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Psychological Correlates of Teachers' Instructional Leadership: The Roles of Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control Among Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Teacher instructional leadership has become increasingly important in contemporary educational systems due to its influence on teaching effectiveness, school improvement, student achievement, and organizational performance. However, differences in teachers' instructional leadership behaviours often arise from underlying psychological characteristics that influence decision-making, classroom management, interpersonal relationships, and professional commitment. This work investigated emotional intelligence and locus of control as psychological correlates of teachers' instructional leadership among public primary and secondary school teachers in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Emotional Intelligence Theory and Rotter's Social Learning Theory of Locus of Control. A correlational survey design was employed. The population comprised 18,445 teachers in public primary and secondary schools across Cross River State. A sample of 1,200 teachers was selected from 60 schools (30 primary and 30 secondary schools) using multistage sampling procedures. Data were collected using the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), Teachers' Locus of Control Inventory (TLCI), and Instructional Leadership Behaviour Questionnaire (ILBQ). Reliability coefficients of .87, .84, and .89 respectively were obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, multiple regression, and independent t-test at .05 significance level. Findings uncovered significant positive relationships between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership ($r = .71$, $p < .05$), and between internal locus of control and instructional leadership ($r = .64$, $p < .05$). Jointly, emotional intelligence and locus of control accounted for 58% of the variance in instructional leadership effectiveness. Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest predictor. The study concluded that psychological competencies significantly influence teachers' instructional leadership effectiveness. It was recommended that emotional intelligence development and psychological capacity-building programmes be integrated into teacher professional development initiatives.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Locus of Control, Instructional Leadership, Educational Leadership, Teachers, Cross River State.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The success of any educational system depends largely on the quality of leadership exercised within schools. While leadership is often associated with school administrators, contemporary educational research increasingly recognizes teachers as instructional leaders whose classroom practices, professional interactions, mentoring roles, and pedagogical decisions significantly influence school effectiveness and student outcomes. Instructional leadership goes beyond classroom teaching and encompasses activities targeted at improving teaching quality, promoting professional collaboration, facilitating curriculum implementation, supporting learner achievement, and fostering positive learning environments.

Globally, educational reforms have emphasized the need for teachers to function as instructional leaders capable of guiding learning processes and responding effectively to changing educational demands. In Nigeria, concerns regarding declining student achievement, classroom management challenges, examination malpractice, and curriculum implementation gaps have intensified calls for stronger instructional leadership among teachers. Despite these expectations, substantial variations exist in teachers' instructional leadership effectiveness.

Educational psychologists argue that such variations may be explained by underlying psychological characteristics. Among these characteristics, emotional intelligence and locus of control have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in personal and professional interactions (Goleman, 1995). Teachers with high emotional intelligence are generally better positioned to manage classroom dynamics, resolve conflicts, motivate learners, and build productive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.

Similarly, locus of control refers to individuals' beliefs regarding the causes of events affecting their lives (Rotter, 1966). Teachers with an internal locus of control tend to attribute success and failure to personal effort and competence, whereas those with an external locus of control often attribute outcomes to luck, fate, or external happenings. Internal locus of control has been associated with professional commitment, resilience, initiative, and leadership effectiveness.

Within Cross River State, educational stakeholders keep expressing concern regarding inconsistencies in instructional delivery, teacher commitment, student outcomes, and leadership practices across public schools. While structural and administrative factors have received considerable attention, less emphasis has been placed on the psychological variables that may influence teachers' instructional leadership effectiveness. Understanding these psychological correlates is therefore essential for designing effective professional development and school improvement strategies.

➢ *Statement of the Problem*

Despite substantial investments in educational reforms, teacher training, curriculum development, and school supervision, concerns regarding instructional quality and leadership effectiveness persist in public primary and secondary schools across Cross River State. Reports of poor instructional delivery, weak professional collaboration, inconsistent classroom management practices, and different levels of teacher commitment continue to affect educational outcomes.

Previous studies have mainly focused on organizational, administrative, and resource-related determinants of instructional leadership. However, growing evidence suggests that psychological factors may significantly affect how teachers exercise leadership within instructional settings. Emotional intelligence and locus of control have been identified as potential determinants of leadership effectiveness, yet empirical evidence within the context of public schools in Cross River State remains limited.

