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MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOUR, ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: A DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Educational management is not only concerned with planning, coordination and resource utilisation; it also depends on how educational managers exercise authority, make decisions and discharge their professional responsibilities. In Nigeria, the increasing emphasis on accountability, fairness, transparency, professional competence and responsible exercise of authority highlights the need to examine how these qualities are expressed in educational management practice. This study examined the dimensions of educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism relevant to educational management, their relationship with effective management, the institutional factors shaping professional conduct and measures for strengthening ethical practice. The study adopted a documentary research design with a total review of twenty-five (25) publications. Out of which twenty-three (23) were published between 2020 and 2026 while the remaining two (2) were below. This was done using Google Scholar, ERIC, African Journals Online (AJOL) and other relevant Nigerian journal and institutional repositories. The review included empirical studies alongside relevant peer-reviewed and institutional documents, while conceptual and opinion papers were used only for contextual support. Data were analysed using thematic synthesis and descriptive content analysis. Findings indicate that integrity, fairness, accountability, transparency, communication, ethical decision-making, role modelling, respect, professional competence and continuous professional development constitute important dimensions of professional educational management. Evidence further indicates positive relationships between ethical leadership and outcomes such as teacher commitment, morale, collaboration, student discipline and administrative effectiveness. However, political interference, inadequate resources, external pressures, conflicts of interest, weak accountability and limited professional preparation can constrain ethical and professional conduct. It concluded that strengthening professionalism requires continuous professional development, clear ethical standards, transparent decision-making, effective accountability mechanisms, participatory leadership and supportive institutional conditions. It recommended that educational institutions and relevant authorities integrate ethical competence and professional conduct into leadership preparation, appointment, supervision and performance evaluation.

Keywords: Educational behaviour, ethics, professionalism, professional conduct, educational management, ethical leadership.

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Introduction

Educational management concerns the coordinated use of human, material, financial and informational resources to achieve educational goals and objectives. In practice, however, management is not merely a technical process of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Decisions made by educational managers and administrators affect staff welfare, students' experiences, resource distribution, institutional relationships and public confidence. Consequently, the quality of management is inseparable from the manner in which authority is exercised and responsibilities are discharged. Global education policy now places institutional leadership at the centre of efforts to improve education systems and emphasises the importance of preparing and supporting education leaders (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, [UNESCO], 2024).

Educational behaviour refers to the observable ways in which educational managers perform their responsibilities and interact with staff, learners and other educational stakeholders. It is expressed through such practices as communication, collaboration, conflict management, decision-making, delegation and the exercise of authority (Arinze *et al.*, 2024; Iliya *et al.,* 2024; Anam, 2025; Manafa, 2025). Rather than deriving this definition from empirical studies that merely measured particular behaviours, the concept is understood here as managerial conduct within the broader leadership process described in the educational leadership literature.

Ethics concerns the values and principles used to determine what ought to be considered right, fair, responsible, integrity and accountable in human conduct (Nwiku & Mba, 2025). In educational management, ethical practice therefore concerns the responsible exercise of authority, respect for persons, fairness in decision-making, integrity, accountability and appropriate treatment of those affected by managerial decisions. This normative dimension distinguishes ethics from behavior, for instance, behaviour describes what managers do, whereas ethics provides principles for judging and guiding what they ought to do. the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria's Code of Conduct establishes standards concerning professional relationships, trust, authority, care and expected conduct, providing an institutional basis for understanding ethical responsibilities in education (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria [TRCN], n.d.).

Professionalism refers to the application of specialised knowledge, competence, professional standards, responsibilities and ethical obligations associated with responsible professional performance and practice. It extends beyond possession of formal qualifications to include competence in practice, adherence to professional standards, accountability and continuing professional development (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2020; Aliyu & Johnson, 2022; TRCN, 2024; Adeoye *et al.,* 2025). The Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers, for example, organise professional expectations around knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and conduct and include provisions for continuous professional development (FME, 2010). TRCN likewise identifies professional standards, teacher quality, accountability and continuing professional development as central elements of its regulatory mandate. Thus, professionalism in educational management is understood in this paper as the sustained integration of competence, ethical conduct and recognised professional responsibilities in managerial practice.

