

**PRINCIPALS' DECISION-MAKING STYLES AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' JOB ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**<sup>1</sup>Prof. Perpetua Ngozi Okorji & <sup>2</sup>Nneka Ukamaka Nweze<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria**Article Details**

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**Abstract**

The study determined principals' decision-making styles as predictors of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 15,321 teachers from the 296 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 767 teachers, selected using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. Two sets of instruments titled "Principals' Decision-Making Styles Questionnaire (PDMSQ)" and "Teachers' Job Engagement Questionnaire (TJEQ)" were used for data collection. The instruments were face-validated by three experts: two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the instruments' internal consistency, yielding overall coefficients of 0.79 for PDMSQ and 0.81 for TJEQ. The researcher, together with five research assistants, collected data for the study using the direct approach, achieving a 98% return rate. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses. The study's findings revealed, among others, that principals' dependent and rational decision-making styles are strong and significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Further results showed that principals' avoiding decision-making style is a fair and significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the Enugu State Post Primary School Management Board should organize annual seminars for principals to share their experiences and knowledge on when and how to use an avoiding decision-making style to improve teachers' job engagement.

**Keywords:** Principals, Decision-Making, Styles, Teachers, Job Engagement, Dependent, Rational, Avoiding**1.1 Introduction**

The principal is the chief executive officer responsible for running day-to-day operations in a secondary school. A principal, as described by Eneje (2024), is typically an individual who holds a leadership and administrative position, overseeing the operations and management of a secondary school. The principal is the administrator who oversees daily operations to ensure the

efficient functioning of a secondary school. According to Egboka and Francis-Okorie (2024), the principal is the chief executive officer who makes major decisions, manages available resources, and influences staff activities to ensure the smooth operation of a secondary school and the attainment of predetermined educational objectives. The principal has executive authority to run programmes and implement educational policies in a secondary school. As the manager, the principal engages in daily decision-making to run the affairs of a secondary school and improve teachers' job engagement.

Teachers' job engagement is the devotion and commitment to work obligations in learning institutions. Okafor, Nnebedum and Nwanne (2025) described teachers' job engagement as the act of involving and partaking in work activities in an organization. Furthermore, Okafor et al. posited that it is concerned with being devoted and passionate about performing work roles in learning institutions. It is the willingness of teachers to do their best to carry out assigned duties in secondary schools. Obasi and Adieme (2021) defined job engagement as expressing the enthusiasm and mental and emotional connection of teaching staff in a school organization. The authors added that job engagement measures how motivated people are to put in extra effort for their organization. Teachers' job engagement is the demonstration of enthusiasm and dedication in carrying out official tasks in secondary schools.

Teachers display job engagement through lesson preparation, classroom management, actual lesson presentation, marking students' registers, commitment to the job assigned, active involvement in extracurricular activities, and motivating learners to achieve desirable academic performance. Choi, Suh, Choi, Lee, and Son (2020) asserted that teachers demonstrate job engagement by showing enthusiasm for their work, investing energy in fulfilling their responsibilities, exerting effort to deliver instruction to students in the classroom, and attaining professional efficacy. Teachers show job engagement through regular lesson presentation, regularity and punctuality in schools, counseling of students, and compliance with the teaching professional code of conduct, among others. Also, Evans and Zhu (2023) noted that teachers display job engagement through a clear understanding and involvement in their professional roles, full participation in discussions of work activities, making essential preparations before teaching students, and valuing regular opportunities to organize school events. However, some teachers disengaged from performing certain aspects of job in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Onubuleze (2023) noted that teachers in public secondary schools in Enugu State often exhibit truancy, frequent absenteeism, tardiness, inadequate lesson planning, and failure to engage in other unethical conduct related to their profession. It rests on the principals to make decisions that could improve teachers' job engagement.

Decision-making is the process of choosing the best options to attain a set goal. According to Udhaya and Anjana (2024), decision-making involves choosing a course of action from multiple options. It is a conscious and deliberate effort to make the right choice when tackling a problem. Nngini and Aguba (2023) described decision-making as a vital cognitive process that involves choosing the most suitable option from various alternatives to achieve specific goals or objectives. Contextually, decision-making involves identifying and weighing alternatives to choose the most

efficient one to solve a given problem. A principal can weigh various alternatives to choose the most efficient one for solving a specific problem through different decision-making styles.