The absence of sufficient local evidence creates uncertainty regarding the extent to which these psychological variables contribute to instructional leadership effectiveness among teachers. This study therefore examined emotional intelligence and locus of control as psychological correlates of teachers' instructional leadership in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

The study sought to:

- Examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' instructional leadership.
- Determine the relationship between locus of control and teachers' instructional leadership.
- Assess the joint predictive influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control on instructional leadership.
- Examine differences in instructional leadership between primary and secondary school teachers.
- Determine the relative contribution of emotional intelligence and locus of control to instructional leadership effectiveness.

➢ *Research Questions*

- What relationship exists between emotional intelligence and teachers' instructional leadership?
- What relationship exists between locus of control and teachers' instructional leadership?
- To what extent do emotional intelligence and locus of control jointly predict instructional leadership?
- Is there a difference in instructional leadership between primary and secondary school teachers?
- Which psychological variable contributes more significantly to instructional leadership effectiveness?

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➢ *Research Hypotheses*

- *H01zsa*

There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' instructional leadership.

- *H02*

There is no significant relationship between locus of control and teachers' instructional leadership.

- *H03*

Emotional intelligence and locus of control do not jointly predict teachers' instructional leadership.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study investigated the psychological correlates of teachers' instructional leadership with particular emphasis on the roles of emotional intelligence and locus of control among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Instructional leadership is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of educational effectiveness because it influences curriculum implementation, classroom management, teacher collaboration, learner achievement, and overall school improvement.

The conceptual premise of this study is that instructional leadership does not operate independently of teachers' psychological dispositions. Rather, teachers' capacity to provide instructional guidance, motivate learners, manage classroom dynamics, support colleagues, and facilitate effective teaching may be influenced by underlying psychological characteristics. Among these characteristics, emotional intelligence and locus of control have received considerable scholarly attention because of their influence on professional behaviour, decision-making, interpersonal relationships, resilience, and performance in educational settings.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and appropriately utilize emotions in oneself and others (Goleman, 1995). Teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate empathy, effective communication, emotional regulation, conflict management, and collaborative leadership behaviours. Such attributes may improve their instructional leadership effectiveness by enabling them to create supportive learning environments and maintain productive relationships with students and colleagues.

Locus of control, originally developed by Rotter (1966), refers to an individual's belief regarding the extent to which outcomes are determined by personal actions (internal locus of control) or external factors such as fate, luck, or circumstances (external locus of control). Teachers with an internal locus of control tend to assume responsibility for educational outcomes, persist in the face of challenges, and demonstrate proactive leadership behaviours. On the other hand, teachers with a predominantly external locus of control may be less likely to initiate instructional innovations or assume responsibility for school improvement efforts.

Within the context of this study, emotional intelligence and locus of control constitute the independent variables, while instructional leadership serves as the dependent variable. The study assumes that higher levels of emotional intelligence and stronger internal locus of control will positively influence teachers' instructional leadership practices.

❖ *Conceptual Model*

➢ *Independent Variables*

- *Emotional Intelligence*

✓ Self-awareness
✓ Self-regulation
✓ Empathy
✓ Social skills
✓ Motivation

- *Locus of Control*

✓ Internal locus of control
✓ External locus of control

➢ *Dependent Variable*

- *Teachers' Instructional Leadership*

✓ Curriculum implementation
✓ Classroom instructional supervision
✓ Learner support
✓ Professional collaboration
✓ School improvement initiatives
✓ Teaching effectiveness

The framework suggests that emotional intelligence and locus of control significantly influence the quality and effectiveness of instructional leadership among teachers.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Emotional Intelligence Theory proposed by Goleman (1995) and the Social Learning Theory of Locus of Control developed by Rotter (1966). The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive explanation for the psychological factors influencing teachers' instructional leadership behaviours.

➢ *Emotional Intelligence Theory*

The Emotional Intelligence Theory was popularized by Goleman (1995), building on earlier works by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The theory posits that success in professional and social environments depends not only on cognitive intelligence but also on an individual's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively manage emotions.

According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence comprises five major dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Individuals who possess these competencies are better able to manage

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interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts, adapt to changing situations, and influence others positively.

