THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TEACHERS' JOB COMMITMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between ethical school administration and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two hypotheses and employed a correlational research design. A sample of 133 teachers was selected using a convenient sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled Ethical School Administration and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (ESATJCQ). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts from the Department of Educational Management and the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach Alpha method, which produced indices ranging from 0.82 to 0.85 across the subscales, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Data analysis was carried out using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between ethical people orientation, ethical power-sharing, and teachers' job commitment. These findings demonstrate that ethical school administration plays a vital role in fostering teachers' sense of belonging, responsibility, and dedication to their professional duties. The study concluded that ethical school administration is a key determinant of teachers' job commitment and, by extension, of overall educational effectiveness in the study area. It was recommended that educational authorities institutionalize ethical school administration practices by formulating policies and organizing training programs that emphasize fairness, transparency, respect, and participatory decision-making. Such initiatives would enhance teachers' professional responsibility, motivation, and long-term commitment.

Keywords: Ethical, School Administration**,** People Orientation, Power-Sharing Teachers, Job Commitment

Introduction

A teacher is a trained and skilled professional responsible for imparting knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to learners in a structured learning environment. Beyond classroom instruction, teachers play a vital role in shaping students' character, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing lifelong learning habits. They are seen as key resources and backbone of any education system (Olorunfemi, 2008; Difoni, et al., 2025), serving as role models, mentors, and guides, bridging the gap between the curriculum and real-life application. In Nigeria, the education system is structured into three major tiers namely: primary, secondary and tertiary. The secondary school system which the focus of this study is the education students receive after completing primary school and serves as a leadway to tertiary education (Nwokonko et al., 2024). According to the *National Policy on Education* (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), secondary school education is crucial to national development. Secondary education is established 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, Obeten, & Obona, 2019; Obona, Edim, & Edim, 2020). Education at this level is expected to prepare students for adulthood by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential for personal growth, responsible citizenship, lifelong learning, and meaningful living within society (Nwannunu et al., 2024; Obona, & Sampson, 2019; Madukwe et al., 2024). Therefore, it is divided into the Junior and Senior Secondary School levels.

Teachers' job commitment is crucial to the success of the school system because it ensures the achievement of educational goals, enhances the quality of learning, and supports the intellectual, moral, and social growth of learners. It reflects the emotional and psychological attachment teachers have to their work, expressed through loyalty, dedication, and active participation in school activities (Dunu et al., 2025; Ekpoh & Eze as cited in Madukwe et al., 2024). Commitment also entails how effectively and promptly teachers carry out their duties, as well as the positive attitudes they display toward their profession (Abbas et al., 2023). Meyer and Allen's (1991) model identifies three dimensions of commitment: affective commitment, where teachers remain because they want to; continuance commitment, where they stay due to the costs of leaving; and normative commitment, where they feel morally obligated to remain, often influenced by values or institutional support. Altogether, teachers' commitment remains an indispensable factor in driving school effectiveness and achieving desired outcomes.

Teachers' job commitment is a key determinant of educational effectiveness, as it reflects the extent to which teachers dedicate themselves to their schools, students, professional duties, and broader societal responsibilities (AARE, 2004, as cited in Peretomode & Bello, 2018; Karuki et al., 2014). Teachers are the human resource backbone of the secondary education system, responsible for utilizing available resources to achieve instructional objectives (Dunu et al., 2025; Obona & Etete, 2019). Committed teachers show their dedication through punctuality, timely lesson preparation, active participation in school activities, and strict adherence to professional

codes of conduct. They ensure that schemes of work are completed, lessons are delivered effectively, and students' assessments are conducted and processed as required (Ibezim, 2024, as cited in Dunu et al., 2025). Such commitment further manifests in teachers' acceptance of school values, compliance with rules, and involvement in co-curricular activities, demonstrating loyalty to the school's mission and readiness to contribute to students' holistic development (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2019). Thus, without teachers' job commitment, the full realization of educational goals remains difficult.

