

INFORMATION SHARING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19 IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The study investigated Information Sharing among Secondary School Principals in the Wake of COVID-19 in Port Harcourt Metropolis. It adopted a descriptive research survey. The population of the study comprised thirty-two (32) principals in the 18 government owned secondary schools (junior and senior) in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The census sampling technique was adopted to select all the secondary school principals. Questionnaire was used to collate the data. 32 copies of the instrument were distributed; only twenty-seven (27) were retrieved and found valid for analysis. The study was analyzed using simple percentages and mean scores. It was discovered that principals shared information about exams, COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens, online learning, teaching and learning methods, about school reopening, COVID-19 information and students' welfare. The information were shared via phone calls, WhatsApp and meeting. On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that they shared information through zoom, webinar, Facebook and text messages. Principals were influenced by responsibility, self-efficacy, school demands, COVID19 outbreak, online platforms, affiliation and technology. The challenges principals faced include inadequate skills, organization culture, lack of gadgets/accessories, poor internet connections and lack of awareness about knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Information; Sharing; Knowledge Sharing; School; Principals; COVID-19.

Introduction

A conventional secondary school in Nigeria comprises principals with the help of academic and non-academic staff, including students in levels one to three (1-3) of the Junior Secondary School and or One to Three (1-3) in Senior Secondary School respectively. The subject curriculum is a combination of major or core subjects such as prevocational subjects and non-prevocational electives. Principals are the heads of the schools and coordinate the activities of the schools. Junior secondary has its own principals as well as the senior secondary. However they are usually in the same school. In running the activities of the schools especially in this era of pandemic, information and its sharing becomes a vital tool in coordinating the activities of the school.

Information has been recognized as one of the basic needs of humans in addition to air, water, food and shelter. It has become a driving force or a motivational factor and the basis upon which decisions are made and actions taken. In this situation of increased internal and external pressure, the information demand and sharing of principals may never be more frequent. At this time principals are required to keep abreast of trendy and topical issues in this society especially as has influenced by the outbreak of COVID-19. Information and its sharing is therefore, a key to keeping informed because without information decision makers would be left in the dark, students may not be able to know for example the time for examination, test, registration, next session, when to reopen schools and principals will not be aware when to register on the WAEC board, when students are misbehaving, assessment of school report cards, about professional development, retirement, transfer of teachers, dynamics in teaching and learning methods, pension, payment of salary and when government may ask schools to reopen in this era of COVID-19. Further, principal may not know when it is necessary to hold meetings amongst themselves, there may not be effective communication among principals especially when information is not shared. Information without sharing is meaningless because it is when the information is shared that it is used to act on. Information sharing is an activity of disseminating and or communicating news, ideas, experiences, perceptions, opinions to one or group of persons. Information sharing is usually used synonymously with knowledge sharing therefore, is used interchangeably in this study. Awad and Ghaziri as cited in Musfikar (2017) described knowledge sharing as is the process of transferring human knowledge about a process or a procedure to others. Furthermore, this is to enable knowledge workers in an enterprise to share the knowledge of other people or of other parts of the system to solve their problems in work". Information sharing could be formal or informal. Formal could come in form of discussion in meeting, news broadcast, memoir and call for meeting. Nwogbo, Nwakwo & Nwachukwu (2019) confirmed that information can be shared through reports, memorandum, correspondence, staff meeting, suggestion box and manuals. On the other hand, informal could come in inform of social network, chat, storey telling, community of practice, mentoring, coaching and counseling (Akpomi, Kayii & Nwile, 2022).

In a similar vein, Bellefroid (2012) identified three generations of knowledge sharing as first, second and third generations. According to him, the first generation is the traditional way of knowledge sharing usually associated with codification and storage which however, is supported by technologies. Furthermore, second generation focuses on social component personalization in which formal and informal methods such as mentoring, coaching and face to face can be employed. In the third generation, social networks are dominants and the trendy ways of communication. Several factors could influence information sharing. It includes availability of information, accessibility of information, channel of communication, behaviour of the informant, sources and seekers information seeking behaviour and

knowledge of the seeker. Similarly, Gaál Obermayer-Kovács & Csepregi (2015) stated the factors that influenced knowledge sharing as provided by different authors to include: Nature of knowledge; Tacit form: located in the individual's mind; Explicit form: embedded in organizational routines and norms, codified in technological devices; Motivation; Internal factors: perceived power and reciprocity; External factors: relationship with the recipient and rewards for sharing; Opportunities; Formal: training programs, team works, technology-based systems; Informal: personal relationships and social networks; Culture of the work environment; Organizational culture determines values, beliefs, and work systems that could encourage knowledge sharing.