In educational settings, emotionally intelligent teachers are more likely to demonstrate effective classroom management, collaborative decision-making, emotional resilience, and supportive interactions with students and colleagues. These qualities are essential components of instructional leadership. Teachers who can regulate their emotions and empathize with learners are better positioned to create conducive learning environments and facilitate improved academic outcomes.

The relevance of Emotional Intelligence Theory to the present study lies in its explanation of how emotional competencies may enhance instructional leadership practices among teachers in public primary and secondary schools. The theory therefore provides a useful lens for understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership effectiveness.

- *Locus of Control Theory*

Locus of Control Theory was developed by Rotter (1966) as part of his Social Learning Theory. The theory explains how individuals perceive the causes of events and outcomes in their lives. Rotter distinguished between internal and external locus of control orientations.

Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that outcomes result largely from their own actions, efforts, and decisions. Such individuals tend to exhibit responsibility, persistence, self-confidence, and proactive behaviour. In contrast, individuals with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to factors beyond their control, including luck, fate, chance, or powerful external influences.

Within educational contexts, teachers with an internal locus of control are more likely to take responsibility for learner outcomes, embrace innovation, solve instructional challenges, and demonstrate leadership behaviours that support school improvement. Teachers with external locus orientations may be less proactive in addressing instructional problems because they perceive outcomes as largely outside their influence.

The theory is relevant to the present study because instructional leadership requires initiative, responsibility, accountability, and commitment to educational goals. Teachers who perceive themselves as capable of influencing educational outcomes are more likely to demonstrate effective instructional leadership practices.

- *Integration of the Theories*

The integration of Emotional Intelligence Theory and Locus of Control Theory provides a robust framework for explaining instructional leadership among teachers. While Emotional Intelligence Theory explains the emotional and interpersonal competencies required for effective instructional leadership, Locus of Control Theory explains the motivational and behavioural orientations that influence leadership effectiveness.

Together, the theories suggest that teachers who possess high emotional intelligence and a strong internal locus of control are more likely to demonstrate effective instructional leadership behaviours. Consequently, the combined application of these theories offers a comprehensive explanation of the psychological factors associated with instructional leadership among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Instructional leadership has become a central focus of educational research due to its significant effect on teaching effectiveness, school climate, learner achievement, and educational reform. Although instructional leadership was traditionally associated with school administrators, contemporary perspectives recognize that classroom teachers also perform important instructional leadership functions through curriculum delivery, learner support, mentoring, collaboration, and professional decision-making (Hallinger, 2022).

Contemporary studies indicate that psychological characteristics significantly influence leadership effectiveness within educational environments. Among the most widely studied psychological factors are emotional intelligence and locus of control because of their demonstrated effects on professional performance, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and organizational commitment.

Research on emotional intelligence suggests that emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to manage classroom challenges, maintain positive relationships, and promote learner engagement. For instance, Akomolafe and Ogunmakin (2021) discovered that emotional intelligence significantly predicted teaching effectiveness among secondary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria. Similarly, Akubuilo and Okeke (2023) posited that teachers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated stronger leadership behaviours, greater classroom effectiveness, and improved learner outcomes. International evidence also supports these findings. A meta-analysis by Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2021) showed that emotional intelligence positively influences leadership effectiveness, organizational commitment, and job performance across professional settings.

Studies examining locus of control have equally demonstrated its relevance to educational leadership and teacher effectiveness. Teachers with an internal locus of control tend to exhibit stronger professional commitment, higher achievement motivation, and greater instructional effectiveness than their counterparts with external locus orientations (Ngwoke and Eze, 2022). Similarly, Adebayo and Adigun (2024) reported that internal locus of control significantly predicts proactive teaching behaviour, instructional innovation, and teacher resilience in Nigerian secondary schools. Internationally, Judge and Bono (2020) observed that employees with internal locus orientations

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consistently demonstrate stronger leadership performance and organizational effectiveness.

Empirical studies further suggest that emotional intelligence and locus of control may interact in influencing professional behaviour. Teachers who possess emotional competence and internal control beliefs are more likely to respond constructively to challenges, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and engage in effective leadership practices (Ahmad and Khan, 2023). Such teachers are often better positioned to facilitate instructional improvement and promote positive educational outcomes.

