INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES OF PRINCIPALS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the influence of leadership styles of principals on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state. Ex post facto design was used for the study. The area of the study is Abia state. Two hypotheses guided the study. A sample size of 609 respondents comprising 374 teachers and 235 principals in secondary schools in Abia state were drawn through the use of proportionate stratified random sampling technique from a target population of 3,970. The instrument for data collection was a 4-point rating scale questionnaire with face and content validity ascertained by three experts from; Measurement and Evaluation, Educational Management in the College of Education Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Reliability index values of 0.64 and 0.75 respectively for the two clusters as a measure of internal consistency was obtained through Cronbach Alpha method. The 609 copies of questionnaires were administered with the help of three research assistants through direct delivery and recovery method. All the 609 copies of the instrument were returned and used for data analysis. Research questions were answered using mean scores, while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the findings revealed that autocratic leadership styles to a high extent influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state. The findings also revealed that contingency leadership styles to a low extent influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state. Based on the findings, recommendations were made; that State Ministry of Education should organize regular inspection to schools to monitor the styles of leadership used by principals that could enhance better academic performance among students. This is necessary in order to achieve the objective of secondary education as entrenched in the National Policy on Education. The study noted that the Principals leadership styles have significant influence on academic performance of students, and therefore recommends that the principals should apply the adequate leadership styles to ensure positive influence on academic performance of students in the schools and among others.

Keywords: Principals Leadership Styles, Autocratic, Contingency Styles and Academic Performance
INTRODUCTION
The increasing rate of students’ intake in public secondary schools in Abia-State has created leadership problems, as well as administrative huddles. This has put so many people into imagining if the principals’ of these public secondary schools do realize the educational goals in relation to their work of management. The primary concern of the academic sector is the effective leadership in teaching and learning, as well as moral life of the students geared towards the realisation of credible academic performance. Leadership is the art of coordinating the individual members of a group deploying some workable skills towards achieving a targeted goal. Leadership according to Edem (2006) is the art of coordinating people with various skills in an organisation towards the realisation of organisational goals. On his own, Douglas (2008) defined leadership as the act of harnessing people with individual abilities to achieve a cooperate goal. Taiwo (2010) asserted that leadership involves encouraging and motivating people for a targeted objective; of which, the principal as a leader works and leads towards the realisation of academic goals. According to Ogbiji (2006) leadership is the ability to get things done with the support and cooperation of other people within the institution, organization, group or system. Hence, a leader is one who gets things done by enlisting the efforts of people. Ibe (2007) opined that leadership is an influence; which its success is measured by how much one can attract a superior work force and inspire them to willingly do things that will help the organization achieve its goal. The right leadership style adopted by the principals in collaboration with students’ reading habit/hard work, teaching skills of both male and female teachers, availability of teaching and learning materials, a good teaching and learning environment, etc. is the basis upon which good academic performance will be actualised. The school which is a social system cannot operate without a structural form, it is therefore by the deployment of peoples’ effort coordinated by the leader that the goal will be realised. No wonder Fasasi (2014) opined that principals’ leadership strategy include: relating with the host community for provision of instructional materials, provision of students personnel services, provision of counselling services, adequate staffing, delegation of authority, staff development, motivation of the teachers among others. These indicate that principals attach importance to performance of leadership duties in the school hence it is an institution of human beings established for harnessing skills and character in order to enhance students academic performance. Academic performance has been described as the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment which could be explained in terms of grades obtained in a subject or group of subjects. Bua and Ada (2013) opined that it is simply what a student get out of an academic activity for what he/she has put in. Wikipidea (2014) agreed with Bua and Ada that academic performance is the outcome of education indicating the degree to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals, and this is commonly measured by examination or continuous assessment.

