UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.21 (1);
January-June, 2026 https://unijerps.org
2023 Impact Factor: **6.834;** 2022 ***Impact Factor***: 5.156; ***2021 Impact Factor: 5.641;***
2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. *Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363*

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPLICATION OF UBUNTU PRINCIPLES BY PRINCIPALS OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND TEACHERS' WELLBEING IN BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study ascertained the relationship between application of Ubuntu principles by principals of Junior Secondary Schools in their leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in Benue State. It was guided by 3 research questions. 2 hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational research design. The area of the study is Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 1469 teachers in public junior secondary schools in Benue State. A sample of 370 teachers was drawn from the population for the study using Krejcie and Morgan table. A multistage sampling technique was employed for the study. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled Ubuntu Leadership Practices and Teachers' Wellbeing Questionnaire (ULPTWQ). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A trial test was conducted using teachers from public junior secondary schools outside the sampled area. The reliability coefficient obtained was (0.80, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent and reliable for data collection. The researchers administered the questionnaire personally with the assistance of trained research assistants. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that principals' leadership practices across communalism and interdependency principles are only moderately applied in Junior Secondary

Schools in Benue State, and teachers' wellbeing is also at a moderate level, indicating that neither leadership practices nor wellbeing are optimally achieved. The study recommended among that, principals should intensify the adoption of communal leadership practices by involving teachers more actively in decision-making and fostering a stronger sense of shared responsibility within the school.

Keywords: Ubuntu Principles, School Leadership, Teachers' Wellbeing, Nigeria Education

Introduction

The secondary school principal, often called the school manager or administrator, serves as the chief executive responsible for coordinating curricula, co-curricular programs, and overall administration (Ayeni, 2016). Their managerial skills are vital for the effective administration of secondary schools. However, today's principals face numerous challenges that can hinder their ability to manage administrative duties effectively, leading to frustration (Nwogu & Ebunu, 2019). The effectiveness of a principal is crucial for the success of the school, acting as the key link between the classroom, the school, and the broader education system. Effective principals can enhance student learning by shaping the conditions for teaching and learning, while also adapting to evolving external environments. This role involves bridging internal improvements with external reforms as educational systems worldwide evolve to meet contemporary societal needs.

Principal leadership practices encompass the strategies and behaviors employed by school principals to enhance teaching and learning. This leadership is crucial for school improvement and student success, as highlighted by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2019), who assert that principals significantly influence conducive learning environments. Instructional leadership is a key practice focusing on overseeing teaching, implementing curricula, and supporting professional development; Hallinger (2021) notes its role in aligning classroom methods with educational standards. Transformational leadership is another vital practice that aims to inspire teachers, foster a shared vision, and motivate staff, thus enhancing collaboration and commitment. Moreover, principals often practice distributed leadership by delegating tasks and empowering teachers in decision-making, a strategy noted by Spillane (2016) for enhancing collective responsibility and organizational capacity. Moreover, effective principals cultivate a positive school climate that encourages trust, respect, and communication, which is linked to better teacher morale and student involvement. Additionally, strategic planning enables principals to set objectives, allocate resources, and track progress towards educational goals.

Principals play a crucial role in the efficient management of school resources to enhance instructional priorities, guided by principles such as those of Ubuntu. Ubuntu represents a humanistic African philosophy that highlights interconnectedness, communal responsibility, mutual respect, and shared humanity. This philosophy is encapsulated by the phrase "I am because we are," which signifies that an individual's

identity and well-being are intertwined with the relationships they maintain. More than just a moral guideline, Ubuntu serves as a practical social ethic that influences behavior, decision-making, and social organization in various African communities. It advocates for harmony, solidarity, and collective well-being over individualism and competition, positioning each human being's intrinsic worth at its core. Mbiti, as referenced by Mkaran (2019), notes that African worldviews are fundamentally communal, emphasizing that personhood is actualized through engagement in the community's life, framing humanity as relational rather than autonomous.

