

Students' Perceived Effective School Management As A Correlate Of Their School Connectedness In Secondary Schools

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Abstract: The study ascertained the relationship between students' perceived effective school management and the level of their connectedness in secondary schools in Anambra state. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational survey research design was adopted. The sample comprised 640 SS11 students from a population of 18,983 SS11 students. Simple random sampling technique was used. Four zones out of the six education zones were studied. Thus, 32 secondary schools out of a population of 259 government owned secondary schools in Anambra state were selected. A structured likert questionnaire was used to collect data. Aggregate scores and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to answer the research questions. The study revealed among others that majority of students perceive the management of their schools to be effective and that there is a high positive relationship existing between students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management. On the strength of the findings, some recommendations were made among which are that school managers should not only be effective but should ensure high academic standards among students; learning should be made relevant to students' lives and they should also be encouraged to develop a stake in their own education.

Keywords: connectedness, school management, students' connectedness, school management and effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

In the life of any nation, education is a long term investment by the state for its continued existence, preservation, its cultural values, and improvement of the society (Ikegbusi, 2012). She further adds that education is a long term investment by the state to make society a better and happier place in which to live and to make a living. Education has been adopted as an instrument for effecting national development (FRN, 2004). This adoption made by the Nigerian government in her bid to take various steps to implement the educational policies, appears to have special messages for those who engage in the business education.

The above assertions point to the fact that the future of any nation depends, to a large extent, on the product of her educational system. However, Ogba and Igu (2014), maintain that for any educational system to prepare the individuals for useful living within the society, good management is highly needed. Good management is needed for planning, co-ordination and execution of any activity within an organization. According to Nwachukwu (2000); Ikegbusi and Iheanacho (2016), management is very imperative and crucial in the school as an organization.

School management according to Oduwale (2015), is the arrangement and utilization of available human resources for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. He

further expounds that the possibility of the above depends greatly on the effectiveness of the school manager. In the same vein, Hoyle (2012), sees organizational effectiveness as the degree to which an organization approximates the achievement of its goals. Ejiogu (2002), is of the opinion that effective school management is concerned with the relationship between the school input and school output with regard to its environment. School management is therefore said to be effective if it is able to satisfactorily apply a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, activities and experiences in a way that maximal performance is achieved (Ikegbusi, 2014).

There are indices of effective school management such as good communication network, availability of appropriate resources, good human relations among others (Hally 2015). As such, schools ought to provide children with skills, values and behaviours that will help them become responsible citizens, contribute to the social stability in the country and increase economically. Such a school climate is supportive of school connectedness. Connectedness reflects one's perception of their own involvement in an affection for other peoples' activities and the organization (Karcher, 2015). He postulates further that when individuals feel a sense of relatedness to others and a belonging in general, they in turn, value those relationships and social institutions in which they experience belongingness and relatedness.

School connectedness therefore is linking together people in organizational learning environments, particularly students (Opums, 2015). Robert (2014), refers to school connectedness as an academic environment in which students believe that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals. A connected school environment also increases the likelihood of academic success. Students who experience school connectedness have love for school, feel that they belong, believe teachers care about them and their learning, believe that education matters, have friends at school, believe that discipline is fair, and have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities (Schapps, 2013). In addition, when young people feel connected to school, they are less likely to skip school or be involved in fighting, bullying, and vandalism; they are therefore more likely to succeed academically and graduate (Wilson & Elliot, 2014).

Students' connectedness is the extent to which students perceive positive support and care from individuals in their school setting (Chung, 2015). He explains further that students who are connected to their schools are committed to their school work. They also have a sense of belonging to the school, developing likeness for the school and believing in the rules and regulations of the school. From the researchers' observation in Anambra state secondary schools, some students are regular and early to school, keep school rules and regulations, dress in correct school uniform, communicate and respect teachers, as well as relate positively with fellow peers in school. Also, in almost all the secondary schools in Anambra state, students do participate in conducting morning assembly and moral instruction. School prefects and classroom monitors do control other students. Yet, it does not mean that they are effectively connected or managed.

There are myriads of other factors that contribute to the feeling of students' connectedness in secondary schools which include a general feeling of attachment to school and a high

degree of acceptance, school climate and culture, school engagement, motivation, good school policies, school involvement, connection to peers, parents and teachers, feeling safe at school, respecting the school tradition and the school environment, both in the classroom and extracurricular activities. These ideas were supported by a longitudinal study conducted by (Catalano and Hawkin, 2004). The above factors would help one to fully understand the nature and impact of students' relationship with the school.