The concepts of educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism are therefore related but analytically distinct. Behaviour describes observable managerial conduct; ethics supplies the normative principles that guide and evaluate that conduct; and professionalism connects competence, conduct and ethical obligations to recognised responsibilities and standards. This

relationship is especially important in Nigeria because educational managers routinely operate amid resource constraints, competing stakeholder expectations, institutional pressures and demands for accountability. Recent literature identifies transparency, accountability, ethical leadership and professional conduct as recurring concerns in school administration and supervision in Nigeria (Anam, 2025; Nwiku & Mba, 2025; Onyebu, 2026). Evidence also indicates that ethical leadership is associated with teacher performance, student discipline and educational goal attainment (Arinze *et al.,* 2024; Iyiegbuniwe *et al.,* 2025; Manafa, 2025).

Despite the growing literature on educational leadership and administration in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to the interconnected dimensions of educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism and how these shape the practice of educational management within the Nigerian context. Existing studies have largely examined individual aspects such as ethical leadership, professional ethics, teacher commitment, school climate and administrative effectiveness, leaving a need for a broader synthesis of the available empirical evidence. This paper examines educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism in educational management in Nigeria, with particular attention to their major dimensions, relationship with effective management, institutional and contextual influences, and measures for strengthening ethical and professional conduct. The study therefore seeks to contribute to the understanding of ethical and professional educational management by synthesising available Nigerian empirical evidence and highlighting practical implications for improving managerial practice and institutional effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Educational institutions require managers who can translate policy, allocate resources, coordinate personnel, supervise instruction and respond to institutional challenges while combining administrative competence with ethical behavior and professional responsibility. These managers are entrusted with authority over people, resources, policies and institutional decisions; consequently, their conduct can influence staff commitment, organisational climate, discipline, accountability and the achievement of educational objectives. In Nigeria, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) provides professional standards governing teachers' conduct, including the proper use of trust and authority, while its disciplinary framework emphasises fairness, transparency, accountability and due process in addressing professional misconduct. Thus, effective educational management should reflect not only managerial competence but also consistent ethical and professional conduct.

The reality, however, indicates that these expectations are not always consistently achieved. Evidence from Nigerian studies identifies ethical and professional challenges within educational management, including political interference, inadequate funding, external pressures and conflicts of interest. For example, Anam (2025) reported these factors as constraints on ethical decision-making. Similarly, Nigerian empirical studies have found significant relationships between principals' ethical leadership and teachers' job commitment, while other studies report relationships between ethical leadership and teachers' job performance and between ethical leadership and effective school management. These findings indicate that ethical behaviour and professionalism are not merely desirable personal qualities but are connected with important dimensions of educational management.

The problem, therefore, is not the absence of professional or ethical expectations, nor the complete absence of Nigerian research on the subject. Rather, the evidence is dispersed across studies examining different aspects of ethical leadership, professional ethics, managerial competence, teacher commitment, job performance and school management. What is needed is a

systematic synthesis that brings these strands of evidence together and examines educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism as interconnected dimensions of educational management in Nigeria. This review therefore synthesises available Nigerian empirical evidence to identify the major dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism, examine their relationship with effective educational management, identify the institutional and personal factors shaping professional conduct and highlight measures for strengthening ethical and professional practice. Hence, there is a need to systematically synthesise available empirical evidence on these interconnected issues in Nigeria.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism in educational management in Nigeria. Specifically, the review seeks to:

i. identify the dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism relevant to educational management;
ii. examine the relationship between ethical behaviour, professionalism and effective educational management;
iii. identify the institutional and personal factors that shape ethical and professional conduct among educational managers; and
iv. examine measures for strengthening managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism in Nigerian educational institutions.

Research Questions

1. What dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are relevant to educational management in Nigeria?
2. How do ethical behaviour and professionalism relate to effective educational management in Nigeria?
3. What institutional and personal factors shape ethical and professional conduct among educational managers in Nigeria?
4. What measures can strengthen ethical behaviour and professionalism in educational management in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework: Ethical Leadership Theory

The study is anchored in Ethical Leadership Theory conceptualized by Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005), which views leadership as involving not only the achievement of organisational objectives but also the demonstration and promotion of normatively appropriate conduct. The theory is relevant because educational managers exercise authority over people and resources and therefore face decisions involving fairness, responsibility, integrity, accountability and the interests of different stakeholders. From this perspective, ethical leadership operates through both the manager's personal conduct and the communication and reinforcement of appropriate standards within the organisation. The framework consequently provides a useful lens for examining how educational managers' behaviour, ethical values and professional responsibilities are expressed in practice. It also helps explain why ethical conduct may be associated with outcomes such as staff commitment, collaboration, discipline and organisational effectiveness, while institutional conditions may either support or constrain its practice.

