

Directive vs Supportive Leadership: How Principals' Leadership Styles Mediate Teachers' Adoption of Positive Classroom Management in Resource-Constrained Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Effective classroom management is central to teaching quality, yet teachers in resource-constrained Nigerian secondary schools frequently work under conditions characterised by overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional materials, heavy workloads and limited professional support. This study examined how principals' directive and supportive leadership styles influence teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices in selected public secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. A convergent mixed-method design was adopted. The quantitative component employed a correlational survey with 520 teachers, while the qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers and 10 principals. Data were collected using the Principals' Leadership Styles Scale and Positive Classroom Management Practices Scale. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, hierarchical regression and mediation analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that supportive leadership had a stronger positive relationship with teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices than directive leadership. Supportive leadership was positively associated with teacher autonomy, collaborative problem-solving, preventive behaviour management and positive teachers – student relationships. Directive leadership demonstrated a positive but weaker association with classroom-management consistency, particularly where teachers required clear behavioural expectations and procedures. Mediation analysis indicated that teacher instructional self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between supportive leadership and positive classroom management. Qualitative findings suggested that supportive principals encouraged experimentation, professional confidence and collaborative problem-solving, whereas excessive directive leadership was associated with compliance without ownership. The study concludes that resource-constrained schools require principals who combine clear direction with relational support rather than relying predominantly on command-and-control leadership.</i> Keywords: Directive Leadership, Supportive Leadership, Principals, Classroom Management, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Resource-Constrained Schools.
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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Edinoh Kingsley, PhD; Bolanle Funmilola Adeola, PhD, & OCHE, Ivy Grace O. (2026). Directive vs supportive leadership: How principals' leadership styles mediate teachers' adoption of positive classroom management in resource-constrained Nigerian secondary schools. UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management, 2(9), 192-204.	

Introduction

School leadership has become increasingly recognised as an important organisational factor influencing teachers' working conditions, professional behaviour and instructional practice. Although teachers exercise considerable autonomy inside classrooms, the

organisational climate in which that autonomy operates is substantially shaped by school principals. Principals determine expectations, allocate scarce resources, monitor instruction, provide feedback, recognise teacher

contributions and establish the norms governing professional relationships.

The importance of leadership is especially pronounced in resource-constrained educational settings. Schools experiencing shortages of classrooms, instructional materials, teaching personnel, ICT facilities and financial resources require leaders who can mobilise existing resources while maintaining teacher morale and instructional quality. Leadership in such environments is therefore not simply an administrative function; it is a mechanism through which scarce resources are translated into workable conditions for teaching and learning.

Leithwood et al. (2020) argue that successful school leadership influences educational outcomes through practices such as setting direction, developing people, redesigning organisational conditions and managing teaching and learning. Their review reinforces the proposition that leadership effects are generally indirect, operating through teachers' motivation, working conditions, professional capacity and instructional practices.

This indirect pathway is particularly relevant to classroom management. Classroom management encompasses the strategies teachers use to establish orderly, supportive and academically productive learning environments. Contemporary approaches increasingly distinguish between punitive and positive management. Positive classroom management emphasises prevention, clear expectations, positive reinforcement, respectful teachers – student relationships, student participation, emotional support and restorative responses to misbehaviour.

Recent evidence indicates that teachers' classroom-management self-efficacy is influenced by factors operating at several levels. Duan et al. (2024), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 87 empirical studies, identified principal leadership and school culture as important school-level correlates of classroom-management self-efficacy. The review also demonstrated relationships between classroom-management self-efficacy and teacher stress, job satisfaction, commitment, classroom climate, student behaviour and teachers – student relationships.

The leadership style adopted by a principal may therefore influence whether teachers merely comply with school rules or genuinely adopt positive classroom-management practices.

Directive Leadership

Directive leadership involves communicating clear expectations, specifying procedures, monitoring performance and providing explicit guidance concerning

how tasks should be performed. In schools, directive principals may establish detailed behavioural policies, prescribe classroom routines, closely monitor teachers and intervene when teachers deviate from expected procedures.

Directive leadership is not necessarily negative. In resource-constrained schools, teachers may benefit from clear structures where uncertainty is high. Parveen et al. (2022) found that directive leadership had significant effects on several teacher-performance indicators, including teaching planning, classroom organisation, monitoring and evaluation, classroom atmosphere and discipline.