Decision-making styles are strategies for selecting a preferred course of action from alternative means of moving towards the desired state of affairs. Aparna and Bhanu (2024) defined decision-making styles as an individual's consistent patterns of approaching issues and making choices to solve problems. Decision-making styles are conscious approaches to choosing alternatives to attain set goals. Another opinion expressed by Bavolar, Kacmar, Lovas and Durbisov (2023) is that decision-making styles are the habitual patterns of reaction to decisional situations. They are procedures for determining the best alternative among several through deliberation. Operationally, decision-making styles are procedures and manners for choosing the best alternative solutions.

Several scholars have outlined decision-making styles as follows: rational, intuitive, dependent, spontaneous, and avoiding decision-making styles (AlAmer, 2023; Olusegun, 2020; Sari, 2023). Similarly, the decision-making style identified by Kaur and Bala (2016) includes emotional, rational, or irrational, spontaneous, dependent, and avoiding decision-making styles. This study focused on dependent, rational, and avoiding decision-making styles. The justification for choosing these three areas is the challenges in decision-making arising from the laxities in the selected styles.

A dependent decision-making style by principals is characterized by being advised and directed by staff members when choosing the best alternative solutions to an organization's problems. Nuran and Mine (2017) noted that the dependent decision-making style is characterized by getting direction and support from others before making a decision. In a dependent decision-making style, staff's views and opinions are considered when decisions are made. Othman, Othman, Hallit, Obeid and Hallit (2020) maintained that a dependent decision-making style requires support, advice, and guidance from others when making decisions. A dependent decision-making style helps to foster a sense of shared responsibility, communication, teamwork, and cooperation. However, some situations that demand a thorough search for information to make decisions require using a rational decision-making style.

Rational decision-making is the systematic method of choosing among possible choices based on facts. Ozsari and Tek (2024) asserted that rational decision-making requires systematically selecting options based on reason and facts, involving a series of processes. Principals employ logical steps to gather and review relevant information before selecting the best course of action. Sari (2022) posited that a rational decision-making style is characterized by the use of logical information processes to make optimal choices. Managers who use a rational style gather and evaluate several alternatives, consider scenarios for all available choices, and choose the best option based on the situation, available information, and resources. Some principals with limited access to information may perhaps avoid decision-making until it is available.

Avoiding decision-making involves actively sidestepping the task of choosing the best alternative for solving a given problem. Han, Quadflieg and Ludwig (2023) described avoiding

decision-making as foregoing, abandoning, postponing, bypassing, or delegating the task of choosing to solve a given problem. Avoidant decision-makers dodge making important decisions until the pressure is on. Sari (2022) noted that avoidant decision-makers tend to postpone the whole decision-making situation until it is near the due date. Principals who suspect the underlying situation is unimportant or will resolve itself could adopt an avoidance decision-making style. Principals could adopt an avoidance decision-making style to save time and energy when handling important issues in secondary schools.

The incessant exhibition of certain undesirable behaviour by teachers casts doubt on the conducive nature of the work environment and on teachers' motivation through involvement in decision-making processes in secondary schools. Onyali and Akpunonu (2024) noted that teachers are frequently excluded from decision-making processes that affect their work environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. In a sequel to this, Onyali and Akpunonu asserted that this lack of teachers' involvement in decision-making processes results in a sense of disempowerment, which adversely affects the quality of education and students' learning outcomes. Some aspects of the work environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State seem unsatisfactory. As noted by Akhibi and Omenyi (2024), some public secondary schools in Enugu State appear to grapple with management challenges, including poor learning environments, lack of teamwork, ineffective communication, persistent conflicts, and poor instructional supervision. It is against this background that the researcher delved into this study.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate principals' decision-making styles as predictors of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Principals' dependent decision-making style as a predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Principals' rational decision-making style as a predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
3. Principals' avoiding decision-making style as a predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of principals' dependent decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?
2. What is the predictive value of principals' rational decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?
3. What is the predictive value of principals' avoiding decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

## 1.4 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 alpha level:

1. Principals' dependent decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Principals' rational decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
3. Principals' avoiding decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

