International Journal of
Current Issues in Educational Development
(IJCIED) July, 2026.

PRINCIPALS' ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR AS A PREDICTOR OF TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE AND ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated principals' adaptive leadership behaviours as predictor of teachers' job performance and engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two specific purposes, two research questions, and two hypotheses guided the study. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 274 principals in public secondary schools in Anambra State; hence census sampling technique was employed for the study. Researcher-structured rating scales titled Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire (PALBQ), Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS) and Teachers' Job Engagement Questionnaire (TJEQ were used for data collection. The instruments were developed by the researcher from literature and in consultation with experts. The instruments were validated by three experts; two experts in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha statistics; and internal consistency co-efficients of 0.89, 0.77 and 0.84 were respectively obtained. Data were analyzed using simple regression. The findings revealed among others that Principals' adaptive leadership behaviours is a moderate predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that given the impact of adaptive leadership behaviours on teachers' job engagement, government should come up with policy framework that will help institute, strengthen and encourage principals to engage in adaptive leadership behaviours in handling the teachers and other school affairs.

Keywords: Adaptive leadership, Leadership, job performance, job engagement

Introduction

Secondary education in Nigeria is that learning stage that follows the completion of primary education, providing students with opportunities to consolidate foundational knowledge and acquire the skills necessary for higher learning and productive living. In Nigeria, secondary education occupies a crucial position within the educational system, serving as a bridge between basic and tertiary education (Ololube, 2019). At this level, learners are expected to develop

intellectual abilities, moral values, and practical competencies that prepare them to contribute meaningfully to national development. The success of secondary education depends largely on the level of teachers' engagement in their job which comes in form of vigor and enthusiasm in instructional delivery.

Teacher job engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral energy teachers devote to their work. It encompasses the extent to which teachers are enthusiastic, dedicated, and absorbed in their professional responsibilities. According to Onwuka and Opara (2018), vigor, dedication, and absorption are the key dimensions of engagement that determine how effective teachers perform. Engaged teachers show a sense of purpose, enthusiasm, and resilience that directly translates into better student learning outcomes and school performance. Similarly, Tucker (2021) highlights that teacher engagement flourishes when educators are part of a collaborative learning community where reflective dialogue, shared norms, and professional trust enhance instructional practice. But job engagement declines when excessive workload, emotional exhaustion, and other job-related stressors are common in school, whereas adequate professional resources and supportive school environments enhance it (Han, Yin, and Wang, 2020; Singh and Jha, 2021). Obioma and Okeke (2019) reported that teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State exhibit symptoms of low morale and reduced commitment to instructional duties, largely due to inadequate support and poor working conditions. Similarly, Uche and Eze (2021) noted that many teachers in the state experience emotional exhaustion and decreased motivation, which negatively affects their level of engagement in classroom activities. Teachers' job engagement mirrors teachers' job performance which is another index for measuring secondary schools' degree of compliance with national policy objectives. As Ugwu and Nwabuzo (2024) put it, no teacher can perform beyond the level of his/her engagement in the job.

Teachers' job performance connotes the effectiveness and quality with which teachers fulfill their professional duties, including lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and student assessment. Obiekwe and Mbanefo (2019) described teachers' job performance as the duties performed by a teacher at a particular period in the school system towards achieving school goals. Onalopo, Damilola and Temitayo (2019) posited that secondary education ultimately succeeds or fails based on the performance of the teachers which is dependent on whether a teacher performs an assigned job well in terms of the use of instructional materials, mastery of their subject matter, class control, teaching methods, regular assessment of students, making lesson plans, assessment of pupils, conduct of field work, teachers' participation in sports, attending school assembly among others. Nwachukwu and Eze (2020) observed that in Anambra State, cases of teachers' negative attitude to work which led to poor performance among teachers is evident, Nwachukwu and Eze noted further that some teachers are even looking elsewhere for greener pastures. Other negative attitudes among the teachers in Anambra State according to Onalopo, Damilola and Temitayo include non-commitment to duty, absenteeism, low morale, lack of interest and dissatisfaction in their teaching job. Similarly, Ezegbe (2021) noted that despite the important role teachers' play in achieving education and school success, poor job performance exists among teachers in some secondary schools in Anambra State

Given these challenges schools face, scholars have emphasized the need for effective school leadership that can rekindle teachers' sense of purpose, promote commitment, and foster a supportive and resilient work environment. Bush, Kirezi, Ashford, and Glover (2022) argued that

school leadership that can ignite the sense of purpose and commitment from the teachers and bring about resilient school organization must be contextually responsive, instructional in nature, and focused on improving teachers' performance through collaboration, capacity building, and strategic vision. One of such leadership models that have been increasingly recognized for its relevance in dynamic educational settings is adaptive leadership.

