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PRINCIPALS' ETHICAL ADMINISTRATION AS CORRELATE OF TEACHERS' JOB COMMITMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKAMKPA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated principals' ethical administration as correlate of teachers' job commitment and service delivery in Secondary Schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research question and hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted correlation design. The population of this study comprised all the 192 teachers in 22 public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Census approach was adopted in the study. An instrument titled "Principals' Ethical Administration," Teachers' Job Commitment," and "Service Delivery Questionnaire (PEATJCSDQ)." was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face and content validated by three research experts from the department of Educational Management, and from Measurement and Evaluation, faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. The reliability was determined through Cronbach alpha technique and the index ranges from .83 to .87. The research questions were answered using scatter plot while Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study concluded that ethical administrative practices by principals are strongly associated with higher levels of teachers' job commitment and improved service delivery in the study area. It was recommended that principals should be trained and encouraged to adopt ethical leadership practices such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and respect for staff, as these behaviors have been shown to significantly enhance teachers' job commitment and service delivery.

Keywords: Principal, Ethical Administration**,** Teachers, Job Commitment, Service Delivery

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Introduction

In contemporary societies, the educational system is widely recognized as a cornerstone for socio-economic, technological, and scientific advancement. In the 21st century, an era defined by rapid knowledge expansion and the dominance of the knowledge economy the imperative of delivering quality education across all levels has become more pronounced than ever. The Nigerian education system plays a vital role in national development by influencing technological advancement, political stability, and socio-economic progress. It is structured into three main levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary education (Obona et al., 2024). Secondary school education constitutes the intermediate stage of formal education that bridges primary education and tertiary education. It is designed to cater to learners typically between the ages of 11 and 18, and it provides both foundational and specialized instruction aimed at fostering intellectual growth, civic responsibility, and employability. In Nigeria, secondary education is structured into two segments: Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS), each with a duration of three years. This level of education is critical for equipping students with the cognitive, social, and vocational competencies necessary for higher learning and productive engagement in society.

Secondary education is expected to maintain a high standard of quality to facilitate effective teaching and learning, promote the development of sustainable communities, and support the attainment of economic objectives that benefit individuals and society at large (Etor et al., 2019; Obona et al., 2020). According to the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), this level of education also serves as a critical preparatory stage for tertiary education and contributes significantly to national socio-economic advancement. Within this context, teachers represent the most vital human resource in the educational process, playing a central role in shaping learners and driving sustainable national development The successful realization of these educational goals is largely dependent on the professional commitment and service delivery of teachers, who are central to the implementation of curriculum and the overall development of learners.

Teachers are widely acknowledged as the most critical resource within the educational sector, given their central role in facilitating effective teaching and learning. Fittingly, Obona and Etete, (2019) described teachers as the cornerstone of secondary education system, the human resources needed for the smooth functioning of secondary education in Nigeria. Among the key indicators of teacher quality is their level of commitment which influence service delivery to the school. The Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE, 2004) cited in cited in Peretomode and Bello (2018) emphasized that the extent to which teachers

dedicate themselves to their schools, students, instructional responsibilities, professional growth, collegial relationships, and societal obligations is a vital determinant of educational effectiveness (Karuki, et al., 2014). Teachers also play a significant role in co-curricular areas such as sports, contributing to students' participation and overall performance (Ukpong & Uchendu, as cited in Nwogbo & Ugwuoke, 2021; Akpan et al., 2025; Ogabor et al., 2025).

The concept of commitment has attracted considerable attention across various organizations, as it encompasses not only the degree of an individual's involvement within the organization but also reflects the intensity of the emotional and psychological bond that exists between the employee and the organization. Teachers' job commitment in this context can be defined as the emotional and psychological attachment educators have toward their profession, institutions, and assigned responsibilities. Ekpoh and Eze (2015) as cited in Madukwe et al. (2024) describes it as the extent to which the teacher participates in the overall running of the school in order to achieve the expected objective and goals of the school.

