



# Principals' Motivational and Disciplinary Practices as Predictors of Student-Friendly Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated principals' motivational and disciplinary practices as predictors of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 15,321 teachers in the 296 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 846 teachers using multistage sampling procedure involving simple random and proportionate sampling techniques. The researchers-developed questionnaires titled "Principals' Motivational and Disciplinary Practices Questionnaire (PMDPQ)" and "Student-Friendly Environment Scale (SFES)" were used as the instruments for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha was used for a test of internal consistencies of the instruments which yielded overall reliability co-efficient of 0.81 for PMDPQ and 0.84 for SFES respectively. The researchers together with three research assistants collected data for the study using the direct approach method and 98% return was recorded. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that principals' motivational practice is a strong and significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It also revealed that principals' disciplinary practice is a strong and significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals should prioritize motivational practices of rewarding, praising and recognizing outstanding learners to create student-friendly environment in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Principals, Motivational, Disciplinary, Practices, Student-Friendly Environment

## Introduction

Education is widely recognized as right of every child. It is the mechanism for teaching values to shape the character of children, equipping them with knowledge and skills that prepare them for future endeavours. Okafor, Ughamadu, and Enwezor (2025) asserted that education has been embraced by many nations as the greatest investment that can bring about civilization, modernization, development and socio-economic progress in the society. The authors added that the important role education plays makes it necessary to understudy the standard and quality in secondary schools which is the intermediate between basic and tertiary level of education. Therefore, the future of any nation depends to a degree on the quality of education that children receive in learning institutions. Okafor and Aniebo (2024) averred that the achievement outcome of learners in any education institutions is influenced by student-friendly environment.

Student-friendly environment is a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in which learners receive instruction. Chukwu, Ngwoke and Nweke (2025) noted that student-friendly school environment connotes an environment which is endowed with infrastructure, facilities, teachers, human resources and as well promotes moral, social and behavioural conduct of the child. Student-friendly environment prioritizes the safety, emotional, social and physical well-being of learners. Abdullahi, Igbaji and Sunusi (2017) noted that student-friendly environment may be considered as a place where learning atmosphere is conducive, the staffs are friendly to children, and safety needs of the children are adequately met. All learners feel welcomed, valued comfortable, respected and safe in a student-friendly environment. Okafor (2025) noted that student-friendly environment encourages learners to engage in both curricular and non-curricular activities in secondary schools.

Student-friendly environment is characterized by basic learning facilities, mutual interpersonal relationship among staff and learners, freedom from harm and bullying, respect of learners' right, supportive and inclusive classroom activities. Cheruto, Allida and Amimo (2021) maintained that student-friendly environment has appropriate, sufficient and secure buildings as well as welcomes, nurtures and educates all children regardless of their sex, intellectual, social, emotion and language. Unfortunately, the condition of some learning environment is unsupportive and unpleasant for students which impedes

instructional processes in secondary schools in Enugu State. Onubuleze (2024) asserted that some public secondary school in Enugu State are faced with different problems such as dilapidated infrastructure, overcrowding and indiscipline in the classrooms which make students to be physical discomfort to engage in teaching and learning activities. In the same vein, Oguejiofor et al (2025) noted that there is poor physical infrastructure, and unsatisfactory building design which cause some physical discomfort for the students in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Motivation is anything that induce an individual to act or behave in a desirable way. Nnebedum, Oshia, Nwanne and Chinagorom (2022) defined motivation as an act of stimulating, strengthening and sustaining desirable behaviour or action. Motivation is the means of creating healthy and enjoyable learning experience that could fuel regular class attendance, punctuality to school and actively engagement of students in learning activities in the classroom. Okafor (2024) asserted that motivated students are psychological driven to pursue academic work to reach their goals. Students who are motivated are likely to work hard and persevere through challenges encountered in learning environment. Some essential motivational practices include: providing positive reinforcement, setting achievable goals, offering constructive feedback, and creating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment (Ogbu & Ebenebem 2025). Other motivational practices are praises, recognition of outstanding students in the yearly school prize-given-day, offering pens to students who accurately answer questions in the classroom, offering little monetary token for launch and provision of facilities in the classroom. The principals that engage in motivational practices could boost the self-esteem and confidence of students to successful complete their academic activities.