The researcher views students’ academic performance as the hallmark attainment which the student obtains at the end of an academic exercise which is either graded per subject or collectively as a cumulative. The principal is the head of the school; therefore his/her level of leadership achievements can only be quantified by the academic performance of students. Ajao cited in Fasasi (2014) stated that students’ academic performance in both internal and external examinations had been used to determine the excellence in the principals and teachers. In other words, the essence of leadership in educational institution is the enhancement of teaching and learning processes which is depicted in the overall academic performance of students. Presently, Nigeria is running the 9:3:4 systems of education and to achieve the purpose, vision and goal expected of this, an effective and efficient leader must be at the helm of affairs in the school leadership and academic activities; which the academic performance and character of the students’ are of prime importance.

The Principal is the chief executive in the secondary school leadership. Akpa (2002) sees him as the structural leader, manager and supervisor whose well co-ordinated leadership activities promotes students’ performance. He is on the top position in the leadership oréogán-gram of the school leadership. Ikediegwu (2006) is of the view that the principal is a curriculum master minder, who works as a catalyst towards planned educational goals. Babalola and Ayeni (2009) maintained that the principal is the leader whose onus is to plan, coordinate and supervise the affairs of teaching and learning exercise in schools so that the entire academic system will run smoothly. In this case, it is expected that such personnel must possess a proven
quality as well as the experimental knowledge to enable him achieve tangible results particularly when the enormous and complex leadership task in the educational system is incumbent on him.

According to Nwaokike (2006) the principal has the sole responsibility of initiating changes in the school in order to accomplish the goals of the academic institution. The degree of success of meeting the educational goals as stipulated in the National policy on education; Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), depends on the type of leadership style adopted by the principal, his competence as well as enabling skills. In this regard, there are various ways of working with, and managing both the human (male and female teachers) and material resources available in order to achieve the set purpose of producing students with excellent academic performance.

Recalling some recent external examination result publications of West African Examination Council, it could be observed that the academic performance of public secondary school students had measured below standard within a period of time in some key subjects. According to Millennium Development Goals’ (MDG’s) objectives (2015), following incessant reports on students’ poor performance in mathematics and other subjects like English language, Physics, Chemistry had been poor within a couple of years. For instance, National Examination Council (NECO, 2009) reported that over 92.8% of students who took the senior secondary certificate examination (SSCE) in 2009 could not obtain the minimum qualification for entry into tertiary institutions. According to Adeyemi (2008) one major cause for the unfortunate situation was the poor performance in subjects like mathematics and English Language. Over the years, there has been a repetition of poor performance and failure of students in mathematics at secondary school level (Onah, 2008). Again, Uman, Nwoye (2010) and Sharma (2013), reported that students are still performing poorly especially in core subjects. According to West African Examination Council (WAEC) chief examiner’s report (2009 - 2012), the percentage of students who scored pass with credit level and above in some key subjects like English Language, Mathematics are 25.99, 23.36, 30.90, and 38.81, while the percentage of those that scored pass and below in the same subjects were 74.01, 76.64, 69.10, and 61.19 in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively. As it were, this has generated serious concern among stakeholders. The researcher therefore tends to study the various leadership styles as adopted by principals in relation to the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Lawal (2011) enunciated that good principals leadership styles leads to serene school organizational climate, productive communication mode, effective and efficient team work, decision making, teaching and learning activities. The author further revealed that good principals’ leadership styles serve as motivation to both the teachers and students.

This brings to lime light, Unachukwu and Okoji’s (2014) view of the types of leadership styles which include: Autocratic Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership style, Laissez – faire leadership Style and Contingency leadership style. Also, Mgbenu (2005) asserted three important leadership styles of principals to include democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles respectively. In her view, Ibiam (2015) outlined leadership styles to include autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles respectively. The autocratic leader does not give his subordinates’ opportunity to contribute to decision making. Mgbenu (2005) and Alaesi (2002) opined that autocratic leadership style deters the productive ego of the teacher towards his students; the straights’ which affects the leaner negatively. According to Perpetua and Glad (2014) autocratic leadership style is a system which is characterized by the leader taking decisions alone without any form of consultation/consideration of his subjects, after which he simply announces or issues instruction on what is expected of them. Here the members of the group are not offered the chance of making their individual contributions in matters pertaining to the organization; rather they are only on the acceptance side. Ibiam (2015) assert that this is a type of leadership by force. Another important principal’s leadership style is the democratic style.