This commitment is often conceptualized through various dimensions, including affective commitment (emotional attachment to the job), normative commitment (a moral obligation to remain in the profession), continuance commitment (awareness of the personal and professional costs of leaving), as well as specific commitments to student achievement, the teaching profession, and institutional goals—all of which collectively influence teaching quality and educational outcomes. According to Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2019) it reflects their willingness to fulfill their duties effectively, remain devoted to institutional goals, and contribute meaningfully to student development and academic success.

Building on this conceptualization, Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed a three-component model of organizational commitment based on empirical findings from diverse organizational contexts. The model comprises affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization. Continuance commitment captures the perceived costs (both material and psychological) associated with leaving the organization. Normative commitment reflects a sense of moral duty or obligation to remain with the organization, often influenced by personal values or institutional investments. For instance, a teacher who has received a scholarship from the state or school and signed a service bond may feel ethically bound to fulfill the agreed terms, thereby reinforcing normative commitment.

Teachers' service delivery is essential for improving student achievement and the overall effectiveness of schools. It involves the efficient performance of core teaching responsibilities such as lesson planning, delivering instruction, managing the classroom, assessing students, and engaging in continuous professional growth. Madukwe et al. (2024) describe it as the fulfillment of assigned tasks aimed at achieving set goals, while Chukwuemeka (2017) views it as the attainment of expected outcomes or productivity within a given period by individuals or organizations.

Teachers can be described as effective in their service delivery when they demonstrate competence in lesson planning, deliver engaging and understandable instruction, maintain orderly classrooms, assess students regularly and accurately, and participate in ongoing professional development. Their ability to adapt teaching methods to meet learners' needs and collaborate with colleagues further reflects effective service delivery. Teachers' commitment and quality service delivery are vital in the school system, as they directly influence students' academic success, foster a positive learning environment, and contribute to the overall achievement of educational goals. A committed teacher not only fulfills assigned duties but also inspires students, supports school improvement efforts, and upholds professional standards that sustain educational excellence.

Nonetheless, the level of job commitment and service delivery among teachers has become a major source of concern to researchers, as it significantly affects the quality of education, student outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of the school system (Madukwe et al., 2024; Obona & Etete, 2019; Difoni et al., 2025). In the context of Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, many educational stakeholders have lamented the consequences of poor teacher commitment and ineffective service delivery. Classrooms are overcrowded, yet teachers arrive late, leave early, or are frequently absent without valid reasons. Lessons are poorly planned or not delivered at all, leaving students disengaged and struggling to grasp basic concepts. Assignments and assessments are either delayed or completely ignored, with feedback rarely provided. In some cases, teachers show little interest in professional development or adapting to modern teaching methods, resulting in outdated practices that fail to meet learners' needs. These deficiencies contribute to widening learning gaps and eroding public confidence in the education sector, underscoring the urgent need for interventions.

In the secondary school system, several factors influence teachers job commitment and service delivery. However, one of such factors that this study examined is principals' ethical administration. Ethical administration as used in this context, refers to the practice

of managing a school organization in a manner that upholds moral principles and values like honesty, fairness, integrity, and respect for others. Şentürk (2011) mentioned other key ethical principles guiding school administration to include equality, impartiality, responsibility, commitment to the organization, respect for human rights, compliance with the law, tolerance, and transparency. These principles ensures that decisions and actions taken by school administrators are just, transparent, and aligned with both legal standards and societal expectations.

Similarly, Orunbon et al. (2022) describe ethical leadership in schools as encompassing traits such as honesty, fairness, a focus on people, shared decision-making, clear roles, ethical direction, and a commitment to sustainability. Similarly, Gikonyo (2020) underscores its importance in guiding school managers toward value-driven leadership, which plays a crucial role in effective school administration. Maimela (2024) further points out that ethical leadership in schools enhances accountability and trust, both vital for the institution's success and reputation. Ethical school administration is important because it fosters trust, accountability, and a positive organizational culture, which are essential for effective leadership, stakeholder confidence, and the overall success and sustainability of institutions.

Principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment

In today's educational landscape, marked by rising demands for academic excellence and effective teaching, sound administrative practices have become a vital factor in shaping teachers' job commitment. Effective administrative techniques and practices not only strengthens teachers' dedication but also significantly contributes to the successful achievement of educational objectives (Obona & Sampson 2021; Obona et al., 2023). Studies highlight the pivotal role of ethical administration in enhancing staff job commitment across diverse educational and organizational contexts. For instance, Obona et al. (2024) examined the influence of innovative leadership practices—including digital communication, empowerment, and supervision—on teachers' job commitment in 16 public secondary schools within Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. Utilizing a sample of 272 teachers drawn from a population of 838, data collected through structured questionnaires were analyzed using Pearson's correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between all three leadership strategies and teachers' job commitment.

Similarly, Sabir (2021) investigated perceptions of ethical leadership among 320 teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, employing the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ). The study demonstrated a significant positive

correlation between ethical leadership and teacher commitment, with seniority affecting perceptions while age and gender did not. Ethical leadership was found to particularly strengthen teachers' dedication to both the profession and instructional responsibilities. Moreover, Özdoğru and Sarıer (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of 47 empirical studies encompassing 18,423 participants to assess the impact of principals' ethical leadership on teachers' organizational attitudes and behaviors. Their random-effects model revealed strong positive effects on organizational trust, justice, motivation, job satisfaction, and overall commitment.

In a related study, Zaki (2022) explored the relationship between ethical leadership and teacher job satisfaction among 374 secondary school teachers in Kedah, Malaysia, using standardized instruments such as the Ethical Leadership at Work scale (ELW), Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), and Teacher Commitment Measure (TCM-ECS-R). The results indicated that ethical leadership significantly enhanced job satisfaction, with both factors serving as strong predictors of organizational commitment. Beyond the educational sector, Abuzaid (2018) examined employees in 13 Jordanian commercial banks and found that ethical leadership positively influenced affective and normative commitment but not continuance commitment. Likewise, Mitonga-Monga et al. (2023) reported a positive association between ethical leadership and employee commitment in a South African steel company.

Mbarawii and Amabibi (2024) surveyed 731 teachers in public secondary schools in Rivers State through stratified random sampling and reliable Likert-scale questionnaires. Their analysis underscored that principals' ethical behaviors, particularly regarding collaboration and accountability, significantly enhanced teacher job commitment, with accountability exhibiting the strongest effect. Further extending these findings to the healthcare sector, Mishra and Tikoria (2021) studied 537 doctors in Indian hospitals and demonstrated that ethical leadership substantially improved the organizational climate, which in turn positively influenced doctors' job commitment. Structural equation modeling (SEM) confirmed this indirect relationship, highlighting the mediating role of workplace culture.

Additionally, Bhandari and Subedi (2024) surveyed 391 employees of Nepalese cooperative societies using convenience sampling and applied Hayes's PROCESS Macro for mediation analysis. Their results showed that ethical leadership had a significant direct effect on job commitment, fully mediated by trust in leadership, suggesting that ethical behavior fosters trust which then promotes commitment. Santiago Torner (2025) analyzed data from 448 professionals in Colombia's electricity sector

to explore the mediating role of work self-efficacy in the ethical leadership–organizational commitment nexus. The study found that ethical leadership enhanced affective and normative commitment as well as the investment dimension of continuance commitment, with self-efficacy accounting for a substantial portion of this effect.

In a study conducted by Obiekwe (2020), data collected from public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria, revealed substantial positive correlations between teachers' perceptions of principals' ethical leadership dimensions—such as communicative ethics, climatic ethics, and ethics in decision-making—and their job commitment. The study found particularly strong associations, with a very high positive correlation of 0.84 between teachers' perceptions of principals' ethics in decision-making and their job commitment. These findings underscore the critical role of ethical leadership in enhancing teachers' dedication to their work.

Principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery

Principals' ethical administration plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of teachers' service delivery. Studies have consistently demonstrated the significant impact of principals' ethical administration on teachers' service delivery, underscoring the importance of ethical leadership in fostering a productive educational environment. In a study conducted by Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019), the researchers examined teachers' perceptions of principals' ethical leadership behaviors in state-owned secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Utilizing the Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS), the study found that teachers perceived a high level of ethical leadership behaviors among principals, particularly in areas of communication, climate, decision-making, and behavior. These findings suggest that ethical leadership practices by principals are positively associated with teachers' commitment and, by extension, their service delivery.

Further exploring the relationship between ethical leadership and teachers' job commitment, Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019) conducted a correlational study involving 672 teachers in Anambra State. The study revealed substantial positive correlations between teachers' perceptions of principals' ethical leadership dimensions and their job commitment, with the highest correlation observed in the area of decision-making ethics. This indicates that ethical decision-making by principals significantly influences teachers' dedication and effectiveness in their roles.

In Portugal, Neves (2025) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership, teacher motivation, and commitment in public schools. The study found that ethical leadership positively correlates with intrinsic

motivation and organizational commitment among teachers. Moreover, the research highlighted that commitment mediates the effect of ethical leadership on teachers' intrinsic motivation, emphasizing the role of ethical leadership in enhancing teachers' motivation and service delivery. Similarly, in Mandera County, Kenya, a study by Mohamed and Hussein (2022) examined the impact of ethical leadership on teaching staff performance in public secondary schools. The findings indicated that ethical leadership practices, characterized by fairness and selflessness, positively influence teachers' job performance. The study emphasized that principals who demonstrate ethical behaviors, such as openness and prioritizing staff well-being, foster an environment that enhances teachers' service delivery.

Collectively, these studies provide robust evidence that ethical leadership and administration is a critical determinant of employee commitment and service delivery across various settings, emphasizing the importance of integrity, fairness, trust-building, and professional accountability in fostering a committed and motivated workforce. However, most of these studies were foreign based, while others were conducted outside Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State, meaning their findings may not be applicable to this specific region due to its unique ethnic and geographical context. No existing study has been found that examined how principals' ethical administration relates to teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap and contribute new insights to the field

Statement of the problem

In secondary schools, teachers' job commitment and quality service delivery are vital for achieving educational objectives and promoting student success. Stakeholders such as school administrators, parents, and policymakers expect teachers to be punctual, consistent in lesson planning and delivery, actively involved in school activities, prompt in assessing students, and dedicated to professional growth and moral mentoring. Effective service delivery also requires good classroom management, full curriculum coverage, and responsiveness to students' needs. Despite these expectations, reports from parents and field observations in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State, indicate that many teachers are not meeting with these expectations. Cases of lateness, absenteeism, inadequate lesson preparation, and delays in marking assessments have been noted. These lapses have led to declining student performance, poor discipline, and reduced confidence in public schools.

In response, the state government and school management have implemented interventions such as timely salary payments,

teacher training, monitoring and evaluation, attendance tracking, and disciplinary actions. Yet, the problem persists, suggesting that deeper issues, particularly in school leadership ethics, may be at play. The researcher suspects that principals' ethical administration could be a key factor influencing teachers' commitment and service quality. As such, this study seeks to examine the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. The need to answer this critical question has given rise to the current research.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated principals' ethical administration as correlate of teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the relationship between:

1. Principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.
2. Principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State?
2. What is the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State?

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided study:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. This design was deemed appropriate for the study as it aimed to investigate the relationship principals' ethical administration as correlate of teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of

Cross River State. The population of this study comprised all the 192 teachers in 22 public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Census method was used in this study. Due to the manageable size of the population, the census method was adopted in involving the entire population of 192 teachers in the study. A census is a study of every unit, everyone or everything when the size of the population is deemed small or manageable.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Principals' Ethical Administration," Teachers' Job Commitment," and "Service Delivery Questionnaire (PEATJCSDQ)." The instrument consisted of four sections. Section A was designed to collect demographic data, including age, gender, marital status, and educational qualifications. Section B contained 8 items that measured the independent variable of "Principals' Ethical Administration," while section C & D contained 16 items that measured the dependent variable of "Teachers Job Commitment and Service Delivery." The questionnaire was structured on a four-point Likert scale: Very High (VH), High (H), Low (L), Very Low (VL). Before administering the questionnaires, the items were submitted to three research experts for validation from the Department of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Based on their input, irrelevant items were either removed or modified. Out of the 28 items initially designed, four were discarded, leaving 24 items for the final study. The reliability, of the instrument was established through a trial test conducted on 50 teachers selected outside the study area. Data collected were coded and subjected to a reliability test using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficient obtained ranged from .83 to .87, indicating a high level of reliability. Statistically, the instrument was deemed appropriate for data collection.

