

Managing Teachers' Work Environment and Cell Phone Related Distractions for Increased Performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria

***Sunday T. Afangideh**

***Abstract:** The study examined the management of teachers' work environment and cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were answered and tested in the study, respectively. The design for the study was the analytic descriptive survey, with the population as all the 258 public secondary schools in the state. These schools have a corresponding number of 258 principals, who acted as participants in the study, from which 155, representing 60% were selected as sampling, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Respondents of the study responded to a fourteen (14) item instrument titled 'Teachers' Work Environment and Cell Phone Related Distractions Management for Increased Performance Scale (TWECPDMIPS)' designed by the researchers in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.81, determined using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study show that the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions include turning off alert from all personal technologies to investing in noise absorbing materials and that in managing cell phone related distractions, administrators should develop a policy on the use of cell phones to providing technology breaks for teachers in schools. The study also found no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance and no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals from rural and urban schools on the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State. It was therefore concluded that deliberate management of teachers work environment and cell phone related distractions has positive implications for increasing*

* Sunday.afangideh@uniport.edu.ng & Gospel G. Kpee gospel.kpee@uniport.edu.ng Department of Educational Management Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

teacher performance in secondary schools in Rivers State. It was recommended that school administrators should continue to use appropriate management strategies in managing teachers work environment and cell phone related distractions in order to increase their performance.

Keywords: Management, Work Environment, Cell Phone, Distractions and Increased Performance

1. Introduction

At different epochs of time, the teacher as a stakeholder in the teaching and learning processes has assumed many roles. These roles differ from scholar to scholar and from environment to environment or what may be seen as locational effect. In the African setting, the teacher has at various times been seen as a technician, who measures and prescribes the dosage of education that should be given to each student and precisely the amount of experience and instruction needed to promote maximum learning. Some people also consider the teacher to be a model, whom students should emulate. In some other instances, the teacher is considered to be a dispenser of knowledge, based on the assumption that the teacher has all the knowledge and wisdom and that the function of the teacher is to pour knowledge into the students head.

At other times, the teacher is perceived to be a craftsman, as teaching is considered as a process like the porter modeling clay in which the potter shapes the inert lump into a beautiful and edifying ceramic piece of art, since the teacher is considered to be the single person, who knows the shape and purpose each student should acquire, as the student remains passive and ready to yield to the teachers determination, whereas in some literature, the teacher is considered as a cultivator, who works like a gardener, by helping the plants to grow in the way in which it is predetermined, by cultivating, watering and tendering the plants to grow, to bear fruits and finally, the teacher is considered as a facilitator of knowledge as he should take a positive view toward the student, permitting their own interest, attitudes, aptitudes and experiences to influence the kind of learning that will take place. These descriptions of the teacher fit into the presentations in Okon and Anderson (1982) and Farrant (1990).

An analysis on the above descriptions of the teacher presents some striking connotations assessments. These include that apart from the facilitation of knowledge, issues and descriptions relating to the teacher as a technician, model, dispenser of knowledge, craftsman and cultivator represent traditional considerations on the role of the teacher.

Today, the teacher is considered as omnibus personified, who must be involved in many aspects of school life, to enhance the teaching and learning processes, in the interest of the students, the teacher, the school and the society in general, and as dictated by the forces of globalization, as driven by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These new thoughts about the teacher must have informed the path-breaking book by a Nigerian Educational Management scholar and researcher, Dr. Usen Godwin Ikpe, titled 'The Demands of the Modern Teacher'. In the book, Ikpe (2005) lists the decision to teach, teaching as a profession, code of ethics and in some aspects of the book, the scholar takes time to present information on globalization and education, Information Technology, the modern teacher and contemporary issues in education and development, values education and the teacher and the law.

Moving a little further, it is pertinent to note that the teacher has to grapple with an ever changing school environments, their different orientation and composition. The teacher has to grapple with the presence of SMART children in his class, who he must ensure that they learn effectively, apart from the fact that he has to discharge his teaching and administrative duties, in accordance with the demands of his supervisory authority and even go beyond to ensure increased general performance of his duties.

Specifically, in the work environment, teachers have a diversity of co-workers, who come from different backgrounds, have different experiences, needs and dispositions and put up different behaviours that may present distractions in the course of discharging their functions. The work place has also internet facilities apart from being located in noisy areas that are capable of presenting distractions.

Another point to note is that, in this era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), communication is a very vital variable, hence, the global village description of the international society, the teacher moves with a cell

phone. This cell phone serves his communication needs in making and receiving calls, sending and receiving text messages, surfing the internet, sending and receiving emails, tweets, chatting on Facebook and on Whatsapp, among numerous others.

