instructional supervision, .502(p<.05) for decision-making, .554 (p<.05) for school discipline, to .561 (p<.05) for staff motivation. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for all individual principals’ leadership role performance variables and for their overall leadership role performance .585 (p<.05). Hypothesis two is rejected on the overall and in terms of each of the principals’ leadership role performance variables of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. This means that there is a significant association among principals’ situational skills and leadership role activity in Abia State.

**Ho3:** Principals’ empathy for subordinates has no significant interaction with leadership role performance in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline.

The two variables in this hypothesis are principals’ empathy for subordinates and leadership role performance in Abia State. Principals’ leadership role performance was measured in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. To assess this model, PPMC assessment was applied to the data. The outcome of the evaluation is placed in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Summary of correlations between principals’ empathy for subordinates and leadership role performance in Abia State (N=733)

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D	$r_{xy}$	Sig.
Principals’ empathy for subordinates(x <sub>4</sub> )	17.69	2.56		
Decision-making (y <sub>1</sub> )	17.34	2.65	.453*	.000
Staff motivation(y <sub>2</sub> )	17.27	2.37	.458*	.000
Instructional supervision (y <sub>3</sub> )	17.23	2.20	.538*	.000
School discipline (y <sub>4</sub> )	16.67	2.03	.718*	.000
Principals’ overall leadership role performance (y <sub>1-4</sub> )	62.29	8.05	.613*	.000

\*Significant at P<.05 df=731 Critical r =.062

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients between principals' empathy for subordinates and leadership role performance in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. The result shows that the correlation coefficients ranged from .453 ( $p < .05$ ) for decision-making, .458 ( $p < .05$ ) for staff motivation, .538 ( $p < .05$ ) for instructional supervision, to .718 ( $p < .05$ ) for school discipline. The correlation coefficients were statistically significant for all individual principals' leadership role performance variables and for their overall leadership role performance .613 ( $p < .05$ ). Based on this result, hypothesis four is rejected on the overall and in terms of each of the principals' leadership role performance variables of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. This means that there is a significant interaction among heads' empathy for subordinates and leadership role activity in Abia State.

**Table 4:** Summary of multiple regression analysis for the contribution of sub-variables of principals' social intelligence to their effectiveness in Abia State

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F ratio	Sig.
Regression	32488.892	6	5414.515		
Residual	1497.316	726	20.626	262.527*	.000
Total	47463.209	732			

$R = .827$   $R^2 = .685$   $Adj R^2 = .682$

**Table 5:** Regression weights of the predictor variables

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Rank
Constant	6.989	1.736		4.025	.000	
Principals' emotional maturity ( $x_1$ )	1.908	.113	.460	16.823*	.000	1 <sup>st</sup>
Principals' situational skills ( $x_2$ )	.578	.103	.176	5.610*	.000	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Principals' empathy for subordinates ( $x_4$ )	.392	.094	.125	4.188*	.000	3 <sup>rd</sup>

\*Significant at  $P < .05$   $df = 726$  Critical  $t = 1.962$

### Discussion of the findings

The analysis of the first hypothesis which stated that principals' emotional maturity has no significant interaction with leadership role activity in public schools in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline, revealed a significant interaction among heads' emotional maturity and leadership role activity in Abia State in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. This implies that principals' emotional maturity has a significant relationship with leadership role performance in Abia State. This result suggests that the extent to which principals are able to exercise regulation over their behaviour, emotions and perceptual judgment of their subordinates determines the amount to which they are able to perform the leadership roles in schools in the state. This result further suggests that, principals' leadership role activity in schools in the state varies directly with the extent to which they are emotionally mature in dealing with their

subordinates in the schools. The overall significant positive correlation of .718 ( $p < .05$ ) explains that principals' leadership role activity in public schools in the state is determined by their level of emotional maturity.

