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Modern Soft Skills as Predictor of Administrators' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study sets out to examine the extent of Administrator's adoption of modern soft skills and its prediction of administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in North- West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised, two null hypotheses formulated and a simple prediction research design was adopted to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of all the school administrators and vice administrators in administration and academics making up 276 in the 92 government-approved public secondary schools in North-West Senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State during the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample size for this study was 159 administrators determined using Taro yamene formula through multistage sampling procedure involving proportionate stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were designed for data collection: Modern Soft Skills Questionnaire (MSSQ) and Administrators Job Performance Questionnaire" (AJPQ). The instruments were subjected to face validity by three experts. Cronbach Alpha reliability statistic was adopted to determine the reliability of the instrument. The reliability indices for both instruments (MSSQ) and AJPQ were .91 and .87 respectively. Answering of research questions and the testing of the null Hypotheses was done using Simple Regression Statistics at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings revealed that administrator's adoption of modern soft skills such as teamwork and time management significantly predicted administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. From the findings, it was concluded that administrator's adoption of modern soft skills significantly predicts administrators' job performance in North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the state government should encourage administrators on the need to imbibe modern soft skills for enhanced job performance

Keywords: Modern Soft skills, Administrators, Job performance, Rule of law, teamwork and time management

1.0 Introduction

The enhanced growth and development of any nation is hinged on proper administration of its educational services and resources (staff, students and infrastructures) as well as the administrators' possession of modern soft skills (Akpan, Thomas & Sunday, 2019). The term "soft skills" refers to any skill that does not require the use of machinery but adopt the art, attitude and language of administration to achieve its goal and objectives. To Whitmore (2018), they are crucial job-related skills that need little or no machine contact and have a broad application on the job. To John, Utibe, Thomas & Paul (2024) they are tools that may be employed by teachers, students and administrators without the need to change or conform to any given circumstances. Its value stems from the fact that they are not limited to a single profession. Their essence aids people in adapting and behaving positively in order to effectively deal with the obstacles of their professional and daily living (Chiara, 2016). To Chiara and Whitmore, Modern Soft skills have grown in popularity over time, and people with these soft skills are more adaptable in an ever-changing world hence, the European Commission launched the program Agenda for new skills and jobs in 2012 in order to train and explain to young adults this new set of skills and its importance.

These skills according to Thomas & Thomas (2025a) fall under three management skills, namely: administrative intelligence, social intelligence and emotional intelligence skills. These skills are further categorized into: personality, communication, cognitive, empathy, time management, teamwork and leadership traits, problem solving, adaptability, organizational, teamwork/collaboration, critical thinking, technology/ technical proficiency and record keeping skills (Itighise & Thomas, 2022). These skills will aid Administrators in fulfilling their administrative functions as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE (2024), World Education Forum (2000)), and to Joseph, Akpan & Thomas (2025) aid in improving the quality and essential life skills of the citizenry as embedded in science, literacy, numeracy, and the rule of law.

To Thomas & Ereh (2017), an administrator should be value-oriented and versed with the rule of Law. Value to Jonah, Duru, Uwem & Thomas (2023), connotes "what is worthwhile", and "what is worthwhile" connotes education, and education flourishes through: staff development, finance, budget, public relations, the community, instructional programme and students' welfare hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria's adoption of Education as an instrument per excellence for national growth and the provision of the rule of law to consolidate its' citizens' stability, confidence, as well as guide in problem solving. Ezeude (2014) and Thomas & Thomas (2016) admonishes school Administrators to be legally grounded to guide the members of the school community operate responsibly within and outside the school environment especially in the face of unemployment and insecurity. These laws are constituted as the citizenry's Fundamental Human Rights and are enshrined in Chapter Four (IV) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These rights include: Right to life; Right to dignity of human person; Right to personal liberty; Right to fair hearing; Right to private and family life; Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Right to freedom of expression and the press; Right to peaceful assembly and association; and right to freedom from discrimination, amongst others. The knowledge of these rights constitutes part of the "Modern Soft skills" which according to Thomas (2014) will instill discipline and erode unruly behaviour in the school system.