In Nigeria, recent empirical studies have examined several aspects of this relationship. Studies have considered principals' ethical leadership and teachers' job performance, students' discipline, teacher commitment, professional ethics, administrative effectiveness and educational goal attainment (Arinze *et al.,* 2024; Iliya *et al.,* 2024; Iyiegbuniwe *et al.,* 2025; Manafa, 2025; Onoyima & Uche, 2025). Other studies have examined professional development, managerial

competencies and ethical administration (Adeoye *et al.*, 2025; Anam, 2025; Nwokonko, 2026). The evidence therefore indicates that the subject is not an under-researched area in Nigeria. Rather, the existing literature is dispersed across different constructs, educational levels, geographical locations and outcome variables.

The specific gap addressed by this study is consequently a synthesis gap rather than an absolute literature gap. Although several Nigerian studies have examined ethical leadership, professional ethics, managerial competence and related outcomes, no review identified for this study has brought these strands of Nigerian empirical evidence together to examine educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism as interconnected dimensions of educational management. Existing studies tend to focus on individual relationships, for example, ethical leadership and teacher commitment, ethical leadership and student discipline, or professional competencies and management outcomes. This study therefore synthesises the available Nigerian evidence to identify the major dimensions of educational behaviour, ethics and professionalism, examine their relationship with effective educational management, analyse the institutional and contextual factors shaping professional conduct, and identify measures for strengthening ethical and professional practice in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a documentary research design to examine managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism in educational management in Nigeria. Evidence was obtained from relevant Nigerian empirical studies, peer-reviewed journal articles, official education documents and professional standards. The literature search was conducted between July to September 2026 with a review of twenty-five (25) publications majorly between 2020 and 2026 using Google Scholar, ERIC, African Journals Online (AJOL) and relevant Nigerian journal and institutional repositories. Search terms included combinations of ethical leadership, educational management, professional ethics, school administration, managerial behaviour, ethical decision-making, professionalism, educational administrators, principals and Nigeria. Studies were selected based on their direct relevance to the research questions and the availability of sufficient information about their research context, design, participants or data sources, analytical procedures and findings. Priority was given to studies published between 2020 and 2026 to reflect recent evidence. However, earlier empirical studies were retained where they provided direct evidence relevant to the review and complemented the more recent literature. This explains the inclusion of studies by Brown, Trevino and Harrison (2005) which directly give a perspective construct for theoretical framework as well as that of Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019) which examined the relationship between principals' ethical leadership dimensions and teachers' job commitment. Conceptual papers, opinion articles and publications without sufficient empirical or documentary relevance were not included in the empirical synthesis.

For each selected empirical study, information was extracted on the author and year, study location, educational level of the study focus, sample, research design and major findings. The evidence was then organised and synthesised thematically in relation to the four research questions. Particular attention was given to distinguishing descriptive evidence from evidence reporting relationships or predictive effects. Thus, findings from correlational studies were interpreted as relationships rather than as evidence of causation. The analysis employed thematic synthesis and descriptive content analysis. The findings were organised around four themes which were the dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism; the relationship between ethical behaviour, professionalism and effective educational management; institutional and personal factors shaping ethical and professional conduct; and measures for strengthening

ethical and professional practice. A statistical meta-analysis was not undertaken because the reviewed studies differed in research designs, populations, variables, instruments and analytical procedures.

Studies with clearly reported empirical procedures were given greater evidential weight in the synthesis. Findings from individual states, education zones or institutions were not automatically generalised to the Nigerian education system as a whole. The review was limited by the availability of published evidence, uneven geographical coverage and the predominance of descriptive and correlational studies. These limitations were taken into account when interpreting the evidence. Nevertheless, the documentary approach provided a structured basis for bringing together available Nigerian evidence on managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism in educational management.

