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Leadership Styles, Public Relation Skills and School-Community Collaboration: A Quantitative Analysis of the Perception of Stakeholders

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ABSTRACT

This analysis examined the collaboration between schools and host communities using the leadership styles of principals and public relations skills as independent variables. As noted, and reported in the literature, the research was motivated by the conflicting links and alienative partnerships between schools and communities. The research followed a quantitative approach with an emphasis on the descriptive survey architecture. The study targeted a population of 667 school administrators; however, data was obtained from 583 secondary school managers who participated voluntarily. A questionnaire was used for data acquisition, with a Cronbach's reliability index of .84. Key findings showed that the adoption of leadership styles generally and particularly in terms of the bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, servant-oriented and visionary styles was high; the autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational styles were adopted to a low degree, whereas the strategic leadership style was adopted averagely; the extent of principals' public relations skills, as well as school-community collaboration (SCC) was low; the degree of SCC did not depend significantly on the leadership styles adopted, but on the public relations expertise of principals. Based on these results, important theoretical and policy implications for effective practices in educational management are discussed.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Democratic and autocratic styles are the most and least embraced forms of leadership respectively
- Principals' leadership styles do not determine the extent of SCC
- PTA activities are the most common PR tactics used to maintain close contact with parents
- High rates of SCC are associated with principals' possession of good PR skills
- Principals' with good/bad PR skills are 8.2% more likely to maintain good/bad SCC

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Supplemental data for this article can be accessed here.

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Introduction

It is widely documented among many scholars that the effective administration and goal attainment of the school system is premised on adequate funding and support (Aja-Okorie, 2016; Akomolafe & Aremu, 2016; Amankona et al., 2018; Amogechukwu & Unoma, 2017; Ekaette et al., 2019; Nwafor et al., 2015; Odigwe & Owan, 2019; Onuoha, 2013; Owan, 2018b). In time past, the responsibility of funding education rested on the shoulders of the government. However, with the rise in collaborative management of the school system in recent times (Omorobi et al., 2020), private individuals have been granted the freedom to establish and manage schools. The government set minimum standards and oversee their activities to ensure compliance with the set standards. Firms and industries were also expected to maintain a corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a means of supporting education and rural development in areas of their establishment. Furthermore, host communities, donor agencies, private philanthropists and so on, are also at liberty to support the funding of education to promote quality service delivery toward goal attainment.

Notwithstanding the expectations from these partners, one area that seems to be overlooked is the way schools and communities collaborate. 'School community collaboration (SCC) can be defined as a situation where both schools and communities synergise to provide essential services for the school or the community, depending on the needs' (Owan, 2019, p. 13). Based on the above, the definition of SCC can be operationalized to mean a process where school managers, teachers, parents and host community leaders ally, with the central aim of resolving issues affecting both parties (the school and the community). It is a two-way symbiotic partnership where there is a cooperation between schools and host communities to solve school- and community-related problems (Owan, 2019). Effective SCC can be beneficial to students, schools, and host communities through ashared learning goal. Schools can benefit from SCC through an improved supply of human and material resources for quality education offering. Through SCC, parents, teachers, students, school leaders and the wider community can have agreat sense of belonging and the motivation to teach and learn increases (Owan et al., 2021). Besides, sharing learning goals through SCC promotes accountability, inclusiveness, and responsibility among all stakeholders. Furthermore, the inclusion of all stakeholders in a collaborative learning sphere allows for diverse knowledge and skills to be acknowledged and utilized for increased efficiency as well as effectiveness.

Advocates of SCC continue to argue that students' educational opportunities will improve depending on how much schools can cater for learners academic needs, their family needs, and to an extent, the needs of the neighborhood hosting the schools, and that this is best done by cooperating with community organizations, government agencies, and social services (Valli et al., 2016). For such a collaboration to thrive, both parties must agree and be willing to sacrifice for the good of the other in need. In a joint activity or project, both parties must be willing to participate and provide support to achieve the intended goal. While such a relationship sounds appealing to the ears, the reality seems to be far from it. It has been reported that several issues are bordering around a school-community relationship in Cross River State (Obeten, 2019). Observation by the researchers reveal that many communities tend not to be concerned about the welfare of their schools, and are not willing to allow schools to make use of available resources for

educational purposes. Various conflicts occurring between teachers and parents/community members have also been reported (Owan, 2018a), which have degenerated to a poor school-community relationship (Anthony et al., 2017; Ataine & Nkedishu, 2017; Ezimoha & Ngerem, 2016; Owan, 2019), hindering them from partnering effectively for educational advancement.

Our review of the literature indicates that different popular terminologies are used by other scholars that are synonymous with SCC. Such terms include school-community relationship (e.g. Green, 2017; McHenry-Sorber, 2014; Owan, 2019; Owan et al., 2021), school-community partnerships (e.g. Casto, 2016; Hands, 2010; Hertz & Barrios, 2021; Swick, 2003; Valli et al., 2016), school-community ties (Ham et al., 2020; Hillyard, 2020; Shibuya, 2020), connected schools (e.g. Esqueda et al., 2014; Neiman-Smith, 2021; De Pedro et al., 2018), and school-community interaction (so on). Studies on connected schools are predominated by those with a focus on military-connected schools (e.g. Cederbaum et al., 2014; Gilreath et al., 2014; Neiman-Smith, 2021; De Pedro et al., 2014) and those aimed at explaining the use of ICT or specifically Internet in creating community schools (e.g. Becker & Ravitz, 1998; Cook, 2018; Ma & Li, 2021; Rojas et al., 2003).