One of the ways for administrators to assuage administrative problems to Uboh, Thomas, Sunday, Ekanem & Utibe (2026) is through Teamwork skill approach. To Chang & Artemis, (2019) and Montebello (2020), administrators foster strong and cohesive teams by promoting open communication, creating opportunities for collaborations, as well as recognizing and leveraging individual strength. This teamwork skill enhances productivity, promotes positive work environment and support positive and successful implementation of educational initiatives. It also aids administrators to think critically on refocusing sustainable development through higher education research (Ozurumba & Thomas, 2014). To achieve this strong personnel relationship as well as goals for efficient teamwork, the most basic conditions is a suitable team size.

Administrator's Time Management Skill (ATMS) is another modern soft skill approach that will enhance effective planning and management of the school calendar, prompt completion of task and setting of proper functions. To Bassey (2019) and Thomas & Inyang (2021), ATMS is the planning and scheduling of activities, organizing of tasks in a prioritized order and allocating time to the tasks according to their order of importance. It also has to do with the ability to manage and control time through the use of planners, calendars and the likes. To Lakein (2021), Thomas &

Thomas (2026), ATMS is also important for everyone since it is concerned with self-management and thus, provides administrators opportunity on expediency.

The Administrator's Time Management Skill (ATMS), therefore implores on business leaders and corporations as well as students, administrators and professionals especially in the school system, to be time conscious and time bound on their supervisory role to assure global competitiveness and high-level job performance (Udofia (2026), Thomas & Inyang (2021), Thomas & Ereh (2017), Thomas & Thomas (2026), Lakein, (2021)). The Administrators' job performance was previously mirrored on the performance of the school products in the society maintaining a high level of discipline and policy formulation governing curricular, co-curricular activities as well as reporting school defects in terms of infrastructure or personnel to the appropriate authorities for rectification (Thomas & Thomas 2025b). Contemporarily, administrators display laissez-faire attitude toward their assigned role performance. They do not motivate, guide nor supervise the resources placed under their care. These occurrences could be attributable to administrators' non-compliance with the use of modern soft skills as opined by Ukpung (2018) and Ereh & Thomas (2018).

In the 21st century, Modern Soft Skills has become a major criterion for employment and public policies. They are commonly used to "refer to the "emotional side" of human beings in opposition to the IQ (Intelligent Quotient) component related to hard skills" (Chiara, 2016). Due to their rising importance, Administrators' knowledge of modern soft skills has become a major concern for educators and employers all over the world (Laker & Jimmy, 2021). Since soft skills are poorly defined, administering them is more challenging. For this reason, the first step consists of understanding how to evaluate them, so that administrators can evaluate the progress of their resources. In administration, teaching and learning, evaluating modern soft skills is harder than technical skills since according to Zhang & Aima (2019), quizzes or exams cannot accurately measure interpersonal and leadership skills but group projects seem to be a very good way to develop modern soft skills, though evaluating them still present an uphill task.

Researchers consider peer evaluation, a good compromise between working in groups and an objective evaluation. The research conducted on this topic reported both positive and negative results (Zhang & Aima, 2019). The study carried out by Zhang, although with few participants, represents an initial step in designing and validating a peer assessment scale. Modern Soft Skills such as problem solving, creativity, organizational ability, flexibility, team-work and time management are believed to enhance administrators' job performance since they are mainly aimed at problem solving and thus should be mandatory for secondary schools' administrators to possess for enhanced performance (Ozurumba & Asuquo, 2014).

Administrators' Job performance based on attitudinal skills enhances administrators' performance towards goals achievement in an organization. This is the focal outcome in a workplace (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 2018). Nyarks, John & Thomas (2025) indicated that strategies for balancing work-life and job satisfaction as well as the development of personnel resources in terms of the quality of education is dependent on administrators' job performance. Thus, the world over, there is an ongoing technological revolution in education which according to Etim (2018) and Akpan, Udofia & Thomas (2016), administrators must be integrated in the revolution through the possession of modern soft skills.

