

INNOVATION-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AS CORRELATES OF TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OGOJA EDUCATIONAL ZONE OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

*This study investigated innovation-driven leadership practices as correlates of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised **1,093 teachers in 90 public secondary schools** in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample was 219 teachers from 18 public secondary schools representing 20% of the total population. The sample was selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using two researcher-developed questionnaires titled "Innovative Leadership Practices Questionnaire (ILPQ)" and "Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ)." The instruments were validated by two experts in University of Calabar. A trial test of the instruments was conducted on 30 teachers using Cronbach Alpha and results obtained was 0.87. The data collected were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The findings of the study showed that digital communication platforms and gamified professional development have strong positive significant correlations with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. It was concluded that innovation-driven leadership practices improve teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. The study recommended that principals should ensure the use of digital communication platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp groups by teachers for the execution of academic and administrative task in that public secondary schools in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Innovation-driven leadership practices, digital communication platforms, gamified professional development, job performance

Introduction

Teachers' job performance has become one of the most central issues in educational institutions, including public secondary schools across the globe. In recent times, many educational institutions have shifted their focus towards identifying strategies to improve teachers' job performance. Teachers' job performance is a critical determinant of educational quality and institutional effectiveness, yet it remains a major concern in public secondary schools globally and in Nigeria in particular. Sustaining high levels of performance is challenging, as declining standards threaten the sustainability of secondary education, especially in the Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State. Scholars such as Muogbo (2017) and Ogbulafor (2019) stressed the urgency of adopting strategies that motivate teachers, improve instructional delivery, and enhance competitiveness.

Motowidlo & Kell (2018) defined teachers' job performance as the successful execution of professional duties like lesson planning, classroom management, student guidance, and assessment is often hindered by inadequate investment in continuous professional development and innovation-driven leadership. Many educational institutions in Nigeria strive to improve teachers' job performance to maximize productivity and educational outcomes. However, public secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, appear to face persistent challenges in achieving this goal, highlighting the need for innovation-driven leadership practices that inspire, equip, and guide teachers toward optimal performance. Innovation-driven leadership practices can be defined as leadership approaches that intentionally incorporate creative strategies, tools and technologies to enhance organizational performance and achieve set objectives (Eze, 2021). Among these practices, digital communication platforms have emerged as a critical tool in modern educational leadership, facilitating real-time interactions, resource sharing, and collaborative problem-solving.

Digital communication platforms refer to technology-based applications and tools that facilitate the exchange of information, ideas and resources between individuals or groups in real time or asynchronously, using the internet or local networks (Okafor, 2022). In public secondary schools, these platforms include tools such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and school-specific portals that enable administrators, teachers and stakeholders to share instructional resources, coordinate activities, and solve problems collaboratively (Ibrahim, 2023). Generally, the growing role of technology in educational leadership calls for innovative practices such as digital communication platforms and gamified professional development programmes to enhance engagement, motivation and skill acquisition.

Gamified professional development refers to the application of game-based elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, challenges and rewards in teacher training programmes to enhance motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention (Oche, 2022). According to Ameh (2023), gamification in public secondary schools transforms conventional professional development into interactive and participatory learning experiences where teachers actively engage in solving problems, completing learning tasks and achieving set goals. Bamidele (2021) affirms that the impact of gamified professional development on teachers' job performance is evident in increased enthusiasm for training, improved mastery of instructional strategies, and stronger collaboration among staff. By incorporating friendly competition and real-time feedback, gamified programmes promote continuous learning and application of skills in classroom settings. Yusuf (2020) revealed that gamified training significantly improved teachers' instructional delivery, technology adoption and student engagement in public secondary schools. Similarly, Danjuma (2021) observed that schools that implemented gamified training recorded higher levels of teacher participation in workshops, faster integration of learned skills and improved lesson quality that fosters teacher performance and innovation, thereby driving sustainable improvement in public secondary schools. It is against this background that this paper investigated innovation-driven leadership practices as correlates of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Innovation-driven leadership is crucial for enhancing teachers' job performance by fostering creativity, adaptability, and professional growth, yet stakeholders in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria have expressed concern over a noticeable decline in teachers' performance marked by reduced instructional creativity, low enthusiasm for professional growth, and suboptimal classroom practices. While factors such as weak institutional support, inadequate resources, delayed salaries, and poor leadership contribute to this issue, the decline appears strongly linked to the absence of innovation-driven practices, particularly the limited use of digital communication platforms like Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and WhatsApp groups, as well as the underutilization of gamified professional development. These gaps hinder timely information flow, collaboration, adaptability to new instructional methods, and teacher motivation, ultimately undermining student academic performance and educational quality. This study, therefore, investigated innovation-driven leadership practices as correlates of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate innovation-driven leadership practices as correlates of teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the correlation of digital communication platforms with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Assess the correlation of gamified professional development with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation of digital communication platforms with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. What is the correlation of gamified professional development with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Digital communication platforms have no significant correlation with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Gamified professional development has no significant correlation with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study was the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised **1,093 teachers in 90 public secondary schools** in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria (Ministry of Education Calabar, 2025). The sample for the study was 219 teachers in 18 schools in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria representing 20% of the total population. The sample was selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using two researcher-developed questionnaires titled “Innovative Leadership Practices Questionnaire (ILPQ)” and “Teachers’ Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ).” The ILPQ was structured in two clusters: Cluster A (Items 1–5) focused on digital communication platforms, while Cluster B (Items 6–10) focused on gamified professional development. The TJPQ consisted of 10 items that elicited responses on teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools. The instruments were validated by two experts in University of Calabar. A trial test of the instruments was conducted on 30 teachers using Cronbach Alpha and results obtained was 0.87. Both instruments used a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, chosen to provide respondents with a range of options to express their level of agreement. The data collected were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The decision rule in answering the research questions was that the closer the calculated correlation coefficient (r) is to +1 or –1, the stronger the relationship between the variables. The strength of the correlation was interpreted using the guideline by Nworgu (2015): 0.00 – 0.19 = Very weak correlation, 0.20 – 0.39 = Weak correlation, 0.40 – 0.59 = Moderate correlation, 0.60 – 0.79 = Strong correlation, 0.80 – 1.00 = Very strong correlation. In testing the hypotheses, the decision rule was that if the calculated p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected; otherwise, it was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the correlation of digital communication platforms with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Correlation of Digital Communication Platforms with Teachers’ Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria*