According to Mgbenu (2005) described democratic leadership style as the kind of principals leadership style where the leader gives consideration to his subordinates granting them opportunity to contribute in decision making during meetings, conferences and consultations. Stroud (2006) revealed that it is the kind of leadership that considers the effort, suggestion, contribution and weakness of teachers and students during decision making. In his view, Anumak (2006) sees democratic leadership style as that which allows all members of the group to make individual contributions as well as air their views in the organizational matters. Okorji and Unachukwu (2014) are of the view that this is a leadership style in which the leader
trusts his followers and solicits input from them during management/decision making. Furthermore, it is a situation where the leader guides his followers in actions to take, seek and obtain their views, opinions and preferences. Laissez-faire leadership style is another leadership style that needs to be considered. According to Alu, Eya, Ede and Ugwu (2001) described laissez- faire leadership Style as the permissive leadership style. It is a leadership style in which members of the organisation are allowed to behave as they wish. This is why it is regarded as laissez-faire; which means free reign. Rather than influencing peoples’ actions towards the achievement of organisational goals, a laissez-faire leader usually allows things to sort themselves out. He is indifferent and sometimes may not even have a clear vision of the goals of the organisation, neither is he willing to formulate polices or programmes in this regard. In his view, Fiedler (2000) looked at Laissez-faire type of leadership style from a French/word perspective, which implies “let things go their way”. It is a leadership style in which the leader essentially makes no decision. From his perspective, MacDonald (2007) posited it that the philosophy underlying this type of leadership is complete absence of management decision making. It is a situation where the group members are allowed to carry out things their own way. Another important principals leadership styles that influence students performance is contingency leadership style.

Contingency leadership style is a type of leadership which arises as a result of emergences, and or various situations. In this case, it is adopted to handle the situation at hand aimed at working to achieve a set purpose. It is a leadership style which is faced with the issue at hand. According to Ibe (2007) this type of leadership style is characterised with the leader developing the capacity to lead in the immediate situation with the view of meeting up the goal. It works to expand the capacity in other to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured. It focuses on building high performing terms. In a school setting, it carries both the male and female teachers along.

Leadership styles could be said to be of varying nature both in characteristics as well as in principles. It is expected that leadership styles adopted by principals should have a great deal of influence on the academic performance of students, particularly in Abia State public secondary schools. However, there is substantially less research which focuses on leadership Styles of principals on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State.

The performance of students academically and other wise is one major evidence of a well co-ordinated leadership of school principal. Okumbe (2001) emphasized that the product of a school is judged by the way its past students perform in society. This is because good performance is necessary for selection and placement of students in institutions of higher learning and for jobs in various firms and organisations (Wakarind, 2013). Rutter, Maugham, and Smith citing Wakarindi (2013) noted that to improve students’ performance, Principals are required first to be effective personnel leaders, by which the teachers both male and female are coordinated towards executing their work as to enhance students’ academic performance. This can be done by setting a clear vision for the schools and communicate the vision to both teachers and students, with the support for its achievement by issuing instructional leadership and being visible in every part of the Institution. This view has the support of some other scholars, for instance, Ogunyinka and Adedoyin (2003) investigated the influence of leadership styles of principals on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Ado Ekiti. In his findings, the author revealed that there is no perfect leadership style for principals, he also revealed that male principals leadership styles is more effective than female counterparts. Also, Yusuf (2012) investigated influence of principals’ leadership styles on students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Otukpo. His findings revealed that autocratic leadership style had a negative influence on students’ academic performance, while democratic leadership however had a positive influence on students’ academic performance. He further revealed that laissez-fair leadership style had no significant influence on students’ academic performance. Sequel to this, the researcher was motivated to investigate the influence of principals leadership styles on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state, it seems to be the first of its kind and the results of the study will be what this research work will contribute to knowledge.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**
Ordinarily, secondary school education is planned and regulated to embrace principals leadership styles such as democratic, contingency, authoritarian and so on that will enhance teachers job effectiveness, school organizational climate, students’ academic performance and mutual relationship among principals, teachers and students.