Adaptive leadership behaviours as conceptualized by Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), manifest when leaders demonstrate ability in mobilizing individuals to tackle complex challenges, learn, and adapt in changing environments. It emphasizes flexibility, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and responsive qualities that are essential in addressing teacher disengagement and improving school performance. Adaptive leadership is increasingly recognized as a dynamic approach that enables leaders to respond effectively to complex and unpredictable organizational challenges. According to Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018), adaptive leadership is not merely about authority or control but about fostering the conditions that allow learning, creativity, and adaptation to emerge within a system. This model encourages collaboration, shared decision-making, and flexibility, allowing leaders to mobilize people toward solving problems that lack clear solutions. Similarly, Northouse (2021), notes that adaptive leadership thrives in volatile environments such as educational institutions where leaders must balance competing demands, manage change, and sustain motivation among stakeholders. Adaptive leadership in school involves the principal's ability to interpret the unique realities of their schools and to guide teachers through change with empathy and strategic insight (Ijeoma-Charles, Kpakol, and Gabriel, 2023).In public secondary schools, principals who demonstrate adaptive leadership are expected to respond flexibly to contextual demands, manage change constructively, and support teachers through inclusive and emotionally intelligent practices (Northouse, 2021).

From the foregoing, evidence in literature appears to suggest that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours can potentially influence teachers' job engagement and performance By fostering a supportive, participatory, and flexible work environment, adaptive principals can enhance teachers' motivation, commitment, and professional efficacy, which in turn positively impacts instructional quality and student outcomes. Despite these insights, empirical evidence specifically examining the predictive relationship between principals' adaptive leadership and teacher outcomes in public secondary schools in Anambra State remains limited.

Thus, there is a pressing need to investigate whether principals' adaptive leadership behaviours can serve as a predictor of teachers' job performance and engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra state. It is against this background that this study was conceived

Statement of the problem

Principals, who display adaptive leadership behaviors, demonstrate ability to interpret the unique realities of their schools and guide teachers through change with empathy and strategic insight. Principals do these by responding flexibly to contextual demands, manage change constructively, and support teachers through inclusive and emotionally intelligent practices.

However, noticeable characteristics of public secondary schools in Anambra state would seem to suggest that principals are still struggling and are yet unable to leverage on the adaptive

leadership as there are manifest incidence of low morale and reduced commitment to instructional duties among teachers, largely due to inadequate support and poor working conditions, feelings of burnout, dissatisfaction, and a lack of institutional support among teachers, leading to reduced enthusiasm and classroom performance and teachers' negative attitude to work which lead to poor performance.

The persistence of these challenges highlights a critical gap in leadership practice and research. If unaddressed, ineffective leadership behaviours may continue to undermine teacher productivity, reduce institutional adaptability, and compromise the quality of secondary education in the state, hence, the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate principals' adaptive leadership behaviour as a predictor of teacher's job performance and engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state. Specifically, the study determined:

1. the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviours on teachers' job performance in public secondary school in Anambra state and
2. the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job performance in public secondary school in Anambra state?
2. What is the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state?

Hypotheses

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

1. Principals' adaptive leadership behaviours will not significantly predict teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Principals' adaptive leadership behaviours will not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised 274 principals in all the 274 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Census sampling technique was used because of the manageable size of the population. Researcher-structured rating scales titled Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire (PALBQ), Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS) and Teachers' Job Engagement Questionnaire (TJEQ were used for data collection formatted on a 4-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly

Disagree (1). Face and content validity was established by three experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha statistics; and internal consistency co-efficients of 0.89, 0.77 and 0.84 were respectively obtained. Data were analyzed using simple regression.

Results

Research Question one: What is the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job performance in public secondary school in Anambra state?