Currently COVID-19 is a contributing factor that has greatly influenced information sharing. Furthermore, several channels are utilized in sharing information including, letters and memoirs. These types of information sharing channels are also affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. COVID-19 is an unprecedented disease caused by coronavirus. They emanate from different species of animals like the cattle, cats, camels, and bats. They are also common in humans. COVID-19 can initially be transferred from animal to human and then from human to humans. It can be traced down to Wuhan, Hubei Province, China due to their connection to a large seafood and live animal market, making them susceptible to animal-to-human spread. Later, a growing number of patients reportedly did not have exposure to animal markets, indicating human-to-human spread. Human-to-human spread was later reported outside China, including Nigeria and Rivers State (Igwela & Nsirim, 2020). It grew to a community spread. Community spread implies that some people have been infected and not aware how or where they were exposed. Reported illnesses could be very mild even with no indicated symptoms or severe, including illness which could result to death.

Its outbreak in Nigeria and in Rivers State has forced Federal and State Governments in Nigeria to close schools, markets, churches, social gathering and seek for a social distancing as well as direct all staff to work from home. This has affected face to face communication. However, traditional media such as television, radio, online newspapers are not much affected. Notwithstanding, the proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies has facilitated information sharing. Consequently, several social media platforms are now leveraged to share information with just a click including Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Considering the significance of information sharing with the vast and easier tools of sharing information even without boundary barriers, it is worrisome whether secondary school principals are sharing information among themselves in the wake of COVID-19 which has limited physical barrier and if they are what type of information and the channels utilized.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the Information Sharing among Secondary School Principals in the Wake of COVID-19 in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the types of information shared by secondary school principals in PHALGA
2. identify the platforms used in sharing information among principals in PHALGA
3. unravel the factors influencing information sharing among secondary school principals in PHALGA
4. ascertain the challenges facing information sharing among secondary school principals in PHALGA

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. what are the types of information shared by secondary school principals in PHALGA?
2. what are the platforms used by secondary school principals when sharing information?
3. what are the factors influencing information sharing among secondary school principals in PHALGA?
4. what are the challenges militating against information sharing among secondary school principals PHALGA.?

Literature Review

While there are pieces written about information sharing, there is minimal empirical literature on information sharing among principals. However, Rismark and Solvberg (2011) posited that the lack of a tradition in sharing individual and collective knowledge may impede schools in their attempts to develop into professional learning communities. Thus, principals are encouraged to build and share knowledge with colleagues. Literature indicates that schools may not yet have tapped the potential for dissemination of information among principals.

Cheng (2015) in his study attempts to verify whether knowledge sharing would create school intellectual capital. He adopted across-sectional quantitative survey to analyze knowledge sharing that would enhance the school Intellectual Capital. It was found that knowledge sharing is the predictors of all three constituents of school Intellectual Capital such as internal, external and human capital. He recommended the adoption of communities of practice in schools to enhance knowledge sharing.

Musfikar (2017) in his study on ‘the best factors for influence knowledge sharing among teachers through website technology stated that there are many implementation strategies of knowledge sharing management in order to share and distribute the knowledge that constitute group discussions, presentations , and write well in blogs ,websites and online media as well as in book form. According to him, via these activities, all staff can share best practices and experiences and create a fresh new idea. Further, sharing knowledge in schools can create ideas for the advancement of education such as new teaching method.

Nwogbo, Nwakwo and Nwachukwu (2019) investigated communication strategies adopted by principals for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study is 6652 respondents comprising 257 principals and 6411 teachers in all the state government owned secondary schools in Anambra state. The sample size for this study is 915. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability coefficient which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.96. Mean scores and standard deviations were used in answering the research question while z-test was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, reports, memorandum, correspondence, staff meeting, suggestion box and manuals were identified as strategies for sharing information.

Tao Li, and Wei (2011) in their own study on of knowledge sharing on campus among teachers found the two factors that influenced knowledge sharing as individual factor and organizational factor. According to them, individual factors include responsibility,

achievement, recognition, and fame while the factor includes affiliation, trust, reciprocity and collaboration (Ubulom, Kayii & Dambo, 2016; Dambo & Kayii, 2008). They found that while the individual factors such as achievement is the most influencing factor affecting teachers' knowledge sharing, affiliation and collaboration as organizational factors have significant positive effects on knowledge sharing in organizations.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research survey. The population of the study comprised thirty-two (32) principals in the 18 government owned secondary schools (junior and senior) in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. Total enumeration sampling technique was adopted to select all the secondary school principals. Questionnaire was used to collate the data. 32 copies of the instrument were distributed; only twenty-seven (27) were retrieved and found valid for analysis. The study was analyzed using simple percentages and mean scores.