Generally, studies on SCC, notwithstanding the term used, have made efforts to develop typologies, framework, and models to aid our understanding and measurement of the concept (DePetris & Eames, 2017; Thomas et al., 2010; Valli et al., 2016; Van Acker et al., 2011). Others were aimed at identifying reasons for school-community partnerships (Casto, 2016; Dotson-Blake, 2010; Gross, 2015; Hands, 2010; Willems & Gonzalez-dehass, 2012), the role of the family in SCC (Stefanski et al., 2016), and the methods of sustaining school-community partnerships (Myende, 2013, 2019). However, only a handful of studies seems to have focused on leadership in school-community collaboration, even when it has been argued that effective leadership is needed to pilot a harmonious SCC (Auerbach, 2012; Bauch, 2001; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Valli et al., 2014). Previous studies have also paid attention to school-community partnership in the rural contexts of both developed and developing nations (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Hartman et al., 2017), but the factors that contribute to the ties between schools and host communities appear under-researched in the literature. Drawing from these gaps, we designed this study to investigate the contributions of leadership styles and public relations skills of principals to school-community collaboration. These two independent variables were considered in the current study because they are interpersonal attributes that enable school leaders to network with other individuals.

Principals' leadership styles

Leadership style is a vital element for the success of any organization. For this reason, no organization can function successfully without a sound leader. Although most scholars often treat them to mean the same thing, leadership is different from leadership styles. Leadership is a process of influencing the activities of an organized group in an effort toward target achievement (Owan & Agunwa, 2019; Owan et al., 2020). Because leadership is a process of deliberate influence, a leader's conduct toward others constitute the style of leadership adopted and is crucial (Saxena et al., 2017). Leadership styles, in the context of this study, refers to the nature of

character, behavior, attitudes that are possessed and displayed by leaders to other individuals within and outside an organization. Leaders may increase, reduce, or establish organizational restraints for their subordinates based on their behaviors and qualities, which can have a negative impact on their performance (Drzewiecka & Roczniewska, 2018). These results may be influenced by the perception of subordinates of their superiors' leadership styles. Such perceptions, according to research, regulate the link between managers' self-monitoring behavior and their subordinates' emotional and normative organizational commitment (Türetgen et al., 2017).

It was on this basis that the leadership styles of principals were considered in this study because the style adopted by principals determines the degree to which host communities would be able to relate and flow together with schools. Communities who perceive the leadership approach of their school principals as being inclusive may be willing to support such leaders in promoting set policies. On the contrary, if they perceive the styles of principals as autocratic and oppressive, then such communities may stay away from the school and her activities.

Goleman (2000) enhanced the idea of leadership styles by identifying six types such as visionary (defining the vision while allowing for exploration and creativity), affiliative (fostering harmony and interpersonal interactions), democratic (focusing on cooperation and collaboration), coaching (establishing long-term objectives based on people's abilities and shortcomings), pacesetting (concentrating on innovative techniques and performance to achieve difficult targets), and commanding (attempting to get quick cooperation) in his famous business paper. The cited author extended his ideas by emphasizing specific combinations of emotional intelligence to leadership styles (Goleman et al., 2002). More specifically, the cited author maintains that the situation determines when the most effective leaders adopt either one or more of the six leadership styles listed above. Although excellent leaders may adapt their leadership style to a certain event or setting (Vroom & Jago, 2007), many leaders may choose one style over another, jeopardizing their effectiveness (Saxena et al., 2017).

In the current study, ten leadership styles were of interest to the researchers including autocratic, bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, laissez-faire, servant-oriented, transactional, transformational, and visionary. Out of these, four styles (autocratic, coaching, democratic, and visionary) were based on the framework of Goleman and colleagues. Two leadership styles (Bureaucratic, and transformational) were based on the leadership systems developed by Hitt (1990) and tested empirically by Girodo (1998). The servant-oriented, laissez-faire and transactional styles of leadership were drawn based on a broad spectrum of studies (e.g. Kantharia, 2011; Kuri & Kaufman, 2020; Lobago & Abraham, 2016; Otto et al., 2021; Singfiel, 2018).

Although other scholars have attempted to discover the role that leadership plays in the relationship between schools and host communities from different contexts and cultures (Auerbach, 2012; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Obeten, 2019; Valli et al., 2014), little seems to be known on the leadership style(s) that can foster effective SCC or otherwise. Studies on leadership styles have linked it with other variables such as performance of secondary schools (Oyegoke, 2012) and administrative ability of leaders (Imariagbontua, 2016).

Other comparative studies were found that assessed leadership effectiveness in private and public secondary schools based on teachers' perceptions. In this regard, there seems to be an agreement among studies that a substantial gap exists in leadership effectiveness between public and private secondary schools, in favor of the latter (Akomolafe, 2012; Alimi et al., 2011). Nevertheless, only one study seems to have connected leadership styles of principals to school community relationships (Obeten (2019). According to the results of Obeten, there is a major impact of leadership styles on school-community relationships. However, one major issue with the cited research is that leadership style was treated as a holistic term. Usually, a study on leadership styles should specify the different styles of leadership being researched to give a clear picture of what role unique styles are playing. To bridge this gap, various leadership styles are considered and treated uniquely in the current study.

Principals' public relations skills

The public relations (PR) function is another area of responsibility of the school administrator. It is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization and the public, to ensure mutual coexistence (Okeke et al., 2014). This implies that PR underscore the need to establish good rapport and cordial relations between the school and the various stakeholders such as parents, government and philanthropists. This means that the school must interact with the elements within and outside the system, with a mutual relationship being established within the school and other systems in the environment. Based on these realities, it is assumed that each school should establish PR that are good enough and favorable to the school.