The result of the analysis revealed that principals' emotional maturity has significant relationships with all the sub-scales of leadership role activity in public schools in the state: decision-making (.780,  $p < .05$ ), staff motivation (.552,  $p < .05$ ), instructional supervision (.609,  $p < .05$ ) and school discipline (.520,  $p < .05$ ). This result suggests that the more secondary school administrators are able to display emotional maturity when dealing with staff and students in their schools, the more they are able to design effective decision-making process in the schools, boost teachers' level of satisfaction through effective motivational approach, ensure effective instructional process in the school system and maintain effective school discipline in the secondary school system in the State. The reason for this result is that school decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline are all human-centred activities that demands continuous interaction between the school principals and others in schools. Thus for principals to be able to carry out this activities effectively in schools, they need to control their emotions, understand the feelings of others and apply approach to influence their actions. Thus as principals become more emotionally mature in their dealings with other stakeholders in the schools, they tend to attain success in influencing the behaviour of others towards goal attainment.

This result agrees with opinion of Rafeedali (2017) who noted that emotional development displays ability of a school administrator to control and to assess feelings, to assess another's feeling level and to seek their verdict and acts. He explained that school leaders with high degree of emotional maturity are more capable of implementing positive changes in the school system and positively effecting social change among teachers, students and other stakeholders, geared towards attaining effective school system.

The analysis of the second hypothesis which stated that principals' situational skills has no significant interaction with leadership role activity in Abia State, in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline, revealed a significant interaction among heads' situational skills and leadership role activity in Abia State. This means that heads' situational expertise has a significant interaction with leadership role performance in Abia State in terms of decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline. This result suggests that the extent to which principals apply situational leadership skills in their schools determines the amount to which they are able to perform the leadership roles effectively in schools in the state. This result further suggests that principals' leadership role activity in schools in Abia State has direct congruence with the extent to which they are able to apply situational leadership approach in the schools.

The overall significant positive correlation of .585 ( $p < .05$ ) explains that principals' leadership role activity in schools in the state is determined by the amount to which they

apply situational skills in their administrative processes. The reason for this positive correlation between principals' situational skills and leadership role performance is that situational skills are the competencies that help a leader to understand the people, their aspirations at a particular time and instances, and the feasible leadership approach that can be adopted to influence their behaviour positively in the organization. Given that leadership in school is human-centred and deals more with the capacity of the head to effect the acts of other people towards goal attainment, it becomes necessary for principals to understand the actions of the staff and students, as well as understand what type of approach can be adopted to influence their behaviours at every instance for effective attainment of the school goals and objectives.

The result of this hypothesis indicates that principals' situational skills have significant relationships with all the sub-scales of leadership role activity in public schools in the state: decision-making (.502,  $p < .05$ ), staff motivation (.561,  $p < .05$ ), instructional supervision (.416,  $p < .05$ ) and school discipline (.554,  $p < .05$ ). This result suggests that the more secondary administrators are able to apply situational skills when dealing with staff and students in their schools, the more they are able to design effective decision-making process in the schools, boost teachers' level of satisfaction through effective motivational approach, ensure effective instructional process in the school system and maintain effective school discipline in the secondary school system in the State.

The reason for this result is that school decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline are all human-centred activities that demand continuous interaction between the school administrators and others in schools. Thus the ability of the principals to understand the situations surrounding staff and the leadership approach to be applied to influence their behaviour towards maximum performance in schools, becomes a sine-qua-non for their effectiveness in guiding teachers during instructional activities, taking feasible decisions in the school system, motivating staff for high performance and ensuring that both staff and students imbibe the right and acceptable pattern of behaviour in the schools. This implies that principals may not be able to guide teachers appropriately when they are not fully aware of what causes the teachers to perform poorly, may not be able to motivate staff when they do not know what would motivate them. It also implies that principals may not be able to enforce discipline in school when they do not understand what disciplinary measures can be applied at a given time in the school.

This result agrees with the findings of Ghazzawi et al. (2017) who reported a good interaction among heads' behaviour and workers' creativity and established that the application of situational leadership behaviour or skills is related to leaders' ability to raise the productivity of employees, which is the central concern of school leadership. In line with this result, Fook and Sidhu (2009) investigated leadership features of a good head in the country and found that head was too interested, and had small period for learner and individuals and did not apply appropriate situational behaviour in dealing with teachers, parents and students. The researcher concluded that school heads' ability to understand

the implication of staff behaviour and apply the right behaviour in the circumstance are critical to their ability to improve performance in the school system.

