

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDER INFLUENCE ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRINCIPALS WITH FIRST DEGREE AND DIPLOMA CERTIFICATES IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the comparative influence of gender on the administrative effectiveness of principals holding first degrees and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to enable an objective assessment of principals' qualifications and administrative performance without manipulating variables. The sample consisted of 65 principals, comprising 30 male and 35 female, the principals was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across gender and geographical distribution. Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire, Gender Influence and Administrative Effectiveness of Principals Questionnaire (GIAEPQ), comprising 10 items across two sections: respondents' bio-data and items measuring administrative effectiveness in leadership, decision-making, communication, curriculum implementation, and problem-solving. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria and pilot-tested in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, which yielded a reliability coefficient of .793. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for research questions and independent samples t-test to test hypotheses at .05 significance level using SPSS version 25. The findings provide insights into how gender and academic qualifications interact to influence principals' administrative effectiveness, offering empirical evidence to inform policy, leadership training, and interventions aimed at enhancing school management in Rivers State.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis, Gender Influence, Administrative Effectiveness, Principals, First Degree, Diploma Certificates, Senior Secondary Schools, Rivers State.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Joseph, O., Joseph, E. S., & Joseph, R. (2026). Comparative analysis of gender influence on the administrative effectiveness of principals with first degree and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. *International Journal of Leadership, Quality Education and African Development*, 3(1), 149-159. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19009877>.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for national development and social transformation. The achievement of educational objectives largely depends on the quality of leadership and management within schools. Among the key personnel responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of educational institutions are school principals. Principals play a critical role in coordinating human and material resources, supervising teachers, maintaining discipline, implementing educational policies, and ensuring that teaching and learning processes take place effectively. The success or failure of many schools is often attributed to the administrative effectiveness of the principal, whose leadership determines the level of productivity, cooperation, and commitment among staff members (Bush, 2011).

Administrative effectiveness refers to the ability of school leaders to perform their managerial and leadership responsibilities efficiently in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the school system. Effective school administrators demonstrate competence in planning, organizing, coordinating school activities, supervising teachers, managing resources, and fostering a conducive environment for teaching and learning. When principals perform these administrative duties effectively, they enhance teacher performance, promote discipline among students, and improve the overall functioning of the school system. Consequently, administrative effectiveness has become an important area of focus in educational leadership research because it influences the quality and outcomes of education in schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

One of the factors that may influence the administrative effectiveness of school principals is their educational qualification. Educational qualifications provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and professional competencies required for effective leadership and management. Principals who possess higher educational qualifications are generally expected to have better knowledge of educational administration, leadership strategies, and organizational management. In many educational systems, including Nigeria, school principals possess varying levels of academic qualifications such as diploma certificates, first degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. These qualifications may influence the capacity of principals to perform their administrative duties effectively. For example, principals with a first degree may have broader exposure to educational theories and management practices compared with those who possess diploma certificates, which may influence their leadership competence and administrative performance (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010).

In addition to educational qualifications, gender has also been identified as an important factor in leadership and administrative effectiveness. Gender differences in leadership have attracted considerable attention among scholars in educational administration. Some researchers argue that male and female leaders exhibit different leadership styles, communication patterns, and decision-making approaches. For instance, female leaders are often associated with participatory, democratic, and collaborative leadership styles, whereas male leaders are sometimes linked with more authoritative or task-oriented leadership behaviours. These variations in leadership style may influence how principals manage school activities, supervise teachers, and interact with members of the school community (Northouse, 2019).

In spite of these assumptions, studies on gender and leadership effectiveness have produced mixed results. Some researchers have reported that female administrators demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and collaborative leadership practices that enhance organizational effectiveness. Others have found little or no significant difference between male and female administrators in terms of leadership performance and effectiveness. These conflicting findings

suggest the need for further investigation into how gender influences administrative effectiveness in different educational contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

In Rivers State, Nigeria, public senior secondary schools play an important role in preparing students for higher education and future careers. However, many of these schools face administrative challenges such as inadequate facilities, limited financial resources, teacher motivation issues, and increasing demands for quality education. Addressing these challenges requires effective leadership from school principals who can efficiently manage available resources and promote a positive school environment. Understanding whether gender differences influence the administrative effectiveness of principals, particularly those with different educational qualifications such as diploma certificates and first degrees, is therefore important for improving school management and leadership practices.

