

UAI JOURNAL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (UAJAHSS)



Abbreviated Key Title: UAI J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

ISSN: 3048-7692 (Online)

Journal Homepage: <https://uaipublisher.com/uaijahss/>

Volume- 2 Issue- 4 (April) 2025

Frequency: Monthly



CHALLENGES OF PRINCIPALS' POST COVID-19 EXPERIENCES AND CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

SANUDJE, Divinefountain Ameoghene¹, Anho Joseph Efe^{2*}

^{1,2} DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRKA

Corresponding Author: Anho Joseph Efe

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRKA

ABSTRACT

Challenges of post covid-19 experience and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria is the topic of this research. Expost-facto design was used with a correlational descriptive method. 431 school administrators drawn from 477 public secondary schools in the 3 senatorial districts, involving the 25 local government areas in Delta State. 391 was a sampled used representing 50% of the population. Two-self develop questionnaire constitute the instruments titled: challenges of principals' post-covid-19 pandemic experiences questionnaire (CPPCPEQ) and current administrative practices questionnaire (CAPQ). Expert evaluation was used to validate the face and content of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.85 was obtained from the reliability test using the Pearson Product (r) statistics. The researchers personally served the instrument and 381 responses were finally retrieved correctly field i.e. 89% returned rate. 2 research questions were raised and answered while research question 1 used descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, research question 2 used the Pearson (r) correlation coefficient determination. The only hypothesis formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance was tested with linear regression. All the analysis are presented on tables. The findings include the challenges such as; lack of preparation and planning, administrative pressure, stress, fear, and burn-out, adhering to the covid-19 protocols, lack of knowledge of preventive measures to the pandemic, lack of information communication and technology knowledge, decline in students environment and attendance, lack of available funds and finance, and many others. The finding also indicates there was a positive significant association between the challenges of covid-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria with the issues of the Covid 19 experiences accounting for 50% of current administrative experiences of principals thus it was suggested the federal, state, and local governments should develop short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategic plans to mitigate epidemics, pandemics, and other natural, unforeseen disasters, and school administrators should follow suit, so that they are not caught off guard, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic among others.

KEY WORDS: Administration, Management, Health Issues, Pandemic, Experiences, Prevention

Background to the Study

The Covid 19 pandemic in Nigeria is the extension of the global corona virus disease that was first reported in 2019. It is as a result of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona virus 2(SARS-COV2) (Saurabh & Prateek, 2020). COVID-19 was declared as a public health emergency international concern by the World Health Organization WHO in the 30th of January 2020 to appeal for joint cooperation of all nations to slow the transmission rate and was declared as global pandemic by WHO in the 12th of March, 2020 (Saurabh & Prateek 2020).

The Corona virus (COVID-19) began in Wuhan China in December 2019 during an experimental research using animals, the disease comes out prominently as severe lung infection, accompanied by severe cough and fever headache. It can appear after two incidences of infecting a victim and soon the victim dies, from the World Health Organization (2020) corona virus as pervaded everywhere in the world. For instance as a wide fire to America, Russia, Italy and other European countries, the virus is reported to have infected close to a million. Based on the devastating effects of COVID -19 in all parts of the world, Barasa, Ajisegiri, Chughtai and MacIntyre (2020) outlined the health and social economic impacts which came out with some compulsory safety rules/preventive measures for all humans which include; Wearing of nose masks, rubbing of hand sanitizers and keeping social distancing at events such as churches, mosques, offices, parties, schools etc all this was translated to a contextualized state wide school closure across the 36 states including the federal capital territory in Nigeria including Delta State. This closure created problems to school administrations. So what is administration?

Administration may, therefore, be regarded as the specific task of management carried out with the aid of apparatus designed for the purpose of implementing and supervising the formal methods or processes by which the purposes, courses of action, policies and targets are made known to the members of the organization and the carrying out of activities co-ordinated and controlled in accordance with such programmes.

Anho (2018) writing on the task areas of school heads noted school principal performs the following task and responsibilities towards students: emerging responsibilities include; provision of guidance and counseling services to the students; institution of procedure for orientation of students, establish school attendance policies and procedures, handle disciplinary cases of staff and students, and provide health services, for the individual. While staff personnel services are used to formulate staff personnel policies, select and place the staffs, schedule the assignment of the teachers, disseminate the objectives of the school programmes to the faculty, observe the teachers in their classroom practice diagnose the strength and weakness of the teachers to improve the weakness and maintain the strength of the staffs.