However, the practical situation of principals’ leadership styles in secondary schools in Abia state appears to be autocratic, permissive and laissez-fair which in turn seem to influence academic performance of students. This assertion was supported by Adeyemi (2011) who opined that poor academic performance of students can be attributed to ineffective leadership styles of principals and teachers. Again, Uman and Nwonye (2010) agreed that 67% of students performed very badly in English, Mathematics and other core subjects due to laissez-fair attitude of principals and teachers. This however poised the researcher to investigate the research problem put in question form “to what extent do principals leadership styles influence students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Abia state”.

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance to guide the study:

H0₁ There is no significant difference between the t-test responses of principals and teachers on the extent autocratic leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

H0₂ There is no significant difference between the t-test responses of principals and teachers on the extent contingency leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Literature Review
Concept of School Leadership
According to Alu, Eya, Odo Ade and Ugwu (2001), leadership is the act of giving direction to the effort of workers who aim at accomplishing organizational goals. They saw leadership as that which has such attributes as technical skills, human skills, social maturity and breath, linking pin as well as transformation of potential into reality. In this view, they saw school leadership as the act of influencing school activities towards educational goals achievement. In quoting Adesenu (2000) he sees school leadership as the act of getting academic work done through the support and co-operation of the school workers within the school. This implies that a leader is therefore that person in the organization who gets things done by mobilizing the efforts of other people in the organization.

School leadership is the ability of the principal to act in other to enable others work in the school setting where each individual serving under him finds himself encouraged and stimulated to a point where he is helped to realize his potential to contribute meaningfully. School leadership has to do with casting vision and motivating people to catch and actualize the vision.

The emergence of a leader is usually caused by the need to work towards a common goal and coordinated interests to achieve a common purpose. Supporting the above view, Ukeje (2009) has it that leadership is the major determinant of success in any organization or group. Hempphil (2003) identified school leadership as one of the five specific functions of the principal who is the leader. However, leadership is the process of influencing group activity towards goal achievement (Stoghill, 2001). It is the behavior of an individual when he is guiding and directing activities of the group towards a shared goal (Greenfield and Andrews, 2000). It is an impetus into an organization and involves interpersonal influences as one initiates structures and acts that result in a consistent pattern of group interaction aimed at high productivity and individual fulfillment. The school leader can be called by a variety of titles: Principal, Head teacher, leader of school, the school father, adviser, chief executive, chief administrator, public relations man, policy maker, organizer, school authority, projectionist, etc. These and many other nomenclatures reveal a great deal about the way people see the school leader performing his tasks. Principals are instructional leaders of their schools. Upon them depends to a large extent the instructional programmes of their schools.

In running a successful school leadership, effective administration is of prime importance. According to Hornby (2002), administration is seen as activity carried out by the administrator in order to plan, organize and successfully run a business, school or other institutions, a process or act of organizing activities in such
Edem (2006) in his view sees administration as that which involves planning of activities which the aim is to fulfill the goals of a particular organization. This therefore calls for the ability of the administrator to make the right decisions in order to fulfill the required goals. In this view therefore, it has to do with educational setting, while administration is regarded as a service, activity or tool with which the cardinal objectives of the educational process may be adequately realized. It could be seen that a quality school leadership is otherwise, in accordance with the quality of a schools’ product as determined by the quality of students admitted into the school, caliber of teachers, quality of instructional materials, resource maintenance and teaching/learning environment. Invariably, the quality of any school leadership is first determined by the quality of staff, students, resource availability, classroom management and instructional processes in the school (Diwunma, 2006).