An individual attains full humanity through compassion, generosity, cooperation, and respect for others, diverging from Western liberalism, which emphasizes individual rights and achievements over collective welfare. Ubuntu principles advocate for empathy, compassion, and caring for the vulnerable, as highlighted by Tutu (2019), who argues that Ubuntu centers on recognizing shared humanity and responding to others' needs kindly. Moral actions within this paradigm foster social harmony and alleviate suffering, placing high value on forgiveness, reconciliation, and restorative justice to maintain relationships and enhance communal ties. This framework was pivotal in South Africa's post-apartheid reconciliation, notably through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, underscoring principles such as communalism, interdependency, reciprocity, dialogue, and morality.

Communalism, rooted in the Ubuntu principle, prioritizes community, shared humanity, and mutual responsibility over individualism. The Ubuntu philosophy, encapsulated in the saying "I am because we are," posits that individual identity, dignity, and well-being are intrinsically linked to active community involvement (Mkaran, 2019). Central to this perspective are the values of cooperation, solidarity, and collective survival. Mbiti (in Mkaran, 2019) highlights that in African thought, individuals exist within a relational framework comprising family, clan, and society, which fosters shared ownership, collective decision-making, and care for vulnerable community members. Ubuntu's communalism also carries moral significance, promoting empathy, compassion, and accountability. Tutu advocates that Ubuntu nurtures social harmony through reconciliation and forgiveness rather than punitive measures. Metz further elaborates on Ubuntu communalism as an ethical paradigm that evaluates moral actions based on their ability to enhance community harmony and diminish alienation. In modern applications, this principle continues to impact education, governance, and conflict resolution by advocating for inclusive participation, social cohesiveness, and sustainable development anchored in shared humanity.

Interdependency, as a core guiding principle of Ubuntu philosophy, highlights the profound interconnectedness among individuals. It emphasises that one's identity, dignity, and moral worth are realised through relationships with others within the community (Ramose, 2020; Metz, 2021). Commonly expressed through the maxim "I am because we are," this principle advocates

for mutual care, cooperation, shared responsibility, and collective flourishing, in contrast to radical individualism prevalent in Western thought (Mkhize, 2019; Mangaliso et al., 2022). Interdependency posits that personal achievements, knowledge, and ethical conduct flourish through social connections rather than in isolation. It fosters empathy, solidarity, and social harmony, encouraging individuals to act in ways that promote collective well-being. By underscoring that, harming others ultimately diminishes oneself, interdependency provides a strong moral framework for inclusive, humane, and socially responsible living (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019; Tayali, 2025).

In relation to educators, teacher well-being is articulated as a holistic state encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, and social health that enables teachers to function effectively and sustainably in their professional roles (Hascher, 2020; McCallum et al., 2017). This construct goes beyond the mere absence of stress or burnout; it includes positive experiences, life satisfaction, emotional stability, and meaningful engagement in work and life domains (Ogunyemi & Okeke, 2021). Teacher well-being is understood as multidimensional, integrating both objective factors (such as working conditions and health status) and subjective dimensions (including positive emotions, engagement, purpose, and supportive relationships with colleagues, students, and the community) (Hascher & Waber, 2021). Emotional stability within this framework is closely linked to job satisfaction and positive interpersonal interactions, which in turn foster a supportive school environment that reduces stress and enhances teaching quality (Ezeoha et al., 2022; Tayali, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

In junior secondary schools, effective leadership should embody humane, participatory, and community-oriented principles, fostering collaboration and the wellbeing of all stakeholders. The Ubuntu philosophy, emphasizing values such as compassion and collective responsibility, serves as an ethical framework to enhance leadership practices. When integrated effectively, Ubuntu principles are believed to improve professional relationships, enhance teachers' emotional and social wellbeing, and create a positive school climate that boosts teacher commitment and morale.