Table one: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviour as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Performance

Model	n	R	r Square	Adjusted r Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Principals' Adaptive leadership Behaviours	268	0.730	0.534	0.532	.0.45008	Strong

Result in Table one shows that the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job performance is 0.730, with a coefficient of determination of 0. 534.This shows 53.4% changes in teachers' job performance could be associated with principals' adaptive leadership behavior. The regression coefficient r of 0.730 indicated that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour is a strong predictor of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

HO_1: Principals' adaptive leadership behaviours do not significantly predict teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table two: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviours as a Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Performance

Predictor	n	R	r^2	*F*	*P-value*	Remark
Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviours	268	0.730	0.534	304.204	0.000	*S

*Significant

As shown in Table two, the simple regression coefficient (r) of principals' adaptive leadership behaviours as a significant predictor of teachers' job performance is 0.730, while the r^2 is 0.534. This shows that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours could contribute to 53.4% variations in teachers' job performance. The *F* (1/268) =304.204and the *p*-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' adaptive leadership behaviours do significantly predict teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question two: What is the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state?

Table three: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviour as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement

Model	n	R	r Square	Adjusted r Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Principals' Adaptive leadership Behaviours	268	0.556	0.310	0.307	0.32334	Moderate

As shown in Table three, the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement is 0.556, with a coefficient of determination of 0.310. This shows principals' adaptive leadership behaviours make 31.0% contributions to teachers' job engagement. The regression coefficient r of 0.556 indicated that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour is a moderate predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

HO_2: Principals' adaptive leadership behaviours do not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table four: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviours as a Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement

Predictor	n	R	r^2	*F*	*P-value*	Remark
principals' Adaptive Leadership Behaviours	268	0.556	0.310	119.280	0.000	*S

*Significant

Table four indicated that the simple regression coefficient (r) of principals' adaptive leadership behaviours as a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement is 0.556, while the r^2 is 0.310, this shows that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours could explain 31.0% changes in teachers' job commitment. The *F* (1/268) =119.280 and the *p*-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' adaptive leadership behaviours do significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Results

The predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job performance in public secondary school in Anambra state

Result in Table one shows that the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job performance is 0.730, with a coefficient of determination of 0.534. This shows that 53.4% changes in teachers' job performance could be associated with principals' adaptive leadership behavior. It implies therefore that principals' engagement in behaviours such

as comforting teachers as they work through intense issues, encourage teachers to take initiative in solving problems, welcome the thoughts of teachers of low and high status and help teachers find new ways of coping with school problems, would contribute by 53.4% in determining the level at which teachers fulfill all duties assigned to them in school on time, effectively inculcate the three behavioural domains in the students and display mastery of their subjects among others. The regression coefficient r of 0.730 indicated that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour is a strong predictor of teachers' job performance; this suggests that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour can potentially undermine the performance of the teachers if adequate attention is not paid to it. It further implies that improving teachers' job performance would require giving considerable attention to principals' adaptive leadership behaviour. More so, in table four, the result showed that the F (1/268) =304.204 and the p-value of 0.000; this implies that since the p-value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative upheld. Hence, it can be stated that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour is a significant predictor of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The findings of this study is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Omran and Abo-Thabet (2024) whose study on the relationship between adaptive leadership practices and the performance of school teachers in Palestine showed that a statistically significant positive relationship exist between adaptive leadership and the job performance of school teachers in Palestine with correlation coefficient of $r = 0.63$; at $p \geq 0.01$. The agreement between the findings of both studies implies that despite the disparity between the two studies in terms of location, government policies, research method, and instruments for data collections among others, adaptive leadership practices such as: supporting teacher professional development, encouraging teamwork and cooperation among teachers, and comforting and encouraging teachers especially when they are under intense pressure will almost always result in improved job performance. This finding further emphasizes the importance of developing adaptive leadership competencies to improve teacher effectiveness and by extension students' performance and achievement.