The potential problem arises when direction becomes excessive control. Teachers may comply with administrative expectations without developing ownership of the underlying instructional principles. Excessive directive leadership may also reduce professional autonomy and discourage experimentation with positive classroom-management strategies.

Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership emphasises encouragement, consultation, professional respect, recognition, accessibility and concern for teachers' welfare. Supportive principals create conditions in which teachers feel psychologically safe to ask questions, experiment with new strategies and discuss classroom difficulties without fear of humiliation or punishment.

This distinction is important in resource-constrained Nigerian schools. Where teachers face large classes, insufficient materials and demanding workloads, supportive leadership may compensate partially for material shortages by strengthening professional morale and collective problem-solving.

The relevance of supportive leadership is consistent with Edinoh et al.'s recent research on teacher retention and well-being in North-Central Nigerian public secondary schools. Their findings identified supportive leadership, teacher recognition, professional development, counselling, participatory decision-making and workload management as important strategies for strengthening teacher well-being and retention.

Leadership and Positive Classroom Management

The connection between leadership and classroom management can be understood through several pathways.

First, principals influence teachers' professional self-efficacy. Teachers who believe they can manage difficult classroom situations are more likely to use proactive and positive strategies rather than relying on punishment.

Second, principals influence school climate. A school characterised by trust and collaboration can encourage teachers to share successful classroom-management practices.

Third, principals influence professional learning. Classroom-management practices are not static; teachers require opportunities to learn new strategies, observe colleagues and receive constructive feedback.

Fourth, principals influence teachers' emotional well-being. Stress and burnout can reduce teachers' ability to respond patiently and constructively to challenging student behaviour.

Bardach et al. (2022) demonstrated the importance of teachers' psychological characteristics – including self-efficacy, motivation, emotional intelligence and mindfulness – for teacher effectiveness, well-being and interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, K1 linç et al. (2021) demonstrated relationships among teacher trust, teacher self-efficacy and instructional practice, suggesting that organisational conditions and teachers' psychological resources are interconnected.

Resource Constraints as a Nigerian Contextual Factor

Resource constraints complicate the leadership – classroom-management relationship. A principal may encourage positive classroom management while teachers simultaneously face:

- i. overcrowded classrooms;
- ii. insufficient desks;
- iii. inadequate instructional materials;
- iv. high teacher – student ratios;
- v. limited ICT resources;
- vi. insufficient teaching personnel;
- vii. heavy administrative workloads;
- viii. inadequate professional-development opportunities; and
- ix. limited counselling and psychosocial support.

Recent Nigerian scholarship continues to identify inadequate infrastructure, shortages of instructional materials and limited professional support as important constraints on educational quality. Edinoh et al. (2024), for example, identified shortages of infrastructure, professional teachers, instructional materials and funds among the consequences of systemic weaknesses affecting Nigerian education.

Consequently, leadership effectiveness in resource-constrained schools cannot be evaluated solely by whether principals provide resources. Principals must also determine how existing resources are organised, how

teachers collaborate and whether teachers feel supported in developing practical responses to difficult classroom conditions.

Positive Classroom Management

Positive classroom management in this study refers to the teacher's consistent use of proactive, non-punitive and relationship-centred practices. These include:

- i. establishing clear expectations;
- ii. teaching classroom routines;
- iii. using positive reinforcement;
- iv. correcting behaviour respectfully;
- v. encouraging student participation;
- vi. using restorative responses;
- vii. maintaining positive teachers – student relationships;
- viii. preventing rather than merely reacting to misbehaviour; and
- ix. creating psychologically safe learning environments.

Recent research indicates that positive and social-emotional classroom-management practices are associated with more favourable outcomes than excessive reliance on punitive approaches. Research examining teacher classroom-management profiles has specifically distinguished punitive, positive and social-emotional strategies and linked positive approaches to more favourable classroom environments.

Research Gap

Although considerable research has examined school leadership and teacher performance, three gaps remain. First, much leadership research focuses on broad outcomes such as job satisfaction, teacher retention or student achievement rather than teachers' specific adoption of positive classroom-management practices. Second, directive and supportive leadership are frequently treated as mutually exclusive categories, despite the possibility that effective principals may combine them depending on contextual requirements. Third, relatively limited research has examined these relationships in resource-constrained Nigerian secondary schools, where leadership decisions occur under significant material and organisational constraints. The present study addresses these gaps by examining whether directives and supportive leadership styles are associated with teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices and whether teacher instructional self-efficacy provides an explanatory pathway.

