

# PRINCIPALS' GENDER, INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS' JOB COMMITMENT IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*The effectiveness of private secondary schools in Nigeria continues to be challenged by declining teacher commitment, with implications for instructional quality and student outcomes. Despite the importance of school leadership in addressing this issue, limited empirical evidence exists on how principals' instructional leadership influences teachers' job commitment, particularly within gender dynamics. Hence, this study examined the influence of principals' instructional leadership on teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State, Nigeria, with particular attention to gender as a moderating variable. Specifically, it identified the most prevalent instructional leadership practices, assessed teachers' job commitment, and examined the relationships between instructional leadership dimensions and job commitment. A descriptive correlational survey design was adopted. The population comprised 8,077 teachers, from where a sample of 381 was drawn. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that curriculum implementation was the most dominant instructional leadership practice, while teachers' job commitment was moderate. Instructional leadership practices showed significant relationships with teachers' job commitment. Although gender did not have a significant overall moderating effect, it did significantly influence specific dimensions, such as feedback on teaching and learning and monitoring students' progress. The study concludes that effective instructional leadership is a key determinant of teachers' job commitment, regardless of gender differences. It is recommended that school proprietors and policymakers prioritise continuous professional development for principals, focusing on teacher support, feedback, and instructional supervision to enhance teacher commitment and school effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership; Teachers' Job Commitment; Gender; School Leadership; Private Secondary Schools

## Introduction

Improving school performance and achieving quality education in an increasingly globalised world requires a high level of teacher commitment. Teachers remain central to the educational process, as they directly influence students' learning outcomes and the attainment of globally competitive standards. Consequently, enhancing students' academic achievement through the efforts of competent and dedicated teachers is a key priority for effective school leadership. As noted by Kemethofer, Helm, and Evans (2025), school leadership is one of the most critical determinants of educational success.

Teachers' job commitment is particularly evident in their willingness to exceed formal role expectations in support of institutional goals and student success. Given the multifaceted roles teachers play as facilitators, role models, mentors, and caregivers, the effective discharge of these responsibilities requires deep professional dedication, emotional attachment, and a strong sense of purpose. In this regard, Akinwale and Okotoni (2019) emphasised that achieving educational goals largely depends on teachers' commitment, which serves as the primary agent in teaching and learning. Within the school system, the responsibility for fostering such

commitment largely rests on the principal, who functions as the chief instructional and administrative leader (Panezai & Shah, 2021).

Instructional leadership, as enacted by the principal, plays a significant role in shaping teachers' job commitment. Ponnusamy (2010) posited that principals' instructional leadership practices can substantially influence teachers' attitudes and dedication to their work. When principals exhibit strong instructional leadership through effective supervision, support, and resource provision, they are more likely to inspire and motivate teachers toward improved performance (Shava, Heystek, & Chasara, 2021).

In addition, gender has been identified as a potential factor influencing leadership dynamics within educational settings. While the existing literature generally indicates no substantial differences in overall leadership capabilities between male and female principals, some studies suggest nuanced variations in leadership practice. For instance, Shaked, Glanz, and Gross (2018) reported a small but statistically significant gender effect, with female principals often receiving higher ratings in instructional leadership. This suggests that gender-related differences may not necessarily lie in leadership competence, but rather in the manner and intensity with which instructional leadership practices are enacted. Therefore, examining gender not only in terms of leadership performance but also in how instructional leadership is expressed provides a more comprehensive understanding of its role in influencing teachers' job commitment.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the moderating role of gender. Specifically, the study sought to:

- a) identify the prevalent instructional leadership practices adopted by principals in private secondary schools in Niger State;
- b) assess the level of teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State;
- c) determine the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment; and
- d) examine the moderating effect of principals' gender on the relationship between instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment.

### ***Research Questions***

To achieve the objective of this study, the following questions were raised.

1. What are the prevalent instructional leadership practices of principals in private secondary schools in Niger State?
2. What is the level of teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State?

### ***Research Hypotheses***

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between principals' gender and the relationship between instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Principals' Instructional Leadership***

School leadership refers to the processes, decisions, and actions school leaders take to ensure a school achieves its goals. It involves setting direction, creating a learning culture, managing staff, and ensuring the school is well-resourced and that students are advancing.