To ensure effective data collection, 3 research assistants were recruited and trained on the study's objectives and proper administration of the questionnaires. Prior to distribution, permission was obtained from school administrators, and the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study. They were assured that all information provided would be used strictly for research purposes and treated with confidentiality. The researchers and assistants distributed the questionnaires and later collected them. The study achieved a 100% questionnaire return rate. Upon collection, the questionnaires were reviewed to ensure completeness. They were then organized based on the variables they were designed to measure. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly
Very High (VH) = 4 point, High (H) = 3 points, Low (L) = 2 points, Very Low (VL) = 1 point. For negatively worded items, the

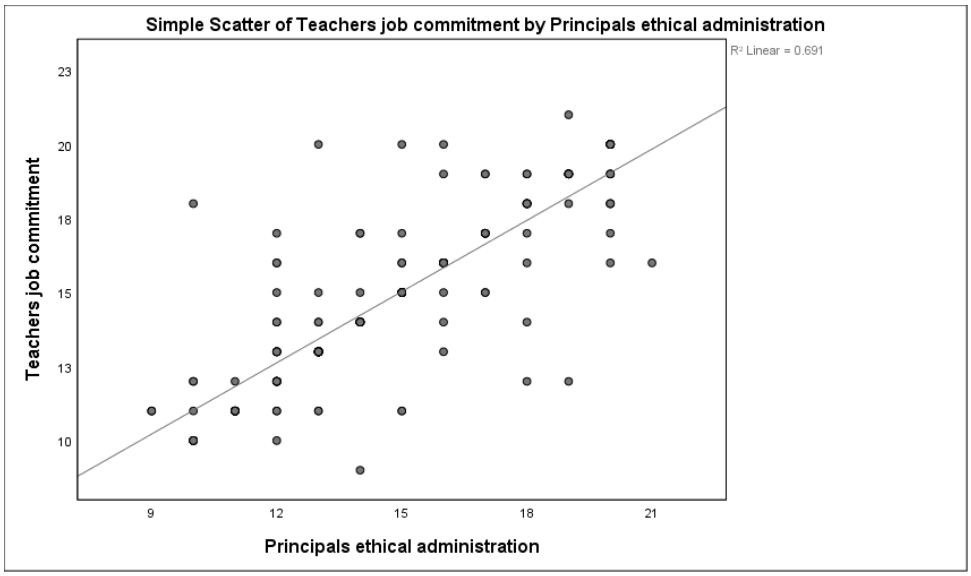
scoring pattern was reversed. Respondents' scores on the sub-scales were summed and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Data analysis was conducted based on the null hypotheses that guided the study. The research questions were answered using scatter plot while Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and discussion

Research question one: What is the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State?

Scatter Plot was used to answer the research question. The result is presented in figure 1. The analysis of data in figure 1 revealed that the points are relatively narrow along the line indicating that the correlation is high (0.691). The graph also show that the slop of the scatter lies in a straight line which indicates a linear relationship between the variables. Additionally, the line moved from lower left to the upper right indicating a significant positive correlation between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in the sampled schools.