The thesis of this academic excursion is that the work environments of teachers based on their composition and location and the presence of the cell phone with him or her, results in distractions from their functions that are capable of reducing their performances. According to Dictionary.com (2018), distraction is a thing that prevents someone from concentrating or something else. It may also be seen as something that turns one's attention away from something you want to concentrate on. Distractions in the work environment may include unnecessary meetings, smoke/snack breaks, noisy co-workers, distracting music, too many people stopping by, distractions from certain processes, e-mail inbox alerts, disrupting colleagues, trying to do too much and personal technology (Mindtools, 2018). The effects of these distractions are enormous to the extent that Mindtools (2018) reports that workplace interruption causes the US business, an average of \$650 billion dollars a year. On the question of the cell phones, it is agreed that they can make colleagues and clients accessible, increase work place flexibility and help support tele-communicating options, but there are also circumstances when they can be viewed as addictive shiny objects that repeatedly distract employees (among them teachers) from their duties (American City Business Journal, 2018).

Just as it is in the business world, the environment of work in the school systems and teachers cell phones present distractions to teachers and should therefore be managed by school administrators if they must extract increased performance of teachers' teaching and administrative duties.

In managing work environment related distractions, scholars have made appreciable suggestions. These include turning off alerts that appear on all personal technology, setting a time limit for all meetings, recognizing the realities of a connected world, setting oneself in an empty room, wearing noise cancelling headphones (Mindtools, 2018). Presenting further, Mindtools (2018) lists ignoring some distractions, ignoring cooking smells and staying in an empty room. In the contribution from Chignel (2016), administrators should ensure that some personal technologies are turned off.

Chignel believes this is important because distractions from them contribute to substantial reductions in productivity and cost companies around the world, large sums of money. For the scholar, distractions from the work environment, also compromise quality of work, bring low morale, impact negatively on boss/employee relations, missed deadlines and loss in revenue. Therefore, employees should remove themselves from environments in which idle chats take place, use head phones to listen to music, have a quiet word with colleagues, placing house plants around the office, creating dedicated quiet room and investing in noise absorbing materials like ceiling, tiles and partitions.

On the issue of cell phone related distractions, scholars prefer both administrative and personal strategies. According to the American City Business Journal (2018), the steps include that administrators should recognize the realities of a connected world, provide general policy reminders on the use of cell phones, develop a policy if necessary, being clear about the consequences, treating isolated cases accordingly and keeping work life balance in mind.

On a different but related note, Lynch (2017) prefers that phone users should establish expectations, pick appropriate time to use the phone, engage self in technology, take time to work around the work plant, just as administrators should not be afraid to seize gadgets from users and giving workers technology breaks.

Presentations here have been mostly theoretical, apart from some few cases that are alien to the Nigerian situation. The need to localize the problem and give empirical explanations in the state studied are what gave the researchers the interest to contemplate on the study in order to close the gap.

2. Statement of the Problem

The work environment of the teacher and access to and utilization of scientific and technological gadgets are two major variables, considered to be valuable incentives for teachers if they must perform their teaching and administrative duties according to expectations. This proposition has influenced and or conjectured the content and location of contemporary school environment and the scientific and technological devices recommended for use by teachers in educational institution. Surprisingly,

rather than increasing the performances of teachers' teaching and administrative functions, the teacher's work environment and the supposed life and work enhancing gadgets appear to have dysfunctional implications on the teaching process by lowering performance as consequences of distractions from interactions in the environment and usages of technological devices during class sessions as research findings, complaints and comments from stakeholders, opinions from concerned individuals and organizations and general day to day observation have shown. The trend has remained unabated and should not be allowed to continue in the school system. Hence, the need for the deliberate and appropriate management of distractions from the work environment and those coming from the use of technological devices like the cell phone. This formed the basis for this study at the secondary level of education.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated into the management of teachers' work environment and cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers States of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 3.1** ascertain the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria
- 3.2.** determine the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

- 4.1.** What are the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria?
- 4.2.** What are the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals from urban and rural schools on the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria

5. Methodology

The design for the study was the analytic descriptive survey. The design was considered appropriate as the researchers collected information on variables of the study and explained and described them as they occurred. The population of the study was the 258 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. These schools have a corresponding number of 258 principals, who served as participants in the study, from which 155 (representing 60%) were selected as sample, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Respondents of the research responded to a validated 14-item instrument titled 'Teachers Work Environment and Cell Phone Related Distractions Management for Increased Performance Scale (TWECPRDMIPS)' designed by the researchers, in the modified 4-point Likert Scale model, with a reliability index of 0.81, determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z.test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

The results of the study came from the answers to the research questions and the results to test of hypotheses. Thus;

Research Question 4. 1: What are the strategies for managing teachers work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Principals on the Strategies for Managing Teachers Work Environment Distractions for Increased Performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