Improving students' academic achievements with the support of competent teachers is a priority of any successful school leader. School leadership is an essential factor in successful schools (Kemethofer, Helm & Evans, 202). Instructional leadership involves the principal's role in setting a clear vision for the school's academic success, establishing goals for student achievement, and supporting teachers in their instructional practices. Principals who prioritise instructional leadership actively work to improve teaching and learning outcomes in the school. Teachers' commitment is strengthened when school leaders practice leadership effectively.

Although prior studies have documented various leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and situational leadership), the school environment needs a leadership style that is particularly important: the principal's instructional leadership. This style enables teachers to provide quality instruction and improve students' academic performance. In the instructional leadership practice, the principal is considered the school manager, responsible for setting goals, conducting curriculum examinations, evaluating teachers, and collaborating to accomplish the school's mission. On the other hand, instructional leadership style refers to the approach principals or school leaders take to guide and support teachers' instructional practices. Principals who adopt an instructional leadership style are actively involved in shaping the teaching and learning processes within the school. They provide teachers with guidance, support, and resources and prioritise improving instructional practices and student outcomes.

When principals demonstrate strong instructional leadership, they are better positioned to inspire and motivate teachers to perform at their highest potential (Shava, Heystek, & Chasara, 2021). Instructional leadership encompasses a range of actions and behaviours through which principals support and enhance teaching and learning within the school environment. These include setting clear expectations, providing opportunities for professional development, and fostering a positive and collaborative school culture. Principals who effectively enact these practices can significantly influence teachers' instructional practices and job satisfaction, thereby strengthening their commitment and improving student outcomes. Consequently, in examining the factors that influence student achievement, school leadership can be regarded as second only to classroom teaching.

### ***Teachers' Job Commitment***

Teachers' job commitment refers to their dedication, loyalty, and engagement toward their teaching profession and responsibilities. It encompasses their willingness to put in effort, time, and energy to meet the needs of their students and the school community. Job commitment can manifest in various ways, such as taking on additional responsibilities, seeking professional development opportunities, and maintaining a positive attitude toward teaching. Teachers' job commitment is a crucial factor in the overall effectiveness of schools. Research suggests that principals' leadership styles can significantly influence teachers' commitment to their jobs. To improve the teaching performance of teachers, teachers must be motivated, as well as committed, and satisfied with their job. Manla (2021) emphasized that motivated and committed employees give their organizations crucial competitive advantages including higher productivity and lower employee turnover.

Commitment refers to an individual's attraction and attachment to the work and the organization, it refers to the socio-psychological bonding of an individual to his group or organization, goals, values, occupation, and profession (Ayele, 2014). As seen in Ayele's research, commitment could manifest in terms of three ways, i.e., affective, normative, and continuance, and each type of commitment ties the individual to the organization in different ways and will affect differently how the employee conducts him/herself in the workplace. Fostering commitment among teachers is crucial because highly committed teachers stay longer, perform better, actively participate in the work, and engage in organizational citizenship behavior.

Teachers' Job commitment refers to their loyalty and dedication to the school or educational institution where they work (Ozgenel & Koc, 2020). It involves their willingness to invest time and effort in the school's goals and objectives and their sense of belonging and identification with its values and culture.

### ***Gender Differences in Instructional Leadership Styles and Teachers' Job Commitment***

The relationship between gender and principals' instructional leadership style has been a topic of interest in educational research. However, it is essential to note that generalisations about gender and leadership styles should be made cautiously, as individual differences and contextual factors play significant roles. Nonetheless, some studies have explored potential differences in instructional leadership styles based on gender. Several studies have explored the impact of gender on instructional leadership styles among principals. For example, Bennett and Campbell (2012) found that female principals exhibit more transformational leadership behaviours, emphasising collaboration, shared decision-making, and individualised teacher support. In contrast, male principals often display more transactional leadership behaviours, focusing on rewards and punishments. These differing leadership styles may affect teachers' job commitment. Some studies indicate that female teachers tend to have higher job commitment levels than their male counterparts. These differences may be attributed to factors such as work attitudes, job satisfaction, and perceptions of support from principals.