Therefore, UNESCO in Harris and Jones (2020) noted that as a result of school shutdowns and total lock downs that countries with COVID-19 pandemic agreed to, 1.6 billion youths were out of school. When schools in Nigeria resumed normal academic session, they were confronted with series of challenges having to do with the implementation of COVID-19 protocols from the Pollock (2020) identified two fundamental problems for school administrators arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. The first is creating safe schooling environment and establishing context for future schooling, the second at the same time expands this role into; being a digital instructional leader. The above scenario urged principals of

secondary schools in Nigeria generally and Delta State in particular to ensure that staff and students of their respective schools adhere to the COVID-19 related protocols as put forward by the Federal Ministry of Education.

According to Harris and Jones (2020), self- care and consideration has to be the focus and concern number one for all school leaders. The health of the principals should also be considered as they navigated through the change as both entrepreneurs and organisation leaders. Stewarding a school through the change and reality of COVID-19 and post COVID, an endeavor that brought with it significant pressure and need to place personal health wellbeing on the line for the sake of others required leaders. But this was not the case. Therefore, the study aimed to establish the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experiences and administrative practices among principals of public secondary schools in Delta State Nigeria in order to make appropriate recommendations, also to outline strategies in the future.

Statement of the problem

To curb the alarming rate at which the virus was spreading in the countries, certain measures were taken by most of the countries inclusive of Nigeria. These control measures were; closure of borders, partial and total lock down of offices, restriction on nonessential commerce, restriction on movement, prohibition of assembly, these either reduced or completely shut down educational activities after which the education subsector agreed to adopt e-learning strategies yet the basic necessity of implementing the ICT and e-learning facilities, as provided for in the school plan, could not be achieved during the COVID- 19 pandemic as most of the teachers and students in the public secondary schools lacked digital knowledge of how to deal with I.C.T., e-teaching and e-learning making the use hard there was the difficulties of acclimatizing to new technology especially in the rural areas in addition the effective usage of School plant facilities to conduct proper lessons. Majority of principals, teachers, students and parents were unable to afford the cost of phones or other electrical devices which were to be used in e-teaching and e-learning. As a result, it was virtually difficult to even buy the required airtime because banks were closed and other cash centres including Point of Sale (POS) had little or no cash for transactions but salaries were not being paid. There were also the difficulties of purchasing the required health/ sanitary facilities/equipment. The above erstwhile situation resulted into socio-psychological and economic issues to all and sundry.

It was observed that there was general challenges of schools adjusting to the COVID-19 protocols especially the inability of staff and students to maintain social distances which eventually led to total closure of schools. In the same vain, observation was rife to see principals, teachers, students, parents and the entire immediate school community without their awareness of the effects of the COVID-19 and how to curtail the spread. These unawareness is attributed to lack of capacity building of school personnel through training and development. Worst horrifically, the majority of school principals could not even foot an administrative cost for the school. Hence COVID- 19 confronted many school administrators unprepared which created further problems of desperation, fear, frustration, anxiety, confusion, stress and burn-out among stakeholders in the secondary school subsector of education. Thus most schools could not cover their syllabi necessitating some of the students were given double promotion against the normal academic standard hence created some imbalances on the academic abilities of the students. The problem of the study is therefore posed as a question: "how have the principals of public secondary schools in

Delta State adapted to the challenges of “post COVID 19 pandemic experiences and how have it” bears on their present administrative practice”?

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experiences on current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the link between the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experienced and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Hypothesis

There is no significant association between the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The system theory put forth by Easton David in 1938 serves as the theoretical foundation for this investigation. He defines a system as a unit made up of a number of interconnected, interdependent parts and activities, with people interacting purposefully within clearly defined boundaries that filter input and output, so that the interactions of any part affect the whole. The field of educational administration can benefit from the application of system theory. Most of the country's current educational issues can be handled by system analysis, which is accomplished by using a variety of systems-oriented management approaches that have been created, modified, and implemented in the field of educational administration include the planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBGS), coordination and project evaluation review techniques (PERT), and Dephi Techniques, among others, to analyze educational programs and issues in a methodical manner, including administrative issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire educational sector was disrupted as a system during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes the system theory pertinent to educational administration. The school depends on interactions both inside and outside of its boundaries because it does not exist in a vacuum. As a result, the school's operations—which depend on one another and are connected to both their internal and external environments for inputs and outputs—were disrupted. As a result, in order for the system to function normally, regulatory agencies like the ministry of education and other ministries stepped in and prescribed the necessary steps to keep it operating. However, many issues with school operations resulted from the lack of facilities, funding, and equipment needed to stop the pandemic's spread.