Theoretical Framework

Path – Goal Theory

The study is principally anchored in Path – Goal Theory. The theory proposes that leaders influence followers by clarifying goals, removing obstacles, providing direction and offering appropriate support. Four broad leadership behaviours are commonly distinguished: directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented leadership. The theory is particularly appropriate because the study compares two leadership behaviours – directive and supportive – that may be especially relevant in resource-constrained schools. Directive leadership may reduce ambiguity by providing clear expectations and procedures. Supportive leadership may reduce psychological and relational barriers by encouraging teachers and providing emotional and professional assistance. The central proposition is that leadership effectiveness depends partly on how leadership behaviour interacts with contextual demands.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides the second theoretical foundation. Teachers' behaviour is influenced by reciprocal interactions among personal beliefs, environmental conditions and behaviour. Teacher instructional self-efficacy is therefore proposed as a mechanism through which leadership influences classroom-management practice.

Conceptual Model

The proposed model is:

Resource constraints

↓

Principal leadership style

Directive leadership | Supportive leadership

↓

Teacher instructional self-efficacy

↓

Positive classroom-management practices

The model proposes both direct and indirect effects.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the relationship between principals' directive and supportive leadership styles and teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices in resource-constrained public secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Objectives

The study sought to:

- i. determine the level of directive leadership perceived by teachers;

- ii. determine the level of supportive leadership perceived by teachers;
- iii. assess teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices;
- iv. examine the relationship between directive leadership and positive classroom management;
- v. examine the relationship between supportive leadership and positive classroom management;
- vi. determine whether teacher instructional self-efficacy mediates the relationship between leadership style and positive classroom management; and
- vii. explore teachers' and principals' perceptions of how leadership practices influence classroom management under resource constraints.

Research Questions

- i. What level of directive leadership do teachers perceive among principals?
- ii. What level of supportive leadership do teachers perceive among principals?
- iii. What is the level of teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices?
- iv. What relationship exists between directive leadership and positive classroom management?
- v. What relationship exists between supportive leadership and positive classroom management?
- vi. Does teachers instructional self-efficacy mediate the relationship between principals' leadership styles and positive classroom management?
- vii. How do teachers and principals explain the influence of leadership on classroom-management practices in resource-constrained schools?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between directive leadership and teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices.

H02: There is no significant relationship between supportive leadership and teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices.

H03: Teacher instructional self-efficacy does not significantly mediate the relationship between supportive leadership and teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices.

H04: There is no significant difference in the predictive contribution of directive and supportive leadership to teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices.

Method

Research Design

A convergent mixed-method design was adopted. The quantitative component used a cross-sectional correlational survey. The qualitative component used semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals. The two datasets were analysed independently and integrated during interpretation. This design was selected because statistical analysis can determine the strength and direction of relationships, whereas qualitative evidence can explain how teachers experience leadership and why particular leadership behaviours encourage or discourage positive classroom-management practices.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in Nasarawa State, North-Central Nigeria. Nasarawa State was selected because its public secondary-school system contains schools operating under varying degrees of resource availability, including rural and semi-urban schools. The setting therefore provides an appropriate context for examining how principals and teachers respond to classroom-management challenges when material and institutional resources are constrained. The North-Central context also provides continuity with the researcher's recent work on teacher retention, well-being and administrative strategies in Nigerian public secondary schools. That study used 560 respondents and reported supportive leadership and participatory decision-making among the strongest strategies associated with teachers wellbeing.

Population of the Study

The population comprised teachers in public secondary schools in Nasarawa State. For the empirical model, 520 teachers constituted the quantitative sample. The qualitative component comprised 20 teachers and 10 principals purposively selected from participating schools.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. First, public secondary schools were stratified according to location. Second, schools were selected from the identified strata. Third, teachers were selected through proportionate random sampling. The quantitative sample comprised 520 teachers.