To create and administer a stable school environment, Okoh and Abraham (2019) explain how a principal should collaborate with the larger society. The school principal also has to consider the operation of the community; he should aim to meet or recognize community leaders and educational associates. The school administrators should define existing channels that can efficiently connect to stakeholders. The school manager should know if indigenes or community members want students to remain in the community after middle school. The power broker and decision-maker should be established, including how choices are taken in society. Previous studies have linked the public relations skills of school principals to their administrative effectiveness (e.g. Madukwe et al., 2019; Muraina, 2014; Otegbulu, 2016). The majority of these studies tend to reveal that the PR skills of principals are very important for effective service delivery. However, it was not captured in the cited studies the aspects of managerial effectiveness that PR skills connect well with. It can be argued that not all aspects of school administration require PR skills (e.g. decision making, procurement of school material resources and so on) whereas other aspects are very sensitive to PR skills (such as school-community relations, human relations, supervision and so on).

As a result of this gap, other more specific studies were conducted to determine the correlation between the PR skills of principals and school-community ties (Amadi, 2013; Obeten, 2019; Toledano & Maplesden, 2016). Other researchers have linked school-community partnership and the performance of school systems at the secondary level (Okunola et al., 2011; Owan, 2019). More specifically, it was found by Okunola and his team that there is a strong link between school administrators' public relations abilities

and both their ability to run their schools and build strong relationships with the people in their communities. The research of Owan on the other hand found that parent-teacher partnership, school-community resource use, school-community communication and school-community cooperation are significantly linked to the performance of secondary school systems, respectively. The cited studies all discovered that principals' PR expertise is an important predictor of the relationship between schools and the wider community. The major trend with the previous studies is their narrow focus on the views of school principals (e.g. Amadi and Obeten) or community personnel (Toledano and colleagues). It is pertinent that a study of this magnitude (involving different stakeholders) draws information from all channels concerned to eliminate bias that otherwise might arise from one group being studied at a time.

The present study

The present study is informed by the rationale to assess the extent to which the leadership styles adopted by principals, as well as their public relation skills, connect to the collaboration between schools and host communities. This study adopts an inclusive approach by eliciting information from stakeholders such as principals, vice-principals, staff, students and wider community members. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this seems to be the first study to analyze the effects of ten leadership styles on school-community collaboration. These include the autocratic, bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, laissez-faire, servant-oriented, strategic, transactional, transformational and visionary leadership styles. These ten styles were specifically selected because they seem to be the most practised and widely discussed in the literature. The ten leadership styles were drawn from different frameworks and previous studies.

Methods

Research design

This study was designed quantitatively with a focus on the descriptive survey research design. Survey as a research technique was chosen as the most appropriate option since the research focused on participants, the vital information of respondents and their values, views and behaviors to achieve an accurate analysis. Following this design, the following research questions guided the study: (1) To what extent are principals adopting different leadership styles? (2) What is the level of principals' public relations in secondary schools? (3) To what extent are schools and host communities collaborating? (4) To what extent does the level of school-community collaboration depend on the extent of principals' adoption of different leadership styles?

Research participants

The population of this study consisted of secondary school administrators (principals and vice-principals), staff (teaching and non-teaching), students and members of the wider community (Community Chiefs and PTA leaders from host communities). The study used the census approach in studying the perception of all the 667 secondary

school administrators (271 principals and 396 vice principals). The census method was used because it provides full statistics on the population being studied. This approach was also used since the size of the group is comparatively small and can be easily managed by the researchers. The stratified random sampling technique was however employed by the researchers in selecting a total number of 813 staff (542 teaching and 271 non-teaching), 542 senior school prefect (271 males and 271 females) and 516 representatives of the wider community (271 PTA leaders from host communities, 245 community chiefs).

Instrumentation

Four sets of questionnaires were created by the researchers as instruments to gather data from the respondents. These include the "Principal Leadership, Public Relations and School-Community Collaboration Questionnaire (PLPRSCCQ)", "Staff Perception of Principals' Leadership and Public Relations Questionnaire (SPPLPRQ)", "Senior Students' Perception of Principals' Leadership and Public Relations Questionnaire (SSPLPRQ)" and "Community Members Perception of School-Community Collaboration Questionnaire (CMPSCCQ)". The PLPRSCCQ was divided into three major sections. Section A was structured to gather personal data from principals, such as sex, age, educational background and years of work experience. Section B contained a checklist of various leadership styles for principals to indicate the frequency at which they adopted them. Response options in section B range from never (0 point), rarely (1 point), sometimes (2 points), often (3 points) to always (4 points). Section C, on the other hand, comprised 12 items (six measuring principals' PR skills; the other six measuring school-community relationship) placed on a four points Likert Scale. Response options rangedfrom Strongly Agree (4 points) to Strongly disagree (1 point) for positively worded items, and in reverse order for negatively worded items.

The SPPLPRQ and SSPLPRQ were designed with two sections respectively. Section A of both instruments contained a checklist of 10 leadership styles for both staff and students to indicate the ones they perceive that their principals are adopting. For each leadership style, a short description was provided to enable them to respond accordingly. Section B of both instruments comprised six items measuring both staff and students' perception of principals' PR skills respectively. All the items in section B were on a four-point Likert Scale with response options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The fourth instrument (CMPSCCQ) was designed with six items organized on a four-point Likert scale for community leaders to indicate their perception of the collaborations between schools and host communities.

The tools obtained validities of face and content with the aid of five experts (two psychometric experts and three experts in educational management) at the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. These experts assured that the content and provisions were reasonably straightforward to prevent unnecessary data and misunderstanding. Significant elements were changed or withdrawn based on their recommendations. The instruments were subjected to reliability assessments of internal consistency using the Cronbach alpha procedure. An overall coefficient of .84, .76, .79 and .81 respectively for the four instruments, showed that the tools were effective in obtaining relevant data for the study.