Teachers' job commitment which directly influences the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes, has being widely discussed in literature (Madukwe et al., 2024; Obona & Etete, 2019; Difoni et al., 2025; Ezeh et al., 2025). Ibezim (2024) noted that some teachers exhibit undesirable organizational behaviours such as frequent absenteeism, disengagement from official duties. Obionu et al (2024) laments that some teachers come late to school, engage in irregular and unauthorized movement from schools. Thompson and Ofojebe (2020) also report cases of absenteeism, persistent lateness and other forms of professional misconduct of some teachers. They are observed laxities in job commitment of teachers in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State. The researcher observed that some teachers exhibit unprofessional attitude such as frequent absenteeism without valid reasons, late arrival and early departure among others. These deficiencies need urgent attention in other to restore public confidence in the secondary education system in the study area. Obona et al. (2025) warned that if the issue persists, it may lead to serious long-term effects, including higher student dropout rates, declining public confidence in the education system, and the production of poorly prepared graduates.

In the context of this study, one variable that can influence teachers' job commitment is ethical school administration. This is a practice of managing secondary schools in ways that uphold values such as honesty, fairness, integrity, transparency, and respect for others. According to Dunu et al. (2025) and Obona et al. (2025), it involves school leaders demonstrating uprightness, accountability, empathy, and a commitment to the common good. Scholars such as Şentürk (2011) and Orunbon et al. (2022) further emphasize traits like equality, impartiality, respect for human rights, tolerance, shared decision-making, and sustainability as key components of ethical administration. Operationally, ethical administration entails influencing staff to exhibit good conduct and professional behavior in order to achieve school goals. Gikonyo (2020) stresses that such leadership is essential in guiding school managers toward value-driven practices, while Maimela (2024) affirms that it builds trust and accountability, which are critical to institutional success and reputation. Ethical practices include fairness, guidance, and role clarification, among others (Sabello & Oted, 2024; Vikaraman et al., 2021). For this study, the focus is on two key dimensions: ethical people orientation and ethical power-sharing.

Ethical people orientation emphasizes prioritizing the dignity, welfare, and professional growth of individuals within an organization, fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and fairness. It refers to the genuine concern school administrators show toward the professional welfare and development of teachers. Arinze et al. (2024) describe staff orientation as a vital element of ethical

leadership, where administrators display sensitivity to the needs and career aspirations of their staff. This is demonstrated through attentiveness to teachers' concerns, recognition of their efforts, and the practice of compassion and empathy. Similarly, Shahab et al. (2021) note that the people-oriented dimension of ethical leadership is marked by respect, care, and support for subordinates, ensuring that their needs are properly addressed. In line with this, Difoni et al (2025) opines that it foster a collaborative teaching environment, which enhances teachers' job performance. Obona et al. (2025) maintain that teachers' job commitment can be observed in their punctuality, preparation and delivery of lessons, active engagement in school activities, effective classroom management, and participation in maintaining student discipline.

Several studies have consistently highlighted the role of ethical orientation and leadership in shaping teachers' attitudes, motivation, and performance. Madukwe et al. (2024) revealed that the participatory leadership behaviour of the principals significantly predicted goal attainment in the schools. Granjo et al. (2020), in a study of 643 Portuguese teachers using structural equation modeling (SEM), established that ethical orientation significantly influenced dimensions of teacher identity such as competence, psychological need satisfaction, self-esteem, and commitment. Their findings revealed both direct and indirect effects, underscoring the importance of ethics in strengthening teacher commitment. Similarly, Sheikh et al. (2024), drawing on correlation and mediation analyses in universities in Lahore, Pakistan, found that personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness were positively associated with organizational commitment, with ethical orientation—particularly relativism—acting as a mediating factor. Expanding the scope, Zehra et al. (2022) investigated how ethical leadership shapes teachers' perceptions of their work environment and commitment in Karachi. Based on data from 560 elementary and secondary school teachers analyzed with PLS-SEM and SPSS, the study confirmed that ethical leadership not only promoted supportive work environments but also enhanced organizational commitment.