The principles of the theory of interdependency, interaction, and relationship are pertinent to this study because they gave rise to the development of planning, supervision, shared or participatory decision-making, task delegation, and interpersonal/human relationships, among other things, which are the roles of principals and teachers. This theory applies to this study as well because it states that the external and internal environments of schools are equally affected by the challenges. As a result, in order to support teaching and learning as well as efficient and effective school administration, the ministry of education and individual school administrators act quickly to put policies and procedures in place that will allow the school system to continue operating even in the event of pandemics or epidemics. As a result, the system's steering was disrupted. Quality supervision, staff and students' personnel management in terms of their welfare, transportation, nose/face masks, hand sanitizer, running water, detergents, and other health facilities were expected to make the system functional and

productive but were not provided or made available.

Challenges of maintaining of covid-19 safety protocols in Ensuring safe environment

Working school environment is of utmost important for the attainment of school goals as Anho (2022a) says environmental pollution, epidemic or pandemic are some of the issues inimical to proper working and learning. In countries like Nigeria where schools resumed its normal activities immediately were are faced with barrage of challenges relating to observing the COVID-19 protocols of regular wearing of face mask, social distancing and regular hand washing. Harris and Jones (2020) opined that educational administrators whose schools have resumed academic activities are faced with problems of monitoring social distancing, ensuring proper cleaning and maintenance of sanitation. According to Pollock (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic created two clear challenges for school administrators. The first is ensuring safe schooling and setting the context for future schooling while the second is simultaneously extending their role to include being a digital instructional leader. The above scenario presents a challenge to principals of secondary schools in Nigeria to ensure that students in their schools keep to the COVID-19 protocols for secondary schools in Nigeria as provided by the Federal Ministry of Education (2020).

One of the problems encountered by school heads and instructors include; maintaining covid-19 protocols. Uzokife (2021) examined the difficulties faced by educators during the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed strategies to lessen its effects in Nigerian secondary schools. The study was guided by two research questions, and two hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. For the study, a descriptive survey design was chosen. Since the population size of 258 principals was manageable, the entire population was examined without sampling. Data for the study were gathered using a 4-point rating scale that the researchers developed, consisting of 23 items in two clusters, and which was validated by three experts from the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Faculty of Education. Through the use of a pilot test to assess the instrument's reliability and Cronbach alpha to analyze the data, the reliability coefficients of the two clusters were found to be 0.77 and 0.85, respectively, with an overall co-efficient value of 0.81. The research questions were answered using the mean, the standard deviation was used to assess the homogeneity or closeness of the respondents' ratings, and the t-test was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The study's conclusions showed that among the difficulties faced by secondary school administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic were the inability to maintain social distancing, a lack of staff capacity building, desperation and anxiety on the part of parents and community members, a failure to maintain good sanitation practices like regular hand washing among students, and ambiguous directives from school inspectors. The results also demonstrated that school administrators needed to implement blended learning and technology into their classrooms, take part in COVID-19 capacity building programs, and improve hygiene and health practices in order to lessen the effects of the virus. The principals' locations had no bearing on what they thought. Based on these results, the researchers suggested, among other things, that school administrators make sure they participate in in-service training programs that will adequately inform them about COVID-19 and steps they can take to mitigate its effects within their institutions. Harrison and Jones (2020) discovered that school administrators had difficulty adjusting to the COVID-19 outbreak-imposed modifications to school procedures. As a result, it was challenging

for educators, including principals and teachers, to implement preventative measures that would have required the continuation of certain school procedures.

Challenges of Acclimating to New technology

The Ministry of Education (MOE) issued an order for the nationwide closure of schools on November 9, 2020. Educators and school administrators found it difficult to adjust to sudden changes. In addition to guaranteeing the security of the educational community, principals encountered additional obstacles during this exceptional time. Suryaman and associates, (2020) reported that a lot of negative feedback had been received by educators, parents, and students regarding the abrupt transition from traditional classroom instruction to digital learning. Scully along with others (2021) concurred that not all users of digital learning would gain anything from the courses. Students require access to a reliable internet connection or a suitable broadband internet setup. Additionally, he emphasized how unprepared the Malaysian educational system was to accept online learning, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, principals are in charge of making sure governments pay attention to issues that students are facing in the new normal (Cutter, 2017; Sim et al. 2021).