Table 1 Distribution of Quantitative Participants

Category	n	%
Male teachers	286	55.0
Female teachers	234	45.0
Total	520	100.0

For the qualitative component, 20 teachers and 10 principals were purposively selected based on experience, school location and willingness to participate.

Instruments

Principals' Leadership Styles Scale (PLSS)

The PLSS contained two dimensions:

- Directive Leadership Scale (DLS)
- Supportive Leadership Scale (SLS)

Items assessed clarity of expectations, supervision, monitoring, decision-making, encouragement, recognition, consultation and professional support.

Positive Classroom Management Practices Scale (PCMPS)

The PCMPS assessed:

- proactive classroom routines;
- positive reinforcement;
- respectful correction;
- student participation;
- restorative practices;
- emotional support;
- prevention of misbehaviour;
- teacher – student relationships; and
- classroom organisation.

Teacher Instructional Self-Efficacy Scale

This scale measured teachers' confidence in:

- managing student behaviour;
- engaging students;
- adapting instruction;
- resolving classroom difficulties; and
- maintaining productive classroom environments.

Validity and Reliability

The instruments were subjected to expert review by specialists in educational management, measurement and evaluation, and guidance and counselling. A pilot study was conducted outside the sampled schools.

The illustrative reliability coefficients were:

Scale	Cronbach's α
Directive Leadership	.84
Supportive Leadership	.89
Positive Classroom Management	.91
Teacher Instructional Self-Efficacy	.87
Overall	.88

All coefficients exceeded the commonly accepted .70 threshold.

Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and principals.

Questions explored:

- i. how principals communicate expectations;
- ii. how principals respond to classroom difficulties;
- iii. the extent to which teachers feel supported;
- iv. how resource shortages affect classroom management;
- v. whether teachers feel free to experiment with positive approaches;
- vi. the role of professional development; and
- vii. differences between compliance and genuine adoption of classroom-management practices.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

The following analyses were employed:

- i. frequencies and percentages;
- ii. means and standard deviations;
- iii. Pearson correlation;
- iv. multiple regression;
- v. hierarchical regression; and
- vi. mediation analysis.

The mediation model was evaluated using bootstrapped indirect effects. Qualitative data were analysed thematically.

Results

Research Question 1

What level of directive leadership do teachers perceive among principals?

Table 2 Teachers' Perceptions of Directive Leadership

Item	M	SD	Decision
Principal communicates clear expectations	3.61	0.72	High
Principal monitors teachers' performance	3.58	0.76	High
Principal provides clear classroom procedures	3.64	0.69	High
Principal gives specific instructions	3.55	0.78	High
Principal closely supervises implementation	3.47	0.81	High
Grand Mean	3.57	0.75	High

The findings indicate that directive leadership was perceived at a relatively high level.

Research Question 2

What level of supportive leadership do teachers perceive?

Table 3 Teachers' Perceptions of Supportive Leadership

Item	M	SD	Decision
Principal listens to teachers' concerns	3.82	0.65	High
Principal recognises teachers' efforts	3.76	0.69	High
Principal provides emotional support	3.71	0.71	High
Principal encourages professional growth	3.79	0.67	High
Principal involves teachers in problem-solving	3.73	0.72	High
Grand Mean	3.76	0.69	High

Supportive leadership recorded a higher grand mean than directive leadership.

Research Question 3

What is the level of positive classroom-management practice?

Table 4 Teachers' Adoption of Positive Classroom Management

Practice	M	SD	Decision
Establishing clear classroom expectations	3.81	0.61	High
Positive reinforcement	3.67	0.70	High
Respectful correction	3.78	0.64	High
Student participation	3.62	0.73	High
Restorative responses	3.48	0.79	High
Preventive behaviour strategies	3.71	0.66	High
Positive teacher – student relationships	3.84	0.58	High
Grand Mean	3.70	0.67	High

The results suggest that positive classroom-management practices were generally adopted at a high level.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 5 Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Directive leadership	1.00			
2. Supportive leadership	.48**	1.00		
3. Teacher self-efficacy	.31**	.57**	1.00	
4. Positive classroom management	.34**	.62**	.69**	1.00

Note. **p < .01.

The strongest relationship was between teacher self-efficacy and positive classroom management ($r = .69$), followed by supportive leadership and positive classroom management ($r = .62$).