Effectiveness according to Mondy (2013), is the capability of bringing about an effect or accomplishment of a purpose, sometimes without regard to the quantity of resources consumed in the process. Management is seen as getting things done through others. Akinnubi (2010), posits that management is the guidance or direction of people towards activities to attain optimum results with organizational resources. He further defines effective school management as one in which there is a vision that inspires people, to throw off their doubts and follow the leader, and an ability to relate with people in a manner that shapes the way people view their world. This boils to the point that effective school management within the scope of initiating structure, sees the principal framing and communicating goals, inspiring both teachers and students, relating with both teachers and students, and setting positive expectations (Schapps, 2013). He explains further that the principal, monitors instructional progress, coordinates the curriculum, supervises and evaluates the progress of the school in view of the stated goals.

Connectedness is essential in every organization, be it a firm, company, meeting, community, family or church in general and an educational institution in particular (Robert, 2014). He goes further to explain that without good and effective connectedness, none of these organizations would achieve its objectives or goals, which therefore can put the organization in a state of dilemma. Connectedness means to be linked or joined together, it is to have social, professional or commercial relationship. Wilson and Elliot (2014), are of the opinion that connectedness also involves relationship with nature. It therefore does not include only relationship with people and culture, but also with the natural environment. For democracy to work, one must ensure that the people have and practise the virtue of good character. People's characters are shaped and moulded by family, faith, friends, schools and experiences they have throughout their lives.

School connectedness therefore represents the term used to refer to the study of a student-teacher good and positive relationship in school; it is the extent to which students perceive positive support and caring from individual adults (teachers) in their school (Chung, 2015). Bonny (2000) sees students' school connectedness as the degree to which students experience a sense of caring and closeness to teachers and the overall school environment. In educational organization, the environment for most people is what they encounter in their daily lives (Bolkin, 2003). It is of note that students must receive care and support from adults and also be close to them to enhance school connectedness. Without care from adults, students may experience violence, drug abuse, premature and premarital sex, and drop-out of school. The feeling of safety and belongingness at school are key to students' success (Robert, 2014). Safety, whether it is physical

or emotional, is the key to feeling connected to any environment, and school is not an exception. If students do not feel safe at school, they will not feel connected to their school, and this will lower the likelihood that they will be able to focus or be engaged in the learning process. School connectedness, therefore revolves around the idea that when young people consistently receive empathy, attention and praise at school, they have a sense of belonging and support that is the springboard for healthy growth and development (Karcher, 2013).

Students at school who feel good, perceive meaningful attachment to adults, and possess a sense of belonging, are also more likely to feel engaged to work harder, and to be involved with positive activities in and outside of school time (Ikegbusi, Chigbo-Okeke & Modebelu, 2016). It instils in students the desire to invest, trust, and give back to the individuals and institutions that support them (Chung, 2015). However, students' school connectedness lead to students' participation in class, avoidance of disruptive behaviours, positive attendance, and timeless predicted academic success. According to Robert (2014), for students to be connected to the school, they must feel attached, bonded, committed, engaged and involved with the school, teachers and principals.

Generally, education is observed as a tool for national development (Ikegbusi, 2012). This means that the future of any nation depends much on the products of its educational system. Nwangwu (1999), gave the drop-out rate in Anambra state secondary schools thus- 61% in 1994, 65% in 1995 and 71% in 1996. He concludes that this is an indication of the progressive nature of disconnectedness among students in secondary schools in Anambra state. General observation of secondary schools in Anambra state indicates lack of good communication network, low performance of students academically, negative human relations among staff and students, and students and school management, which are indices of effective school management has been empirically established (Kirby, 2011). One therefore wonders whether level of connectedness to school by students has any relationship to effective school management in Anambra state. The study therefore is motivated by the need to ascertain the relationship between students' perceived effective school management and their school connectedness in secondary schools in Anambra state.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- The following research questions guided the study.
- ✓ How are students connected to their schools in secondary schools in Anambra state?
 - ✓ How effective do students perceive their school management in secondary schools in Anambra state?
 - ✓ How related are the students' school connectedness to their effective school management in secondary schools in Anambra state?

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- ✓ There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students on their school connectedness.
- ✓ There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students in their perceived effective school management.
- ✓ The relationship existing between the students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management is not significant.