Discipline is the practice of controlling the behaviour of individuals to ensure adherence to established rules and standard of conduct. Nnebedum, Nwanga and Odoh (2020) noted that discipline is readiness to comply with prescribed rules and regulations of the school system. Discipline helps to maintain order and create safe environment that students can feel comfortable to engage in learning activities. Maintaining discipline in learning environment minimize disruptive behaviour that distract instructional activities and thereby enable students to concentrate on their studies. Ihendinihu (2024) asserted that the disciplinary practices that could adopted in secondary schools include verbal warning, referral to disciplinary committee, written warning, and suspension, loss of privileges, manual labour, counseling/therapy, and flogging, discussion, kneeling down and reporting to parents among others. Disciplinary practices foster ethical behaviour that help students to develop positive character and possibly contribute to their overall academic success.

The existence of disciplinary problems is worrisome in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Ihendinihu (2024) revealed cases of examination malpractice, bullying/fighting, insulting teachers, vandalism, sexual harassment, wrong use of cell phones, truancy, and absenteeism in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Some students are ill-motivated by shortages of relevant learning facilities in the classroom as well as failure to be recognized and celebrated for outstanding academic performance by principals of in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It is against this background that the researchers investigated principals' motivational and disciplinary practices as predictors of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

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## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine principals' motivational and disciplinary practices as predictors of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. Principals' disciplinary practice as a predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Principals' disciplinary practice as a predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

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## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the preventive value of principals' disciplinary practice on student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State?
2. What is the preventive value of principals' disciplinary practice on student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

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## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Principals' disciplinary practice is not a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.
2. Principals' disciplinary practice is not a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

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## Methods

Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The study was undertaken in Enugu State, located in South Eastern part of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 15,321 teachers in the 296 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for this study consisted of 846 teachers using multistage sampling procedure involving simple random and proportionate sampling techniques. In the first stage, simple random sampling

technique involving sampling without replacement was used to select 85 public secondary schools for the study. In the second stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to draw 846 teachers for the study.

The researchers-developed questionnaires titled “‘Principals’ Motivational and Disciplinary Practices Questionnaire (PMDPQ)” and “‘Student-Friendly Environment Scale (SFES)’” were used as the instruments for data collection. The instruments were developed by the researcher based on insight gained from literature and consultation with experts. PMDPQ had Clusters A and B. Cluster A contained 12 items on motivational practices and Cluster B had 10 items on disciplinary practices. PMDPQ therefore contained 22 items. On the other hand, SFES contained 25 items on student-friendly environment. The two sets of the instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts, two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The internal consistencies of the instruments were established using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded co-efficient values of 0.82 and 0.79 for the two clusters of PMDPQ with the overall reliability index being 0.81, while coefficient of 0.84 was obtained for SFES.

Data were collected by the researchers with the help of three research assistants who are postgraduate students in Enugu State. A total of 846 copies of instruments were distributed and 833 copies of questionnaires were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating 98 percent return rate. At the end of the exercise, dully completed and retrieved copies of the instruments were used for data analysis. Data were analyzed using simple regression to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. For the research questions the coefficient  $r$  and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the correlation coefficient recommended by Schober, Boer and Schwarte (2018), as follows:

Coefficient	Relationship
.00- .10	Negligible correlation
.11- .39	Weak correlation
.40- .69	Moderate correlation
.70- .89	Strong correlation
.90- .99	Very strong correlation
1.00	Perfect

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if the exact  $p$ -value is equal to or greater than significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted but if exact  $p$ -value is less than significant value of 0.05, the null hypotheses was rejected.