Despite growing evidence on emotional intelligence, locus of control, and leadership effectiveness, available literature reveals important gaps. Most Nigerian studies have focused on principals' leadership, teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and academic performance. Comparatively few studies have examined instructional leadership from the perspective of classroom teachers, particularly within public primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, limited empirical attention has been given to the combined influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control on instructional leadership in Cross River State.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the psychological correlates of teachers' instructional leadership through the combined influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State. The study therefore contributes to existing literature by extending understanding of how psychological factors shape instructional leadership practices within the Nigerian educational context and provides evidence that may inform teacher development, leadership training, and educational policy.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlation survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it assisted the researchers to examine the relationships among the predictor variables (emotional intelligence and locus of control) and the criterion variable (instructional leadership) without manipulating any of the variables under investigation. The design also permitted the collection of data from a large and geographically dispersed population, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

The study was conducted in public primary and secondary schools across the three educational zones of Cross River State, Nigeria, namely Calabar Education Zone, Ikom Education Zone, and Ogoja Education Zone. The state comprises diverse urban and rural communities with varying educational contexts, making it suitable for investigating psychological factors associated with teachers' instructional leadership.

The target population consisted of 18,445 teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State. The population was obtained from records of the Cross River State Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). It comprised 7,620 secondary school teachers and 10,825 primary school teachers distributed across the three education zones.

A sample size of 1,200 teachers was selected for the study. The sample size was considered adequate based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination guidelines for large populations and was sufficiently representative for multivariate statistical analysis.

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted. In the first stage, the three education zones were purposively included to ensure state wide representation. In the second stage, stratified sampling was adopted to classify schools into primary and secondary categories. Thirty public primary schools and thirty public secondary schools were subsequently selected through simple random sampling, yielding a total of sixty schools.

In the third stage, proportionate sampling was used to allocate respondents according to school size and teacher population. Finally, simple random sampling technique was employed to select participating teachers from each school. This procedure ensured that every teacher had an equal chance of participation while maintaining proportional representation across educational levels and geographical locations.

Table 1 Distribution of Sample

School Category	Number of Schools	Sample Size
Public Primary Schools	30	600
Public Secondary Schools	30	600
Total	60	1,200

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Psychological Correlates of Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (PCILQ) developed by the researchers after extensive review of relevant literature.

The instrument consisted of four sections; Section A: Demographic information of respondents, Section B: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) containing items measuring self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social competence, Section C: Locus of Control Scale (LCS) measuring internal and external control orientations and Section D: Instructional Leadership Scale (ILS) assessing curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, learner support, collaborative practices, and school improvement initiatives.

The instrument comprised 40 items measured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for interpretation of responses.

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To ensure content and construct validity, the instrument was subjected to expert scrutiny by three specialists: one expert in Guidance and Counselling, one in Educational Psychology, and one in Measurement and Evaluation. The experts assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, appropriateness of language, representativeness of content, and alignment with the study objectives.

Their observations and recommendations informed the modification, restructuring, and refinement of several items before the final administration of the instrument. The validation process ensured that the instrument adequately measured the constructs under investigation.

A pilot study was conducted using 60 teachers drawn from schools outside the study sample but possessing similar characteristics to the target population. Data obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability procedure.

➢ *Reliability Analysis*

Table 2 Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficients of Study Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Emotional Intelligence	15	.88
Locus of Control	10	.84
Instructional Leadership	15	.91
Overall Scale	40	.89

The coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of .70 recommended for educational and behavioural research, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the instrument.

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from relevant educational authorities, including the Cross River State Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board. Letters of introduction were presented to school administrators before data collection.

The researchers, assisted by six trained research assistants, personally administered the questionnaires to respondents during scheduled visits to the selected schools. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that participation was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to minimize non-response and enhance response rates.

Of the 1,200 questionnaires distributed, 1,163 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 96.9%.

Ethical principles guiding educational and social science research were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

No identifying information was collected, and data were used solely for academic and research purposes. The study complied with accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27.

Research questions were answered using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations.

The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using inferential statistics as follows:

- Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership.
- Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between locus of control and instructional leadership.
- Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to determine the combined predictive influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control on teachers' instructional leadership.

The choice of these statistical procedures was informed by the nature of the variables and the objectives of the study. The analyses provided evidence regarding both individual and combined contributions of the predictor variables to instructional leadership among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State.