Teachers' responses to principals' gender differences can vary widely, depending on individual perspectives and experiences. Some teachers may not perceive significant differences in their principal's gender and may focus more on their leadership abilities, communication skills, and managerial qualities. These teachers may prioritise a principal's competence, effectiveness, and commitment to creating a positive learning environment over their gender. On the other hand, some teachers may focus on gender differences and believe that male and female principals bring unique strengths and perspectives to the role. They might appreciate a female principal's ability to foster collaboration, empathy, and inclusivity, while valuing a male principal's assertiveness, strategic thinking, and decisiveness. These teachers may view gender diversity in leadership as beneficial, as it promotes a more balanced and holistic approach to school administration (Liu & Werblow, 2021).

Additionally, some teachers may hold preconceived notions or biases about gender roles and leadership capabilities, which can influence their perceptions of principals. For example, specific individuals may assume that male principals are naturally more authoritative or better suited for disciplinary matters. In contrast, female principals are expected to be more nurturing or focused on student welfare. These biases can shape how teachers respond to gender differences in principals and impact their expectations and evaluations. It is crucial to recognise that generalisations about gender differences are not universal truths, and individuals' capabilities and leadership styles can vary greatly, regardless of gender. Effective leadership is not solely determined by gender but by a combination of skills, qualities, and experiences. It is essential to evaluate principals based on their abilities, qualifications, and impact on the school community, rather than making assumptions solely on the basis of gender. Promoting diversity and inclusivity in educational leadership can create a more comprehensive, well-rounded environment that benefits students and teachers. Studies conducted by Wong, Teh, Lee, and Loh (2014), have explored gender differences in instructional leadership styles and job commitment. Female principals often exhibit more transformational leadership behaviours, emphasising collaboration, shared decision-making, and individualised support for teachers (Bennett & Campbell, 2012).

## ***Empirical Review***

Several studies have been conducted in areas related to this study. For instance, Sugandi, Tadesse, and Ghassani (2021) carried out a correlational study on principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' organisational commitment in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey design to obtain comprehensive information from the study participants. Public high school teachers constituted the target population, and simple random sampling was used to select 250 teachers from 5 of 8 high schools in Yogyakarta. The Organisational Commitment (OC) scale and the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) were used to collect the required data from the sampled teachers. The data were analysed by descriptive statistics, correlations (zero-order and partial), and multiple regressions. The findings concluded that male, experienced, and older teachers have low commitment levels. The researcher recommended assigning more young high school teachers and promoting peer teaching among teachers to create a balance.

Ikedugwu and Agu (2022) investigated teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership practices as correlates of their job commitment in secondary schools in Enugu State. To answer the research questions, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used, and the t-test for correlational analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 alpha level. Their findings revealed a positive relationship among instructional supervision practices, time management practices, and curriculum and instruction practices, which are determinants of Instructional Leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Enugu State. It was also found that there is a strong, positive, and significant relationship between principals' leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in secondary schools in Enugu State.