Along the same line, Mohamed and Hussein (2022) focused on public secondary schools and found that ethical leadership—characterized by fairness, transparency, and selflessness—positively influenced teachers' job performance. Complementing this, Li et al. (2020) studied young university teachers in China and reported that ethical leadership strongly predicted work engagement. Using SPSS, principal component analysis, and hierarchical regression, they further identified trust as a mediating variable, suggesting that ethical leadership fosters engagement through building trust. Further evidence comes from Arısoy and Cömert (2021), who examined principals' ethical leadership behaviors and their relationship with teacher motivation in Turkey. Employing a relational survey approach with 298 teachers and analyzing responses through non-parametric tests and Pearson correlation, the authors observed a moderate but positive relationship, demonstrating the motivational benefits of ethical practices in school leadership.

Ethical power-sharing is the practice of involving teachers in decision-making processes and granting them a sense of ownership in school governance. This is widely recognized as a catalyst for trust, collaboration, and teacher commitment. Leaders who practice fairness, empathy, and respect create an enabling environment where teachers feel valued and motivated, thereby

strengthening their dedication to school goals (Obona & Sampson, 2021; Arinze et al., 2024; Shahab et al., 2021). Empirical studies support this claim. For example, Obona et al. (2024) found that teacher empowerment and digital communication improved job commitment in secondary schools in Calabar, while Ngene (2025), through a survey of 118 teachers in Akpabuyo, Nigeria, reported that ethical supervision characterized by transparency and integrity significantly predicted teachers' commitment. Obona et al. (2025) in a study found that ethical leadership has a statistically significant impact on teachers' job commitment and goal attainment in public secondary schools in Ikom Local Government Area.

Similar findings have emerged globally: Sabir (2021) in Pakistan and Zaki (2022) in Malaysia both confirmed that ethical leadership enhances job satisfaction and commitment, while Özdoğru and Sarıer's (2024) meta-analysis reinforced that ethical principals build teacher trust, motivation, and organizational loyalty. Evidence from other fields further affirms the broad relevance of ethical leadership. Abuzaid (2018) and Mitonga-Monga et al. (2023) demonstrated its positive impact on employee commitment in banking and industrial contexts, while Mishra and Tikoria (2021) in healthcare, and Bhandari and Subedi (2024) in cooperative societies, showed that ethical leadership fosters trust and supportive work cultures. In Colombia, Santiago Torner (2025) linked ethical leadership to enhanced self-efficacy and loyalty, while in Nigeria, Mbarawii and Amabibi (2024) found that principals who model collaboration and accountability strengthen teacher commitment. Likewise, Obiekwe (2020) and Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2024) stressed the importance of open communication and fairness in decision-making for teacher dedication, and Önder and Gündoğdu (2024) in Turkey confirmed that ethical school leadership boosts organizational commitment. Neves et al. (2024/25) further highlighted that ethical leadership enhances motivation and commitment, whereas despotic leadership has the opposite effect. Collectively, these findings underscore the universal importance of ethical leadership in promoting teacher motivation, trust, and sustained commitment across educational and non-educational contexts.

Collectively, these studies affirm that ethical orientation and power-sharing are critical factors in fostering teacher motivation, commitment, and performance across diverse educational settings. However, no study to the best of the researcher's knowledge has been found specifically on ethical school administration for teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Calabar South local government area, cross river state, Nigeria. This study is therefore undertaken to fill the gap in literature.