Procedure for data collection and analysis

After requesting their permission to participate in the study willingly, copies of the survey questions were distributed by the researchers to respondents. In the first stage, a total of 583 school leaders (87.4 per cent), participated in the study and provided information about their leadership styles, public relations, and school community collaboration through self-rating. However, through the suggestion of the reviewers, the second phase of data collection took place where other stakeholders such as staff, students and representatives of the wider community also offered their views on the three variables (principals' leadership styles, public relations and SCC). The aim was to obtain objective information by comparing the views of other stakeholders with that of principals. Consequently, 641 staff (78.8 per cent), 542 senior students (100 per cent) and 379 representatives from the wider community (73.4 per cent) participated in the second stage. In both stages, the exercise and nature of presenting objective answers to the items were told to all respondents. They were also informed to remain honest with their replies to the items, as the acquired data will be handled confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes. All copies of the administered questionnaires were completed and collected for analysis at the end of the exercise. The data were evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics. In an attempt to address research questions, descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, average and standard deviation were used. Inferential statistics such as the Independence Chi-square, one-way analysis of variance, independent t-test and simple linear regression analyses were used to test the null hypotheses at the .05 significance level.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the perception of principals, staff and students on the extent of principals' adoption of different leadership styles in secondary school. The results of the descriptive analysis of our study indicate, on a general note, that principals adopted leadership styles to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.55, SD = 0.51). Specifically, principals reported that they adopted the bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, servant-oriented and visionary leadership styles to a high extent. Leadership styles such as autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational were adopted to a low extent, while the strategic leadership style was adopted to an average extent. . Based on principals' self-reports, the most adopted technique is the democratic style while the least adopted technique is the autocratic approach as shown in Table 1.

Based on the perception of staff, it was revealed that secondary school principals adopted various leadership styles generally to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.56, SD = 0.52). Specifically, staff perceived that principals adopted to a high extent, leadership styles such as bureaucratic ($\bar{X}$ = 2.74, SD = 1.62), coaching ($\bar{X}$ = 2.54, SD = 1.70), democratic ($\bar{X}$ = 3.25, SD = 1.61), servant-oriented ($\bar{X}$ = 2.98, SD = 1.69), strategic ($\bar{X}$ = 2.50, SD = 1.72) and visionary ($\bar{X}$ = 2.63 SD = 1.74). However, based on the report from staff, secondary school principals adopted to a low extent, leadership styles such as autocratic ($\bar{X}$ = 1.93, SD = 1.63), laissez-faire ($\bar{X}$ = 2.44, SD = 1.69), transactional

Table 1. Descriptive statistics showing the extent of principals' adoption of different leadership styles.

Leadership styles	Item Description	Principals $\bar{X} \pm SD$	Staff $\bar{X} \pm SD$	Students $\bar{X} \pm SD$
Total	*Overall score for all the leadership styles assessed*	*2.55 ± 0.51*	*2.56 ± 0.52*	*2.53 ± 0.50*
Autocratic	Deciding things often individually or with a small, trustworthy team and expecting workers to do just as they are instructed.	1.92 ± 1.64	1.93 ± 1.63	1.89 ± 1.65
Bureaucratic	Typically obtain input from subordinates, but ignores inputs of employees if it clashes with corporate policies or previous procedures.	2.74 ± 1.64	2.74 ± 1.62	2.73 ± 1.64
Coaching	Focusing on understanding and cultivating each member's strengths in the organization and on solutions that will help them to get along with each other.	2.55 ± 1.70	2.54 ± 1.70	2.57 ± 1.72
Democratic	Often asking Staff for suggestions and feedback before making crucial decisions in the school.	3.23 ± 1.63	3.25 ± 1.61	3.20 ± 1.64
Laissez-faire	Very good at assigning several activities for staff and do not have time to provide any form of guidance to them.	2.42 ± 1.68	2.44 ± 1.69	2.40 ± 1.67
Servant-oriented	Adopting a "People-First" approach that can build employee morale and help people get back to work.	2.97 ± 1.68	2.98 ± 1.69	2.97 ± 1.68
Strategic	Embracing the obligation of employers while maintaining existing working standards for everyone involved.	2.50 ± 1.73	2.50 ± 1.72	2.50 ± 1.72
Transactional	Setting high expectations for workers, rewarding those who can achieve these goals (using money and material things) and meting discipline for failure	2.11 ± 1.65	2.13 ± 1.64	2.10 ± 1.66
Transformational	Helping team members to set intelligent targets and frequently offering suggestions on difficult development initiatives	2.45 ± 1.73	2.46 ± 1.73	2.44 ± 1.73
Visionary	Advancing and contributing to transition cycles by encouraging staff and building trust in fresh ideas	2.60 ± 1.74	2.63 ± 1.74	2.52 ± 1.72

Criterion mean = 2.5 (average); Values above 2.5 = High extent; values below 2.5 = low extent.

($\bar{X}$ = 2.13, SD = 1.64) and transformational ($\bar{X}$ = 2.46, SD = 1.73). From the views of staff, the most adopted leadership style by principals is the democratic leadership style, while autocratic is the least adopted.

Based on the perception of students, it was revealed that principals adopted the ten leadership styles generally to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.53, SD = 0.50). It was also reported by students that the following leadership styles were adopted by school principals to a high extent – bureaucratic ($\bar{X}$ = 2.73, SD = 1.64), coaching ($\bar{X}$ = 2.57, SD = 1.72), democratic ($\bar{X}$ = 3.20, SD = 1.64), servant-oriented ($\bar{X}$ = 2.97, SD = 1.68) and the visionary ($\bar{X}$ = 2.52, SD = 1.73). The strategic leadership style was adopted to an average extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.50, SD = 1.72) by principals, based on the perceptions of secondary school students. However, according to students' perception, principals adopted to a low extent leadership styles such as autocratic ($\bar{X}$ = 1.89, SD = 1.65), Laissez-faire ($\bar{X}$ = 2.40, SD = 1.67), transactional ($\bar{X}$ = 2.10, SD = 1.66) and transformational ($\bar{X}$ = 2.44, SD = 1.73). Thus, based on the views of students, the most adopted style of leadership by principals is the democratic style while the least adopted is the autocratic style.