Our deduction from the above is that school leadership therefore, involves the effective managing, administering the educational curriculum and teaching, moral care, discipline, evaluation of assessment and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal, community relationship, use of practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of school organizations; which includes decision making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict resolution, organizing of meetings etc.

**Leadership Styles of Principals**

This simply means the various leadership styles adopted by school principals of public secondary schools. According to Benny, Chioma and Ikwuegbu (2006), leadership styles of principals are those leadership styles adopted by school principals by which the running of secondary schools are carried out to achieve educational goals. In their view, Alu, Eya, Odo, Ede and Ugwu (2001), opined that leadership styles have been generally categorized under three major headings - Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-faire leadership styles.

**Authoritarian Leadership Style**

From their view, authoritarian leadership style is also known as autocratic or coerces leadership style. Quoting Okeke and others (2000), authoritarian leadership style implies “leadership by force”. It is often identified with dictatorial or high handed methods. Members of the group are treated as if they are machines and there is little or no consideration of their basic problems or needs. The authoritarian leader is characterized by his ruthlessness, wickedness, love of poor and desire to be flattered. Edem (2000) identifies authoritarian leadership as being characterized by the following:

i. The dictation of all policies and procedures by the leader with little or no group participation in decision making.

ii. The imposition of task and methods on the subordinates.

iii. An absence of communication between the leader and the group.

iv. Nagging and suspicious brooding on the part of the leader.

It can be seen from the above that the authoritarian leader supports the mechanistic interpretation of leadership. All he expects is obedience from his subordinates. In a democratic society such as ours today, this type of leadership can hardly stand the taste of time. Looking at this nature of leadership style, its influence on the academic performance of students of public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria could be such that will not produce good academic performance. For the purpose of clarity, four styles will be discussed in details and they are democratic, autocratic, contingency and laissez-faire principals’ leadership styles.

**Autocratic Leadership Style**

Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership. Leaders have absolute power over their employees, and the latter have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if it would be in the organizations best interest (Adeyemi and Bolarinwa, 2013). Autocratic leadership often leads to high levels of absenteeism and low employee turnover (Okeke and others, 2000). However, it could remain effective for some routine and unskilled jobs, as the advantages of control may outweigh the disadvantages. Also, Peretomode (2012) described autocratic leadership style as leadership with force and the leaders’ contribution is binding whether
good or bad. Duze (2012) revealed that autocratic leadership to a high extent influence academic students and job performance of teachers.

a) Contingency Leadership Style

According to Aniamulu (2015), Situational leadership style is that in which a leader has an enabling stable and balanced ability to handle various situations in a system through the coordination of members of the group in view of achieving a set goal. One important function of the school head is to communicate effectively to the teachers the philosophy and objectives of the school system particularly as the school system and its leadership are not an easy going affair. This will invariably bring about their commitment to the set objectives. The leader indeed needs to realize that effectiveness in leadership depends on his ability to diagnose and adapt to the dynamics of every confronting situation visa-vis contingency leadership.

In their view, Unachukwu and Okorji, (2014), averred that this style of leadership is that which believes that the leadership varies from one situation to another due to some variables among which are the followers’ behavior and the leader’s ability. It is such which posit that a leader may be effective in one situation and ineffective in another situation. In his view, Peretomode (2012) explained that depending on the situation, a dictator can change his style to become a democratic leader, while in the contingency model since leadership style is relatively inflexible the right thing to do is to select a leader with an appropriate style and fit him into the situation. In this regard, a contingency situational leadership is that which could be adopted by a leader as situation arises and varies so as to achieve a targeted result. Relating this style of leadership on academic performance of students of public secondary schools, it is such a leadership which could be applied by a principal towards achieving good academic performance.