Statement of the problem

In every school system, the attainment of set goals is largely dependent on the job commitment of teachers. Teachers' commitment can be accessed through their punctuality, lesson planning and delivery, active participation in school activities, effective classroom management, and involvement in students' discipline (Obona et al., 2025). However, in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, evidence of poor job commitment among secondary school teachers has become a pressing concern. Many teachers are frequently absent from school without valid reasons, while others report late and close before official hours, disrupting the

smooth flow of academic activities. Lessons are sometimes poorly prepared or skipped entirely, leaving students idle and struggling to cope with essential subjects. These lapses have resulted in low student performance, widening knowledge gaps, and declining public confidence in the ability of schools in Abi Local Government Area to deliver quality education.

Although the state government has attempted solutions such as prompt salary payment, teacher supervision, and attendance monitoring, the problem persists, indicating deeper underlying issues. This study therefore investigates the relationship between ethical school administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the relationship between ethical school administration teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

3. Ascertain the relationship between ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment.

4. Determine the relationship between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment.

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided study:

3. There is no significant relationship between ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment.

4. There is no significant relationship between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was a correlational design. According to Barkha and Basnet (2023) correlational research design involves the examination of the relationships between or among two or more variables in a single group, which can occur at several levels. Correlational design is appropriate for this study because the researcher collected data from the given sample of teachers to investigate principals' ethical administration and teachers' job commitment. The study was conducted in Calabar South Local Government Area (L.G. A), which is one of the 18 local government areas in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of this study comprised all the 307 teachers in 8 public secondary school in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State. Census sampling was used in selecting all the 8 public secondary schools in the study while a sample of 133 teachers were selected using convenient sampling technique.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Ethical School Administration and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (ESATJCQ)." The instruments have Sections 1, 2

and 3. Section 1 focused on the demographic data of the respondents. Section 2 of the instrument (PEAQ) measured ethical school administration. The instrument contained 18 items spread in three clusters A, B and C. Cluster A which focuses on ethical orientation contained 6 items, Cluster B contained 6 items on ethical power-sharing. Cluster C focuses on teachers job commitment and measured 6 items. The items are designed on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The face and content validation of the instrument was determined by three experts 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. The suggestions and comments of the experts were affected and incorporated in the final copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach alpha method. The data used for computing the reliability indices were obtained from the copies of the three instruments administered on 50 teachers in public secondary schools in Ogoja Local Government Area. The choice of Ogoja L.G. A. was because teachers in both study areas share similar characteristics.

The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha which yielded a co-efficient value of 0.83, and 0.85 for clusters A and B of ESAQ, while coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained for TJC. These values exceeded the 0.60 benchmark set by Ogbazi and Okpala (1994) who argued that an instrument yielding a reliability co-efficient of 0.60 and above should be considered strong enough for a study. Therefore, the researcher considered the instruments to be reliable for the study. Prior to distribution, the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured that all information provided would be used strictly for research purposes and treated with confidentiality. Thereafter, the instrument was distributed directly by the researchers and five trained research assistants. The entire exercise recorded a 100% success rate. The items were then organized based on the variables they were designed to measure. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. For negatively worded items, the scoring pattern was reversed. Data analysis was conducted based on the null hypotheses that guided the study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test all the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The coefficient (r) and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the correlation coefficient recommended by Alsagr (2021), as follows:

Coefficient	Interpretation
.00 - .19	Weak Negative Relationship
.20 - .39	Fair Negative Relationship
.40 - .69	Moderate Positive Relationship
.70 - .89	Strong Positive Relationship
.90 - .99	Very Strong Positive Relationship
2	Perfect Relationship

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if the p-value is equal to or greater than significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected but if p-value is less than significant value of 0.05, the null hypotheses was rejected. All data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27.