However, many schools observe a disconnection from this ideal, with prevalent leadership styles being authoritarian and task-focused, which fail to prioritize empathy and shared leadership. As a result, teachers report high levels of emotional strain, low morale, inadequate recognition, and poor involvement in decision-making, undermining their job satisfaction and wellbeing.

This detrimental environment affects not just the teachers but the entire school system, leading to increased stress, burnout, absenteeism, and reduced commitment, all of which negatively impact instructional quality and student development. If unchecked, these issues may lead to high staff turnover and a deteriorating school climate, undermining the effectiveness of education within these institutions. Despite recognizing Ubuntu-based leadership as beneficial, there is

limited empirical research on its specific impact on teachers' wellbeing. This highlights a critical need for systematic investigation into how the application of Ubuntu principles influences teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools, which this study aims to address.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to ascertain the relationship between application of Ubuntu principles by principals of Junior Secondary Schools in their leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in Benue State, the specific objectives sought to determine the:

1. extent of application of communalism principles in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria
2. extent of application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria.
3. level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria.
4. relationship between the application of communalism principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria.
5. relationship between the application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the extent of application of communalism principles in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria?
2. What is the extent of application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria?
3. What is the level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated and was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between the application of communalism principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State.
2. There is no significant relationship between the application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Systems Theory by Ubuntu Philosophy (African Communalism Theory)

Ubuntu Philosophy (African Communalism Theory)

Ubuntu philosophy, also known as African Communalism Theory, is a philosophical and ethical framework rooted in African cultural values. It is often expressed by the phrase "I am because we are," emphasising that individual identity and wellbeing are inseparable from the welfare of the community (Mkaran, 2019; Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019). Ubuntu promotes the understanding that humans exist in a network of relationships and that moral development is realized through social connections. It prioritizes values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility (Mangaliso et al., 2022; Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2022). In essence, Ubuntu views human beings as interdependent, suggesting that the actions of one person affect the entire community (Metz, 2021).

Within organizational and institutional contexts, including schools, Ubuntu can guide leadership practices by fostering humane, participatory, and ethical interactions (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019; Abdulkadir et al., 2024). Leadership guided by Ubuntu is centered on communal values, ethical conduct, collaboration, and the wellbeing of all members of the community. The tenets of Ubuntu are critical for shaping leadership and social behavior. Communalism emphasizes the collective over the individual, encouraging leaders to prioritize the welfare of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Metz, 2021; Okeke & Eze, 2022). Interdependency highlights the reliance of individuals on one another to achieve shared goals, promoting teamwork, cooperation, and mutual support (Ramose, 2020; Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2022). Ethical leadership grounded in Ubuntu strengthens trust, reduces conflicts, and creates a positive working climate (Abdulkadir et al., 2024; Ogunleye & Adebanjo, 2023).

The Ubuntu Philosophy serves as a vital framework for analyzing the impact of leadership practices on teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools. It promotes communalism to foster belonging and job satisfaction, interdependency to enhance teamwork and reduce stress, and reciprocity to ensure teachers feel valued. Dialogue encourages teacher participation and engagement, while moral leadership emphasizes fairness and transparency in decision-making. These dimensions communalism, interdependency, reciprocity, dialogue, and morality are operationalizable for research, particularly in Nigeria where communal values are significant. Ultimately, Ubuntu offers a comprehensive theoretical foundation for exploring ethical and participatory leadership that improves teacher welfare and institutional effectiveness in Benue State's educational context.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies were conducted on this topic such those conducted by Abdulkadir et al. (2024) who explored the impact of Ubuntu principles on teachers' wellbeing and job satisfaction in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, using a mixed-methods approach on a sample of 450 teachers. Findings indicated increased wellbeing under Ubuntu-informed leadership. Ogunleye & Adebanjo (2023)