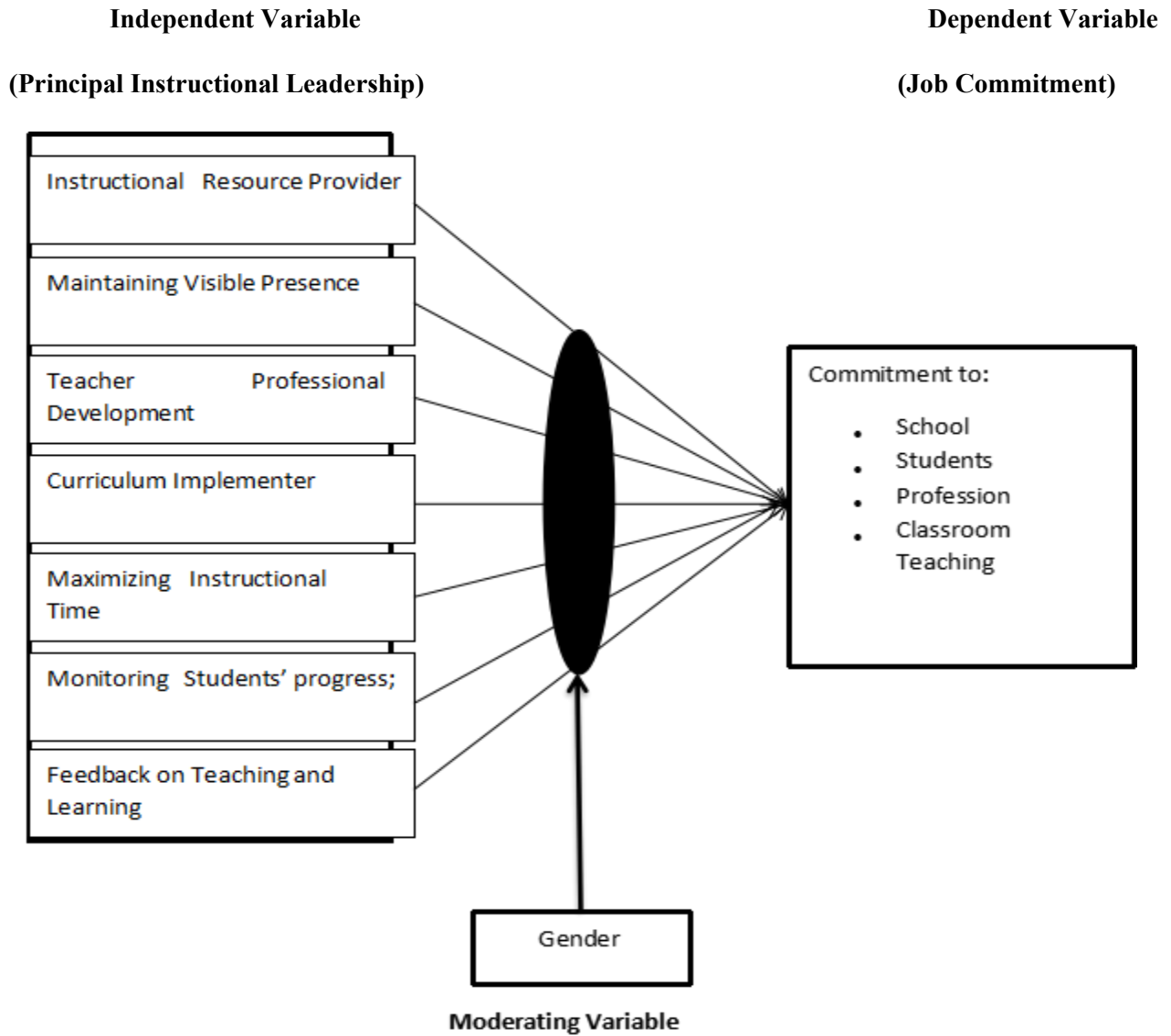
A study by Ayeni (2020) investigated principals' instructional time management strategies, teachers' effectiveness in instructional tasks, and students' academic performance in secondary schools in the Ondo North Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Findings from this study indicated a significant relationship between principals' time management strategies and teachers' instructional tasks performance.

Most recently, another study by Shikokoti, Okoth and Chekonga (2023) examined the influence of principals' involvement in professional development on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study employed a quantitative method. Simple Linear regression was used to analyse the data. From the findings, the indicators of principals' involvement in professional development, including encouragement and motivation, had p-values less than 0.01; therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there was no significant relationship between principals' involvement in professional development and teachers' job satisfaction, was rejected. Hence, the study concluded that there was a relationship between principals' involvement in professional development and teachers' job satisfaction.

A study conducted by Akinwale and Okotoni in 2019 investigated teachers' job commitment to the teaching profession, teaching and learning, and commitment to school in secondary schools in Osun State. The results indicated that teachers' commitment in these areas was generally low. The study recommended strategies such as regular promotion, prompt salary payments, and effective interaction between principals and teachers to enhance teachers' job commitment.