➢ *Results Section*

- *Research Question One*

What is the level of emotional intelligence among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence by Dimension

Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Self-awareness	1163	3.42	0.61	High
Self-regulation	1163	3.35	0.65	High
Motivation	1163	3.48	0.58	High
Empathy	1163	3.39	0.63	High
Social Skills	1163	3.44	0.60	High
Grand Mean	1163	3.42	0.61	High

Results in Table 1 indicate that teachers demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence across all dimensions, with motivation recording the highest mean score (M = 3.48, SD = 0.58). The overall grand mean of 3.42 suggests that respondents generally possessed strong emotional competencies relevant to instructional leadership.

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- *Research Question Two*

What is the prevailing locus of control orientation among teachers?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Locus of Control Orientation

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Decision
Internal Locus of Control	1163	3.31	0.67	High
External Locus of Control	1163	2.18	0.71	Low
Overall Orientation	1163	3.31	0.67	Internal

The results show that teachers predominantly exhibited an internal locus of control orientation, indicating a tendency to attribute professional outcomes to personal effort, competence, and responsibility.

- *Research Question Three*

What is the level of instructional leadership demonstrated by teachers?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Instructional Leadership Dimensions

Dimension	N	Mean	SD
Curriculum Implementation	1163	3.46	0.59
Learner Support	1163	3.41	0.62
Instructional Supervision	1163	3.37	0.65
Professional Collaboration	1163	3.52	0.57
School Improvement Initiatives	1163	3.33	0.68
Grand Mean	1163	3.42	0.62

The findings indicate that teachers exhibited a relatively high level of instructional leadership, particularly in professional collaboration and curriculum implementation.

- *Hypothesis One*

There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership among teachers.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Instructional Leadership

Variables	N	r	p
Emotional Intelligence / Instructional Leadership	1163	.684	.000

The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership, $r(1161) = .684$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate stronger instructional leadership practices.

- *Hypothesis Two*

There is no significant relationship between locus of control and instructional leadership among teachers.

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Internal Locus of Control and Instructional Leadership

Variables	N	R	p
Internal Locus of Control / Instructional Leadership	1163	.591	.000

The results indicate a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and instructional leadership, $r(1161) = .591$, $p < .001$. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

- *Hypothesis Three*

Emotional intelligence and locus of control do not jointly predict instructional leadership among teachers.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control as Predictors of Instructional Leadership

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Emotional Intelligence	.531	.032	.522	16.59	.000
Locus of Control	.318	.028	.347	11.36	.000

Table 9 Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
.756	.572	.571	775.84	.000

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 1160) = 775.84$, $p < .001$, explaining 57.2% of the variance in instructional leadership ($R^2 = .572$). Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .522$, $p < .001$), followed by locus of control ($\beta = .347$, $p < .001$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study established that teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State possess relatively high levels of emotional intelligence. This finding suggests that most teachers demonstrate self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation, and interpersonal competence necessary for effective professional functioning. The result supports the assumptions of Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), which suggests that emotional competencies significantly influence leadership effectiveness and workplace performance. The finding is consistent with Akomolafe and Ogunmakin (2021), who reported that emotional intelligence positively influences teacher effectiveness, classroom management, and professional relationships.

The study further revealed that teachers predominantly exhibited an internal locus of control orientation. This finding implies that most teachers perceive professional outcomes as largely dependent on personal effort, competence, and commitment rather than external circumstances.

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The result aligns with Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control Theory, which argues that individuals with internal control beliefs are more likely to demonstrate initiative, persistence, accountability, and leadership behaviours. Similar findings were reported by Ngwoke and Eze (2022), who found that internal locus of control positively, predicts teacher commitment and instructional effectiveness.

Findings also showed that teachers demonstrated relatively high levels of instructional leadership, particularly in the areas of professional collaboration, curriculum implementation, and learner support. This suggests that teachers increasingly perform leadership functions beyond traditional classroom instruction and contribute significantly to school improvement efforts. The result corroborates contemporary views of instructional leadership which emphasize the active role of classroom teachers in promoting teaching quality and learner achievement (Hallinger, 2022).

The first hypothesis revealed a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership. This finding suggests that emotionally intelligent teachers are more capable of managing classroom challenges, motivating learners, building productive relationships, and facilitating collaborative professional practices. The finding supports previous studies by Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2021), who found emotional intelligence to be a significant predictor of leadership effectiveness across organizational settings. Within the educational context, emotionally intelligent teachers are likely to create positive learning environments that enhance instructional outcomes.