Concept of Students’ Academic Performance

The definitive view of academic performance has to do with the scholastic standing of a student or learner at a particular point in time or period by virtue of class work assessment. This standing could be explained in terms of the grades obtained in a course/subject or group of subjects Daniels and Schoulen, (2001). Simkins (2001), in his comments and arguments on the scholastic standing, has it that performance is a measure of output, which the main outputs in education are expressed in terms of learning; that is changes or increase in knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals as a result of their experiences within the school’s system. In a supporting view, Science Technology and Mathematics (STAM) cited from First Degree Courses in Nigerian Universities 2003/2004 sessions as recorded by Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) in paper presented at West African Examination Council (WAEC) Symposium at University of Ibadan, Nigeria; upholds that performance is the level of attainment of a student in an examination, which is the individual’s ability to demonstrate his/her competence in an examination.

In the same vein, Al-Shoraye (2010) sees a student’s performance in an examination as being dependent on his/her cumulative grade point average. This is in support to Taiwo’s (2010) assertion that a student’s success is generally judged through examination performance hence the best optimal performance in all the subjects is taken.

In a negative standing, poor academic performance according to Aremu (2000) is a performance judged by the examiner, and some other significant as falling below an expected or desired standard when appreciated from the perpetual cognitive ability of the evaluator of the performance. The evaluator or assessor can therefore issue different interpretations depending on some determining factors.

Uyanga (2008) sees poor academic performance as any performance which falls below a desired standard. The criteria of excellence could range between 40% and 100%, which is dependent on the subject yard stick of the evaluator or assessor. For instance, an English Language SS3 student scoring 70% is in no doubt regarded to be a very good performance. According to Babalola and Ayeni (2009), poor academic performance of a student in an academic institution in examination is one in which the person fails to attain a set standard or performance in a given evaluation exercise such as test, examination or series of continuous assessment. This standard is usually based on a number of stipulated objectives and other school activities. A candidate who scores below the standard is regarded as showing a poor academic performance in school.

METHODOLOGY
The study adopted an Expo-Facto research design. This is because the event has already taken place and the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variable. The study was conducted in Abia state located in the eastern part of Nigeria with concentration on the public secondary schools in the state. The choice of this state was informed by the constant poor performance of students attributed to ineffective leadership styles of principals.

The population of the study was 3,970 consisting of 3,735 teachers and 235 principals in 235 secondary schools of Abia-state (Secondary Education Management Board, 2018). A sample size of 609 participants consisting of 374 teachers and 235 principals out of 3,970 population were selected for the study. Proportionate Stratified sampling was used to select the schools according to their zones, 10% of the schools were selected using simple random sampling technique. The choice of choosing 10% was supported by Anthony (2006) who posited that when population is large, 10% is adequate to be used for the study. A researcher structured questionnaire titled “Leadership Styles of Principals and Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (LSPAPSQ), was used for data collection. The face validity of the instrument was established by three experts, two from Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation in College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The internal consistency reliability coefficient was determined using Cronbach alpha procedure. 80 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 40 teachers and 40 principals from ten schools in Orlu Education zone of Imo state. The two clusters yielded reliability index values of; 0.64, 0.75.

**PROCEDURE**

Copies of LSPAPSQ were administered to 609 respondents, made up of 235 principals and the 374 teachers drawn from 23 public secondary schools in Abia state through direct delivery and recovery method with the help of three trained research assistants selected from the three Education Zones in Abia-state. The respondents filled the questionnaire on the spot. This enhanced the return rate. Data collected was used for data analysis.

The research questions were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation, while the z-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The mean was determined by assigning values to the four point scale which is as follows: VHE-4-Very High Extent, HE- 3- High Extent, LE- 2- Low Extent, VLE- 1- Very Low Extent. To this extent the mean score was then computed as follows:

{eq}X = \frac{\sum x}{n}{/eq}

{eq}X = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 2.50{/eq}

The cut-off mean score becomes 2.50; hence any value less than 2.50 is regarded as ineffective while above 2.50 is regarded as effective.