Professionalism and Educational Management

Professionalism refers to the sustained application of relevant knowledge, competence, ethical standards, professional judgement and responsibility in the performance of educational duties. For educational managers, it involves competent leadership, adherence to professional standards, ethical conduct, continuous professional development, responsible engagement with stakeholders and accountability for decisions and actions. In Nigeria, these expectations are articulated in the Professional Standards for the Teaching Profession in Nigeria, developed by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education. The standards specify professional knowledge, practice, conduct and membership obligations, and include specific standards for leadership in basic and senior secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions (Federal Ministry of Education [FME] & Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria [TRCN], 2019).

Professionalism is therefore expressed through practice, not merely through possession of academic or professional credentials. It is reflected in how educational managers apply their knowledge, exercise authority, make decisions, uphold ethical standards, relate with staff and learners, and respond to institutional responsibilities. The Nigerian standards provide performance expectations that can guide professional practice, assessment and continuing development, while the TRCN regulatory framework emphasises professional standards, ethical conduct, accountability and continuous professional development. Nigerian empirical evidence further indicates that managerial competence and professional development are associated with important aspects of educational management, including teacher commitment and effective school administration (Obiekwe *et al.*, 2024; Adeoye *et al.*, 2025). Professionalism in this study is consequently understood as the integration of competence, ethical conduct, professional values and responsible managerial practice rather than certification alone.

Dimensions of Educational Behaviour, Ethics and Professionalism Relevant to Educational Management in Nigeria

Managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are interconnected dimensions of educational management. Managerial behaviour concerns the observable ways educational managers exercise authority, communicate, make decisions, relate with staff and respond to institutional responsibilities. Ethics provides the principles that guide whether such actions are fair, responsible and accountable, while professionalism concerns the competence, standards, values and continuing development required for responsible performance. From the perspective of Ethical Leadership Theory, effective managers are expected not only to pursue institutional objectives but also to demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through fairness, integrity, responsibility, respect and accountability.

The Nigerian literature provides empirical attention to these dimensions across different aspects of educational management. Studies have examined ethical leadership in relation to teachers' job performance, commitment and students' discipline, while others have considered professional competence and professional development as components of effective school management (Arinze *et al.,* 2024; Obiekwe *et al.,* 2024; Manafa, 2025; Adeoye *et al.,* 2025). Rather than treating these studies as separate definitions of managerial behaviour, ethics or professionalism, this review synthesises their findings to identify the specific dimensions, relationships, influences and strengthening measures reported in Nigerian educational management.

Table 1: Dimensions of Educational Behaviour, Ethics and Professionalism Relevant to Educational Management in Nigeria

Author(s)	Year	State	Educational level	Sample	Research Design	Major Findings
Arinze, Egboka & Nwosu	2024	Anambra	Public secondary schools	786 teachers	Correlational	Ethical guidance and orientation had significant relationships with teachers' job performance, while ethical power-sharing also showed a significant relationship.
Obiekwe, Joseph & Madudili	2024	Anambra	Public secondary schools	1,405 teachers	Correlational	Principals' competencies in instructional supervision, staff personnel management and communication were significantly related to teachers' commitment.
Iliya, Ibrahim & Gabriel	2024	Kaduna	Senior secondary schools	120 principals and teachers	Descriptive	Ethical leadership was examined in relation to effective management of senior secondary schools.
Manafa	2025	Anambra	Public secondary schools	725 teachers	Correlational	Principals' ethical leadership was significantly related to students' discipline; role

						modelling showed the strongest association, followed by integrity and fairness.
Adeoye, Obi, Ibrahim-Raji & Yahaya	2025	Niger	Primary/basic schools	1,141 respondents	Survey design using Borich's needs-assessment model	The study identified professional development needs among head teachers, highlighting the importance of strengthening competencies for effective school management.
Onoyima & Uche	2025	Enugu (Obollo Afor Education Zone)	Public secondary schools	312 teachers	Descriptive survey	Fairness was practised to a high extent; the authors recommended broader application of ethical leadership practices beyond fairness and accountability.
Aliyu & Johnson	2022	Southwest Nigeria	Secondary schools	1,200 (816 teachers; 384 principals	Descriptive survey	Principals' professional competencies in human and material resource management were reported at a high level and were significantly related to teachers' job performance.