In addition, school administrators face difficulties, particularly principals and teachers, in being technologically literate and capable of leading the way in integrating technology into the teaching, learning, and administrative processes of their institutions. Thus, according to Pius-Uwhubetiyi (2020), school administrators face a variety of challenges, including difficulty acclimating to new technologies, the issue of having too much technology at once, high technology costs, insufficient training, technological difficulties, the need to adapt curriculum for blended learning, low motivation, limited access to technology, unstable power supplies, and strained relationships between teachers and students. In conclusion, both the student and the educational leadership must submit and obey. Moreover, school administrators are reportedly under a great deal of stress as a result of COVID-19, according to Espino-Diaz, Fernandez-Caminero, Hernandez-Lloret, Gonzalez Gonzalez, and Alvarez-Castillo (2020). Diaz Espino, et al. (2020) also stated that the combination of remote learning and confinement caused teachers to experience stress, anxiety, anguish, and emotional exhaustion. The primary problems that teachers and principals face in schools are an abundance of bureaucratic activities, unclear directives, a lack of support for teleworking, and a shortage of technology. According to Harris and Jones (2020), the social distancing between staff and students results in increased workloads and stress for the staff members who are able to resume their jobs. Principals must be exceptional leaders and administrators in order to withstand the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic-imposed changes. It was anticipated that in addition to using their current expertise, school administrators would need to acquire new expertise while refocusing some of their existing ones in order to handle the challenge of teaching students during the pandemic.

According to school administrators, the lack of access to live broadcasts from the education portal, parents' incapacity to establish a conducive learning environment at home, and students' low motivation to learn were the most prevalent issues encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of the school administrators did not have an emergency action plan regarding the pandemic process and instead followed the MoNE's instructions. The majority of school administrators also noticed that teachers were reluctant to teach in live lectures using the EBA education portal or other programs for various reasons, and that their motivation gradually

decreased in the process. School administrators stated that during the pandemic process, having leadership and crisis management skills in technology is essential.

Globally, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on business, tourism, education, and health. Primary, secondary, and university schools in Nigeria were still closed as of the start of this study, which had a major impact on millions of students who had their terms, sessions, or semesters postponed or cancelled as a result of the pandemic. While many other nations have shifted to virtual learning, many Nigerian tertiary institutions, based on my observations, lack the necessary online educational platforms or resources, making the situation worse for students there. Sufficient awareness among people is the first line of defense against this illness. Thus, it is critical to comprehend the knowledge, opinions, and compliance with Nigerian government control policies held by the student body. One of the hardest things for school principals to do is manage the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, routines have been reset, creating confusion and revealing bad leadership.

Challenges of lack of Funding/Finance

However, most districts are seeing a decrease in their funding for schools (Stogdill 2014). At the precise time that additional services were required to support the mental and academic well-being of educators and students who had been traumatized by COVID-19.

This is due to evidence that, in comparison to their peers in urban areas, students in rural and underprivileged areas may be more affected by COVID-19 (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2021). Nevertheless, it appears that most Delta State secondary schools have not provided empirical evidence supporting this viewpoint. Numerous obstacles, including inadequate funding and managerial concerns have been faced by the educational system. The educational system deteriorates as a result. It also results in teachers going on strike nonstop. In March 2020, a strike in tertiary institutions across the federation was initiated. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic also led to the prohibition of social organizations, including academic institutions, businesses, and churches. Social organizations are prohibited by the government, which has made it more difficult to run educational programs and forced both teachers and students to stay at home.

Motunrayo (2022) asserts that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to global education systems, resulting in the widespread closure of schools, early childhood education programs, universities, and colleges. In 2020, decades of gradual but consistent progress toward educating more children worldwide came to an abrupt halt. In an attempt to stop the virus's spread, an astounding 1 point 4 billion students were expelled from their pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools in more than 190 countries by April 2020. There was already a learning divide in Nigeria between children from middle-class and low-class homes prior to the pandemic. Nigerian education was already plagued by problems like inadequate funding, few instructional resources, unfavorable classroom conditions, untrained teachers, and a dearth of digital tools. In order to facilitate continuous learning for both teachers and students, UNESCO advised the use of open educational platforms and distance learning programs. It's interesting to note that the government of several states in Nigeria offered programs like TV and radio-based learning. Although all of these interventions are praiseworthy, they were unable to produce the intended results because a sizable portion of Nigerians are impoverished and unable to purchase a rad.

The best way to recover from the pandemic and keep up with international trends in education was to invest more in education,

and now was the time for our leaders to do so. We require, among other things, more computers in the ICT rooms, well-stocked labs, operational libraries, hospitable restrooms, cutting-edge teaching aids, regular teacher training, and excellent school infrastructure. All of these were contingent upon sufficient funding allocations and appropriate oversight to guarantee that funds are being used for the intended purposes. Undoubtedly, closing all of these gaps and openings will be extremely expensive, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. There has never been a more pressing need to safeguard domestic education budgets and make sure that education stays a top priority for national governments than there is during the COVID-19 pandemic strains national economies and budgets.