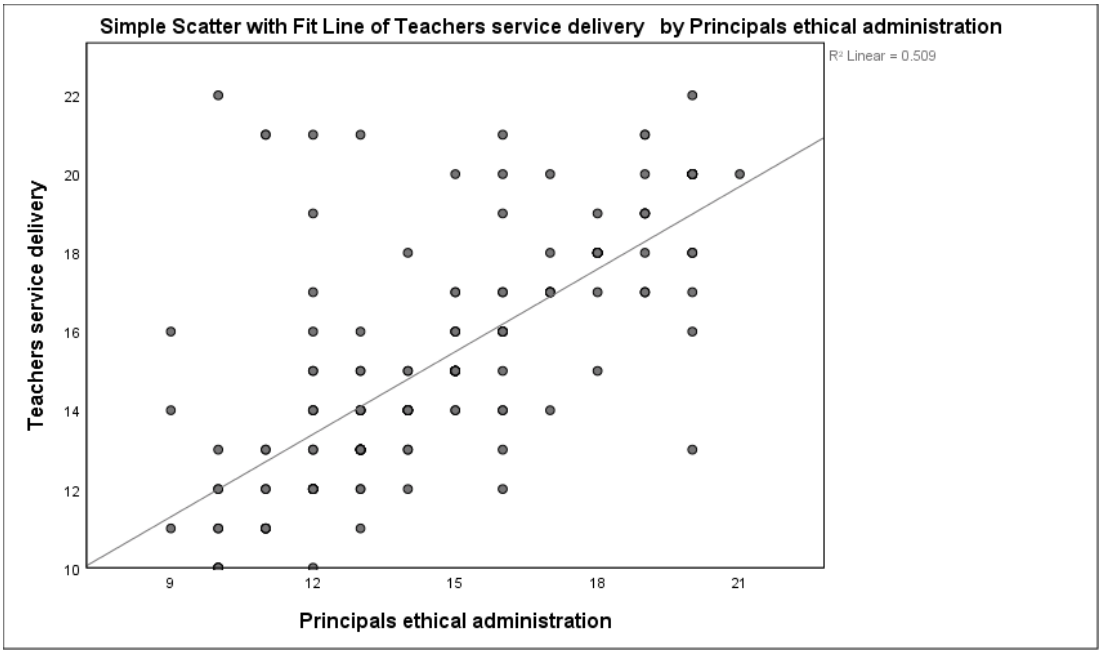
Figure 1: Scatter Plot showing the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State.



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Research question two: What is the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State?
Scatter Plot was used to answer the research question. The result is presented in figure 2. The analysis of data in figure 2 revealed that the points are relatively narrow along the line indicating that the correlation is high (0.509). The graph also show that the slop of the scatter lies in a straight line which indicates a linear relationship between the variables. Additionally, the line moved from lower left to the upper right indicating a significant positive correlation between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in the sampled schools.

Figure 2: Scatter Plot showing the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State.



Research hypotheses

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

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The two variables in this hypothesis are principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficient between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' job commitment (r = .83, p<.05). Since *p*(.000) is less than *p*(.05), hypothesis one is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 1: Summary of correlation between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. (N=192)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.
Principals' ethical administration	14.79	3.03		
Teachers' job commitment	14.86	2.92	.83*	.000

*Significant at p<.05 df=190

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficient between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' service delivery (r = .71, p<.05). Since *p* (.000) is less than *p* (.05), hypothesis one is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

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Table 2: Summary of correlation between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. (N=192)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.
Principals' ethical administration	14.79	3.03		
Teachers' job commitment	15.34	2.97	.71*	.000

*Significant at p<.05 df=190

Discussion of findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that, there is a statistically positive significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. This result is unsurprising, considering the socio-cultural environment of the area. Principals who lead with integrity, fairness, and respect tend to create a positive and morally supportive work atmosphere, which naturally encourages teachers to remain dedicated and emotionally invested in their jobs. In a context like Akamkpa, where strong communal values and respect for moral authority are highly regarded, teachers are more likely to respond positively to ethical leadership. Furthermore, in settings where systemic challenges exist—such as limited resources and infrastructural constraints—ethical leadership can provide the psychological safety and motivation needed for teachers to remain committed. The direct implication of this finding is that ethical administration is a key driver of teacher commitment, which is essential for maintaining stability, continuity, and effectiveness in the secondary school system within the LGA.