## 2. Methods

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 15,321 teachers from the 296 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 767 teachers, selected using the proportionate stratified sampling technique. Two sets of instruments titled "Principals' Decision-Making Styles Questionnaire (PDMSQ)" and "Teachers' Job Engagement Questionnaire (TJEQ)" were used for data collection. The researcher developed the instruments from a literature review and consultation with experts in the field of education. PDMSQ has three clusters: A, B, and C, with 9, 7, and 8 items, respectively, for dependent decision-making styles, rational decision-making styles, and avoiding decision-making styles. PDMSQ contains 24 items structured on a four-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. TJEQ comprised 18 items that measure teachers' job engagement. The items of the instrument are placed on a 4-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Face validity of the instruments was determined by three experts: two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instruments were subjected to a test of internal consistency using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded coefficients of 0.79, 0.82, and 0.76 for the three clusters A, B, and C of PDMSQ, with the overall reliability index of 0.79. On the other hand, the coefficient value of 0.81 was obtained for TJEQ.

The researcher, with five research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Enugu State, used the direct data collection method. A total of 767 copies of instruments were distributed, and 751 copies of questionnaires were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating a 98 percent return rate. The duly completed and successfully retrieved copies were used for data analysis. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses. For the decision on the research questions, the coefficient  $r$  and the predictive value were interpreted using the correlation coefficient by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, cited in Wubante (2020), as follows

Predictive Value Interpretation  
.00- .19 Weak Prediction  
.20- .39 Fair Prediction  
.40- .69 Moderate Prediction  
.70- .89 Strong Prediction  
-.90- .1.00 Very strong Prediction

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if the p-value is equal to or less than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is rejected, but if the p-value is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

### 3. Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the predictive value of principals' dependent decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

**Table 1: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Dependent Decision-Making Styles as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Dependent Decision-Making Style	751	.886	.785	.785	.26748	Strong

Table 1 revealed that the predictive value of principals' dependent decision-making style on teachers' job engagement is 0.886 with a coefficient of determination of 0.785. This shows that 78.5% changes in teachers' job engagement could be attributed to principals' dependent decision-making style. The regression coefficient  $r$  of 0.785 indicated that principals' dependent decision-making style is a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State

**Hypothesis One:** Principals' dependent decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 2: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Dependent Decision-Making Styles as a Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Predictor	N	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P-value	Remark
Dependent Decision-Making Style	751	.886	.785	2742.177	.000	*S

\*Significant

As shown in Table 2, the simple regression coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.886 while the  $R^2$  is 0.785 showing that principals' dependent decision-making style makes 78.5% contribution to the variance in teachers' job engagement. The  $F(1/751) = 2742.177$  and the  $p$ -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the  $p$ -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' dependent decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the predictive value of principals' rational decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

**Table 3: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Rational Decision-Making Styles as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Rational Decision-Making Style	751	.786	.618	.618	.35674	Strong

Result in Table 3 revealed that the predictive value of principals' rational decision-making style on teachers' job engagement is 0.786 with a coefficient of determination of 0.618. This shows that principals' rational decision-making style can make 61.8% changes in teachers' job engagement. The regression coefficient  $r$  of 0.786 indicated that principals' rational decision-making style is a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis Two:** Principals' rational decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 4: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Rational Decision-Making Styles as a Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Predictor	n	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P-value	Remark
Rational Decision-Making Style	751	.786	.618	1213.677	.000	*S

\*Significant

It is shown in Table 4 that the simple regression coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.786, while the  $R^2$  is 0.618 showing that 61.8% changes in teachers' job engagement could be explained by principals' rational decision-making style. The  $F(1/751) = 1213.677$  and the  $p$ -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the  $p$ -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' rational decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Research Question 3:** What is the predictive value of principals' avoiding decision-making style on teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

**Table 5: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Avoiding Decision-Making Styles as a Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Model	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Avoiding Decision-Making Style	751	.346	.120	.118	.54187	Fair

Table 5 indicated that the predictive value of principals' avoiding decision-making style on teachers' job engagement is 0.346 with a coefficient of determination of 0.120. This reveals that principals' avoiding decision-making style can lead to 12.0% variation in teachers' job engagement. The regression coefficient  $r$  of 0.346 indicated that principals' avoiding decision-making style is a fair predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis Three:** Principals' avoiding decision-making style does not significantly predict teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 6: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Principals' Avoiding Decision-Making Styles as a Significant Predictor of Teachers' Job Engagement**

Predictor	n	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P-value	Remark
Rational Decision-Making Style	751	.346	.120	101.658	.000	*S