found a positive correlation between Ubuntu principles and teachers' wellbeing in Ogun State senior secondary schools, emphasizing leader traits like respect and empathy. Adeyemi & Iorfa (2022) addressed communal values in Benue State junior secondary schools, demonstrating a positive relationship with wellbeing but without a focus on specific Ubuntu principles. Amarachi (2022) examined communalism in Enugu, while Omodan & Tsotetsi (2019) linked Ubuntu principles to teacher effectiveness in Ekiti, both studies lacking a wellbeing focus. Mokoena (2023) discussed barriers to Ubuntu in Gauteng without empirically tying it to wellbeing, whereas Nkambule (2022) assessed Ubuntu leadership styles for knowledge management. Okpara et al. (2025) and Tayali (2025) advocated for integrating Ubuntu in education and revealed its positive impact on wellbeing, respectively. Kramer (2023) highlighted its influence on school climate in South Africa, and Setlhodi (2018) acknowledged its improvement on collaboration and effectiveness without measuring wellbeing. Each study contributes toward a comprehensive understanding of Ubuntu's role in educational settings, with the current study filling gaps across regions and school types by focusing specifically on junior secondary schools in Benue State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between the application of Ubuntu principles in school leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing without manipulating any variables. The correlational design enabled the examination of the degree and direction of association between the independent variables (Ubuntu principles) and the dependent variable (teachers' wellbeing) as they naturally occur within the school environment.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the 1469 teachers in public junior secondary schools in Benue State. These teachers were considered appropriate for the study because they are directly affected by school leadership practices and are well positioned to assess the extent to which Ubuntu principles are applied by school administrators and how such practices influence their wellbeing.

Table 1: Gender representation of teachers

S/N	Gender	Number
1	Male Teacher	652
2	Female Teachers	817
	Total	1469

Source: Benue State Teaching Service Board (2026)

Sample Size

A sample of 370 teachers was drawn from the population for the study using Krejcie and morgan table. The sample size was considered adequate to ensure representativeness and to allow for meaningful statistical analysis. The determination of the sample size was guided

by standard sampling procedures to balance accuracy, manageability, and cost-effectiveness.

Sampling Techniques

A multistage sampling procedure was employed for the study. In the first stage, Local Government Area was selected using simple random sampling. In the second stage, public junior secondary schools were selected from the chosen Local Government Areas using purposive sampling. Then some schools were randomly selected among the public schools. Proportionate sampling was used to calculate the sample size for each of the selected schools in line with the sample of 370.In the final stage, Teachers were selected from the sampled schools using simple random sampling. This approach ensured that Teachers from different schools and locations within the state were adequately represented.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled Ubuntu Leadership Practices and Teachers' Wellbeing Questionnaire (ULPTWQ). The instrument consists of two sections. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents, while Section B will measure the extent of application of selected Ubuntu principles communalism, interdependency, reciprocity, dialogue, and morality and teachers' wellbeing. Responses were structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, in Federal University Wukari, Taraba State. The validators examined the instrument to ensure clarity, relevance, adequacy of coverage, and alignment with the study objectives and variables. Their comments and suggestions were used to revise and refine the instrument before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A trial test was conducted using teachers from public junior secondary schools outside the sampled area. The reliability coefficient obtained was (0.80, indicating that the instrument was internally consistent and reliable for data collection.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally with the assistance of trained research assistants. Permission will be obtained from relevant educational authorities and school administrators before data collection. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and the questionnaires were collected immediately or within an agreed period to ensure a high return rate.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Statistical analyses were carried out using appropriate statistical

software to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between Ubuntu leadership principles and teachers' wellbeing.