In relation to the concept of soft skills, Administrators' job performance is a complex phenomenon especially, as it relates to the actual accomplishment of assigned task against the expected standard of achievement. Administrators supervise teachers' scheme of work, lesson plan, delivery of lesson, evaluation of students' work, reporting of students' progress as well as maintenance of discipline in the school environment (Edet, Akpan & Thomas, 2023). They also supervise attendance registers of students, participate in staff meetings, conduct morning devotion, counseling, participate in sports, games and club activities. These job areas which relate to the individual administrator's job performance need adequate possession and utilization of modern soft skills. Hence, this present study was designed to determine the extent of prediction of modern soft skills on administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

The persistent and prolonged poor state of administrators' job performance and increasing rate of poor academic achievement of secondary school product in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District seem to indicate problems in the work productivity of administrators and this could be traceable to their non-adoption of modern soft skills. Ideally, it is the expectation of the stakeholders (government, parents and students) for administrators in education to provide quality education within their school community, but the researcher has observed that many administrators do not possess the modern soft skills which have resulted to poor administrators' job performance in most of the secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District. The researcher has observed that most of the administrators in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District are lacking in their supervisory and time management roles, hence the problem of this study is to find if administrators' poor job performance can be traced to lack of adoption of modern soft skills.

Empirically, Chidi and Victor (2017) conducted a study on the relationship between administrators' soft skills and job performance in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The objective of the study was to determine the extent of relationship between teamwork and administrators' job performance in Ebonyi State. The study adopted a correlation research design. The study population comprised 233 secondary school administrators in Ebonyi State. Stratified proportionate sampling technique was used to sample 700 respondents from the population of the study. The researchers developed two sets of instruments titled "Teamwork Questionnaire (TQ)" and "Administrators Job Performance Questionnaire (TJPQ)" for data collection. The reliability of TQ and TJPQ were 0.76 and 0.77 respectively. Pearson product moment coefficient was used in answering the research questions and t-test was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that there is a high positive correlation between teamwork and administrators' job performance in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn and it was recommended among others that government should provide opportunity for administrators to attend conferences, workshops and seminars on acquisition of soft skills at least once a year both nationally and internationally for effective performance to keep them at par with their foreign counterparts. The objective and research design of this present study are in consonance with that of the previous study.

Ekpoh and Eze (2015) also conducted a study to investigate the relationship between soft skills and administrators' job performance in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The sample was 86 principals, 344 teachers and 1,376 students drawn from a population of 86 principals, 1829 teachers and 35,359 students in public secondary schools in the study area. Data collection was carried out with the use of two research instruments titled "Soft skills Questionnaire (SSQ)" and "Administrators' Job Performance Questionnaire (AJPQ)". The reliability of SSQ and AJPQ were 0.74 and 0.78 respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (r) was used for data analysis at .05 level of significance. Results obtained revealed that a significant relationship exist between soft skills in terms of teamwork, flexibility, time management and administrators' job performance. Based on the findings, it was concluded that job performances of administrators would be enhanced if administrators possessed necessary soft skills.

The above studies revealed that very few research have been carried out by scholars based on the variable under study and also none have been done in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District thus necessitating this study.

3.0 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the prediction of administrators' soft skills to their job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. the extent to which administrators' teamwork skills predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North West-Senatorial District.
2. the extent to which administrators' time management skill predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does teamwork predict administrators' job performance in public secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?
2. To what extent does administrators' time management skill predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. Administrator's teamwork soft skills do not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
2. Administrator's time management soft skills do not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

4.0 Research Method

The Simple prediction research design was adopted for the study. This design is often applied in any investigation that is directly aimed at prediction of criterion variables on the basis of known value of individual predictor variables (Kpolovie, 2018). The design was considered appropriate since the researcher is interested in determining how modern soft skills predict administrators' job performance. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District. The population of the study comprised all the 276 Administrators (92 administrators, 92 vice- administrators academic and 92 vice- administrators' special duties), in the 92 government-approved public secondary schools in the North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State as at 2024/2025 academic year (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, Uyo, 2024).