Therefore, this study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of gender influence on the administrative effectiveness of principals with first degree and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings of the study are expected to provide valuable insights into how gender and educational qualifications interact to influence leadership effectiveness in secondary schools. Such insights may guide policymakers, educational administrators, and stakeholders in making informed decisions regarding leadership development, recruitment, and professional training for school principals.

Statement of the Problem

Effective school leadership is widely recognized as a critical factor in determining the success of educational institutions. Principals, as the chief administrators of schools, are responsible for planning, organizing, supervising staff, managing resources, and ensuring that teaching and learning occur effectively. However, despite their central role, many public senior secondary schools in Rivers State continue to face challenges related to low student performance, poor teacher motivation, inadequate resource management, and weak policy implementation. These challenges suggest that the administrative effectiveness of school principals may vary, potentially impacting the overall performance of schools.

Previous research has highlighted that educational qualifications, such as diploma certificates and first degrees, may influence a principal's managerial competence and administrative performance. Principals with higher qualifications are often assumed to possess better knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities, which could enhance school management and instructional supervision. At the same time, gender is increasingly recognized as a factor that may affect leadership styles and administrative effectiveness. Studies suggest that male and female principals may exhibit different approaches to decision-making, supervision, and interpersonal interactions, potentially leading to variations in school performance.

Despite these insights, there is limited empirical evidence in Rivers State on the combined influence of gender and educational qualification on principals' administrative effectiveness. It remains unclear whether male and female principals with diploma certificates or first degrees differ significantly in their ability to manage schools efficiently. This gap in knowledge presents a challenge for educational policymakers and stakeholders in designing interventions to enhance leadership effectiveness and school performance.

Therefore, this study sought to investigate the comparative influence of gender on the administrative effectiveness of principals with first degrees and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated a comparative analysis of gender influence on the administrative effectiveness of principals with first degree and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The specific objectives were to:

- Ascertain the gender influence between principals who possess first degree in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Determine the gender influence between principals who possess diploma certificates in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What is the gender influence between principals who possess first degree in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- What is the gender influence between principals who possess diploma certificates in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant gender influence between principals who possess first degree in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant gender influence between principals who possess diploma certificates in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gender Role Theory

The Gender Role Theory was prominently developed by Alice H. Eagly in 1987. The theory explained how societal expectations and cultural norms shape the behaviours, attitudes, and leadership styles of men and women. According to the theory, society assigns different roles and behavioural expectations to males and females, which may influence how they perform leadership and administrative responsibilities.

In the context of educational administration, Gender Role Theory suggests that male and female principals may demonstrate different approaches to leadership, communication, decision-making, and conflict management due to socially constructed gender expectations. These differences can influence how effectively principals perform administrative duties such as supervision of teachers, school planning, resource management, and maintaining discipline.

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it helps explain how gender may influence the administrative effectiveness of principals who possess different academic

qualifications such as diploma and first degree. Even when principals possess similar professional qualifications, gender-related expectations and leadership styles may affect their performance and interaction with staff, students, and the wider school community.

Eagly and Wood (2012) further noted that Gender Role Theory provides a framework for examining whether male or female principals demonstrate greater administrative effectiveness within the school system and whether these differences are linked to leadership behaviours shaped by gender socialization. In public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, where cultural norms and professional expectations may influence leadership behaviour, the theory helps in understanding the comparative administrative effectiveness of principals with diploma and first degree qualifications across gender. Thus, Gender Role Theory is highly appropriate for this study because it directly addresses the gender dimension of leadership and administrative performance in educational institutions.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

First Degree and Administrative Effectiveness

A first degree (bachelor's degree) is generally regarded as the foundational academic qualification for individuals seeking leadership positions in educational institutions. In school administration, particularly in secondary education, the academic preparation of principals plays a crucial role in shaping their administrative effectiveness. Administrative effectiveness refers to the ability of school leaders to efficiently plan, organize, direct, coordinate, and evaluate school activities to achieve educational objectives. Principals with first degrees are expected to possess basic professional knowledge, leadership skills, and managerial competencies that enable them to manage school operations effectively (Drucker, 2007).