## Result

**Research Question 1:** What is the preventive value of principals’ motivational practice on student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

**Table 1: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Preventive Value of Principals’ Motivational Practice on Student-Friendly Environment**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Motivational Practice	833	.857	.691	.689	.27651		Strong

Result in Table 1 indicated that the predictive value between principals’ motivational practice and student-friendly environment is 0.857 with a coefficient of determination of 0.691. This shows that principals’ motivational practice can contribute to 69.1% changes in student-friendly environment. The regression Coefficient  $r$  of 0.857 indicated that principals’ motivational practice is a strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the preventive value of principals’ disciplinary practice on student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

**Table 2: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on Preventive Value of Principals’ Disciplinary Practice on Student-Friendly Environment**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Disciplinary Practice	833	.812	.668	.667		.27651	Strong

Table 2 indicated that the predictive value between principals' disciplinary practice and student-friendly environment is 0.812 with a coefficient of determination of 0.668. This shows that 66.8% changes student-friendly environment can be connected to principals' disciplinary practice. The regression Coefficient  $r$  of 0.812 indicated that principals' disciplinary practice is a strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis One:** Principals' motivational practice is not a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 3: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis (P-value) of Principals' Motivational Practice as a Significant Predictor of Student-Friendly Environment**

Predictor	N	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P-value	Remark
Motivational Practice	833	.857	.691	432.221	.000	*S

\*Significant

As shown in Table 3, the predictive value ( $r$ ) between principals' motivational practice and student-friendly environment is 0.857, while the  $r^2$  is 0.691 showing that principals' motivational practice makes 69.1% contribution to the variance in student-friendly environment. The  $F(1/833) = 432.221$  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' motivational practice is a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis Two:** Principals' disciplinary practice is not a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

**Table 4: The Summary of Simple Regression Analysis (P-value) of Principals' Disciplinary Practice as a Significant Predictor of Student-Friendly Environment**

Predictor	N	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P-value	Remark
Disciplinary Practice	833	.812	.668	398.107	.000	*S

\*Significant

Table 4 shows that the predictive value ( $r$ ) between principals' disciplinary practice and student-friendly environment is 0.812, while the  $r^2$  is 0.668. This shows that 66.8% changes in student-friendly environment could be explained by principals' disciplinary practice. The  $F(1/833) = 398.107$  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' disciplinary practice is a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

## Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that principals' motivational practice is a strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This agreed with the finding of Hafizoglu and Yerdelen (2019) which indicated that students' motivation had a strong relationship with the perceived child-friendly learning environment. The agreement in findings could be explained by the fact that the two studies were conducted in educational institutions where motivation of learners create conducive learning environment. Principals' motivational practice create conducive atmosphere that boost the morale of learner to work hard which might be connected to strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Learners feel valued, appreciated and comfortable in learning environment in which they are often motivated by the principals and this can create student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It was also found that principals' motivational practice is a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding supported that of Hafizoglu and Yerdelen (2019) which indicated that students' motivation had a significant relationship with the perceived child-friendly learning environment. Students who are motivated channel the behaviour to positive activities that reduce distraction in the classroom and thereby significant predict student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

The result of the study showed that principals' disciplinary practice is a strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This agreed with the finding of Kihara, Kimiti and Mulwa (2024) which showed that there was a strong relationship between instructional

supervision and the promotion of a child-friendly learning environment. The similarity in time span of the studies could account for the agreement between the findings. The finding could be attributed to the fact that disciplinary practices create orderliness, warm and welcoming atmosphere that is connected to the strong predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It is through disciplinary practices that principals control negative influence of peer pressure that create distractive and disorder in the learning environment. The respect of constituted authority and self-regulation that are enhanced by disciplinary practices of principals can strongly create strong healthy and friendly learning environment. Further result indicated that principals' disciplinary practice is a significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This affirmed the finding of Kihara, Kimiti and Mulwa (2024) which revealed that there was a significant relationship between instructional supervision and the promotion of a child-friendly learning environment. Learners who are disciplined stay focused and safe to learn which can contribute to significant predictor of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

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## Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that principals' motivational and disciplinary practices are positive and significant predictors of student-friendly environment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Principals who engage in motivational and disciplinary principals can create secure, comfortable and healthy learning environment in in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Students who are well-motivated and disciplined can exhibit friendly behaviour towards others in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

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## Recommendations

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

1. Principals should prioritize motivational practices of rewarding, praising and recognizing outstanding learners to create student-friendly environment in secondary schools.
2. Principals should ensure consistent enforcement of school rules and regulations to regulate the behaviour of learners towards creating student-friendly environment in secondary schools.

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