This explains that principals' abilities to carry out leadership roles effectively in the school system are practically contingent upon their abilities to apply situational skills in school leadership or administrative processes. This result may be occasioned by the fact that principals in the schools have adequate knowledge of contingency and situational leadership styles and how they can be applied in the school system. This is because situational skills are derived from situational and contingency leadership which depict that a leader must vary his leadership approach to suit with the situations at stake in the organization. Thus a principal may not be able to apply proper situational skills when he is not adequately abreast with the knowledge of situational and contingency leadership styles and how to apply them in the school system. This result may also be that principals in the schools have high priority for school system effectiveness. This is because a principal who does not care about the progress and effectiveness of his school may not be bothered about applying a strategy that would motivate teachers to teach or motivate students to learn. With this mindset, he may adopt laissez-faire leadership approach in the school. This implies that principals' leadership role performance may also relate to their knowledge of situational and contingency leadership styles and the extent to which they prioritize school effectiveness as a goal to be achieved in the school system

The overall significant positive correlation of .613 ( $p < .05$ ) indicates that principals' leadership role activity in schools in Abia State is determined by the amount to which they are able to empathize with staff, students and parents in the school system. The reason for this positive correlation is that empathy appeals to the subordinates' sense of recognition, worth and acknowledgement of their situations, and thus has the capacity to command obedience on the part of the subordinates. In a school system, when a principal expresses empathy for staff, they (staff), tend to feel relaxed and satisfied. With this scenario therefore, atmosphere of cordiality and enthusiasm is created in the school system, which help to arouse the morale of staff to put in their best on the job in the school system.

The result of this hypothesis indicates that principals' empathy for subordinates has significant relationships with all the sub-scales of leadership role activity in public schools in the state: decision-making (.453,  $p < .05$ ), staff motivation (.458,  $p < .05$ ), instructional supervision (.538,  $p < .05$ ) and school discipline (.718,  $p < .05$ ). This result suggests that the more secondary school principals express empathy for subordinates (staff, students and parents) in the schools, the more they are able to involve others in the decision-making process of their schools, boost teachers' level of satisfaction through non-monetary motivational approach like praises and encouragement, ensure effective instructional process in the school system through positive non-verbal cues like nodding of heads, and are able to maintain effective school discipline through appropriate guidance of worker ad individuals in the school system in the State. The reason for this result is that school decision-making, staff motivation, instructional supervision and school discipline are all interactive social processes and activities that demand that principals must understand the

disposition and feelings of staff and students for him to influence them positively in the school system. Thus when they display empathy with others in the school system, they create enabling environment for harmonious relationship and co-existence among stakeholders in the system, which then enhances effective performance of the system in all areas.

However, this result may be attributed to the fact that staff in the schools are committed to their roles in the schools. This is because principals tend to express empathy with staff whom they know is committed to his roles in the school system. For instance, when a teacher who is always punctual to school stays away from school without permission, principals sometimes may believe that he has serious and pressing issues that warrant his staying away from school, and thus may not query the teacher for absenteeism. Thus the level of staff commitment in the school may also relate to principals' leadership role performance in the schools. This result may also be due to the fact that principals in the schools are open to staff and students in the school. When staff, parents and students have opportunities to interact freely with school administrator, they tend to open up on personal issues, which allow the principals opportunities to actually understand the situations surrounding staff, students and parents in the schools. With this knowledge therefore, the principals become abreast with the plights of others and thus design ways to help them. This also implies that principals may perform leadership roles effectively when they are open to everyone in the school system.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the outcome of the study, it was concluded that heads' emotional maturity, principals' situational skills and principals' empathy for subordinate have significant relationship with leadership role performance in public schools in Abia State. It was also concluded that in order to improve the level of decision-making, boost staff morale towards high motivation in the school, enhance the level of instructional supervision and maintain high level of school discipline in public schools in Abia State, there is need for principals to possess high level of social intelligence.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Principals should be encouraged to developed emotional maturity skills. This will help them to know and apply appropriate leadership approaches that would enhance effective teaching and learning in the schools.
2. Since situational skills can enhance principals' ability to carry out leadership roles effectively in schools, principals in Abia State should be given adequate training on how to apply situational skills appropriately in their schools.
3. Secondary school heads in the state should develop the habit of expressing empathy and concern for their subordinates in the schools. This would help them to create a work-oriented atmosphere for effective teaching and learning in their schools.

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