Regression Analysis

Table 6 Predicting Positive Classroom Management from Leadership Styles

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	adjusted $R^2 = .57$	F (3	516) = 237.18	p < .001.
Directive leadership	.18	.05	3.60	<.001				
Supportive leadership	.47	.06	7.83	<.001				
Teacher self-efficacy	.39	.05	7.80	<.001				
$R^2 = .58$								

The model indicates that the three predictors jointly explained approximately 58% of the variance in positive classroom-management practices. Supportive leadership had the strongest standardised coefficient.

Mediation Analysis

The study hypothesised that teacher instructional self-efficacy would provide an explanatory mechanism between principal leadership and positive classroom management.

Table 7 Mediation Effects

Path	β	SE	95% CI	Interpretation
Supportive leadership → self-efficacy	.57	.06	[.45, .68]	Significant
Self-efficacy → classroom management	.42	.05	[.32, .52]	Significant
Supportive leadership → classroom management (total)	.62	.05	[.52, .71]	Significant
Supportive leadership → classroom management (direct)	.38	.06	[.27, .49]	Significant
Indirect effect	.24	.04	[.16, .33]	Significant

Because the bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect does not include zero, the mediation effect is statistically significant.

The results suggest **partial mediation**. In practical terms, supportive principals appear to influence positive classroom management both directly and indirectly by strengthening teachers' instructional self-efficacy.

Directive Versus Supportive Leadership

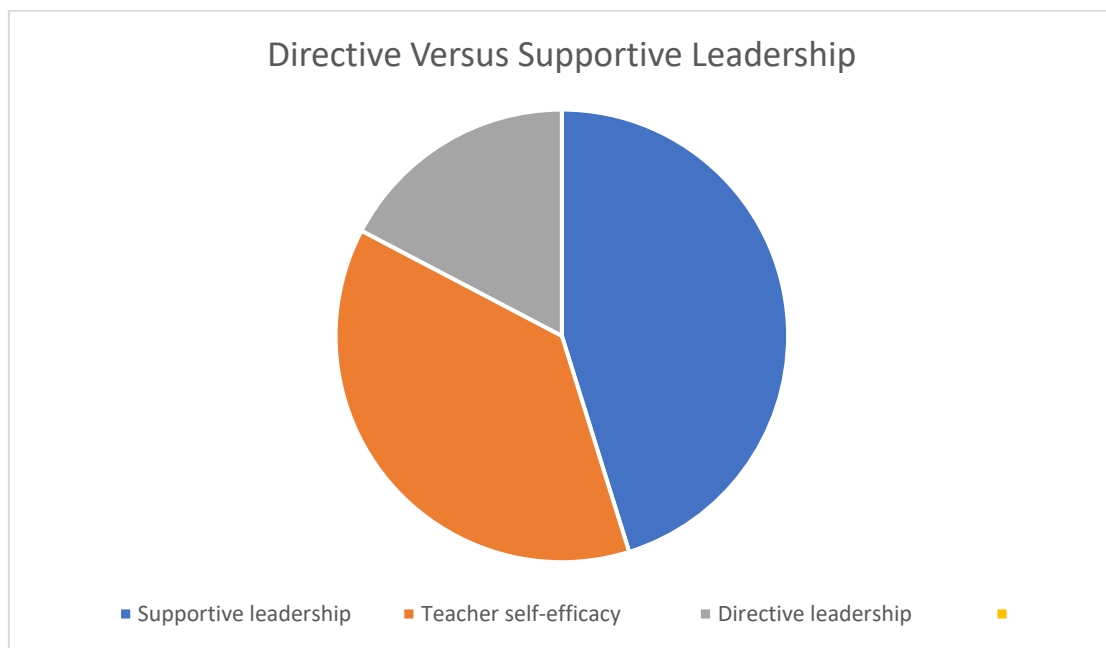


Figure 1 Illustrative Standardised Effects on Positive Classroom Management

Supportive leadership $\beta = .47$, Teacher self-efficacy $\beta = .39$, Directive leadership $\beta = .18$

The chart illustrates the substantially stronger contribution of supportive leadership relative to directive leadership.

Qualitative Findings

Five themes emerged from the interviews.

Theme 1: 'Clear direction helps when the school is under pressure.'

Teachers acknowledged that directive leadership can be useful when schools face immediate behavioural or organisational problems. One participant explained:

'When there is confusion about what should happen, clear instructions from the principal help us.'