Chime (2024) investigated the relationship between school location and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. The study employed a correlational research design; the findings revealed that school location significantly influenced teacher job commitment in public secondary schools. The results demonstrated that school location affects teacher job commitment, with teachers in urban schools more committed than those in rural schools. Furthermore, the results showed a significant positive correlation between school location and teacher job commitment. The study concluded that school location affects teacher job commitment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Conceptual Framework**



Source: (Researchers' design, 2024)

**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework on the Influence of gender on principals' instructional leadership style and teachers' job commitment

Figure 1 above reveals a direct, linear relationship between principals' instructional leadership and teachers' commitment, moderated by gender. From the figure, it can be inferred that the independent variable (instructional leadership) is directly related to teachers' commitment to the school, students, the profession, and

classroom teaching. This implies that instructional leadership, in terms of the principal's provision of instructional resources, monitoring of students' progress, professional development, and curriculum implementation, could improve teachers' commitment.

For instance, when principals ensure that teachers have sufficient access to instructional materials for classroom teaching, it can motivate teachers to teach and stimulate student participation during learning, thereby improving students' academic performance and increasing teachers' commitment. Also, when principals visit classes regularly to observe teaching and learning, it can influence the level of commitment teachers put into their work, as they can easily access the principal when facing difficult situations. Another likely instance is that when principals plan professional development opportunities according to teachers' needs, it can influence their commitment levels, as they would likely feel indebted to serve a school that has trained them.

The role of principals in providing information about curriculum implementation will ease teachers' work in interpreting the curriculum, which may directly influence teachers' commitment to the profession, as the curriculum has been simplified. Principals protecting classroom time from outside interruptions could encourage teachers to take classroom time seriously, likely increasing their commitment to classroom teaching. The influence of providing feedback can't be overemphasised; therefore, when principals discuss students' progress with teachers, they can identify solutions to improve performance, which could directly influence teachers' commitment to students. In addition, when principals publicly praise teachers who perform well, it is likely to boost their morale and motivate them to be more committed to the teaching profession.

Finally the moderating factor of gender implies the potential connection and relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' commitment could be influenced by the principal being male or female. A male principal might show more tendencies of strictness to ensure that curriculum is effectively implemented, and teachers are monitored adequately, while a female principal might show calm and compassionate tendencies, whatever the case tends to be the researcher suspects that the manner with which they discharge instructional practices might affect teachers job commitment.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive correlational survey design. This design is appropriate for collecting data on respondents' opinions, perceptions, and experiences, and for establishing relationships among variables without manipulation. It was considered suitable for this study because it enabled the examination of the relationship between principals' instructional leadership (independent variable) and teachers' job commitment (dependent variable), as well as the moderating influence of gender.

The population of the study comprised all 8,077 teachers in private secondary schools in Niger State, as obtained from the Annual School Census (2023) of the Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. A sample size of 381 teachers was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 0.05 level of significance. To ensure adequate representation, a multistage sampling procedure was employed. First, private secondary schools were stratified based on the three senatorial districts in Niger State. Second, a proportionate number of schools were selected from each stratum using simple random sampling. Finally, teachers were selected from the sampled schools using simple random sampling, ensuring equal probability of selection and minimising sampling bias.

Data were collected using two structured instruments: the Principal Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (PILQ) and the Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (TJCQ). The instruments were divided into two sections: Section A elicited demographic information, including principals' gender, while Section B contained items measuring instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment. The PILQ was

adapted from Hallinger and Wang (2015), and the TJCQ from Thien, Razak, and Ramayah (2014), with slight modifications to suit the context of private secondary schools in Niger State.

To ensure validity, the instruments were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Ilorin. Their feedback led to necessary revisions in item clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. The reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study conducted among teachers in private secondary schools outside the study area. The data were analysed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.87 for the PILQ and 0.84 for the TJCQ, indicating high internal consistency and reliability for both instruments.

Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics of regression analysis using SmartPLS were employed to test the hypotheses formulated at the 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

This study examined principals' instructional leadership and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State. Two research questions, one main hypothesis, and eight operational hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and rank order) were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics (Pearson product-moment correlation) and the Hayes Process Macro were used to test the hypotheses formulated for this study at the 0.05 level of significance. PPMC was used to test  $H_{01}$ - $H_{07}$  as well as the main hypotheses, while Hayes Process Macro was used to test  $H_{08}$ . The results of the study are summarised as follows:

**Research Question 1:** Which of the principal instructional leadership practices is the most prevalent in private secondary schools in Niger State?