II. METHOD

The correlational survey research design was adopted in this study. According to Akuezilo and Agu (2003), correlational survey research design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few of the people or items considered to be representatives of the entire group in order to establish the extent of relationship existing among them. Accordingly, the study is a correlational study since it involves collecting and analysing data on students' perceived effective school management as a correlate of their school connectedness. The study area has six education zones and a total of 259 secondary schools, and 18,983 SS11 students as provided for by the Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC), Awka in September, 2015.

The sample of the study consisted 640 SS11 students which was chosen from a population of 18,983. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 4 zones out of the six Education zones in Anambra state; and 8 secondary schools which must be of senior level in each of the selected 4 education zones. Thus, 32 schools were studied in the 4 selected zones. From each of the selected 32 schools, 20 SS11 students were also randomly selected.

A self-developed questionnaire titled Students' Questionnaire on School Connectedness (SQSC) and Students' Questionnaire on Effective School Management (SQESM) served as the instrument for data collection. The construction of the questionnaire was guided by the research questions. The questionnaire is a 4-point rating scale divided into three parts: A, B, and C. Part A is concerned with personal background information about respondents. Part B consists of 20 items under students' school connectedness. Respondents were required to tick (✓) in appropriate column in order to indicate for each item, the level of their connectedness to their schools. The rating scales for part B are as follow: Very High (4 points), High (3 points), Low (2 points), Very Low (1 point).

Part C is on Students' Questionnaire on Effective School Management. It consists of 14 items with response mode of Very Effective (4 points), Effective (3 points), Fairly Effective (2 points), and Not Effective (1 point). The instrument was validated by four experts in Measurement and Evaluation and department of Educational Management and Policy, from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria and Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.74 for part B and 0.88 for part C which were considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered by hands to students by the researchers and four research assistants. In each zone and school visited, copies of the questionnaire were administered

on the respondents, they were allowed to respond to the items before retrieving the filled questionnaire. These strategies were meant to minimize chances of loss of questionnaire copies, and to explain any point the respondents may not understand very well. Fifteen students did not complete their copies even after repeated visits and some of them filled two options. On the whole, all the 640 copies were retrieved but 15 copies were invalidated, while only 625 copies were used for data analysis.

The aggregate scores were used to answer research questions 1 and 2. For these research questions, the aggregate scores were calculated to measure students' level of connectedness to their schools, the scales are as follow:

- 1.00 – 1.49 → 20.00 – 29.80 = Very Lowly Connected
- 1.50 – 2.49 → 30.50 – 49.80 = Lowly Connected
- 2.50 – 3.49 → 50.50 – 69.80 = Highly Connected
- 3.50 – 4.00 → 70.50 – 80.00 = Very Highly Connected

From the above, the minimum and maximum scores on students' school connectedness stood at 20 and 80 respectively. So any student who scored below 50 was considered not connected to his school, and any student who from 50 and above was considered connected to the school.

Furthermore, in measuring the students' perceived effective school management, the following guided the research.

- 1.00 – 1.49 → 14.00 – 20.86 = Not Effective
- 1.50 – 2.49 → 21.50 – 34.86 = Fairly Effective
- 2.50 – 3.49 → 35.50 – 48.86 = Effective
- 3.50 – 4.00 → 49.50 – 56.00 = Very Effective

This shows that the minimum and maximum scores for measuring students' perceived effective school management was 14 and 56, so that any student who scored below 35 was considered to have perceived the school management not effective, and any student who scored 35 and above was considered to have perceived the school management as effective. Research question 3 was answered using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test for hypothesis 1 and 2, and t-test of correlation for hypothesis 3.

III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

From the data collected, the following results are presented.

Range of scores	N	Remarks
20.00 – 49.80	63	Not Connected
50.50 – 80.00	562	Connected
Total	625	

Table 1: Range of scores on students' school connectedness

Table 1 shows that 562 students who scored between 50 and 80 are connected to their schools. Also, 63 students who scored between 20 and 49.80 are not connected to their schools.

Range of scores	N	Remarks
14.00 – 20.86	9	Not Effective
21.50 – 34.86	50	Fairly Effective
35.50 – 48.86	291	Effective
49.50 – 56.00	275	Very Effective

Table 2: Scores on students' perception on the effective school management

In table 2, it was observed that with scores ranging from 49.50 to 56.00, 275 students perceived their school management to be very effective. Also, with scores ranging from 35.50 to 48.86, 291 students perceived their school management to be effective. With scores ranging from 21.50 to 34.86, 50 students perceived their school management to be fairly effective, while 9 students who scored between 14.00 and 20.86, perceived their school management as not being effective.