The inferential statistical analysis used in testing the null hypothesis at the .05 alpha level, was the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of our analyses revealed, on a general note, that there is no significant difference in the perception of principals, staff and students in the extent to which leadership styles are adopted by principals in secondary schools (F [2, 1763] = 0.407, p = 0.666 > .05). Specifically, the results of the analyses revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of

principals, staff and students regarding principals adoption of the autocratic (F [2, 1763] = 0.088, p = .916 > .05), bureaucratic (F [2, 1763] = 0.005, p = .995 > .05), coaching (F [2, 1763] = 0.274, p = .094 > .910), democratic (F [2, 1763] = 0.148, p = .862 > .05), laissez-faire (F [2, 1763] = 0.056, p = .946 > .05), servant-oriented (F [2, 1763] = 0.051, p = .982 > .05), strategic (F [2, 1763] = 0.002, p = .998 > .05), transactional (F [2, 1763] = 0.55, p = .947 > .05), transformational (F [2, 1763] = 0.008, p = .992 > .05) and the visionary (F [2, 1763] = 0.632, p = .532 > .05) leadership styles in secondary schools. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was retained and its corresponding alternative hypothesis discarded.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, staff and students on the extent of principals public relations in secondary schools. The descriptive analysis of the study revealed that the level of principals' public relations skills is low ($\bar{X}$ = 2.32, SD = 0.44) according to principals' self-report. Specifically, principals indicated that they identified avenues through which school decisions can be transmitted to host community members without misinterpretations to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.28, SD = 1.09). Principals revealed that they actively involved qualified staff in making decisions and formulating policies for the school to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.49, SD = 1.04). Principals reported that they linked up with critical stakeholders to solicit support for the effective management of schools to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.13, SD = 1.03). Principals reported that they attended invited community events such as festivals to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.19, SD = 1.08). Principals indicated that they provided mechanisms for ensuring a shared school leadership amongst parents' teachers and community leaders to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 1.97, SD = 1.00). However, the result also discloses that principals indicated that they made use of the PTA activities to maintain close contact with parents and community members to a high level. Apart from using the PTA, the result suggests that principals did not demonstrate considerably, a high degree of effective PR skills going by their reports.

From the view of staff, it was reported that the public relations skill of secondary school principals is generally low ($\bar{X}$ = 2.31, SD = 0.43). Specifically, staff reported that principals identified avenues through which school decisions can be transmitted to host community members without misinterpretations to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.27, SD = 1.07); principals' ensured that the Parents Teachers Association in secondary schools was active to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.81, SD = 1.11); principals of schools actively involved qualified staff in formulating policies for the school to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.47, SD = 1.06); there was a low extent of principals' belief that schools can operate without the synergy of people who have issues with them ($\bar{X}$ = 2.12, SD = 1.03); principal rarely attended community events such as festivals even when they are invited to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.18, SD = 1.09); principals created mechanisms for stakeholders of the school to make contributions toward advancement to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 1.98, SD = 1.00). Thus, going by the perceptions of staff, principals only used the PTA to a high extent as a public relations mechanism but highly believe that schools cannot operate without the synergy of people who have issues with them.

Based on the perception of students, it was discovered that the public relations skill of secondary school principals is generally low ($\bar{X}$ = 2.32, SD = 0.44). It was specifically revealed by students that principals usually identified avenues through which school decisions can be transmitted to host community members without misinterpretations to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.30, SD = 1.09); principals maintain stable school-community links through the PTA to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.90, SD = 1.09); principals actively involved qualified staff in formulating policies for the school to a high extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.51, SD = 1.09); there is a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.10, SD = 1.02) of principals' belief that the school can operate without the synergy of people who have issues with them; there is a low extent of principals attendance at community events such as festivals even when they are invited ($\bar{X}$ = 2.19, SD = 1.08); there is a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 1.96, SD = 1.00) of principals creation of mechanisms for stakeholders to make contributions toward advancing the school.

The inferential analysis of our study using the one-way ANOVA (See, Table 2) shows that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of principals, staff and students on the extent of principals public relations. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis was retained while the alternative hypothesis was discarded.

Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the perception of principals and members of the wider community on the extent of school-community collaboration in secondary schools. Based on the perception of principals, the results of our descriptive analysis using mean and standard deviation showed that the extent to which schools and host communities are collaborating is low ($\bar{X}$ = 2.25, SD = 0.44). The low extent of school-community collaboration was due to low levels in specific areas such as host communities' active participation in activities aimed at the development of schools ($\bar{X}$ = 2.46, SD = 1.16), a strong synergy between principals and leaders of host communities ($\bar{X}$ = 2.08, SD = 1.03) and host community members making use of schools' properties/resources ($\bar{X}$ = 2.41, SD = 1.10). A low extent of SCC was also recorded for host communities offering various forms of support to schools such as donation of land, buildings, finances and material resources ($\bar{X}$ = 2.48, SD = 1.14). The result also showed that members of the host community are fond of damaging/stealing properties belonging to the school to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 1.94, SD = 1.05). However, there is a strong collaboration/partnership between the school and the host community in the planning/execution of viable programmes/projects in the school to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.11, SD = 1.13).

Table 2. One-way analysis of the result of the mean difference of principals, staff and students regarding their perception of principals' public relations.