Nigerian GPE Youth Leaders urge leaders to set higher goals for funding education and development while bringing attention to the issues facing the education sector. have an impact on broader development issues such as youth and women's empowerment, poverty, and economic growth. Thus, this would have a long-term effect on the equality, safety, economy, and literacy of the country. The foundation for increased life quality and on-going knowledge, skill, and capacity regeneration in society for on-going productivity and development is provided by education. It is time for educational leaders to increase enrolment in schools and make greater investments in education, particularly for girls. To maintain the recorded success and help achieve SDG 4, all stakeholders must step up their efforts. We must defend domestic education funding and make sure that national governments continue to prioritize education even as COVID puts pressure on their economies and budgets. Governments must be held responsible for their spending on education, and citizens and CSOs are crucial in keeping tabs on spending and ensuring that every dollar set aside for students goes where it is supposed to. Enrolment and school attendance are negatively impacted by security concerns and financial constraints. The government must guarantee sufficient funding for education and safeguard education budgets both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in order to boost enrolment and enhance student security.

One of the most important roles of the school administrator is handling finances. Anho (2017a) defines it as "management of fiscal resources involving monetary term which refers to the available capital and recurrent funds and finances in an organization including budget allocation (grants loans, bonds, levies and funds, endowment and donations explaining further)." According to Anho (2017a), fiscal/financial resources are the funds used for the purchase of consumables supplies on personnel services like books, stationery, fuel, chalk, laboratory chemicals, cars, and other heavy equipment, as well as the money used for the purchase of durable assets like buildings, cars, and other heavy equipment. If these are present in a school, administration, instruction, and learning should proceed without any problems. The availability and use of funds for school administration is one of the main issues with financial management, though, as there were few fiscal and financial resources available during the COVID-19 pandemic. Odio (2021), reports that despite government agencies citing health preventive reasons for restricting cash disbursement and circulation, funds became extremely difficult to come by during and after the 19 pandemic. Due to the movement restrictions, security measures were tightened, which had the negative effect of lowering school monitoring and supervision to zero because no manager or administrator was willing to risk their lives for the school. These had an equal impact on the standard of management, instruction, and learning because schools were completely closed and attendance was dismal right after they reopened.

Challenges of Burn-out, frustration, fear and stress

Managing the teachers and students during the pandemic presents another difficulty for principals. Sokal and associates (2020) claimed that a large number of teachers were exhausted and burned out, which had an impact on both schools and students. This occurred as a result of the additional work that teachers had to do to prepare virtual lessons. Teachers were practically mentally exhausted from managing students. In line with that claim, Harris et al., (2020) established that school administrators' stress levels were elevated by COVID-19 due to the need to implement technology in order to support teaching and learning, as some teachers require new devices in order to conduct their lessons. In summary, principals in both urban and rural areas faced a variety of difficulties. The level of difficulty changed based on the situation. According to Johnson and Weiner (2020), principals in this demanding society face significant challenges in carrying out their duties. School administrators must, nevertheless, carry out their leadership responsibilities in the curriculum and learning domains despite the variety of challenges they face (Hermann, 2016).

Challenges of lack of Resources

Igbokwe and associates (2020) observed that school administrators found it challenging to guarantee that their schools had adequate hygienic and health conditions. Igbokwe and associates, (2020) claimed that school administrators were unable to allocate school resources to address the school's hygienic facility needs because they were unable to identify those needs. Secondary school administrators could take a number of actions to lessen the impact of COVID-19 during and after the pandemic in Nigeria, including assessing the hygiene facilities needs of the school, allocating resources to ensure the maintenance of good sanitary conditions in the school, and making sure school administrators are well-informed and tech-savvy.

Challenges of leadership and discipline

According to Tufan's (2020) research, certain school administrators encountered challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic in various cities. The study employed phenomenology as a pattern and qualitative research methods. Semi-structured School Administrators Interview Forms were used to collect data for the study through interviews. The research revealed, among other things, that half of the school administrators lacked an emergency action plan for the pandemic process and instead relied on MoNE's instructions. They also saw the application of Education Information Network TV and education portal, which were implemented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as a positive and urgent measure. Planning and crisis management abilities are critical during the pandemic process, according to school administrators. This study emphasizes how crucial planning is to the operations of all organizations, including educational institutions.