Results

Research question 1: What is the extent of application of communalism principles in principal's leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses of respondents on the extent of application of communalism principles in principal's leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The principal encourages teachers to work together as a team in achieving school goals.	370	2.90	.823	Agree
2	Decisions affecting the school are made through collective consultation with teachers.	370	2.92	.818	Agree
3	The principal promotes a sense of shared responsibility among teachers in the school.	370	2.92	.817	Agree
4	Teachers are encouraged by the principal to support one another in professional tasks.	370	2.95	.815	Agree
5	The principal fosters a school culture where individual success is linked to collective success.	370	2.96	.800	Agree
6	The principal values contributions from all teachers regardless of rank or experience.	370	2.98	.821	Agree
7	The principal involves teachers in solving school-related problems as a group.	370	2.97	.806	Agree
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		**2.94**	**0.80**	Agree

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The result presented in Table 2 shows that the mean scores of items 1 to 7 range from 2.73 to 2.95, which are all above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that respondents agreed with all the statements regarding the application of communalism principles in principals' leadership practices. The cluster mean of 2.94 further confirms that communalism is moderately practiced among principals in junior secondary schools in Benue State. The standard deviation values, which range between 0.72 and 0.89, indicate that the responses were relatively homogeneous, suggesting consistency in respondents' opinions.

Research question 2: What is the extent of application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses of respondents on the extent of application of interdependency principles in principal's leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State

S/N	Questionnaire Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The principal collaborates with teachers and staff in making key school decisions.	370	2.97	.824	Agree
2	The principal encourages teamwork among teachers and departments to achieve school goals.	370	2.98	.816	Agree
3	The principal regularly seeks input from staff, students, and parents before implementing new policies.	370	2.93	.827	Agree
4	The principal shares leadership responsibilities with others to promote collective ownership.	370	2.95	.827	Agree
5	The principal ensures that resources and information are shared among staff for effective teaching and learning.	370	3.01	.801	Agree
6	The principal promotes mutual support and cooperation among staff members.	370	3.01	.816	Agree
7	The principal builds strong partnerships with stakeholders (PTA, community leaders, and external agencies).	370	2.96	.826	Agree
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		**2.97**	**0.79**	Agree

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Findings in Table 3 reveal that the mean scores of all items fall between 2.75 and 2.92, exceeding the benchmark of 2.50. This implies that respondents agreed that principals practice interdependency in their leadership. The cluster mean of 2.97 indicates a moderate level of application of interdependency principles. The standard deviation values (0.70–0.88) show low variability, meaning respondents shared similar perceptions.

Research question 3: What is the level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of responses of respondents on the level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I feel satisfied with my work-life balance.	370	2.99	.813	Agree
2	I experience low stress in teaching duties.	370	3.00	.841	Agree
3	I receive adequate support from management.	370	3.01	.810	Agree
4	I feel emotionally supported by colleagues.	370	2.96	.807	Agree
5	I have access to adequate teaching resources.	370	2.97	.852	Agree
6	I feel motivated and valued.	370	3.04	.831	Agree
7	I am satisfied with my physical health.	370	3.04	.792	Agree
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		**3.00**	**0.87**	Agree

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The findings on Table 4 show that item means range from 2.65 to 2.87, all above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that teachers generally experience positive wellbeing. The cluster mean of 3.00 suggests a moderate-to-moderate level of wellbeing

among teachers. The standard deviation values (0.79–0.93) indicate moderate consistency in responses.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the application of communalism principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 5: Correlation test of significant relationship between the application of communalism principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Communalism vs Teachers' Wellbeing	370	0.642	0.000	Reject H_{01}

The result on Table 5 shows that since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a significant positive relationship between communalism and teachers' wellbeing.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 6: Correlation test of significant relationship between the application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing in junior secondary schools in Benue State

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Interdependency vs Teachers' Wellbeing	370	0.615	0.000	Reject H_{02}

The result on Table 6 shows that the p-value is less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There exists a significant positive relationship between interdependency and teachers' wellbeing.

Summary of Major Findings

1. There is a moderate extent of application of communalism principle in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State.
2. There is a moderate extent of application of interdependency principle in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State
3. There is a moderate level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria.
4. There is significant positive relationship between application of communalism principle and teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State.
5. There exists a significant positive relationship between application of interdependency principle and teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State.