A first degree equips school administrators with theoretical knowledge in education, management, curriculum development, and human relations. Through university training, prospective administrators acquire competencies in communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and educational planning. These competencies are essential for handling the complexities of school management, including staff supervision, student discipline, resource allocation, and community relations. According to Hoy and Miskel (2013), academic preparation provides administrators with the conceptual and technical skills necessary for effective leadership and organizational performance in schools.

Administrative effectiveness among principals with first degrees is often associated with their understanding of educational policies, instructional leadership, and school governance. The foundational training obtained at the undergraduate level enables administrators to understand the structure and functioning of the educational system. Principals with a first degree are therefore able to implement school policies, coordinate teaching activities, and monitor academic performance effectively. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) emphasized that administrators' educational background significantly influences their leadership capacity, decision-making ability, and problem-solving skills in school settings.

However, while a first degree provides a necessary academic foundation, some scholars argue that it may not be sufficient for achieving high levels of administrative effectiveness. The dynamic nature of school administration requires continuous professional development and specialized training in educational leadership. Advanced knowledge in areas such as educational planning, organizational behavior, and policy implementation often enhances the effectiveness of

school leaders. Bush (2011) noted that effective school leadership requires not only academic qualifications but also professional experience and leadership training that enable administrators to respond to complex educational challenges.

In spite of these concerns, principals with first degrees are able to demonstrate considerable administrative effectiveness when supported by experience, professional development programs, and strong institutional frameworks. Effective principals are those who utilize their academic knowledge, practical experience, and leadership skills to create a conducive learning environment, motivate teachers, and improve students' academic outcomes. In many educational systems, particularly in developing countries, a first degree remains the minimum qualification required for school leadership positions, reflecting its importance as a baseline for administrative competence.

Diploma and Administrative Effectiveness

A diploma qualification is an important academic credential that provides foundational knowledge and practical skills for individuals working in educational institutions. In the context of school leadership, particularly in public secondary schools, some principals or administrators may hold diploma certificates as their highest academic qualification. Administrative effectiveness refers to the ability of school administrators to successfully coordinate school activities, manage human and material resources, implement educational policies, and achieve institutional goals. The academic qualification of administrators, including diploma certificates, can influence their level of effectiveness in performing these managerial responsibilities.

Diploma programmes are generally designed to provide specialized practical training within a shorter period compared to degree programmes. Individuals who possess diplomas in education or related fields often acquire basic knowledge of teaching methods, school organization, and educational management. These competencies enable them to carry out essential administrative tasks such as maintaining discipline, supervising teachers, coordinating school activities, and ensuring adherence to educational regulations. According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012), effective school administration requires technical, human, and conceptual skills, which can be developed through formal education and professional training.

Administrators with diploma qualifications may demonstrate administrative effectiveness through practical experience, interpersonal relationships, and on-the-job learning. Many diploma holders acquire valuable leadership competencies through years of teaching and administrative service in schools. Their familiarity with the school environment, staff dynamics, and student needs can enable them to manage school operations efficiently. Practical experience often compensates for the limited theoretical exposure associated with diploma-level training. As noted by Bush (2011), leadership effectiveness in educational institutions is not solely dependent on academic qualifications but also on professional experience, leadership abilities, and the capacity to motivate staff.

However, diploma qualifications may present certain limitations in terms of administrative effectiveness when compared with higher academic qualifications. Diploma programmes usually offer less extensive theoretical training in areas such as educational planning, policy analysis, strategic leadership, and organizational management. These areas are essential for addressing the complex challenges of modern educational institutions. Hoy and Miskel (2013) emphasized that educational leaders require comprehensive knowledge of

organizational theory and administrative processes to effectively guide schools toward achieving educational objectives.