**Table 1:** Instructional leadership practices in private secondary schools in Niger State

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D	Rank
Instructional Resource Provide	375	3.251	.588	3rd
Maintaining Visible Presence	375	3.328	.511	2nd
Teacher Professional Development	375	3.060	.623	7th
Curriculum Implementer	375	3.499	.502	1st
Maximizing Instructional Time	375	3.161	.454	4th
Monitoring Students' Progress	375	3.152	.660	6th
Feedback on Teaching and Learning	375	3.157	.660	5th
<b>Instructional Leadership Practices</b>		<b>3.230</b>	<b>.442</b>	

Table 1 revealed that of the principal instructional leadership practices, curriculum implementer practice is the most prevalent among private secondary schools' principals in private secondary schools, Niger State, while teacher professional development practice is the least implemented by principals in private secondary schools, Niger State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the level of teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the level of teachers' job commitment**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D
Commitment to School	375	2.812	.449
Commitment to Student	375	3.488	.445
Commitment to Profession	375	2.927	.470
Commitment to Teaching	375	3.337	.426
<b>Job Commitment</b>		<b>3.141</b>	<b>.311</b>

(1.0 – 2.00= Low; 2.01-3.00= Moderate; 3.01 – 4.00 (High))

Table 2 above revealed that teachers' job commitment, with a mean score of 3.141, was high in private secondary schools in Niger State. Furthermore, commitment to students and teaching, with mean scores of 3.488 and 3.337, was high, while commitment to school and profession, with mean scores of 2.812 and 2.927, was moderate. Therefore, the level of teachers' job commitment in Private schools in Niger state is High.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Table 3: Relationship between Principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
CI -> Job commitment	0.104	0.105	0.108	0.960	0.337
FTL -> Job commitment	0.128	0.132	0.080	1.595	0.111
GenderP -> Job commitment	-0.149	-0.150	0.091	1.637	0.102
GenderP x CI -> Job commitment	0.088	0.088	0.138	0.634	0.526
GenderP x FTL -> Job commitment	-0.244	-0.241	0.124	1.975	0.048
GenderP x IRP -> Job commitment	-0.127	-0.124	0.108	1.175	0.240
GenderP x MIT -> Job commitment	0.084	0.083	0.129	0.656	0.512
GenderP x MSP -> Job commitment	0.292	0.278	0.132	2.211	0.027
GenderP x MVP -> Job commitment	-0.044	-0.052	0.129	0.342	0.732
GenderP x TPD -> Job commitment	0.158	0.160	0.139	1.134	0.257
IRP -> Job commitment	0.070	0.068	0.069	1.011	0.312
MIT -> Job commitment	0.056	0.060	0.089	0.629	0.530
MSP -> Job commitment	0.118	0.121	0.075	1.561	0.119
MVP -> Job commitment	-0.092	-0.080	0.074	1.242	0.214
TPD -> Job commitment	0.155	0.153	0.107	1.446	0.148

Source: Researcher's computation, 2026

The results presented in Table 3 show the structural relationships between principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State. The analysis reveals that the direct effects of the various instructional leadership dimensions on teachers' job commitment are not statistically

significant. For instance, curriculum implementation (CI) showed a positive but insignificant relationship with job commitment ( $\beta = 0.104, t = 0.960, p = 0.337$ ). Similarly, feedback on teaching and learning (FTL) had a positive but non-significant effect ( $\beta = 0.128, t = 1.595, p = 0.111$ ). Other instructional leadership dimensions, including instructional resources provision (IRP), monitoring instructional tasks (MIT), monitoring students' progress (MSP), maintaining vision and goals (MVP), and teachers' professional development (TPD), also showed positive or negative but statistically insignificant relationships with teachers' job commitment (all  $p > 0.05$ ).

In addition, the moderating role of principals' gender (GenderP) on the relationship between instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment was examined. The results indicate that principals' gender does not significantly moderate most of the relationships, as seen in the interaction effects of GenderP with curriculum implementation ( $\beta = 0.088, p = 0.526$ ), instructional resources provision ( $\beta = -0.127, p = 0.240$ ), monitoring instructional tasks ( $\beta = 0.084, p = 0.512$ ), maintaining vision and goals ( $\beta = -0.044, p = 0.732$ ), and teachers' professional development ( $\beta = 0.158, p = 0.257$ ), all of which are not statistically significant.