The findings of this study align with the results of Obona et al. (2024), who explored the influence of innovative leadership practices—specifically digital communication, empowerment, and supervision—on teachers' job commitment in 16 public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. Their study established a statistically significant positive relationship between these leadership strategies and teachers' job commitment. In a related context, Sabir (2021) investigated teachers' perceptions of ethical leadership among 320 respondents in Punjab, Pakistan, using the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ). The results revealed a significant positive correlation between ethical leadership and teacher commitment, with seniority influencing perceptions while age and gender showed no significant effect. Ethical leadership was particularly effective in reinforcing teachers' professional dedication and instructional responsibilities. Supporting this, Özdoğru and Sarıer (2024) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of

47 empirical studies involving 18,423 participants, which demonstrated that principals' ethical leadership exerted strong positive effects on teachers' organizational trust, justice, motivation, job satisfaction, and overall commitment. Extending beyond the education sector, Abuzaid (2018) found that ethical leadership significantly influenced affective and normative commitment—though not continuance commitment—among employees in 13 Jordanian commercial banks. Similarly, Mitonga-Monga et al. (2023) reported a positive relationship between ethical leadership and employee commitment in a South African steel manufacturing context, reinforcing the cross-sectoral relevance of ethical leadership in promoting organizational commitment.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that, there is a statistically positive significant relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. This result is not surprising, given the contextual realities of the study area. Principals who demonstrate fairness, accountability, and transparency in their administrative duties often inspire trust and commitment among teachers, thereby enhancing their service delivery. In Akamkpa, where teachers may work under resource-constrained conditions, ethical leadership becomes a crucial motivator, fostering a sense of inclusion and professional respect. Additionally, the cultural expectations of communal responsibility and moral uprightness in the region likely reinforce the value teachers place on principled leadership. The direct implication of this finding is that ethical administration by principals serves as a catalyst for improved teacher performance, which can significantly impact students' learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of secondary education in the area.

The finding of this study is consistent with that of Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019), who explored teachers' perceptions of principals' ethical leadership behaviours in state-owned secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Their study revealed that ethical leadership practices exhibited by principals were positively associated with teachers' commitment, which in turn influenced their overall service delivery. Similarly, Neves (2025) examined the relationship between ethical leadership, teacher motivation, and commitment in public schools, and found that ethical leadership was positively correlated with both intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment among teachers. Notably, the study highlighted that teachers' commitment served as a mediating factor in the relationship between ethical leadership and intrinsic motivation, thereby underlining the crucial role of ethical leadership in enhancing motivation and service effectiveness. In the same vein, Mohamed

and Hussein (2022) investigated the influence of ethical leadership on teaching staff performance in public secondary schools. Their findings demonstrated that ethical leadership—marked by fairness, selflessness, openness, and a concern for staff welfare—had a positive impact on teachers' job performance. Collectively, these studies affirm the pivotal role of ethical leadership in fostering a committed and high-performing teaching workforce.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment and service delivery in public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study concluded that ethical administrative practices by principals are strongly associated with higher levels of teachers' job commitment and improved service delivery in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Principals should be trained and encouraged to adopt ethical leadership practices such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and respect for staff, as these behaviors have been shown to significantly enhance teachers' job commitment and service delivery.
2. The Ministry of Education should incorporate ethical leadership modules into leadership development programs for school administrators, to ensure that future principals understand the critical role of ethical conduct in promoting a productive and committed teaching workforce.
3. School management should regularly assess and monitor principals' adherence to ethical administrative standards, as consistent ethical behavior among school leaders can sustain teacher motivation, reduce attrition, and improve overall school effectiveness.

Study limitation:

One major limitation of this study is its restricted geographical scope, as it focused solely on public secondary schools in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. This narrow focus may limit the generalizability of the findings to other local government areas or states with different administrative structures, cultural dynamics, or educational challenges. Additionally, the study relied primarily on self-reported data from teachers, which may be subject to social desirability bias or personal perceptions that do not fully capture actual administrative practices.

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