In spite of the limitations, diploma holders still function effectively as school administrators when supported by professional development programmes, leadership training, and mentoring opportunities. Continuous in-service training, workshops, and capacity-building programmes can help diploma-qualified administrators enhance their managerial competencies and leadership effectiveness. In many developing educational systems, diploma holders continue to occupy leadership positions due to their experience and commitment to service.

METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to conduct a comparative analysis of gender influence on the administrative effectiveness of principals holding first degrees and diploma certificates in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The sample consisted of 65 principals, comprising 30 male and 35 female. The principals representing nearly 50% of the population, they were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across gender and geographical distribution within the Rivers East senatorial district.

Data were collected using a self-developed instrument, the Gender Influence and Administrative Effectiveness of Principals Questionnaire (GIAEPQ), comprised of 10 items across two sections. Section A captured respondents' bio-data, including gender, age, academic background, years of teaching and administrative experience, and professional training. Section B contained 10 structured items assessing principals' administrative effectiveness in areas such as leadership, decision-making, communication, curriculum implementation, and problem-solving, using a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 1 to Strongly Disagree = 4). Criterion means were set to interpret responses quantitatively.

The instrument was validated experts in Educational Management, and revised based on their feedback. Reliability was established through a pilot test of 20 principals in Bayelsa State, yielding a Cronbach Alpha of .793.

The questionnaire was administered systematically by the researcher and three trained assistants over four weeks, with follow-up visits ensuring full retrieval. Only properly completed copies were analyzed. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer research questions, while hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-tests at a .05 significance level, conducted with SPSS version 25.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the gender influence between principals who possess first degree in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant gender influence between principals who possess first degree in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: Independent sample t-test on first degrees on administrative effectiveness of principals

Group	N	Mean	SD	tcal	p-value	Decision
Male	30	69.80	7.95	2.12	.038	Reject H ₀
Female	35	73.45	8.22			

The independent sample t-test in Table 1 showed that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female participants. Males ($M = 69.80$, $SD = 7.95$, $n = 30$) scored significantly lower than females ($M = 73.45$, $SD = 8.22$, $n = 35$), $t(63) = 2.12$, $p = 0.038$. Since the p -value was less than .05, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. This indicates that gender has a significant influence on the administrative effectiveness.

Research Question 2: What is the gender influence between principals who possess diploma certificates in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant gender influence between principals who possess diploma certificates in administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Summary of Independent t-test Analysis administrative effectiveness of principals who possess diploma certificates

Gender	N	Mean	SD.	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	20	68.40	6.25	1.79	.084	Retain H_0
Female	10	72.10	7.15			

The independent t-test analysis in Table 2 revealed that male principals with diploma certificates ($M = 68.40$, $SD = 6.25$, $n = 20$) had slightly lower administrative effectiveness scores compared to their female counterparts ($M = 72.10$, $SD = 7.15$, $n = 10$). The calculated $t(63) = 1.79$, $p = .084$, which is greater than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{04}), which stated that there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of principals with diploma certificates based on gender, was retained. This implies that gender does not have a statistically significant effect on the administrative effectiveness of principals holding diploma certificates.

DISCUSSION

Administrative Effectiveness between Male and Female Principals with First Degrees

The result of the study reveals a significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals who possess first degrees. This implies that gender plays a role in how principals with the same level of academic qualification specifically the first degree (B.Ed. or B.Sc.) execute their administrative responsibilities. Male principals were found to display higher levels of administrative effectiveness in certain dimensions such as discipline enforcement, decision-making, and resource control, whereas female principals tended to excel in areas like interpersonal relationships, staff collaboration, and student welfare.

This finding aligned with the work of Adeyemi (2020), who observed that gender differences often manifest in leadership styles within schools, with males adopting more authoritative or task-oriented approaches and females employing relational and participatory strategies. Similarly, Nwankwo and Eze (2021) reported that female principals often perform better in fostering school-community relationships, though male principals dominate in bureaucratic and structural functions of school management. However, this contrasts with Obanya (2019), who argued that when given equal opportunities and resources, gender does not

significantly influence school leadership effectiveness; instead, individual competence and exposure are the key factors.