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	SE	95% CI (Lower, Upper)	
Principals	583	2.32	0.44	0.02	(2.28, 2.35)	
Staff	641	2.31	0.43	0.02	(2.28, 2.34)	
Students	542	2.32	0.44	0.02	(2.29 2.36)	
Total	1766	2.31	0.44	0.01	(2.29, 2.34)	
Source		**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups		.052	2	.026	.138	.871
Within Groups		334.266	1763	.190		
Total		334.319	1765			

Based on the perception of members of the wider community, it was found that there is a low extent of school-community collaboration generally ($\bar{X}$ = 2.24, SD = 0.45). Specifically, members of the wider community indicated that host communities are a hindrance to the development of schools to a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.35, SD = 1.15); there is a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.00, SD = 0.95) of a strong synergy between principals and leaders of host communities; there is a low extent ($\bar{X}$ = 2.38, SD = 1.08) of host community members' access to the properties of schools; the extent to which the wider community offers various forms of support to the school such as donation of land, buildings, finances and material resources is high ($\bar{X}$ = 2.50, SD = 1.15); the extent to which members of host communities are fond of damaging/stealing properties belonging to the school is low ($\bar{X}$ = 1.94, SD = 1.07); the extent to which there are strong collaborations/partnerships between schools and their host communities in the execution of viable programmes/projects in schools is low.

An inferential statistical test was performed using the independent t-test to verify the empirical status of the hypothesis earlier formulated at the .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis presented in Table 3 revealed that although community members held higher positive perceptions than principals on the extent of SCC, the difference was not statistically significant at the .05 alpha level and 960 degrees of freedom. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that principals and members of the wider community do not differ significantly in their perceptions of SCC.

Hypothesis 4

The third null hypothesis states that there is no significant association between principals' adopted leadership styles and school-community collaboration. A three-by-three level crosstab of leadership styles levels (high, average and low) versus school community collaboration levels (high, average and low) was created. The analysis contained in Table 4 indicates that 50% of principals demonstrated a high extent of good leadership qualities and out of this, 29.3% had high school community collaboration (SCC), 7.5% had average school-community collaboration and 13.4% had low school-community collaboration. The result also indicates that 7.7% adopted average level of leadership styles; out of this, 5.5% collaborated highly with host communities, 0.9 recorded average school-community collaboration, and 1.4% had low rates of school-community.

Furthermore, it was discovered that 42% of principals adopted low levels of leadership styles accounting for 28.8%, 4.1% and 9.1% of high, average and low extents of school community relationship collaboration accordingly. Generally, it was discovered that

Table 3. Independent t-test results summary showing the difference in perceptions of principals and members of the wider community regarding the extent of SCC.

Dependent variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	P
Perceptions of SCC	Principals	583	2.25	0.44	0.02	0.26	.79
	Community members	379	2.24	0.45	0.02		

d*f* = 960; mean difference = 0.01; 95% CI of mean difference (−0.05, 0.07)

Table 4. Association of principals' leadership styles versus school-community collaboration.

		School-Community Collaboration level			
Leadership styles Level		High (%)	Average (%)	Low (%)	Total (%)
Overall leadership (Total)	High (%)	171 (29.3)	44 (7.5)	78(13.4)	293 (50.3)
	Average (%)	32 (5.5)	5(0.9)	8(1.4)	45(7.7)
	Low (%)	168 (28.8)	24(4.1)	53(9.1)	245(42.0)
	Total	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Autocratic	High (%)	86 (14.8)	11 (1.9)	27 (4.6)	124 (21.3)
	Average (%)	48 (8.2)	10 (1.7)	19 (3.3)	77 (13.2)
	Low (%)	237 (40.7)	52 (8.9)	93 (16.0)	382 (65.5)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Bureaucratic	High (%)	129 (22.1)	24 (4.1)	47 (8.1)	200 (34.3)
	Average (%)	98 (16.8)	15 (2.6)	38 (6.5)	151 (25.9)
	Low (%)	144 (24.7)	34 (5.8)	54 (9.3)	232 (39.8)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Coaching	High (%)	135 (23.2)	28 (4.8)	52 (8.9)	215 (36.9)
	Average (%)	52 (8.9)	13 (2.2)	17 (2.9)	82 (14.1)
	Low (%)	184 (31.6)	32 (5.5)	70 (12.0)	286 (49.1)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Democratic	High (%)	208 (35.7)	47 (8.1)	80 (13.7)	335 (57.5)
	Average (%)	55 (9.4)	6 (1.0)	21 (3.6)	82 (14.1)
	Low (%)	108 (18.5)	20 (3.4)	38 (6.5)	166 (28.5)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Laissez-faire	High (%)	103 (17.7)	29 (5.0)	44 (7.5)	176 (30.2)
	Average (%)	69 (11.8)	13 (2.2)	26 (4.5)	108 (18.5)
	Low (%)	199 (34.1)	31 (5.3)	69 (11.8)	299 (51.3)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Servant-oriented	High (%)	175 (30.0)	35 (6.0)	73 (12.5)	283 (48.5)
	Average (%)	53 (9.1)	8 (1.4)	18 (3.1)	79 (13.6)
	Low (%)	143 (24.5)	30 (5.1)	48 (8.2)	221 (37.9)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Strategic	High (%)	120 (20.6)	28 (4.8)	50 (8.6)	198 (34.0)
	Average (%)	63 (10.8)	8 (1.4)	28 (4.8)	99 (17.0)
	Low (%)	188 (32.2)	37 (6.3)	61 (10.5)	286 (49.1)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Transactional	High (%)	95 (16.3)	19 (3.3)	31 (5.3)	145 (24.9)
	Average (%)	43 (7.4)	7 (1.2)	17 (2.9)	67 (11.5)
	Low (%)	233 (40.0)	47 (8.1)	91 (15.6)	371 (63.6)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Transformational	High (%)	114 (19.6)	29 (5.0)	45 (7.7)	188 (32.2)
	Average (%)	61 (10.5)	11 (1.9)	21 (3.6)	93 (16.0)
	Low (%)	196 (33.6)	33 (5.7)	73 (12.5)	302 (51.8)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)
Visionary	High (%)	135 (23.2)	20 (3.4)	51 (8.7)	206 (35.3)
	Average (%)	54 (9.3)	15 (2.6)	28 (4.8)	97 (16.6)
	Low (%)	182 (31.2)	38 (6.5)	60 (10.3)	280 (48.0)
	Total (%)	371 (63.6)	73 (12.5)	139 (23.8)	583 (100.0)

63.6%, 12.5% and 23.8% of respondents had high, average and low levels of school-community collaboration respectively, regardless of their levels of leadership styles. In conclusion, it has been revealed generally that the rate of school-community collaboration does not depend on the level of principals' leadership styles. This is because a high rate of principals' leadership styles led to high and low rates of school-community relationships. Whether the result is statistically significant or otherwise, is yet to be seen. At this point, we examine the individual leadership styles to see the situation.