The evidence indicates that managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are multidimensional constructs rather than isolated attributes. Ethical guidance, fairness, integrity, role modelling, accountability, communication, professional competence and continuous development recur across the reviewed studies. The findings also indicate relationships between these managerial qualities and outcomes such as teacher commitment, teacher job performance, student discipline and effective school administration. However, the predominance of

correlational and descriptive survey designs means that these relationships should generally be interpreted as associations rather than evidence of direct causation.

Relationship between Ethical Behaviour, Professionalism and Effective Educational Management in Nigeria

The reviewed evidence indicates relationships between ethical managerial practices and selected indicators of effective educational management in Nigerian schools, although the strength and type of evidence vary across studies. Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019), using data from 672 teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State, reported positive and statistically significant relationships between principals' ethical leadership dimensions and teachers' job commitment. Specifically, communicative ethics correlated with job commitment at r = 0.69, climatic ethics at r = 0.78, and ethics in decision-making at r = 0.84. These coefficients indicate relatively strong positive associations, but the correlational design does not establish that ethical leadership caused higher teacher commitment.

Iliya *et al.* (2024) examined ethical leadership and effective management among senior secondary schools in Jema'a Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The study used a descriptive survey design with 120 principals and teachers drawn from a population of 284 principals and teachers in five selected schools. Analysis was based on means and standard deviations rather than correlation or regression coefficients. Respondents reported that principals employed different ethical leadership practices and that ethical leadership was perceived to foster unity, integrity, teachers' morale and students' outcomes. Because the study used a relatively small sample and perception-based questionnaire data, these findings provide descriptive evidence of respondents' views rather than a statistical estimate of the strength of a relationship.

Anam (2025) studied all 94 principals in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State using a census approach. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and analysed questionnaire responses using frequencies and percentages. It reported that principals' adherence to professional ethics was associated, in the respondents' perceptions, with fairness, transparency, accountability and collaboration in educational management, while ethical conduct was also reported to support instructional supervision through fairness, honesty and constructive feedback. However, because the evidence was based on principals' self-reported responses, the findings may be affected by self-report and social-desirability bias and should not be interpreted as independent verification of actual managerial conduct.

Further evidence comes from Manafa (2025), whose correlational study involved 725 teachers selected from a population of 7,248 teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study found significant relationships between principals' ethical leadership and students' discipline, with role modelling showing the strongest association, followed by integrity and fairness. The study therefore provides quantitative evidence linking perceived ethical leadership practices with student disciplinary outcomes, although its correlational design likewise limits causal interpretation.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that ethical managerial practices are associated with teacher commitment, morale, student discipline and other indicators of school management. However, the evidence varies considerably in methodological strength: some studies provide correlation coefficients, while others rely on descriptive statistics and respondents' perceptions. The findings should therefore be understood as evidence of association and perceived contribution rather than definitive causal effects. The reliance on self-reported data in some studies, including the census of principals in Anam (2025), also warrants caution when interpreting claims about actual managerial behaviour.

Factors Shaping Ethical and Professional Conduct Among Educational Managers

The conduct of educational managers is shaped by both professional capacity and the institutional conditions within which managerial responsibilities are performed. Nigerian evidence indicates that political influence can affect the processes through which school administrators are appointed and managed. A recent study in Bayelsa State, based on 235 principals and teachers from 30 public secondary schools and supplemented with key-informant interviews and document review, adopted a convergent mixed-methods design and found evidence of political interference in the appointment, posting and transfer of principals. The study reported that such politicisation was associated with concerns relating to principals' legitimacy, teacher morale, discipline, resource management and administrative effectiveness (Ibaba, 2026). Similarly, a study of 89 public secondary schools in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State used a census approach and descriptive survey design to examine political interference in the appointment of school administrators and recruitment of teachers. Simple linear regression showed that political interference significantly and negatively predicted the quality of teachers, the learning environment and students' educational outcomes (Otei *et al.,* 2026). These findings suggest that institutional processes surrounding appointment and personnel administration can constitute important contextual influences on educational management.

Financial conditions also constitute an important institutional factor. Eniang-Esien (2022) examined staff-development policy and funding as determinants of principals' management efficiency in public secondary schools in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. Using a descriptive survey design, the study drew a sample of 251 principals from a population of 502 and analysed the data using simple regression. The findings showed that both staff-development policy and the funding system significantly predicted principals' management efficiency, indicating that resource and staff-development conditions may influence managers' capacity to perform their responsibilities effectively (Eniang-Esien, 2022).