Discussion of Finding

The finding of this study revealed that there is a moderate extent of application of communalism principles in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State. This suggests that communalism, as an indigenous leadership philosophy rooted in African social systems, is only partially operational within the school context. The finding may be attributed to systemic challenges such as bureaucratic administrative structures, limited leadership training, and the persistence of hierarchical leadership styles in the Nigerian educational system.

This finding is consistent with the observations of Okorie (2019), who reported that although school leaders in Nigeria often recognize the value of collaborative practices, their implementation tends to be moderate due to institutional constraints and leadership orientation. Similarly, Eze and Nwankwo (2021) found that principals demonstrate moderate levels of participatory leadership, noting that decision-making processes are sometimes inclusive but not sufficiently decentralized to reflect true communal engagement. In the same vein, Adebayo (2020) asserted that communal leadership practices in Nigerian secondary schools are often situational rather than systemic, thereby limiting their overall impact on school effectiveness.

However, the finding contrasts with Ogunyemi (2022), who reported a high level of communal leadership practices among principals in South-West Nigeria, attributing this to increased awareness and training in collaborative leadership models. The disparity may be due to regional differences in educational administration, access to professional development opportunities, and variations in leadership culture across states. The implication of the moderate application observed in this study is that the full benefits of communalism such as enhanced teacher wellbeing, improved interpersonal relationships, and increased organizational commitment may not be fully realized. Therefore, the moderate level identified in this study suggests a need for improvement in the adoption of communalism principles among principals.

The study found that there is a moderate extent of application of interdependency principles in principals' leadership practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State. This finding addresses the research question which sought to determine the extent to which interdependency principles are applied in principals' leadership practices, and it is also relevant to the corresponding null hypothesis that postulated no significant relationship between the application of interdependency principles and teachers' wellbeing.

The moderate level of application indicates that principals demonstrate some degree of mutual reliance, teamwork, shared accountability, and collaborative problem-solving in their leadership practices, but such practices are not consistently or fully embedded within the school system. In essence, while there is evidence that principals recognize the importance of interdependence among staff members, the operationalization of this principle appears to be partial and varies across schools. This suggests that leadership practices in the study area still retain elements of individualism and

hierarchical control, which may limit the full realization of interdependent working relationships.

This finding may be attributed to several contextual factors, including administrative pressures, centralized decision-making structures, and limited professional training in collaborative leadership models. In many public secondary schools, principals are often required to operate within rigid policy frameworks that may constrain the extent to which they can delegate responsibilities or foster shared leadership. Consequently, although interdependency is acknowledged as beneficial, its application may be situational rather than systematic.

The finding is in agreement with Eze and Nwankwo (2021), who reported that school principals exhibit moderate levels of teamwork and collaborative practices, noting that while teachers are occasionally involved in decision-making, the final authority often remains centralized. Similarly, Akinwale (2020) found that interdependent leadership practices in Nigerian secondary schools are moderately practiced due to structural and cultural factors that favor top-down administration. In the same vein, Okeke (2019) observed that although principals encourage cooperation among staff, true interdependence—characterized by shared leadership and collective responsibility—is not fully institutionalized.

However, the finding contradicts the report of Olatunji (2022), who found a high level of interdependent leadership practices among principals in some parts of South-West Nigeria, attributing this to increased exposure to leadership development programmes and decentralized school management systems. The variation in findings may be due to differences in regional policies, leadership training opportunities, and school organizational culture.

The implication of the moderate application of interdependency principles is that the potential benefits associated with such practices—such as improved teacher collaboration, enhanced problem-solving capacity, and increased organizational cohesion—may not be maximally achieved. As noted by Nworgu (2018), leadership that promotes interdependence fosters a sense of collective efficacy and shared commitment among staff, which is essential for improving teachers' wellbeing and school performance. Therefore, the moderate level observed in this study suggests a need for strengthening interdependent leadership practices among principals.