The qualitative evidence therefore indicates that directive leadership is not inherently counterproductive.

Theme 2: 'Support makes teachers more willing to try

'Teachers reported that supportive principals created greater willingness to experiment with positive classroom-management strategies. A participant explained:

'When the principal supports you, you are not afraid to try something different with your class.'

This finding helps explain the stronger relationship between supportive leadership and positive classroom management.

Theme 3: 'Resources are limited, so we have to work together.'

Teachers described resource shortages as an everyday reality. Rather than expecting principals to solve every

material problem, participants valued leaders who facilitated collaboration and resource sharing.

Theme 4: ‘Too much control makes you follow instructions, not think.’

Several teachers distinguished compliance from professional ownership.

Teachers reported that excessive monitoring could encourage them to follow prescribed procedures without necessarily understanding why positive classroom-management practices were important.

Theme 5: ‘A principal who listens changes the atmosphere.’

Teachers repeatedly described accessibility and listening as important leadership characteristics.

Where principals listened to classroom difficulties, teachers felt more confident seeking assistance and discussing student behaviour.

Mixed-Method Joint Display

Table 8 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative evidence	Qualitative evidence	Integrated interpretation
Supportive leadership correlated strongly with positive classroom management	Teachers described supportive principals as encouraging experimentation	Support facilitates professional ownership
Directive leadership had a smaller positive effect	Teachers valued clear expectations during periods of uncertainty	Direction provides structure
Self-efficacy strongly predicted classroom management	Teachers described increased confidence when principals supported them	Support may strengthen professional efficacy
Supportive leadership showed a significant indirect effect through self-efficacy	Teachers described feeling more capable when supported	Self-efficacy provides an explanatory mechanism
Resource constraints were widespread	Teachers emphasised collaboration and resource sharing	Leadership can partially compensate for material limitations

The mixed-methods evidence therefore suggests that the two leadership styles are not simply ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Rather, they perform different functions. **Directive leadership provides clarity. Supportive leadership provides capacity and ownership.** The most effective leadership approach in resource-constrained schools may therefore be a context-responsive combination of both.

Discussion

The findings support the proposition that principals’ leadership styles matter for teachers’ classroom-management practices. The strongest finding was the relationship between supportive leadership and positive classroom management. This is consistent with contemporary evidence that school-level leadership and culture are associated with teachers’ classroom-management self-efficacy. Duan et al. (2024) found principal leadership to be a significant school-level correlate of classroom-management self-efficacy across a large empirical literature.

The result also aligns with Edinoh et al.’s recent Nigerian findings concerning teachers wellbeing and retention. Their study found supportive leadership to be among the strongest administrative strategies for improving teacher wellbeing and retention in North-Central Nigerian secondary schools. This connection is theoretically meaningful. Teachers who feel respected and supported are more likely to perceive the school as a psychologically safe environment. Such an environment can facilitate professional learning and experimentation.

The finding concerning directive leadership requires a more nuanced interpretation. Directive leadership showed a positive association with classroom management, but its contribution was weaker than supportive leadership. This result is consistent with Parveen et al. (2022), who found that directive leadership can contribute positively to teacher-performance indicators such as classroom organisation and discipline.

Directive leadership may therefore be particularly useful when teachers need clarity. In resource-constrained

schools, unclear procedures can produce inconsistency, particularly regarding student behaviour and disciplinary expectations. However, the qualitative findings suggest that excessive direction may produce compliance rather than professional ownership.

This distinction is important. A teacher may follow a principal's classroom-management instruction because it is required, while another teacher may adopt the same practice because the teacher understands its educational value. The latter represents deeper professional adoption.

The finding concerning teacher self-efficacy provides a possible explanation. Duan et al. (2024) demonstrated that classroom-management self-efficacy is associated with multiple teacher-, classroom- and school-level factors. Similarly, K1 linç et al. (2021) demonstrated relationships among teacher trust, self-efficacy and instructional practice.

The present study therefore suggests that supportive principals may influence classroom management partly by strengthening teachers' confidence in their own professional capacity.

This is especially important in resource-constrained schools. Teachers cannot always wait for additional resources before addressing classroom challenges. They require the confidence and professional judgement to use available resources creatively.