Professional preparation is another relevant factor. Adeoye *et al.* (2025) examined professional-development needs among head teachers in Niger State using a descriptive survey design based on Borich's needs-assessment model. Data were obtained from 1,113 head teachers and 28 educational lecturers through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study identified particularly strong professional-development needs in areas including staff personnel management, curriculum implementation, designing professional-development activities and innovative instructional practices. The findings indicate that managerial professionalism requires continuing development rather than reliance on existing qualifications alone (Adeoye *et al.,* 2025).

Organisational relationships and managerial practices also form part of the contextual conditions surrounding professional conduct. Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019) reported a positive relationship between principals' climatic ethics and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State, while Obiekwe *et al.* (2024) found significant relationships between principals' competencies in instructional supervision, staff personnel management and communication and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in the same state. More recent evidence from Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State similarly found statistically significant positive relationships between principals' ethical people-orientation, ethical power-sharing and teachers' job commitment. However, the latter study was limited to 133 teachers across 13 public secondary schools and therefore provides evidence for the study area rather than for Nigeria as a whole (Nwokonko, 2026).

The reviewed evidence indicates that managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are influenced by an interaction between individual professional capacity and institutional conditions. Political influence in appointment and posting, funding arrangements, staff-development opportunities, managerial competencies and organisational relationships emerge as relevant factors across the reviewed studies. The evidence is nevertheless geographically and methodologically diverse, with studies concentrated in particular states and education zones.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are relevant to educational management in Nigeria?

The evidence indicates that these dimensions are expressed through integrity, fairness, communication, accountability, ethical decision-making, role modelling, professional conduct and managerial competence. Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019), for example, identified communicative ethics, climatic ethics and ethics in decision-making as dimensions of principals' ethical leadership and found positive relationships between each dimension and teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. More recent Nigerian studies reinforce this pattern while adding professional competence to the picture. Manafa (2025) and Anam (2025), identified fairness, transparency, accountability and collaboration among the relevant ethical practices. Onoyima and Uche (2025) similarly found that fairness was practised to a high extent among principals in the Obollo Afor Education Zone of Enugu State, although their study was descriptive and therefore provides evidence about the extent of practice rather than its effect on educational outcomes. Professionalism extends this ethical dimension by requiring managers to possess the competencies necessary to perform their responsibilities effectively. Obiekwe *et al.* (2024) found significant relationships between principals' competence in instructional supervision, staff personnel management and communication and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Also, Adeoye *et al.* (2025), similarly identified areas requiring further development in school-management competencies. These findings are consistent with Ethical Leadership Theory, which conceptualises ethical leadership in terms of normatively appropriate personal conduct and the promotion of such conduct through communication, decision-making and interpersonal relationships. The Nigerian evidence therefore suggests that ethics becomes operational in educational management through what managers actually do, how they communicate, exercise authority, make decisions, treat staff and model expected standards. Professionalism complements this ethical dimension by providing the competence required to translate appropriate values into effective managerial practice. International evidence provides a useful point of comparison. Cansoy *et al.* (2021), in a study of 641 teachers in Turkey, found positive relationships between principals' ethical leadership and teachers' job satisfaction and between ethical leadership and the ethical climate of schools. Their analysis further showed that ethical climate partially mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. The similarity between this evidence and the Nigerian findings suggests that ethical communication, fairness, responsible leadership and an ethical organisational climate are not exclusively Nigerian concerns. However, the Nigerian evidence remains context specific and should not be assumed to operate identically across different education systems.

Research Question Two: How do ethical behaviour and professionalism relate to effective educational management in Nigeria?