Findings

Table 1: Types of information shared by principals (N=27)

What type of information have you shared with other principals amidst COVID-19?	Mean	Decision
About school reopening	3.0	Accept
COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens	3.5	Accept
About students exams (WAEC, NECO, etc)	3.6	Accept
COVID-19 information	3.0	Accept
Students welfare and discipline	2.8	Accept
Teaching and learning methods	3.2	Accept
Online learning	3.4	Accept

Table 1 shows the types of information shared by secondary school principals amidst COVID-19 pandemic and revealed that the most shared information is exams which has a mean score of (3.6), followed by COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens (3.5), online learning (3.4), teaching and learning methods (3.2), about school reopening (3.0), COVID-19 information (3.0) and the least shared information which is students' welfare (2.8).

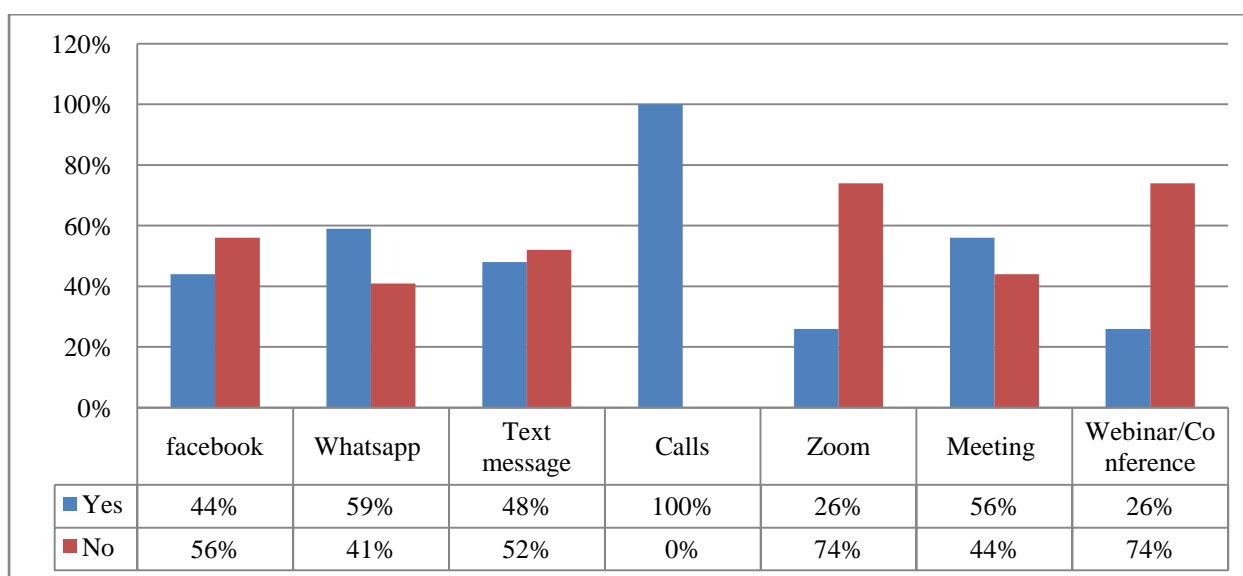


Fig 1: Channels used in sharing information by secondary school principals

The result shows that all the principals shared information via calls (100%), whatsapp (59%), and meeting (56%). On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that they shared information through zoom (74%) and webinar (74%) respectively. Further, facebook (56%), and text messages (52) were not used by most of the respondents when sharing information.

Table 2: Factors influencing information sharing of principal amidst COVID-19

What factors influenced your information sharing amidst COVID-19?	Mean	Decision
Technology	2.6	Accept
Responsibility	3.5	Accept
COVID-19 outbreak	3.2	Accept
Affiliation	2.6	Accept
School demands	3.3	Accept
online platforms	2.8	Accept
Self-efficacy	3.4	Accept

The result shows that all the items are above the reference mean score of 2.5 indicating that all the factors influenced information sharing by secondary school principals. The most influencing factors is responsibility (3.5) followed by self-efficacy (3.4), school demands (3.3), COVID19 outbreak (3.2), online platforms (2.8), affiliation (2.6) and technology (2.6) respectively.