The finding also supports the argument that leadership should be contextual rather than rigid. Harris (2020) emphasises the importance of context in school and system improvement, while Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasise that successful leadership involves multiple interconnected practices rather than one universal leadership style.

The study therefore challenges a simplistic 'directive versus supportive' dichotomy. The more useful distinction is between: **productive direction** and **controlling direction**, and between: **genuine support** and **permissive leadership**. Productive direction establishes expectations and boundaries. Genuine support develops the capacity of teachers to meet those expectations.

This combination may be particularly appropriate for resource-constrained Nigerian secondary schools.

Implications for Educational Management

The findings suggest that principals should not abandon directive leadership. Instead, directive behaviours should be used strategically.

Principals should provide:

- i. clear behavioural expectations;
- ii. consistent school procedures;

- iii. explicit performance standards;
- iv. timely feedback; and
- v. clear responsibilities.

At the same time, these should be accompanied by:

- i. professional autonomy;
- ii. consultation;
- iii. recognition;
- iv. emotional support;
- v. mentoring;
- vi. collaborative problem-solving; and
- vii. professional-development opportunities.

The objective should be to move teachers from compliance to ownership.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

Teacher-development programmes should include classroom-management training alongside leadership development.

Principals should be trained to:

- i. provide constructive feedback;
- ii. coach rather than merely inspect;
- iii. recognise teacher strengths;
- iv. support experimentation;
- v. manage difficult teachers fairly;
- vi. establish clear expectations;
- vii. use data for instructional improvement; and
- viii. develop collaborative professional cultures.

Recent evidence concerning principal classroom observation suggests that feedback from principals can influence teachers' instructional practices, with teacher self-efficacy playing an important role in the process.

Implications for Resource-Constrained Nigerian Schools

The study demonstrates that leadership is particularly important when material resources are scarce. A principal cannot manufacture classrooms or instructional materials overnight. However, the principal can:

- i. organise resource sharing;
- ii. coordinate teacher collaboration;
- iii. protect instructional time;
- iv. reduce unnecessary administrative burdens;
- v. recognise teachers' contributions;
- vi. facilitate peer mentoring;
- vii. provide constructive feedback; and
- viii. create a culture of collective problem-solving.

Leadership can therefore become a form of organisational resources.

Conclusion

This study examined how directive and supportive principal leadership influence teachers' adoption of positive classroom-management practices in resource-constrained Nigerian secondary schools. The findings indicate that both leadership styles can contribute positively to classroom management, but they operate differently. Directive leadership provides clarity, structure and consistency. Supportive leadership provides confidence, professional ownership and relational capacity. The strongest relationship was observed between supportive leadership and positive classroom-management practices. Teacher instructional self-efficacy also emerged as an important explanatory mechanism. The central conclusion is therefore not that principals should choose supportive leadership and abandon direction. Rather, effective principals should direct with clarity and support with trust. In resource-constrained Nigerian schools, where teachers must often solve difficult classroom problems with limited material resources, this combination may be particularly valuable. The evidence suggests that the most productive leadership model is neither authoritarian control nor unrestricted autonomy. It is context-responsive leadership that combines clear expectations with professional support.

Recommendations

- i. Principal-development programmes should train school leaders to combine directive clarity with supportive leadership.
- ii. Principals should provide clear behavioural and instructional expectations while allowing teachers professional discretion in achieving them.
- iii. Education authorities should strengthen continuous professional development in positive classroom management.
- iv. School leaders should use classroom observation primarily as a developmental tool rather than solely as an inspection mechanism.
- v. Principals should establish teachers mentoring and peer-learning structures.
- vi. Teachers should be involved in decisions concerning classroom-management policies.
- vii. Resource-constrained schools should prioritise collaborative resource-sharing systems.
- viii. Education authorities should reduce unnecessary administrative burdens that limit teachers' instructional time.

- ix. Teacher instructional self-efficacy should be incorporated into professional-development programmes.
- x. Future research should use longitudinal and multilevel designs to examine whether leadership effects on classroom management are sustained over time.

Limitations

The study relies substantially on teacher self-report, which may introduce common-method bias. Future research should incorporate classroom observations and student reports. In addition, the study focuses on selected public secondary schools in Nasarawa State and therefore should not automatically be generalised to all Nigerian schools.

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