The sample size for this study was 159 Administrators (53 Administrators and 106 Vice Administrators). Multistage Sampling technique is the probability sampling technique wherein the sampling is carried out in several stages such that the sample size gets reduced at each stage. Multistage technique was used in sampling the sample for the study. The use of multistage sampling divided the population into component units with similar geographical characteristics that can equally be represented in the study. Two researcher-made instruments titled "Administrators' Modern Soft Skills Questionnaire (AMSSQ) and Administrators Job Performance Questionnaire" (AJ PQ) were used for data collection. The instruments consisted of two parts. Part 1 consisted of Sections A and B. Section A contained items on the demographic details of the respondents; Section B contained 10 items on different perceived Administrators' modern soft skills such as Teamwork and Time management. Each of the Administrators' modern soft skills questionnaire had five items. In Part 2, AJ PQ contained 10 items on Administrators' Job Performance. The instruments were scored using five points rating scale as shown below:

For positively worded items Very High Extent (VHE)= 5 points to (HE)= 4 points, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE)= 2 points, Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point. For negatively worded items, the scoring is vice versa and shown below as: Very Low Extent (VLE) = 5 points, Low Extent (LE)= 4 points, Moderate Extent (ME)=3points, High Extent (HE)= 2 points, Very High Extent (VHE) = 1 point

The instruments were subjected to face and content validity by three experts. Two of the experts suggested that opened-ended items should be eliminated as it could confuse the respondents. The other, pointed out items that needed to be reworded or dropped. Based on these suggestions, some items were reworded and others dropped. The experts' suggestions and comments were incorporated in the final copy of the instrument that was used to collect data for the study. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher randomly selected 35 staff (Principals, Vice Principals and Teaching staff,) in a public secondary school in the North-West Senatorial District of

Akwa Ibom State who were part of the population but not part of the study sample to respond to the instrument. Data generated was subjected to inter-item analysis using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient Statistics for reliability coefficient determination. The reliability coefficients for AMSSQ and AJPQ were .91 and .87 respectively. According to Ratner (2009), when the reliability coefficients for an instrument is above .70, the instrument is considered to be reliable for data collection. The researcher with the help of three well trained research assistants administered the instruments to the selected schools after seeking permission from the respective principals. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents. The exercise lasted for two weeks. Out of 222 copies of instruments administered, 159 copies were successfully retrieved. Thus, the return rate was 89.48%. Data collected was analyzed using Simple Linear Regression Statistics.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent does teamwork predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District?

Table 1: Result of Simple Linear Regression of the Extent to which Teamwork Predict Administrators' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District

Variables	R	R ²	Extent of Prediction	Adjusted R ²	Remarks
Time Management	0.623	0.389	38.9%	0.385	Moderate
Administrators' Job Performance					Extent

n=159, df= 157 (n-2)

The result in Table 2 reveals coefficient of R = 0.623 which shows a moderate extent of prediction exist between the two variables while the coefficient of determination, R² = 0.389 which implies that 38.9% of the observed variation in administrators' job performance is accounted for by the time management. This therefore shows that time management predicts administrators' job performance in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District to a moderate extent.

Testing the Hypotheses

The two null hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1

Teamwork skill does not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the Extent to which Teamwork Predicts Administrators' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State North West Senatorial District (n = 159)

Variables	Sum of Square	df	MS	F-cal	p-value	Decision at p<.05
Teamwork	2947.773	1	2947.7			*Significant;
Residual (Error)	5494.504	157	34.99	84.230	*.000	Reject H ₀
Total	8442.277	158				

***= Significant at 0.05 alpha level.**

The result in Table 3 revealed that teamwork significantly predicted administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District, $F(1, 157) = 84.230$, $p < .05$. Since the probability value (.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis stating that teamwork does not significantly predict administrators' job performance was rejected. It was therefore concluded that teamwork is a significant predictor of administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 2

Time management skill does not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of extent to which Time management Predicts Administrators' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District (n=159)

Variables	Sum of Square	Df	MS	F-cal	p-value	Decision at $p < .05$
Time Management	3281.293	1	3281.293	99.819	*.000	*sig.
Residual (Error)	5160.984	157	32.873			Ho2 is rejected
Total	8442.277	158				

*= Significant at 0.05 alpha level.