Table 3: Challenges facing secondary schools principals on information sharing

What challenges did you face when sharing information	Mean	Decision
Lack of cooperation	2.4	Reject
Lack of gadgets/accessories	2.8	Accept
Inadequate skills	3.0	Accept
Poor internet connections	2.8	Accept
Lack of Organization culture	2.9	Accept
Lack of awareness about knowledge sharing tools	2.7	Accept

Tables 3 shows that inadequate skills (3.0), lack of organization culture (2.9), lack of gadgets/accessories (2.8), poor internet connections (2.8), and lack of awareness about knowledge sharing (2.7) were the challenges faced by secondary school principals on information sharing. On the other hand, lack of cooperation (2.4) was not reported as a major challenge.

Summary of the Findings

The study summarizes thus;

1. Principals shared information about exams, COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens, online learning, teaching and learning methods, about school reopening, COVID-19 information students' welfare.
2. Principals shared information via calls, whatsapp and meeting. On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that they shared information through zoom, webinar, facebook and text messages
3. Principals were influenced by responsibility, self-efficacy, school demands, COVID19 outbreak, online platforms, affiliation and technology.

4. The challenges principals faced include inadequate skills, organization culture, lack of gadgets/accessories, poor internet connections and lack of awareness about knowledge sharing.

Discussion of the Findings

In research question one, secondary school principals were asked to identify the type of information shared during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was reported that principals shared information about exams, COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens online learning, teaching and learning methods, about school reopening, COVID-19 information students' welfare. The study corroborates with the study carried out by Udo-Anyaanwu and Emmanuel (2020) on acquisition of ICT by LIS educators for Effective Knowledge Sharing in Universities in Imo and Rivers State and found that LIS educators shared information on classroom experience, technology use, lecture methods/

In research question two, respondents were asked to confirm, the channels used when sharing information. It was reported that all the respondents shared information via calls. Most of them share information via whatsapp and meeting. On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that they shared information through zoom, webinar, facebook and text messages. This could be due to reliance and the familiarity with the conventional means of communication by the respondents.

In research question three, respondents were asked to identify the factors that influenced their information sharing amidst COVID-19. It was reported that most of the respondents were influenced by responsibility, self-efficacy, school demands, COVID19 outbreak, online platforms, affiliation and technology. The study supports that of Tao Li, and Wei (2011) who observed that two factors that influence knowledge sharing are individual factor and organizational factor. Individual factors include responsibility, achievement, recognition, and fame while the factors include affiliation, trust, reciprocity and collaboration. They found that while the individual factors such as achievement is the most influencing factor affecting teachers' knowledge sharing, affiliation and collaboration as organizational factors have significant positive effects on knowledge sharing in organizations.

In research question four, respondents were asked to confirm the challenges they faced when in information sharing in COVID-19 era. The challenges reported include inadequate skills, lack of organization culture, lack of gadgets/accessories, poor internet connections and lack of awareness about knowledge sharing. The study therefore, is in line with that of Awodoyin, Simisaye & Osisanwo (2020) on awareness and use of collaborative tools for knowledge sharing as perceived by library and information science educators in selected library schools in south-west Nigeria and found lack of skills, lack of organizational culture, Prime and Mtui (2017) added poor internet connection and inadequate infrastructure

Conclusion

Information sharing is crucial to the effective management of schools as school managers like the principals can use information shared to make decision. Technology has influenced the way information is shared. Principals therefore, have a lot of channels to share and communicate information especially with the restriction of face to face communication as necessitated by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The study however found that principals shared information about exams, COVID-19 guidelines when school reopens, online learning, teaching and learning methods, about school reopening, COVID-19 information students' welfare. Principals shared information via calls, WhatsApp and

meeting. On the other hand, most of the respondents disagreed that they shared information through zoom, webinar, Facebook and text messages. Principals were influenced by responsibility, self-efficacy, school demands, COVID19 outbreak, online platforms, affiliation and technology. The challenges principals faced include inadequate skills, organization culture, lack of gadgets/accessories, poor internet connections and lack of awareness about knowledge sharing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that:

1. Principals should acquire digital skills that will enable them to effectively and efficiently use the various social media platforms to share information
2. Principals should adopt a social media platform where they can share information from anywhere in addition to the conventional phone calls.
3. Information workers, information managers or information professionals should create awareness and communicate to the populace particularly the principals about the importance of sharing information.

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