MEAN RESPONSES							
S/N		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	\bar{x}	Remark
1	Teachers who wish to handle distractions from the work environment should turn off alert from personal technologies.	3.51	1.02	3.54	0.95	3.53	Agreed
2	Setting time limits for meetings makes it possible for teachers to return to their duty posts promptly after such meetings.	3.45	0.84	3.71	0.75	3.58	Agreed
3	Recognizing the realities of a connected world is a good step to manage the work environment.	3.48	0.89	3.23	1.06	3.36	Agreed
4	Ignoring some distractions from the work environment ensures that work progresses normally.	1.60	1.05	1.60	0.60	1.60	Disagreed
5	Creating dedicated quiet rooms present opportunities for teachers to personally handle work environment distractions.	3.20	1.13	3.49	0.85	3.35	Agreed
6	Teachers who have quiet moments with their noisy colleagues succeed in going on with the works.	3.67	0.85	3.46	1.01	3.57	Agreed
7	Investing in noise absorbing materials assists in reducing noise in school environment.	1.96	1.27	1.31	0.87	1.64	Disagreed
	Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$	2.98	1.01	2.90	0.87	2.95	Agreed

Legend

\bar{x}_1 = Mean Rating Male Principals
 SD_1 = Standard Deviation for Mean 1
 \bar{x}_2 = Mean Rating Female Principals
 SD_2 = Standard Deviation for Mean 2
 \bar{x} = Weighted Mean Rating
 $A\bar{x}$ = Aggregate weighted mean

Scale

1.00 - 2.449 Disagree
2.50 - 4.00. Agreed

Data on Table I show that items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 had weighted mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were agreed on as the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. Differently, items 4 and 7 had weighted mean ratings below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were denied agreement as the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in the state, studied.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean ratings of 2.95, above the criterion mean of 2.50, male and female principals agreed that the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions are turning off alerts from all personal technologies, setting time limits for meetings, recognizing the realities of a connected world, ignoring some distractions from the work place, creating quiet rooms for teachers, asking teachers to have quiet words with their perceived noisy colleagues and investing in noise absorbing materials.

Research Question 4.2: What are the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of Principals from Urban and Rural Schools on the Strategies for Managing Cell Phone Related Distractions for Increased performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria

MEAN RESPONSES							
S/N		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	\bar{x}	Remark
8	Developing a policy on the use of cell phones by teachers is good in managing teachers performance.	3.28	1.09	3.41	0.88	3.35	Agreed
9	Providing general policy reminders help the teachers to make good use of their cell phones in schools.	3.33	0.75	3.24	1.19	3.29	Agreed
10	Being clear about the consequences of violating the policy on the use of cell phones controls their usages in schools.	3.54	0.83	3.43	0.83	3.49	Agreed
11	Treating isolated cases of violating cases of policy default accordingly sends strong signals to other school members.	3.61	0.93	3.37	1.12	3.49	Agreed
12	Keeping work-life balance in mind ensures that teachers do their works well.	3.63	0.94	3.50	0.96	3.57	Agreed
13	Showing firmness in seizing cell phones from defaulting teachers ensures that the policies are not violated.	1.32	0.89	1.28	0.69	1.30	Disagreed
14	Providing technological breaks makes it possible for teachers to attend to themselves as they also attend to the work.	1.45	1.02	1.39	0.91	1.42	Disagreed
	Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$	2.88	0.92	2.80	0.94	$A\bar{x}\bar{x} = 2.82$	Agreed

Legend

\bar{x}_1 = Mean Rating Male Principals
 SD_1 = Standard Deviation for Mean 1

\bar{x}_2 = Mean Rating Female Principals
 SD_2 = Standard Deviation for Mean 2

\bar{x} = Weighted Mean Rating

$A\bar{x}$ = Aggregate weighted mean

Scale

1.00 - 2.449 Disagree

2.50 - 4.00. Agreed

Data on Table 4 show that items 8, 9, 10 and 14 had weighted mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. Differently, items 11, 12 and 13 had weighted mean ratings below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were denied agreement as the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean rating of 2.84, above the criterion mean of 2.50, principals from rural and urban schools agreed that the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria are developing a policy on the use of cell phones in schools, providing general policy reminders on the use of cell phones, being clear about the consequences of violating the policy on the use of cell phones, treating isolated cases of violating the policy on the use of cell phones accordingly, keeping work-life balance in mind, showing firmness in seizing cell phones from defaulters and providing technology breaks for teachers.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of z-test Analysis on the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Principals on the Strategies for Managing Teachers’ Work Environment Distractions for Increased Performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria

t			SD	z-cal	z-crit	df	pn
Male Principals			1.01	0.47	1.96	153	No Significant (t)
Female Principals			0.87				