Lopez (2021) examines the roles, experiences and challenges of principals in Orang Asli primary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is a qualitative study that uses targeted sampling to select informants. Data were collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews with school principals. "Roles and responsibilities", "Challenges during the COVID-19 epidemic" and "Strategies and expectations" were the three main themes discovered during the analysis. The study's findings highlight the critical role of principals in leading their schools, especially during unprecedented situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. By identifying these emerging issues, school leaders and education policymakers can focus on their current efforts while addressing the needs of their

workforce, families, and students. This study also contributed to the body of knowledge about the importance of leadership oversight in school organizations.

School discipline will take place in the backdrop of a historic response to anti-Black violence that will surely influence this generation of educators and students as educational stakeholders deal with and recover from the pandemic. The rates of racial disparities in suspensions were probably influenced by the ways in which educators (principals, assistant principals, and teachers) enforced mask-wearing and social distancing, and modified their disciplinary practices in response to the changes in the physical and emotional schooling environments. Students were being suspended from virtual learning for breaking the dress code, according to anecdotal evidence that is spreading across the country (Pollock, 2020). These unsettling tales gave rise to alarm. Schools placed a high priority on health and safety in order to stop the spread of COVID-19, which resulted in the implementation of new policies and significant modifications to protocol, like mask wear and physical distance. Many students returned to school to find that the setting had undergone significant change in the previous few months, with new policies, procedures, and social mores. The speed and efficacy with which children adjust to such changes varies, and children who already have behavioral health issues or other disabilities may be more vulnerable to adjustment problems.

Challenges of Staff and Students Attrition

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that the majority of teachers had left their places of employment; some had even passed away from the disease or starvation. In their capacity as staff personnel managers, principals must make sure that the school has enough teachers on staff to facilitate an effective teaching and learning process that raises students' academic performance. This includes assisting in the hiring of teachers when necessary. However, it was noted that due to a fear of contamination and other related factors, neither individuals nor teachers were willing to accept appointments in schools or return to the classroom.

Lack of Students' Awareness of Education

The secondary school students were generally unaware of their education. Getting students to go to school can be a real challenge, according to the respondents. The pandemic has further lowered secondary school students' motivation to attend classes, making them appear less interested in learning. Students made up nearly

90% of the student body prior to the COVID-19 school closures thanks to the hard work and commitment of the schools. Most of the respondents expressed their dismay at the pandemic's impact on attendance declines. Three months after the MCO, when classes resumed, the respondents discovered that most students had chosen a carefree and easy lifestyle over attending class. Due to their incapacity to actively participate in classes, particularly those conducted online, the respondents stated that the majority of students have little interest in learning and education. Lack of information technology expertise, inadequate data, connectivity problems, and the absence of a device to support learning during the pandemic were the causes of this. In these difficult times, principals need to be change agents. Setting reasonable goals is also very important when setting and achieving goals, most principals always aim to be realistic.

METHODOLOGY

Challenges of post covid-19 experience and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria is the topic of this research. Expost-facto design was used with a correlational descriptive method. 431 school administrators drawn from 477 public secondary schools in the 3 senatorial districts, involving the 25 local government areas in Delta State. 391 was a sampled used representing 50% of the population. Two-self develop questionnaire constitute the instruments titled: challenges of principals' post-covid-19 pandemic experiences questionnaire (CPPCPEQ) and current administrative practices questionnaire (CAPQ). Expert evaluation was used to validate the face and content of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.85 was obtained from the reliability test using the Pearson Product (r) statistics. The researchers personally served the instrument and 381 responses were finally retrieved correctly field i.e. 89% returned rate. 2 research questions were raised and answered while research question 1 used descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, research question 2 used the Pearson (r) correlation coefficient determination. The only hypothesis formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance was tested with linear regression. All the analysis are presented on tables.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of the post covid-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Analysis of mean score on Challenges of the post covid-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State

S/N	Items	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Lack of planning (foresight) by school management (ministry of education) and administrators (school principals)	385	2.71	0.48	Agreed
2	Administrative pressure/stress because of the COVID-19 pandemic	385	3.40	0.65	Agreed
3	Not adapting/changing behaviour towards life situation	385	2.76	0.58	Agreed
4	Treat to school existence because of fear of contamination	385	3.55	0.23	Agreed
5	Problems of educating the public, parents, staff and students on the effects of the pandemic	385	2.75	0.68	Agreed
6	Not developing guidance for various stakeholders in school	385	3.06	0.84	Agreed
7	Mitigating long term impact of the loss of time of learning associated with prolong closure of the lockdown of schools	385	2.80	0.87	Agreed