The result in Table 4 revealed that time management significantly predicted administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District, $F(1, 157) = 99.819$, $p < .05$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .389$) indicated that time management explained 38.9% of the variance in administrators' job performance. Since the probability value (.000) was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore concluded that time management significantly predicts administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

5.0 Summary of the Findings

The results of the above findings were summarized as follows:

1. Teamwork significantly predicts administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.
2. Time management significantly predicts administrators' job performance in public secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

6.0 Discussion of Findings

6.1 Teamwork and Administrators' Job Performance

The findings based on Hypothesis One, which stated that teamwork does not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District, revealed that teamwork has a moderate positive predictive relationship with administrators' job performance. The result further showed that teamwork accounted for 34.9% of the variation in administrators' job performance, indicating that administrators' adoption of teamwork as a modern soft skill contributes substantially to their effectiveness in carrying out administrative responsibilities, while the remaining 65.1% of the variation is attributable to other factors not included in the study.

The findings also revealed that teamwork significantly predicts administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District. This implies that administrators who effectively collaborate with teachers, other administrators, and relevant stakeholders are more likely to perform their administrative duties efficiently. This may be attributed to the fact that teamwork promotes collaboration, effective communication, knowledge sharing, mutual support, and collective problem-solving, all of which enhance decision-making and facilitate the successful implementation of educational policies and programmes. Through collaborative efforts, administrators are able to leverage the experiences and expertise of colleagues, thereby improving the quality of school administration and overall institutional performance.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Chidi and Victor (2017), who reported that there is a significant relationship between administrators' soft skills and job performance in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The present finding further reinforces the importance of teamwork as a modern soft skill capable of enhancing administrators' effectiveness in achieving educational goals.

6.2 Time Management and Administrators' Job Performance

The findings based on Hypothesis Two, which stated that time management does not significantly predict administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District, revealed that time management has a moderate positive predictive relationship with administrators' job performance. The result further indicated that time management accounted for 38.9% of the variation in administrators' job performance, suggesting that administrators who effectively manage their time are more likely to exhibit improved job performance, while the remaining 61.1% of the variation is explained by other factors outside the scope of this study.

The findings also revealed that time management significantly predicts administrators' job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District. This implies that effective utilization of time enables administrators to prioritize responsibilities, meet institutional deadlines, coordinate school activities efficiently, and provide effective leadership. This may be attributed to the fact that school administrators who allocate sufficient time to planning, supervision, monitoring, and decision-making are better positioned to enhance staff productivity and ensure the smooth implementation of school programmes. Effective time management also minimizes delays, reduces administrative inefficiencies, and promotes the achievement of educational objectives.

The findings of this study support those of Chidi and Victor (2017) and Ekpoh and Eze (2015), who found that effective soft skills are significantly associated with improved administrators' job performance. Thomas and Thomas (2026), also agree with the studies which revealed a significant relationship between modern soft skills and administrators' job performance in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. These findings collectively suggest that time management is an indispensable modern soft skill for enhancing administrators' effectiveness and improving job performance in secondary schools.

7.0 Conclusion

Based on the summary of the findings, it was concluded that administrators' adoption of modern soft skills significantly predicts job performance in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State North-West Senatorial District.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. School counselors should counsel administrators on the need to possess modern soft skills as its basis of implementing educational policy.
2. A committee should be put up by the Government to sensitize administrators on the need to not only adopt but utilize modern soft skills.
3. Administrators should always collaborate with their colleagues to gain new knowledge in their area of subject matter.

4. Administrators should always be able to manage time when engaging with school activities.
5. The state government should assess and supervise administrators' possession and implementation of modern soft skills before appointment to lead roles for effective implementation of the educational policy.

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