Source of Variation	N	School Connectedness r	Effective School Mgt. r	Remark
School connectedness	32		1.00	0.82
Very high positive r/ship				
Effective Sch. Mgt.	32		0.82	1.00

Table 3: Pearson r on students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management

Results in table 3 reveal that there is very high positive relationship existing between the students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management.

IV. TESTING THE NULL HYPOTHESES

Source of Variation	N	X	sd	df	cal. z	crit. Z	P O.05
Male	235	63.67	8.21	623	1.92	1.96	NS
Female	390	62.23	9.70				

NS= Not Significant

Table 4: z-test on the mean scores of male and female students on their school connectedness

Table 4 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, and 625 degree of freedom, the calculated z1.92 is less than the critical z 1.96. This implies that there is no significant difference in students' level of school connectedness.

Source of Variation	N	X	sd	df	cal.z	crit.z	P≥0.05
Male	235	43.93	7.24	623	0.78	1.96	NS
Female	390	44.39	7.22				

Table 5: z-test on the mean scores of male and female students' perception on their schools' effective management

Results in table 5 indicate that at 0.05 level of significance and 623 degree of freedom, the calculated z value of 0.78 is less than the critical z value of 1.96. Therefore the second null hypothesis is upheld. This implies that there is no significant difference in the students' perception of effective school management due to gender.

N	r	df	cal.t	crit.t	P≥0.05
32	0.82	30	7.82	2.04	S

Table 6: t-test of correlation on students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management

Table 6 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance and 30 degree of freedom, the calculated t of 7.82 is greater than the critical t of 2.04. Therefore the third null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the positive relationship existing between students' school connectedness and their perceived school management is significant.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

It has been discovered that majority of students are connected to their schools. These findings agree with Whitlock (2006), who found that 64%, 400 students out of 700 respondents studied in Royal College were connected to their schools. The peculiar thing about these findings was that both studies yielded the same or similar results, even when they were conducted in different geographical areas. The findings also collaborated with earlier findings of Edens (2006), that students are relatively well connected to their formal educational environment in Rolling Hills High School. His findings proved that students who were connected to their schools were high achievers in schools. However, this finding of perceived high connectedness in the current study disagrees with that of Robert (2014), which reported low extent of connectedness in Kita City School. The current study used students to ascertain the perceived school connectedness, unlike the former which studied administrators.

In the same vein, majority of the students about 566 out of 625 perceived the management of their schools to be either effective or very effective. This finding disagrees with that of Dibour (2010), where a lesser percentage of the respondents perceived their school management as very effective, since the principal tended to lack the identified attributes of effective managers. The difference in the findings may be attributed to the focus of the studies. The former tried to ascertain the attributes of effective school managers and linked them with effective school management, while the current study was on students' perceived school management effectiveness as a correlate of school connectedness. The difference could also be attributed to the population of the studies. Dibour (2010) used school heads as respondents but the current study studied students.

Finally, the study indicates that there is very high positive relationship of 0.82 existing between students' school connectedness and their perceived effective school management. Again, table 6 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance and 30 degree of freedom, the calculated t 7.82 is greater than the critical t 2.04. This shows that there is very high significant relationship existing between students' connectedness and their perceived effective school management. In support of the above findings, Wigfield (2012) found that there is a big relationship between school connectedness and school management and that the quality of relationship in this regard was positively associated with students' academic motivation and good attitudes towards school. In agreement also, Hawkins (2001) found that the more connected students feel to their teachers and the more supportive they perceive the school management, the more likely they were to abide by the teachers' standards and school rules and regulations.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, the following conclusion are highlighted. Majority of the students are connected to their schools. Similarly, they also perceived the management of their schools to be either effective or very effective. It also

concluded that there is a very high relationship between students' connectedness to school and their perceived effective school management. The realization from the above discussion is that school managers should encourage and enhance connectedness through effective school management in secondary schools in Anambra state.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- ✓ School managers should not only be effective but should ensure high academic standards coupled with strong teacher support.
- ✓ School managers should ensure a physically and emotionally safe school environment. This will go a long way to enhance students' school connectedness.
- ✓ School managers should make provisions for multidisciplinary education teams in which various groups of teachers work with students. They should not only encourage mentorship between teachers and students but also ensure that each student has a teacher as an adviser but morally and academically.
- ✓ Learning should be made relevant to students' lives and they should also be encouraged to develop a stake in their own education.

Teachers should not only reward a variety of students' achievement, but also recognize and follow up students' progress, this will help to enhance positive academic performance among students.

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