Results

Research hypotheses

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are ethical people orientation 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 ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' job commitment (r = .76, 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 ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 1: Summary of correlation between ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South. (N=133)

Variables	$\overline{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.	Decision
Ethical people orientation	18.64	3.29			
	19.05	3.22			
Teachers' job commitment			.76*	.000	Rejected

*Significant at p<.05 df=131

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State.   The two variables in this hypothesis are ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment. 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 ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' job commitment (r = .80, p<.05). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis two is rejected. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 2: Summary of correlation between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South. (N=133)

Variables	$\overline{X}$	S.D	R	Sig.	Decision
Ethical power-sharing	17.43	3.79			
Teachers' job commitment	19.05	3.22	.80*	.000	Rejected

*Significant at p<.05 df=131

Discussion of findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that, there is a statistically positive significant relationship between ethical people orientation and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. This result can be attributed to principals demonstrating ethical concern for the well-being, dignity, and fair treatment of teachers. Practices such as transparent communication, respect, empathy, and consistent support foster teachers' commitment to their duties, schools, and professional responsibilities. The implication is clear: the stronger the ethical orientation toward people, the more likely teachers are to exhibit dedication, loyalty, and a willingness to exceed the minimum requirements of their roles.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Madukwe et al. (2024), who reported that principals' participatory leadership practices were strong predictors of goal achievement in schools. In the same vein, Shahab et al. (2021) stressed that the people-oriented aspect of ethical leadership is reflected in genuine concern, respect, and support for subordinates, ensuring that their needs are adequately addressed. This outcome also aligns with the work of Granjo et al. (2020), who explored the association between ethical orientation and various dimensions of teacher identity, they established that ethical orientation exerted both direct and indirect significant effects on these factors, thereby underscoring its critical role in strengthening teacher commitment. Similarly, Zehra et al. (2022) examined the impact of ethical leadership on teachers' perceptions of their work environment and their organizational commitment. their study confirmed a positive relationship between ethical leadership, supportive work environments, and higher organizational commitment. In addition, Li et al. (2020) investigated the role of ethical leadership in influencing work engagement among young university teachers. They found that ethical leadership was a significant predictor of work engagement, with trust playing a mediating role in the relationship.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that, there is a statistically positive significant relationship between ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. This result is not surprising as it suggests that when school administrators ethically share power—through participatory decision-making, respect for professional autonomy, and fairness—they enhance teachers' sense of

belonging, responsibility, and commitment. The implication is that teachers who feel empowered and valued are more likely to remain dedicated to their roles and contribute actively to school success.

Several studies support this outcome. Obona et al. (2025) and Ngene (2025) found that ethical leadership and supervision grounded in fairness, respect, and transparency significantly predicted teachers' job commitment and goal attainment. Similarly, Sabir (2021), Zaki (2022), and Mbarawii and Amabibi (2024) reported that ethical and collaborative leadership behaviors enhance teacher satisfaction, accountability, and dedication. Obona et al. (2024) further emphasized that modern leadership practices, such as digital communication and teacher empowerment, positively influence teacher commitment. Other scholars have reinforced these findings by linking ethical leadership with trust, self-efficacy, and healthy organizational culture (Mishra & Tikoria, 2021; Bhandari & Subedi, 2024; Santiago & Torner, 2025). Additionally, Obiekwe (2020) and Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2024) highlighted that open communication and equitable decision-making are key drivers of teacher loyalty, while Önder and Gündoğdu (2024) demonstrated similar effects in the Turkish context.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between ethical school administration and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools within Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings established a statistically significant and positive association between ethical people orientation, ethical power-sharing, and teachers' job commitment. Consequently, the study concludes that ethical school administration is a critical determinant of teachers' job commitment, underscoring its relevance for strengthening professional dedication and sustaining educational effectiveness in the study area.

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

1. Educational authorities at the government level should institutionalize ethical school administration practices by developing policies and training programs that emphasize people orientation, transparency, and participatory decision-making. This will promote fairness, respect, and inclusivity, thereby strengthening teachers' sense of commitment and professional responsibility.

2. School administrators should adopt power-sharing strategies—such as involving teachers in decision-making processes and respecting their professional autonomy. Such practices will enhance teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and long-term organizational loyalty.

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