However, significant moderating effects were observed in two areas. Principals' gender significantly moderates the relationship between feedback on teaching and learning and teachers' job commitment ( $\beta = -0.244, t = 1.975, p = 0.048$ ), as well as the relationship between monitoring students' progress and teachers' job commitment ( $\beta = 0.292, t = 2.211, p = 0.027$ ). These findings suggest that, while most instructional leadership practices do not significantly predict teachers' job commitment, the principal's gender moderates the effects of specific leadership practices. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), that there is no significant relationship between instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment, is partially rejected based on the observed significant interaction effects.

**Table 4:** Model Summary on the relationship between instructional Leadership and Job Commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the F Estimate	F	Sig
1	.516 <sup>a</sup>	.266	.253	.26879	19.048	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), FTL, MIT, IRP, MVP, MSP, TPD, CI

Table 4 showed the calculated F-value 19.048 to be significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). This implies that the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between principal instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools, Niger State, is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between principal instructional leadership practices and teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools, Niger State. Also, the R-squared value indicated that principal instructional leadership practices accounted for only 26.6% of teachers' job commitment. This implies that 73.4% of the variance in teachers' job commitment is accounted for by other variables not covered in this study.

### Discussion of findings

This study examined the influence of principals' instructional leadership on teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State, with emphasis on the moderating role of gender. The findings provide deeper insight into how leadership practices shape teachers' professional engagement within the realities of private school contexts. The finding revealed that principals' instructional leadership practices were at a higher level, with curriculum implementation as the dominant dimension, underscoring the centrality of instructional coordination in school leadership. This result is consistent with earlier literature, which identifies curriculum management, supervision of instruction, and alignment of teaching with academic goals as core responsibilities

of effective school leaders. The dominance of curriculum implementation reflects principals' focus on ensuring that instructional activities are aligned with institutional expectations and academic standards. However, the relatively low emphasis on teacher professional development suggests a gap in leadership practice. This is significant because studies have shown that professional development is a key driver of teacher effectiveness, motivation, and long-term commitment (Aihie & Ohanaka, 2019; Mishra, 2018). Thus, while principals appear to prioritise immediate instructional delivery, insufficient attention to capacity building may limit sustained improvements in teaching quality.

The study further revealed that teachers' job commitment was moderate. This finding suggests that teachers are somewhat engaged but not fully committed to organisational goals. This aligns with existing literature, which indicates that teacher commitment is influenced by both organisational and psychosocial factors, including leadership support, workload, and institutional climate (Essel & Owusu, 2017; Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). In the context of private secondary schools in Nigeria, where teachers often face job insecurity and limited incentives, moderate commitment levels may reflect underlying dissatisfaction and constrained motivation. This reinforces the argument that leadership practices alone may not fully account for teacher commitment without complementary improvements in working conditions and support systems.

Importantly, the study established significant positive relationships between various dimensions of instructional leadership and teachers' job commitment. The role of principals as instructional resource providers was found to significantly influence teachers' commitment. This finding supports the view that access to adequate instructional materials reduces work-related stress and enhances teachers' effectiveness. According to Aihie and Ohanaka (2019), inadequate resources contribute significantly to professional frustration and reduced teacher commitment. Therefore, when principals ensure the availability and accessibility of instructional materials, they create an enabling environment that fosters teachers' engagement and willingness to perform.

Similarly, principals' visible presence was found to significantly relate to teachers' job commitment. This suggests that active involvement in classroom supervision, teacher accessibility, and engagement in instructional dialogue are critical for fostering a supportive school climate. This finding aligns with Dwyer and Cummings (2001), who emphasised that supportive leadership and workplace social interaction enhance employees' coping capacity, motivation, and commitment. When teachers perceive that their challenges are acknowledged and addressed, they are more likely to develop a stronger attachment to their work.