Similarly, the findings of the study by Obi and Onyeike (2018) on the extent principals' leadership styles predict job performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State are equally consistent with the findings of the present study. Obi and Onyeike (2018) observed that principals' leadership styles jointly and significantly predicted job performance of teachers in secondary schools in Imo State; this therefore implies that not only that adaptive leadership behaviours of principals predict teachers' job performance, there are other leadership styles that could also do same. It therefore goes without saying that improving teachers' job performance requires committed efforts on the part of the policy makers and school managers to invest more resources in leadership training of the school heads. Notwithstanding the time lag between the two studies, the results have remained the same- the study of Obi and Onyeike was conducted in 2018 and eight years later, nothing seems to have changed in terms of the opinions expressed by principals and teachers on the effect of leadership on teachers' job performance. The consistency of the results over time gives vent and credibility to the opinion expressed by Sun and Wang, (2017) that Principal's Adaptive Leadership style and the supportive climate established by school principals are consistently linked to teachers' performance and long-term professional success.

The predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement in public secondary school in Anambra state

The finding of the study as presented in table three shows that the predictive value of principals' adaptive leadership behaviour on teachers' job engagement is 0.556, with a coefficient of determination of 0.310.This implies that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours account for 31.0% contributions to teachers' job engagement; this further implies that when principals exhibit behaviours such as using their authority to resolve problems when events that trigger strong emotional responses among teachers arise, help teachers work through difficulties when they feel uncertain about school changes, and communicate their thoughts when teachers are struggling with a decision, it will contribute by 31% to teachers becoming enthusiastic about their job, devoted to giving their full energy to teaching activities and willing to go extra mile to achieve school goals among others. More so, the regression coefficient r of 0.556 indicated that principals' adaptive leadership behaviour is a moderate predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State; that is to say, principals' engagement in adaptive leadership behaviour fairly explains the strength of absorption of teachers in their job. Result in table two also revealed that the F (1/268) =119.280 and the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05; this implies that since the p-value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis will be rejected, accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it is safe to say that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the results of Alene, Ayana, Misganaw, Tsegaye and Shiferaw (2025)'s study that examined the effect of principals' adaptive leadership behavior on teachers' work engagement in public secondary schools in the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia which showed a positive and statistically significant correlation between principals' adaptive leadership behavior and teachers' work engagement with a relationship coefficient of r =.682, at p <.001. The study also showed that 46.1% of teachers' workplace engagement variation is explained by the combined effect of adaptive leadership behaviors. The concurrence of both studies confirms the fact the human beings regardless of disparity in location, culture and tradition, behave in a relatively similar manner when they are similarly treated; teachers everywhere are likely to be engaged in their job when principals display adaptive leadership behaviour in handling them. The agreement between the two studies can be explained further by the similarity between the group of respondents, research instrument and design; both studies engaged teachers and principals as the respondents, used researcher' developed instruments for data collection and adopted correlation research design.

The finding of the present study is also in agreement with the result of the study conducted by Gebeyehu (2025) on the effect of principals' adaptive leadership practice on teachers' work engagement in secondary schools of central Gondar zone. The result of the study showed that 34.2% of the variance in work engagement was significantly predicted by adaptive leadership. The study among others observed that principals' ability to handle resistance to change, build trust between him the teachers and among the teachers and stimulate collaboration among teachers and principals largely determines the engagement level of the teachers to their job. Therefore, the study concluded that adaptive leadership has a significant effect on work engagement.

It is noteworthy to observe that although Gebeyehu (2025)'s study varied in method, design, instrument and location with the present study, the results still remained similar. While Gebeyehu's study adopted explanatory sequential mixed method research design, combining qualitative and quantitative research approach by using both researchers' developed questionnaire and interview and conducted the study in entirely different country with variations in government's education policies and programmes, one would have expected that a combined effect of all these differences would have resulted in disparity in the findings of the two studies. But that wasn't the case. Consequently, it would therefore be safe to conclude that adaptive leadership behaviour enjoys cross-border relevance in application and can be used to explain the job engagement of workers in human organization such as schools.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence provided by this study it can be concluded that principals' adaptive leadership behaviours strongly and positively predict teachers' job performance and engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

Recommendation

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

1. To improve on teachers' job performance, Ministries of education both federal and state should expedite action through conferences and seminars to sensitize and educate the principals and school administrators on the critical importance of adaptive leadership towards improving teachers' job performance.
2. It is recommended that given the impact of adaptive leadership behaviours on teachers' job engagement, government should come up with policy framework that will help institute, strengthen and encourage principals to engage in adaptive leadership behaviours in handling the teachers and other school affairs.

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