The specification of the t-test is as thus:

{eq}Z = \frac{X_1 - X_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{n_2}}}{/eq}

**RESULTS**

The results of the study are presented in the tables below

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the t-test responses of principals and teachers on the extent autocratic leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

**Table 1:** z-test analysis of Principals and Teachers responses on the extent Autocratic Leadership Style of Principals Influences Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>z-cal</th>
<th>z-tab</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean scores of the two groups were subjected to z-test statistic. The result presented in Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of the two groups. This is because the z-calculated (2.32) is greater than the z-tabulated of 1.96 with degree of freedom 607. Since the value of z-observed is greater than z-tabulated, we would reject the null hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean score responses of principals and teachers on the extent autocratic leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the t-test responses of principals and teachers on the extent contingency leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

### Table 2: z-test analysis of Principals and Teachers responses on the extent Contingency Leadership Style of Principals Influences Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>z-cal</th>
<th>z-tab</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-1.6401</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean scores of the two groups were subjected to z-test statistic. The result presented in Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the two groups. This is because the z-calculated (-1.6401) is less than the z-tabulated of 1.96, degree of freedom 607. Since the value of z-observed is less than z-tabulated, we would accept null hypothesis. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean score responses of principals and teachers on the extent contingency leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The extent autocratic leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria

From table 1 above, items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 respectively indicated that principals adopts autocratic leadership style during; staff meetings ($\bar{x} = 2.54, 2.78$), supervision of teachers and students ($\bar{x} = 2.67, 2.62$), delegation of duties ($\bar{x} = 2.55, 2.87$), decision making ($\bar{x} = 2.66, 2.54$) and conflict management ($\bar{x} = 2.73, 2.50$). From the pooled means ($\bar{x} = 2.62, 2.70$), the table shows that autocratic leadership style of principals to a high extent influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state.

The findings of the study is in line with Moses, Lucy and John (2016) they agreed that the use of diverse principals leadership behaviour scale skewed more to autocratic leadership style in terms of academic performance of students in Homabay County Kenya. Also, Nicholas, Ozofor and Alimo (2017) agreed that autocratic leadership style of principals have a positive correlation on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Enugu South more than the mission secondary schools. In another vein, Adeyemi and Bolarinwa (2013) argued that autocratic leadership style was found to be significantly not related with students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Ekiti state, they considered it as strict and wicked means of forcing the teachers and students to work with poor conditions of service.

The extent contingency leadership style of principals influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

From table 2 above, items 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 respectively indicated that principals do not adopt democratic leadership style during; staff meetings ($\bar{x} = 2.33, 1.92$), supervision of teachers and students...
(\(\bar{x} = 2.47, 2.26\)), delegation of duties (\(\bar{x} = 2.09, 2.45\)), decision making (\(\bar{x} = 1.88, 2.21\)) and conflict management (\(\bar{x} = 1.68, 2.26\)). From the pooled means (\(\bar{x} = 2.09, 2.22\)), the table shows that contingency leadership style of principals’ to a low extent influences academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state.

The findings of the study is in line with Adeyemi (2008) who agreed that the influence of leadership styles of principals on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Ondo was low especially in the use of contingency leadership style. Also, Yusuf (2012) agreed that contingency leadership styles had no significant influence on students academic performance in secondary schools in Benue State. In related conclusion, Nicholas, Ozofor and Alimo (2017) supported the findings and posited that contingency leadership styles negatively correlate with students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Enugu South L.G.A, this was as a result of the government not allowing the principals to manage situational problems because of political interest.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion of findings of this study, the following conclusions were made; that autocratic leadership styles to a high extent influences academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state. While contingency leadership styles to a low extent influences academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia state.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. School principals should imbibe a mixture of autocratic and contingency styles of leadership in their school administration in order to enhance better academic performance of students.
2. As such, principals could use the contingency style of leadership in some occasions.
3. They should be autocratic in certain situations in order to increase productivity among teachers and students performance.

**REFERENCES**