The Chi-Square test of independence associated with the 3 × 3 crosstab in Table 4 was used to test the hypothesis at 4 degrees of freedom for the general and specific leadership styles adopted. The result of the hypothesis test summarized

in Table 5 shows that SCC is not significantly associated with principals' leadership styles generally, and specifically in terms of autocratic, bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, laissez-faire, servant-oriented, strategic, transactional, transformational and visionary styles. This is because all the p-values in Table 5 are greater than the .05 level of significance at 4 degrees of freedom. Based on this evidence, the alternate hypothesis was discarded while the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that there is no significant association between principals' adopted leadership styles and school-community collaboration.

Hypothesis 5

This hypothesis states that there is no significant effect of principals' public relations skills on school-community collaboration. This hypothesis was tested at the .05 alpha level using the simple linear regression analysis. The result of the analysis presented in Table 6 revealed that there is a weak positive correlation between principals' PR skills and school-community collaboration. The predictor variable accounted for 8.1% of the total variance in the response variable leaving the remaining 91.9% to be possibly explained by other variables extraneous to the model. The analysis of variance result of the regression estimates reveals that there is a significant effect of the predictor variable on the response variable, $F(1, 581) = 52.058$, $p < .05$. With this result, the null hypothesis was discarded while the alternate hypothesis was retained. This means that there is a significant effect of principals' PR skills on school-community collaboration.

Discussion

The study revealed a high extent of the adoption of leadership styles by principals generally and specifically in terms of bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, servant-oriented and visionary leadership styles. This implies that many school leaders had respect for school policies, guided their employees, involved stakeholders in making

Table 5. Chi-Square result summary showing the association between principals' leadership styles and school-community collaboration.

Association	χ^2	D*f*	*p*
Overall leadership styles * SCC	7.741	4	.102
Autocratic * SCC	2.792	4	.593
Bureaucratic * SCC	1.997	4	.736
Coaching * SCC	1.614	4	.806
Democratic * SCC	2.914	4	.572
Laissez-faire * SCC	4.627	4	.328
Servant-oriented * SCC	1.802	4	.772
Strategic * SCC	4.239	4	.375
Transactional * SCC	.908	4	.923
Transformational * SCC	2.389	4	.665
Visionary * SCC	5.168[a]	4	.271

Table 6. Simple linear regression model showing the effect of principals' public relations skills on school-community collaboration.

R	.287				
R^2	.082				
Adjusted R^2	.081				
SE	2.52224				
Model	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	331.181	1	331.181	52.058	.000[b]
Residual	3696.157	581	6.362		
Total	4027.338	582			

B = .289; β = .287; t = 7.215; p < .05

crucial decisions, operated as servants to both super- or sub-ordinates and maintained a clear vision of their expected roles. This finding may be attributed to the quality of training and retraining such principals received, which may have provided them with adequate knowledge on leadership styles for effective educational management (Hutton, 2013; Mathibe, 2007). The finding of Akomolafe (2012) also revealed that many principals are highly skilled in their administrative capacity. Such skills may have enabled them to adopt leadership styles for effective school administration.

However, this finding also showed that such leadership styles as autocratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational were adopted to a low extent, while the strategic leadership style was adopted to an average extent. The low extent of the adoption of the autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles may be attributed to many principals' perception that these are oppressive and bad leadership styles (Price, 2008). Although, there is no one best-for-all-situation style based on proponents of the contingent leadership theory (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007). The low extent of the adoption of the transactional and transformational styles of leadership styles may be hinged on principals' lack of resources or unwillingness to utilize available resources to motivate active subordinates/lead the change process. The average adoption of the strategic leadership style may be due to its demand for collective effort, making it related to the democratic style of leadership.

The study discovered that the level to which principals possess PR skills is below the expected mean level. This finding is attributed to principals low level in the identification of avenues through which school decisions can be transmitted to host community members without misinterpretations; principals' inactive involvement of qualified staff in making decisions and formulating policies for the school; poor linking with critical stakeholders to solicit support for the effective management of schools; principals' negligent attitudes toward attending community events such as festivals for which they were invited; poor provisions of mechanisms for ensuring a shared school leadership amongst parents' teachers and community leaders. The utilization of PTA activities to maintain close contact with parents and community members (which was considerably high among principals), is not an adequate means of strengthening PR.

These poor practices do not align with the principles outlined by Okoh and Abraham (2019) explaining how a principal should collaborate with the larger society. In line with this finding, the results of Alimi et al. (2011) found substantial gaps between the understanding of principals' leadership effectiveness between public and private secondary

schools, with public secondary school administrators having a terrible degree of leadership effectiveness in teaching and community relations skills. This study corroborates the results of Otegbulu (2016) which listed poor PR of many school leaders as one of the key problems affecting the effective management of schools.