Furthermore, with respect to the hypothesis tested, the moderate application of interdependency principles may result in a corresponding moderate influence on teachers' wellbeing, thereby affecting the strength and significance of the relationship between the variables. This highlights the importance of enhancing interdependent leadership approaches as a means of promoting teachers' wellbeing and improving overall school effectiveness.

The study found that there is a moderate level of teachers' wellbeing in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria. This finding addresses the research question which sought to determine the level of teachers' wellbeing, and it is also related to the corresponding hypotheses that examined the relationship between

principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing.

The moderate level of teachers' wellbeing implies that teachers in the study area experience a fair but not optimal state of physical, psychological, and professional wellbeing. This suggests that while some aspects of their work environment may be supportive—such as interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction, or access to basic resources—there are still notable challenges that limit their overall wellbeing. Such challenges may include workload pressures, inadequate motivation, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient welfare support. The finding indicates that teachers are neither highly distressed nor highly satisfied, but rather exist within an intermediate state of wellbeing.

This result may be attributed to prevailing conditions within the public secondary school system in Nigeria, where teachers often operate under constrained resources and demanding responsibilities. Factors such as irregular or inadequate remuneration, large class sizes, infrastructural deficits, and administrative demands may negatively impact teachers' wellbeing. At the same time, intrinsic motivation, commitment to the teaching profession, and supportive collegial relationships may help sustain a moderate level of wellbeing despite these challenges.

The finding is consistent with Adebayo (2020), who reported that teachers' wellbeing in Nigerian secondary schools is generally moderate, noting that while teachers demonstrate commitment to their duties, they face significant occupational stress and limited institutional support. Similarly, Eze and Nwankwo (2021) found that teachers experience moderate job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing, influenced by both positive workplace interactions and systemic constraints. In the same vein, Okorie (2019) observed that teachers' wellbeing is often balanced between job-related stressors and coping mechanisms, resulting in a moderate overall level.

However, the finding contrasts with Ogunyemi (2022), who reported a high level of teachers' wellbeing in some regions of South-West Nigeria, attributing this to better working conditions, improved welfare packages, and more supportive leadership practices. The variation may be due to differences in resource allocation, policy implementation, and school management practices across regions.

The implication of this finding is that while teachers are functioning at an acceptable level, their wellbeing is not sufficiently enhanced to promote optimal productivity and effectiveness. As noted by Nworgu (2018), teachers' wellbeing is a critical determinant of their performance, commitment, and overall contribution to educational outcomes. A moderate level of wellbeing suggests that there is room for improvement in areas such as motivation, welfare support, and work environment enhancement.

Furthermore, this finding has important implications for the relationship between principals' leadership practices and teachers' wellbeing. Since wellbeing is only moderate, it is likely that the influence of leadership practices such as communalism, interdependency, reciprocity, dialogue, and

moral principles may not be fully maximized. Strengthening these leadership practices could therefore play a significant role in improving teachers' wellbeing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study establishes that principals' leadership practices across communalism, interdependency, reciprocity, dialogue, and moral principles are only moderately applied in Junior Secondary Schools in Benue State, and teachers' wellbeing is also at a moderate level, indicating that neither leadership practices nor wellbeing are optimally developed. Consequently, strengthening these leadership principles through targeted training, supportive policies, and improved administrative structures is essential to enhance teachers' wellbeing and overall school effectiveness.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Principals should intensify the adoption of communal leadership practices by involving teachers more actively in decision-making and fostering a stronger sense of shared responsibility within the school.
2. School administrators should promote collaborative work culture by encouraging teamwork, delegation of responsibilities, and joint problem-solving among staff.
3. Principals should develop structured systems for recognizing and rewarding teachers' efforts to strengthen mutual trust, motivation, and professional commitment.
4. Principals should improve open communication channels by organizing regular interactive meetings and encouraging free exchange of ideas, feedback, and suggestions among staff.
5. Education authorities should provide continuous leadership training on ethical conduct to ensure that principals consistently demonstrate fairness, integrity, accountability, and transparency in school management.

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