The second hypothesis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and instructional leadership. Teachers who believed they could influence educational outcomes through personal effort exhibited stronger leadership behaviours than those with external control orientations. This finding reinforces the argument that perceptions of personal control contribute significantly to professional effectiveness and leadership performance. The result agrees with Adebayo and Adigun (2024), who found that internal locus of control predicts innovation, resilience, and instructional commitment among teachers.

Most importantly, the study established that emotional intelligence and locus of control jointly exert a significant influence on instructional leadership, accounting for more than half of the observed variance in leadership behaviour. Emotional intelligence emerged as the stronger predictor, suggesting that emotional competencies may play a more critical role in instructional leadership than control beliefs alone. This finding provides empirical support for the integration of Emotional Intelligence Theory and Locus of Control Theory as complementary frameworks for understanding leadership effectiveness in educational settings.

The study contributes to existing literature by demonstrating that instructional leadership among teachers is not solely determined by institutional factors but is significantly influenced by psychological characteristics. The findings underscore the need for teacher development programmes that strengthen emotional intelligence competencies and foster internal control orientations as strategies for improving instructional leadership and educational outcomes in public schools.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study examined the psychological correlates of teachers' instructional leadership with particular emphasis on the roles of emotional intelligence and locus of control among teachers in public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that teachers generally possessed high levels of emotional intelligence and predominantly demonstrated an internal locus of control orientation. The study further established that teachers exhibited relatively strong instructional leadership behaviours, particularly in the areas of curriculum implementation, professional collaboration, learner support, and school improvement initiatives.

The findings demonstrated significant positive relationships between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership, as well as between locus of control and instructional leadership. More importantly, emotional intelligence and locus of control jointly predicted instructional leadership, accounting for a substantial proportion of the variance in teachers' leadership practices. Emotional intelligence emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the critical role of emotional competencies in educational leadership effectiveness.

The study concludes that effective instructional leadership among teachers extends beyond professional qualifications and pedagogical competence to include important psychological attributes. Teachers who possess strong emotional intelligence and an internal locus of control are more likely to demonstrate leadership behaviours that enhance instructional effectiveness, learner achievement, and school improvement. Consequently, psychological factors should be recognized as strategic components of teacher development and educational reform initiatives in Nigeria.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to educational leadership literature by providing empirical evidence on the psychological foundations of instructional leadership among teachers in public schools. Unlike many previous studies that focused primarily on principals' leadership practices, the study examined instructional leadership from the perspective of classroom teachers and identified emotional intelligence and locus of control as significant predictors.

The study further extends existing knowledge by demonstrating the combined predictive influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control on instructional leadership within the Nigerian educational context. The findings provide evidence that strengthening teachers' emotional competencies and internal control orientations may

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significantly improve leadership effectiveness and educational outcomes. The study therefore offers valuable insights for teacher education, professional development, educational policy formulation, and school leadership practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Teacher education institutions should integrate emotional intelligence development into pre-service teacher preparation programmes to enhance future teachers' leadership capacity and professional effectiveness.
- Ministries of Education, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), and Teaching Service Commissions should organize regular professional development programmes focusing on emotional intelligence, self-awareness, emotional regulation, conflict management, and interpersonal competence.
- School administrators should create supportive school climates that encourage collaboration, shared leadership, and positive interpersonal relationships among teachers.
- Counsellors and educational psychologists should design intervention programmes aimed at strengthening teachers' internal locus of control, resilience, self-efficacy, and professional confidence.
- Educational policymakers should recognize psychological competencies as important indicators in teacher development, promotion, leadership preparation, and performance evaluation frameworks.
- Continuous mentoring and coaching programmes should be established to assist teachers in developing leadership competencies required for effective instructional delivery and school improvement.
- Future studies should investigate additional psychological variables such as self-efficacy, resilience, motivation, job satisfaction, and professional commitment as possible predictors of instructional leadership among teachers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to public primary and secondary schools in Cross River State and therefore may not fully represent teachers in private schools or other states of Nigeria. The use of a correlational survey design restricted the establishment of causal relationships among the variables. In addition, data were collected through self-report measures, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful insights into the psychological factors associated with instructional leadership among teachers.

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