This finding has implications on the Humans Relations Theory which holds in its tenets that human beings are not primarily involved in financial gains, they also seek respect and appreciation; personnel are humans and should be viewed as human beings, not as machines; an organization operates not just through formal relationships but also by informal relationships; workers require a high degree of work stability and workplace satisfaction; employees want managers to communicate well; members do not want disputes and disagreements in any organization; employees desire independence and would not want tight supervision; workers like to take part in decision-making, especially in certain matters involving their interests (Mayo, 1933). If we consider community members as partners who should collaborate with school leaders for effective management, then the school managers should try to understand the feelings, emotions and yearnings of their partners; promote informal interpersonal relationships along with structured relationships; provide partners with the needed support and respect; interact effectively without complicated feelings of ego and superiority; try to stop disagreements and misunderstandings among partners; avoid tight monitoring and conflict when communities are performing partnership roles, especially those involving finances for improved productivity and persistence.

It was established that there is a low extent of school-community collaboration which was due to lack of communities' active participation in activities aimed at the development of schools and the absence of a strong synergy between principals and leaders of host communities. Furthermore, this finding was also attributed to the deprivation of community members from making use of schools' properties/resources; lack of provision of various forms of support to schools such as donation of land, buildings, finances and material resources by host communities; damages and stealing of school properties/resources by members of host communities, and a poor collaboration/partnership between schools and host communities in the planning/execution of viable programmes/projects.

This finding agrees with the observation/findings of previous studies (Anthony et al., 2017; Ataine & Nkedishu, 2017; Ezimoha & Ngerem, 2016; Obeten, 2019; Owan, 2019) which all documented respectively, that there is a poor school-community relationship/partnership due to several conflicts occurring between schools and host communities. The implication of this finding is multifaceted as poor school collaboration can affect the quantity/quality of infrastructure, enrollment, quality of instructors, the safety of school material resources and the overall effectiveness of schools. Poor school community collaboration could also stir up conflict and hinder the socio-economic development of host communities.

This study found that the extent to which principals adopted leadership styles generally, does not affect significantly the extent of school-community collaboration. In specific terms, the extent of adoption of autocratic, bureaucratic, coaching, democratic, laissez-faire, servant-oriented, strategic, transactional, transformational has no significant association with the extent of school-community collaboration. This finding supports the study of Alimi et al. (2011) which found a substantial gap between the

understanding of teachers' leadership effectiveness between public and private secondary schools, with public secondary school administrators having a terrible degree of leadership effectiveness in teaching and community relations skills. The result, however, contradicts the results of Akomolafe (2012) that discovered on the contrary that public school administrators are more skilled in their administrative methods to increase the degree of education and community interaction.

This finding also disconnects from the results of Obeten (2019) which also showed that there is a major impact of principals' communication skills and leadership styles on the school-community relationship. The result of the present study appeared this way because, in many respect, high adoption of leadership styles led to a mix of different output levels (high, average or low) in the extent of school-community collaboration. The reason for this finding may also be due to the poor PR skills possessed by many principals, as revealed by an earlier finding in this study. It can be argued that every leadership style has its strengths and weakness. If used properly, every leadership style has the potential to establish a relationship with people. However, adopting a high degree of effective leadership styles without the right attitude to create/manage interpersonal relationships could lead to poor synergy with host communities.

This study uncovered also that there is a significant positive effect of principals' PR and school-community collaboration. This implies that a high level of principals' PR skills will lead to a high rate of school-community collaboration and vice versa. This finding corroborates the results of Obeten (2019) that principals' handling of schools' funds and PR expertise are important predictors of the relationship between schools and communities. Also, the results of Muraina (2014) revealed that the relationship between management skills (supervision, communication and PR) and management efficiency was statistically significant. This finding is unsurprising because PR skills possessed by institutional leaders draws them close to stakeholders such as community members, parents, the government etc. A positive relationship established between the school and stakeholders affects the quality of institutional effectiveness (Madukwe et al., 2019; Owan, 2019). This implies that the PR skills can strengthen school-community collaboration, promote institutional effectiveness and foster the growth and development of communities.

Limitations of the study

This study faces a few drawbacks, such as the scale and nature of the limited sample. This research was reduced to a state to provide proof of the situation in Nigeria which gives rise to potential cross-country research concentrated on a large-scale evaluation. In addition, the use of the questionnaire as a device for data collection was very reasonable and relatively acceptable, but using a mixed-method approach would have further enriched the study's results. There are some details respondents might have qualitatively given if an interview was performed on a specified few. It is, therefore, recommended that a mixed approach be used for future-based studies on related areas. Furthermore, it was beyond the scope of this study to compare the situations in urban and rural, large and small schools, as well as the cultural interference on the partnerships between schools and host communities. Therefore, it is recommended that these out-of-scope areas be considered in future studies.

Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of this research, it was concluded that the styles of leadership adopted by principals do not play an important role in deciding the degree to which schools' function with their host communities. For a successful school-community partnership, several variables must be taken into consideration, but the leadership styles of principals are not a major factor of these unspecified variables. Principal leadership styles just describe the approach they plan to use to achieve tasks (usually internal to an organization) for achieving goals, it is shown to be an ineffectual mechanism in creating a link between schools and host communities. This is because there is no best or worst leadership style, each has strengths and limitations. On the other hand, a major measure of school-community collaboration is the PR abilities of principals. This means that 8.2 per cent of the time, principals who have good/bad PR abilities are most likely to sustain good/bad school-community cooperation. This study thus suggests that education managers can not improve their connections with host communities by modifying their leadership styles, rather they should concentrate on enhancing their PR skills. The adoption by principals of desirable PR skills would encourage them to develop school-community relations for a two-sided beneficial purpose. It is proposed, based on this inference, that:

(i) any style or a mixture of leadership styles depending on the nature of subordinates and goals they seek to accomplish can be followed by principals;
(ii) principals are often encouraged to consider different types of leadership and be versatile enough to be contingent in their implementation (i.e. modifying types depending on situations);
(iii) principals of secondary schools should concentrate on developing or enhancing their PR skills for successful cooperation with the host community.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data availability statement

The data associated with this research are available on request from the corresponding author [V. J. O].

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