\*Significant

Table 6 shows that the simple regression coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.346, while the  $R^2$  is 0.120 showing that 12.0% changes in teachers' job engagement could be explained by principals' avoiding decision-making style. The  $F(1/751) = 101.658$  and the  $p$ -value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, since the  $p$ -value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, principals' avoiding decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The study found that principals' dependent decision-making style is a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding could be explained by the fact that the dependent decision-making style of principals makes teachers feel they have a voice and input in school affairs, thereby motivating them to exhibit stronger job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. This agreed with the findings of Kian, Nabaei and Gharibi (2022), which showed that a dependent decision-making style was a

strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in primary schools. The agreement between the findings may be due to the studies being conducted in educational institutions and to teachers serving as respondents. This disagreed with the finding of Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatalilat and Elci (2019), which revealed a moderate relationship between dependent decision-making style and employees' job engagement. The disagreement between the findings could be attributed to a six-year time span, which can lead to changes in research reports.

Teachers who are consulted before decisions are made may feel heard and more valued, thereby contributing to stronger job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. A dependent decision-making style among principals fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration, boosting staff morale and serving as a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The inclusive work environment created by the dependent decision-making style of principals can inspire teachers to demonstrate strong job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. It was also found that principals' dependent decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This agreed with the finding of Kian, Nabaei, and Gharibi (2022), which showed that a dependent decision-making style was a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in primary schools. A dependent decision-making style fosters open communication and trust, which are significant predictors of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The study found that principals' rational decision-making style is a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Principals' rational decision-making style, which is based on gathering facts to make decisions about school affairs, reduces the likelihood of errors and guesswork and improves the quality of final decisions, which could explain its strong association with teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. This affirmed Kijjambu's (2022) finding of a strong relationship between dependent decision-making and employee engagement among academic staff. This also concurred with the findings of Kian, Nabaei and Gharibi (2022), who found that a rational decision-making style was a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in primary schools. The agreement between the findings could be explained by the fact that the studies were all conducted in educational institutions. Principals' rational decision-making style involves gathering and analyzing detailed information, leading to well-informed decisions on school and staff affairs and thereby serving as a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

A rational decision-making style among principals is associated with choosing the most appropriate option after in-depth examination of issues to be decided, which can create a conducive work environment and serve as a strong predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Further result showed that principals' rational decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This upheld Kijjambu's (2022) finding of a significant relationship between dependent decision-making and employee engagement among academic staff. This is in line with the finding of Kian, Nabaei and Gharibi (2022) which revealed that rational decision-making style was a significant of predictor of teachers' job engagement in primary schools. A rational decision-

making style among principals reduces the uncertainty associated with decisions about staff affairs, a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The study's findings revealed that principals' avoidance decision-making style is a fair predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding is probably explained by the fact that principals' avoidance decision-making style is associated with delaying or failing to address issues, which may worsen over time and create an unhealthy work environment, which could be a fair predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. This is in agreement with the finding of Kijjambu (2022), which indicated that there was a fair relationship between avoiding decision-making and employee engagement among academic staff. This refuted the finding of Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatalilat and Elci (2019) which showed that there was a moderate relationship between avoidance decision-making style and job engagement of employees. Differences in geographic location, respondents, and organizations with different policies may contribute to the disagreement between the findings. Principals' avoidance decision-making style leads to delaying decisions until the last moment, which can cause conflict and disharmony and contribute to a weak predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Principals' use of an avoidance decision-making style in matters concerning teachers can build frustration and resentment, leading them to exhibit weak job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. It was also found that principals' avoiding decision-making style is a significant predictor of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This affirmed Kijjambu's (2022) finding of a significant relationship between decision avoidance and employee engagement among academic staff. Principals' avoidance decision-making style enables them to take time to gather information and think before arriving at the right decisions, which are significant predictors of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it was concluded that principals' decision-making styles are positive and significant predictors of teachers' job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State. The right decision-making styles can help teachers support and motivate them to display strong job engagement in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

## **6. Recommendations**

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

1. The Ministry of Education should develop an inclusive management policy to foster a participatory decision-making style that values and supports teachers' input on school affairs, thereby enhancing their job engagement.
2. Principals should enroll in a leadership course that provides a platform for continuous improvement in their rational decision-making to facilitate teachers' job engagement.

3. The Enugu State Post Primary School Management Board should organize annual seminars for principals to share their experience and knowledge on when and how to use the avoiding decision-making style to improve teachers' job engagement.



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