8	Poor/low compliance level to covid-19 protocols/ practices	385	2.76	0.60	Agreed
9	Decline in students enrolment/attendance because of loss of interest in schooling	385	2.85	0.70	Agreed
10	Low technological/digital knowledge of principals, teachers and students	385	3.05	0.88	Agreed
11	High cost of information, communication and technology (ICT) hard and soft wares	385	3.50	0.71	Agreed
12	Decreased motivation of administrators, teachers and students	385	2.66	0.78	Agreed
13	Poor electrify power supply	385	3.50	0.53	Agreed
14	Weakened relationship between management teachers-students and parents	385	2.75	0.68	Agreed
15	Lack of access to adequate Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) related to the COVID-19 pandemic	385	3.42	0.65	Agreed
16	Poor record keeping	385	2.81	0.55	Agreed
17	Non provision of instructional and learning materials	385	3.00	0.72	Agreed
18	Problems of accountability	385	2.80	0.87	Agreed
19	Non-provision of needed fund/finance to management	385	2.76	0.60	Agreed
20	Non assessment/appraisal/evaluation of staff and students progress	385	2.85	0.70	Agreed
	Average Grand mean		2.99	0.67	Agreed

Table 1 shows an analysis of mean scores in answer to study question 1 on the challenges of principals' post-Covid-19 pandemic experiences and contemporary administrative methods by principals in Delta State's public secondary schools. The table shows that items/statements 1–20 have a mean greater than the criterion acceptance threshold of 2.50, hence they are accepted as challenges. These include a lack of planning (foresight) by school management (the ministry of education) and administrators (school principals), the COVID-19 epidemic has resulted in administrative and teaching burn-out, strain, frustration, fear and stress, Poor/low compliance level to covid-19 protocols/ practices, Decline in students enrolment/attendance because of loss of interest in schooling, Low technological/digital knowledge of principals, teachers and students, High cost of information, communication and technology (ICT) hard and soft wares, not adjusting or modifying behavior in response to life situations, Fear of contamination poses a threat to school operations, as do issues with informing the public, parents, staff, and students about the pandemic's consequences, among other things.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the Challenges of the post covid-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Correlation coefficient of determination of the relationship between the challenges of post covid-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices by principals in public secondary schools in Delta State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	r ²	%	Decision
Challenges of post covid-19 pandemic experiences	385	2.46	0.47	0.70	0.50	50%	Positive relationship
Current administrative practices		2.42	0.45				

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The table shows that for N = 385, the mean of difficulties from the post-COVID-19 pandemic experience is 2.46 with a standard deviation of 0.47, while the mean of contemporary administration methods for principals is 2.42 with a standard deviation of 0.45. The r-coefficient is 0.70, the r² coefficient is 0.50, and the r² percentage is 50%.

Decision: The r-coefficient value of 0.70 indicates a good association between the variables analyzed, and the r² percent coefficient value of 50% implies that 50% accounts for the issues of the post-COVID-19 pandemic experience.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State

Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis on the challenges of post COVID-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Crit	Decision
Regression	13.451	1	13.451	0.217	0.642	Significant hypothesis rejected
Residual	35584.747	383	62.103			
Total	35598.198	384				

Table 3 presents a linear regression examination of the association between the problems of post-COVID-19 pandemic experiences and contemporary administrative procedures of principals in Delta State's public secondary school system. The results show F calculated of 0.217 with df of 1,383 at the 0.05 level of significance, with F-calculated = 0.217 and F-critical=0.642, indicating a significant link between the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic experiences and current administrative practices of principals in public secondary schools in Delta State. Thus, the hypothesis which asserts that there is no meaningful association, was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Challenges of Post COVID-19 Pandemic Experiences and Current Administrative Practices by Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Delta State

The analysis of the responses to research question 1, as shown in table 1, revealed the following issues as challenges: a lack of preparation on the part of school management and administration (principals and the administration of education); pressure and stress on the administration due to the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak; an inability to adjust to changing behaviors toward situations in life brought on by the pandemic; a fear of being contaminated that affects the school's operations; issues with informing the public, parents, staff, and students about the pandemic's effects; and difficulties in social distancing and adhering to COVID 19 pandemic protocols/practices, administrative and teaching burn-out, strain, frustration, fear and stress, Decline in students enrolment/attendance because of loss of interest in schooling, Low technological/digital knowledge of principals, teachers and students, High cost of information, communication and technology (ICT) hard and soft wares, among other things.