The evidence generally indicates positive associations between ethical managerial practices and teacher or student related outcomes. The clearest evidence comes from Obiekwe and Ezeugbor

(2019), who reported positive correlations between principals' communicative ethics and teachers' job commitment (r = 0.69), climatic ethics and teachers' job commitment (r = 0.78), and ethics in decision-making and teachers' job commitment (r = 0.84). Arinze *et al.* (2024) similarly reported significant relationships between ethical leadership practices and teacher job performance. Manafa (2025) extended the evidence to students by examining the relationships between integrity, fairness, role modelling and students' discipline. Professional competence also appears relevant to managerial effectiveness. Obiekwe *et al.* (2024) found significant relationships between principals' competencies in instructional supervision, personnel management and communication and teachers' commitment. This complements the ethical-leadership evidence by suggesting that effective educational management involves both how authority is exercised and whether managers possess the competencies required to perform their responsibilities. Ethical Leadership Theory helps explain these relationships. Ethical leadership can shape organisational behaviour because employees observe managerial conduct and interpret it as an indication of the standards expected within the institution. A manager who communicates fairly, makes decisions transparently and treats staff consistently may contribute to an organisational climate in which trust and commitment are more likely to develop. Nevertheless, the major studies reviewed are predominantly survey-based and correlational. Consequently, the findings demonstrate relationships and associations, not definitive causal effects. It would therefore be inappropriate to conclude that ethical leadership alone causes improved teacher performance, commitment or student discipline. Other institutional, personal factors may also contribute to these outcomes.

Research Question Three: What institutional and personal factors shape ethical and professional conduct among educational managers in Nigeria?

The evidence suggests that these factors operate at both the personal and institutional levels. At the personal level, professional competence and continuing development are important. Adeoye *et al.* (2025) identified professional-development needs among head teachers in Niger State, including areas associated with personnel management and the development of professional practices. Similarly, Obiekwe *et al.* (2024) linked principals' competencies in instructional supervision, personnel management and communication with teachers' commitment. These findings suggest that professionalism is not static; it requires managers to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills needed to perform changing educational responsibilities. At the institutional level, Anam (2025) identified political interference, inadequate funding, external pressures and conflicts of interest among the challenges confronting principals' ethical decision-making in the Calabar Education Zone. This is important because it shows that ethical conduct cannot be understood entirely as an individual characteristic. Managers make decisions within institutional environments that may either support or constrain professional judgement. This interpretation is compatible with Ethical Leadership Theory because ethical leadership involves not only the personal conduct of the leader but also the communication and reinforcement of ethical standards within the organisation. The combined evidence therefore points to an interaction between managerial capacity and institutional conditions. Professional development may strengthen an individual's capacity to act professionally, but the effectiveness of that capacity may also depend on the degree to which the institution provides clear standards, fair procedures, adequate support and an environment in which ethical decisions can be exercised.

Research Question Four: What measures can strengthen ethical behaviour and professionalism in educational management in Nigeria?

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The reviewed Nigerian studies did not generally test specific ethics or professional-development interventions experimentally. Therefore, the measures discussed under this research question are drawn principally from the recommendations made by the authors in response to their respective findings, rather than from independent evidence demonstrating that the interventions have already produced measurable effects. For example, Obiekwe and Ezeugbor (2019) recommended that principals consistently demonstrate ethical behaviours in their dealings with teachers following their finding of positive relationships between ethical leadership dimensions and teachers' job commitment. Obiekwe *et al.* (2024) recommended sustained school-based training for principals following evidence of relationships between managerial competencies and teachers' commitment. Adeoye *et al.* (2025) likewise identified professional-development needs among head teachers, providing a basis for strengthening continuing professional development. Anam (2025) recommended ethics training, adequate funding and policy reforms in response to the ethical challenges identified among principals in Cross River State. These recommendations are consistent with the theoretical explanation provided by Ethical Leadership Theory, strengthening ethical awareness, professional competence and organisational support may help create conditions in which appropriate managerial conduct can be sustained. However, the present review does not establish the effectiveness of these measures as tested interventions. They should therefore be understood as evidence-informed recommendations derived from the reviewed studies, rather than as empirically validated solutions.