Legend

- N = Number of Respondents
- \bar{x} = Mean
- SD = Standard Deviation
- z-cal = z-calculated value
- z-crit = z-critical value
- df = degree of freedom

Data on Table 3 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers’ work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. The z. calculated value, used in testing the hypothesis, came out as 0.47, while the z. critical value stood at 1.96, using 153 degrees of freedom, at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 153 degrees of freedom, the calculated z.value of 0.47, is by far less than the critical value of 1.96. This suggested that no significant difference existed between the mean ratings of the respondents. Based on the above observations, the researchers were constrained to retain the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers’ work environment distractions in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals from rural and urban schools on the strategies for managing teachers’ cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis on the Mean Ratings of Principals from Rural and Urban Schools on the Strategies for Managing Teachers’ Cell Phone Related Distractions for Increased Performance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria

Subject	N	Mean	SD	z-cal	z-crit	Df	Decision
Principals from Rural Schools	109	2.88	0.92	0.50	1.96	153	Not Significant (Fail to reject)
Principals from Urban Schools	46	2.80	0.94				

* The legend for Table 3 applies

Data on Table 4 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference between the mean ratings of principals from rural and urban schools on the strategies for managing teachers’ cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. The z.value, calculated and used in testing the hypothesis came out as 0.50, while the z.critical value stood at 1.96, using 153 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 153 degrees of freedom, the calculated value of 0.50 is less than the z.critical value of 1.96. This suggested that no significant difference existed between the mean ratings of the respondents. Based on these observations, the researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals from rural and urban schools on the strategies for managing teachers’ cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

7. Discussion of Findings and Implications

7.1 Strategies for Managing Teachers’ Work Environment Distractions for Increased Performance

Firstly, it was found out that the strategies for managing teachers’ work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria, are turning off alerts from personal technologies, setting time limits for meetings, recognizing the realities of a connected world, ignoring some distractions from the work place, creating quiet rooms for teachers, asking teachers to have quiet words with their perceived noisy

colleagues and investing in noise absorbing materials. This finding agrees with Mindtools (2016), Mindtools (2018) and Chignel (2016). The academic outfit and scholar provide impressive information on the strategies for managing work place distractions for higher productivity in organizations. The trend of the finding may be predicated on the fact that with organizational distractions emanating from the work place, the workers and the surrounding environments, organizational leaders have seen the need to adopt appropriate measures to contain distractions. However, it appears disturbing that a corresponding finding from the test of hypothesis, found no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in the state, studied.

This later finding negates Mindtools (2016) and (2018) and Chignel (2016) but cannot in any way invalidate the initial finding, as the strategies for managing teachers' work environment distractions for increased job performance. The negative finding may not be unconnected with the rigorous statistical processes in testing the hypothesis or that the respondents may have differed in their reactions as a consequence of differences in sex. These findings imply that in school environment where teachers are perceived to be doing well, their administrators make use of appropriate administrative strategies in managing organizational distractions.

7.2 Strategies for Managing Teachers' Cell Phone Related

7.2.1 Distractions for Increased Performance

Secondly, it was found out that the strategies for managing teachers' cell phone related distractions for increased performance in secondary schools in Rivers State are developing a policy on the use of cell phones in schools, providing general policy reminders on the use of cell phones, being clear about the consequences of violating the policy on the use of the cell phones, treating isolated cases of violating the policy on the use of the cell phones accordingly, keeping work-life balance in mind, showing firmness in seizing cell phones from defaulters and providing technology breaks for teachers. This finding agrees with the finding by the American City Business Journal (2018) and that of Lynch (2017). A possible explanation for this finding may be in the fact that, as almost everybody (teacher) has the phone, school

leaders have come out with policies to handle the dysfunctional influences from them. Although the finding from the test of hypothesis established no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals from rural and urban schools on the strategies for managing teachers cell phone related distractions for increased performance in the state, studied, its result cannot invalidate the fact that organizations need to use administrative procedures to manage perceived and real distractions from the use of technological devices.

The observed difference may have been due to the rigorous statistical procedures used in testing the hypothesis or that the respondents differed in their reactions as a result of the influence of location. These findings implies that in this era of Information and Communication Technology influences on organizational workers, most succeeding schools are those who have put policies in place to manage their usages by organizational members.

8. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the discussion on them and their attendant implications, it is concluded that deliberate management of teachers work environment and cell phone related distractions have positive implications for increasing teachers performance in secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

9.Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were offered:

1. School administrators should continue to use appropriate management strategies to manage the distractions from the school environment in order to be assured of the performance of their teachers.
2. School administrators should continue to employ sound administrative strategies in regulating the use of the cell phone in schools so as to sustain the commitment of their teachers to their works for increased performance.

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