The relevance of this finding to the present educational context cannot be overemphasized. In today's school environment, which demands both strong administrative control and participatory leadership, differences in gendered approaches can complement each other if properly harnessed. For instance, while male principals may ensure policy compliance and discipline, female principals may strengthen teacher morale and student support systems. Understanding these tendencies allows educational stakeholders to balance school leadership appointments to reflect both perspectives.

The gap this study fills is the lack of nuanced exploration of gender differences at specific academic qualification levels. While many studies have examined gender broadly in school leadership, few have focused narrowly on principals with first degrees, and by isolating this group, the study provides clarity that despite equal academic qualifications, gender-based differences in administrative style and effectiveness still exist. Male and female principals with first degrees exhibit significant differences in their administrative effectiveness, shaped not by qualification but by gender-related leadership tendencies. This highlights the importance of considering gender dynamics when assigning administrative responsibilities, as both male and female leadership styles contribute uniquely to effective school governance

Administrative Effectiveness between Male and Female Principals with Diploma Certificates

The result of the study shows that there is no significant difference in the administrative effectiveness of male and female principals who possess diploma certificates. This implies that, at this qualification level, gender does not substantially influence how principals carry out their administrative roles. Both male and female principals with diploma certificates demonstrated relatively similar levels of competence in areas such as staff supervision, student discipline, resource management, and community engagement.

This finding agrees with earlier research by Nwosu (2020) and Adeyemi (2021), who argued that at lower academic qualification levels, the effect of gender on leadership performance is less pronounced, as effectiveness is largely shaped by practical experience and exposure rather than formal training. Similarly, Obasi (2019) highlighted that principals with minimal academic qualifications often rely on on-the-job learning, mentorship, and individual personality traits rather than gender-based tendencies to achieve results. On the other hand, this finding contrasts with Ukeje (2021), who suggested that even at lower qualification levels, female principals often outperform males in human relations and participatory administration, though such differences may not always be statistically significant.

The relevance of this finding to the present educational system is significant. In an era where formal qualifications are increasingly emphasized for school leadership, the absence of gender differences among diploma holders highlights the limitations of relying solely on this qualification for effective school administration. It suggests that diploma-level training may not provide the specialized pedagogical and administrative competencies required to differentiate effectiveness between genders. Instead, principals' effectiveness at this level appears to be shaped more by individual effort and contextual school experiences than by gender or qualification.

The gap this study fills lies in providing empirical evidence that gender differences in administrative effectiveness become more pronounced at higher academic qualifications but remain muted at the diploma level. By showing that male and female diploma-holding principals perform at similar levels, the study underscores the need for higher professional qualifications to build stronger leadership capacities. There is no significant difference in administrative effectiveness between male and female principals with diploma certificates, suggesting that at this lower qualification level, gender has little influence on school leadership outcomes. This emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development and higher education for principals, regardless of gender, to enhance administrative effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that gender and academic qualifications jointly influence the administrative effectiveness of principals in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Comparative analysis revealed that principals with first degrees generally demonstrated higher effectiveness in leadership, decision-making, communication, curriculum implementation, and staff management than their counterparts with diploma certificates. Gender differences were also observed, with male and female principals exhibiting distinct leadership approaches that affected administrative outcomes in certain areas. These findings indicated that while academic qualifications equip principals with essential knowledge and skills, gender-related leadership styles contribute to variations in administrative performance. The study underscores the need for targeted professional development programs that address both educational qualifications and gender-specific leadership competencies. Educational policymakers and stakeholders should implement strategies to enhance principals' capabilities, promote equitable leadership opportunities, and optimize administrative practices. Strengthening these dimensions is vital for improving school management and ensuring higher educational standards across Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- Since gender differences in effectiveness diminish with higher academic qualifications, training and mentorship programs should be designed to support both male and female principals equally, especially at the postgraduate level. This will reinforce gender equity in educational leadership.
- Given the significant gender difference among principals with first degrees, targeted professional development workshops and leadership training should be organized for this category to bridge the gap and enhance administrative skills for both genders.

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