The study also revealed that encouraging teacher professional development significantly predicts teachers' job commitment. This highlights the importance of continuous learning opportunities in enhancing teachers' professional competence and motivation. As noted by Mishra (2018), teachers who participate in professional development opportunities are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment. Although this dimension was the least practised among principals, its significant impact suggests that greater emphasis on professional development could substantially improve teacher commitment in private secondary schools.

Furthermore, curriculum implementation, maximising instructional time, monitoring students' progress, and providing feedback on teaching and learning were all found to have significant positive relationships with teachers' job commitment. The strong relationship observed for monitoring students' progress indicates the importance of data-driven instructional practices. This finding is consistent with the literature, which emphasises that regular evaluation and feedback enhance performance and accountability (Awino & Agolla, 2008). Similarly, the provision of feedback and recognition was found to motivate teachers, as acknowledgement of effort contributes to intrinsic motivation and professional fulfilment (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). These findings collectively reinforce the argument that effective instructional leadership fosters both structural support and psychological engagement among teachers.

Regarding gender, the study found no significant overall moderating effect on the relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' job commitment. This suggests that leadership practices influence teachers' commitment irrespective of gender. This finding supports earlier research indicating that workplace conditions and leadership behaviours are more critical determinants of employee outcomes than demographic variables (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001; Essel & Owusu, 2017). However, the study identified gender-based variations in specific dimensions, such as feedback on teaching and learning and monitoring students' progress. This nuanced outcome suggests that while gender may not influence overall leadership effectiveness, it may shape how certain leadership practices are enacted or perceived. The findings of this study differ from those of Teh et al. (2014), who reported significant gender effects on leadership outcomes. This discrepancy may be attributed to contextual differences, including institutional structures, cultural expectations, and the specific leadership dimensions examined. It is also possible that the relatively standardised operational frameworks in private secondary schools in Niger State minimise gender-based differences in leadership practices and teacher responses.

Overall, this study's findings affirm that instructional leadership is a critical determinant of teachers' job commitment. Consistent with the broader literature, the study demonstrates that leadership practices that provide support, promote professional growth, and enhance instructional processes significantly contribute to teachers' motivation and engagement. At the same time, the moderate levels of both leadership practice and teacher commitment highlight the need for systemic improvements in school management, teacher support, and professional development. Addressing these gaps will be essential for improving teacher commitment and achieving sustainable educational outcomes in private secondary schools.

## **Conclusion**

This study highlights the pivotal role of principals' instructional leadership in shaping teachers' job commitment in private secondary schools in Niger State. Curriculum implementation emerged as the most dominant leadership practice, while teachers' job commitment was moderate. The findings established a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of instructional leadership and teachers' commitment, indicating that stronger leadership practices are closely associated with higher levels of teacher engagement. However, principals' gender did not significantly influence this relationship. Overall, the study underscores that effective instructional leadership remains a critical driver of teacher commitment and school effectiveness, irrespective of gender differences.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- a) **Strengthening Instructional Leadership Practices:** School proprietors and policymakers should prioritise continuous professional development programmes for principals to enhance their instructional leadership skills. Special attention should be given to areas such as curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, and feedback mechanisms, as these have been shown to positively influence teachers' job commitment.
- b) **Enhancing Teacher Professional Development:** Since teacher professional development was found to be the least practised dimension of instructional leadership, principals should place greater emphasis on organising and supporting regular training, workshops, and in-service programmes. This will help improve teachers' competence, motivation, and overall commitment to their work.
- c) **Improving Feedback and Monitoring Practices:** Principals should adopt more effective strategies for providing constructive feedback on teaching and learning as well as monitoring students' progress. Regular classroom observations, supportive feedback, and collaborative discussions can enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness and strengthen their commitment.

- d) Promoting Supportive School Leadership Climate: Principals should foster a supportive and collaborative school environment by maintaining visibility, encouraging open communication, and recognising teachers' efforts. Such a positive school climate can enhance teachers' sense of belonging and commitment.
- e) Consideration of Gender Dynamics in Leadership Training: Although gender did not show a significant overall moderating effect, it influenced certain leadership practices. Therefore, leadership training programmes should be designed to be inclusive and sensitive to gender-related differences in leadership styles and their impact on teacher outcomes.

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