Variables		$\overline{X}$	SD	Digital Communication Platforms	Teachers’ Job Performance
Digital Communication Platforms	Pearson	2.87	0.82	1	.76**
	Correlation				.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N			219	219
Teachers’ Job Performance	Pearson				
	Correlation	2.89	0.80	.76**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
	N			219	219

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in Table 1 shows that $r = 0.76$. Since the value of $r = 0.76$ falls within the range of 0.60 – 0.79, it indicates a **strong positive correlation**. This implies that improvements in the use of digital communication platforms are strongly associated with corresponding increases in teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What is the correlation of gamified professional development with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Correlation of Gamified Professional Development with Teachers’ Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria*

Variables		$\bar{X}$	SD	Gamified Professional Development	Teachers’ Job Performance
Gamified Professional Development	Pearson	2.83	0.86	1	.70**
	Correlation				.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Teachers’ Job Performance	N			219	219
	Pearson				
	Correlation	2.84	0.83	.70**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	
N				219	219

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results (2025).

The result in Table 2 shows that $r = 0.70$. Since the value of $r = 0.76$ falls within the range of 0.60–0.79, it indicates a **strong positive correlation**. This implies that increased use of gamified professional development strategies is strongly associated with improved teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

Digital communication platforms have no significant correlation with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 3: *Significant Correlation of Digital Communication Platforms and Teachers’ Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria*

Variables		Digital Communication Platforms	Teachers’ Job Performance
Digital Communication Platforms	Pearson Correlation	1	.76**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	219	219
Teachers’ Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	.76**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	219	219

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results (2025)

The result in Table 3 shows that $r = 0.76$, with a significance value of $p = .000$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that Digital communication platforms have no significant correlations with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria was **rejected**. This implies that digital communication platforms have strong positive significant correlations with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2:

Gamified professional development has no significant correlation with teachers’ job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria

Table 4: *Significant Correlation of Gamified Professional Development and Teachers’ Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria*

Variables		Gamified Professional Development	Teachers’ Job Performance
Gamified Professional Development	Pearson Correlation	1	.70**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	219	219
Teachers’ Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	.70**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	219	219

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results (2025)

The result in Table 4 shows that $r = 0.70$, with a significance value of $p = .000$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that gamified professional

development has no significant correlation with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria was **rejected**. This implies that gamified professional development has strong positive significant correlation with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study showed digital communication platforms have strong positive significant correlations with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The finding aligns with Musa (2021), whose study established a strong positive relationship between digital communication platforms and teachers' performance, particularly in lesson preparation and timely reporting. Similarly, the study agrees with Abiola (2022), who found that schools where administrators actively used digital communication platforms recorded higher teacher punctuality, faster assignment feedback, and better curriculum adherence. In essence, this study affirms that the integration of digital communication platforms into school leadership and instructional practices is a catalyst for improved teacher effectiveness.

The second finding of the study revealed that gamified professional development has strong positive significant correlation with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. This finding supports the study by Yusuf (2020), whose work revealed that gamified training significantly improved teachers' instructional delivery, technology adoption, and student engagement in public secondary schools. The finding is also in line with Danjuma (2021), who observed that schools that implemented gamified training recorded higher levels of teacher participation in workshops, faster integration of learned skills, and improved lesson quality that fosters teacher performance and innovation, thereby driving sustainable improvement in public secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, this paper established that both digital communication platforms and gamified professional development significantly enhance teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Ogoja Educational Zone, Cross River State. This implies that improvement in innovation driven-leadership in terms of digital communication platforms and gamified professional development would lead to increase in teachers' job performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. School administrators should institutionalize the use of digital communication platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp groups for academic coordination, lesson planning and feedback dissemination.
2. Government should design and implement periodic gamified professional development programmes for public secondary school teachers, incorporating platforms like Kahoot, Classcraft and EdApp to make training interactive and engaging.

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