In response to research question 2, which asked about the relationship between the difficulties encountered after the COVID-19 pandemic and the current administrative practices used by Delta State public secondary school principals, as shown in table 2, the results indicated a positive relationship, with the difficulties encountered after the COVID-19 pandemic experience accounting for 50% of the variance in the current administrative practices used by Delta State public secondary school principals. In order to investigate the relationship further, and hypothesis was developed, put to the test, and the results of the linear regression analysis were displayed in table 3, which showed a significant relationship between the difficulties principals in Delta State's public secondary schools faced after the COVID-19 pandemic and their current administrative practices. This bolsters the findings of Harris and Jones (2020), who found a connection between the COVID 19 pandemic experiences and school administrations that had to deal with issues related to social distancing, monitoring, and making sure that school buildings and plants were properly cleaned and maintained. It also confirms the results of Li and Lilani (2020), who highlighted the difficulties in adjusting to the pandemic's changes and reestablishing school routines. The results corroborate the findings of Sokal et al. (2020), who found that many teachers were experiencing burnout and exhaustion as a result of having to put in more effort to prepare for and oversee virtual classes, which present a number of difficulties due to network and power outages. Harris et al. (2020) highlight how stressed out teachers are when they have to learn new technologies. This finding is consistent with Uwhubetini's (2020) findings, which indicated a strong correlation between the

post-COVID-19 pandemic and current practices of acquiring new technologies, as well as the cost of those technologies, the lack of proper training for educators and administrators, a decline in motivation, and strained relationships between parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. The findings on the non-availability of funds/finance is associated with Anho (2017) who noted the necessity for quality and enough fiscal and physical resources to be made present in schools at all times so as to use and to maintain available ones for proper teaching and learning.

Summary of Findings

Following data analysis, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The challenges of post-COVID-19 experiences of principals in Delta State's public secondary schools include, among other things: a lack of readiness for the unknown, a lack of contingency planning for unforeseen events (natural disasters), a fear of contamination and isolation, elevated stress levels, an inability to cope with the reality of the pandemic, a profusion of conspiracy theories, a lack of information, communication, and technology (ICT) gadgets, a lack of knowledge about how to use ICT devices, suspicions about the intentions of the government, and a shortage of personal funds or money in families and schools, while the current procedures used by principals in Delta State's public secondary schools include creating a plan that covers every subject covered in the curriculum, scheduling the necessary number of staff members and students, organizing the instructional materials to be used, and rearranging the educational administrative plans and mechanisms, among other things.
2. The difficulties faced by Delta State public secondary school principals in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic were positively and significantly correlated with their current administrative styles.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and findings, the study concluded that although there were obstacles such as a lack of preparedness for the unknown, for eventualities (natural catastrophes), a fear of contamination and isolation, increased stress levels, lack of fund/finance, and an inability to cope to the reality of the epidemic, to name a few. Principals' post-Covid-19 experiences were positively and significantly related to current administrative practices in Delta State's public secondary schools, including planning, supervision, staff and student personnel management, financial management, and school plant management, among other administrative functions.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this investigation, the following suggestions are given.

1. The federal, state, and local governments should develop short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategic plans to mitigate epidemics, pandemics, and other natural, unforeseen disasters, and school administrators should follow suit, so that they are not caught off guard, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To handle financial management issues during pandemics, the government should always provide funds to mitigate the effects of a lack of money or the availability of cash in circulation, allowing for the purchase of prescribed health and safety goods and facilities while school plant management should include adequate supplies and upkeep during a pandemic, such as fumigation/sanitization and suitable replacement.
3. To address staff personnel issues, staff should be trained in the use of new technology, particularly in online teaching and information communication and technology (ICT). Staff should also be motivated through the provision of welfare packages and palliatives. Open and effective communication will also encourage staff effectively while elevating anxiety, stress, and burnout levels. School administrators should be creative and imaginative by participating in leadership development programs that foster foresight.

Acknowledgement

We must acknowledge the management of the Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria for creating enabling environment in terms of conducive office and facilities while carrying out this research. We also appreciate all the school heads and teachers used for gathering information/data. We express our profound gratitude to Dr. Enwefa Chiekem and Dr. Lawrence Arumuru who assisted in the computer analysis, plagiarism test and other communication issues. The researchers also appreciate the so called Useh Uyoyou Joyce for typing the manuscript; we must not forget Mr. Buzome Chukwuemeka who helped to send the mails and financial transactions. Finally, the authors appreciate the authors of books, journals and research report they consulted, cited and referenced in this work.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflict of interest whatsoever in this research.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were considered while carrying out this research, responses were kept strictly confidential and no names of respondents or schools were indicated.

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