From the above, the empirical evidence reviewed in this study indicates that managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism in Nigerian educational management are closely related dimensions of responsible educational leadership. The major evidence is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Evidence Relevant to the Research Questions

Research Questions	Main evidence from Nigerian studies	Major Implications
RQ1: Dimensions of managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism	Studies identify integrity, fairness, communication, ethical decision-making, accountability, role modelling, professional conduct, managerial competence and professional development were identified across studies in Anambra, Cross River and Enugu States.	Ethical and professional management is expressed through observable managerial conduct and professional competence, not merely through formal qualifications.
RQ2: Relationship with effective educational management	Ethical leadership is positively associated with teachers' job commitment, job performance and students' discipline in Nigerian studies.	Ethical conduct may contribute to favourable organisational and behavioural outcomes, although most Nigerian evidence is correlational and does not establish causation.
RQ3: Institutional and personal factors	Evidence identifies to professional competence and development needs, while institutional conditions and external influences can shape managerial conduct and effectiveness.	Ethical management depends not only on individual values but also on the organisational conditions within which managers exercise authority.
RQ4: Measures for strengthening ethical and professional conduct	Reviewed studies recommend ethics training, professional development, accountability, fair decision-making, adequate resources and supportive institutional arrangements.	These measures are primarily recommendations arising from identified problems and findings; they should not be presented as experimentally tested interventions.

Across the four research questions, the evidence suggests that managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are interdependent components of educational management. Ethical conduct is expressed through fairness, integrity, communication, accountability, decision-making and role modelling, while professionalism adds the competence and continuing development required to perform managerial responsibilities effectively. Nigerian studies generally report positive relationships between these practices and outcomes such as teacher commitment, teacher performance and student discipline, while international evidence similarly links ethical leadership with teacher satisfaction and ethical school climate. The findings are therefore broadly consistent with Ethical Leadership Theory, particularly its emphasis on leaders as behavioural models who establish and reinforce ethical expectations through their conduct and interactions. At the same time, the Nigerian evidence indicates that ethical management is influenced by wider institutional conditions, including professional-development opportunities and contextual pressures. The overall evidence should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously because most Nigerian studies are based on descriptive or correlational designs. Finally, the measures identified for strengthening ethical and professional conduct are largely derived from researchers' recommendations; further Nigerian research is needed to test their effectiveness through longitudinal, experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

Conclusion

This study shows that managerial behaviour, ethics and professionalism are interconnected dimensions of educational management in Nigeria. The evidence indicates that integrity, fairness, accountability, transparency, responsible decision-making, effective communication, respect for stakeholders, professional competence and continuous development are important features of responsible educational management. Ethical leadership and professional competence are also associated with outcomes such as teachers' commitment, job performance and students' discipline, although the predominantly correlational nature of the evidence limits causal interpretation. The contribution of this review lies in bringing these strands of Nigerian evidence together within a single framework linking managerial conduct, ethical practice, professional competence and the institutional conditions in which educational managers operate. Rather than treating ethical behaviour and professionalism as separate administrative concerns, the review demonstrates their interconnectedness and highlights the importance of considering both individual managerial capacity and institutional conditions when examining educational management in Nigeria.

The study has an important limitation. Much of the available Nigerian evidence is based on survey research involving secondary schools and participants drawn from a relatively small number of states, which limits the geographical and educational-level breadth of the evidence. The findings should therefore not be generalised automatically to tertiary institutions, northern Nigeria or the Nigerian education system as a whole. Future research should extend empirical investigation to universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions, as well as to underrepresented states, particularly in northern Nigeria. More studies should also employ mixed-methods, longitudinal and other designs capable of providing deeper explanations of how managerial ethics and professionalism develop and influence educational outcomes over time. Research should further test specific professional-development, accountability and ethical-leadership interventions rather than relying predominantly on cross-sectional surveys and researchers' recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

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1. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), State Ministries of Education and Teaching Service Commissions should strengthen continuing professional development in ethical leadership and managerial competence. Training for educational managers should therefore give greater attention to ethical decision-making, communication, personnel management, accountability and responsible exercise of authority.
2. State Ministries of Education, Teaching Service Commissions and relevant school-management authorities should ensure that existing professional and ethical standards are clearly communicated and consistently enforced. The emphasis should therefore be on effective implementation, monitoring and consistent application of existing standards rather than creating unnecessary new codes.
3. State Ministries of Education, Teaching Service Commissions and other appointing authorities should give appropriate consideration to demonstrated professional and managerial competence when appointing or promoting educational managers. Accordingly, managerial appointments should consider relevant professional competence and demonstrated capacity for effective personnel and instructional management alongside the applicable qualifications, experience and statutory requirements.
4. The Federal Ministry of Education, State Ministries of Education, Teaching Service Commissions, school-management authorities and school governing structures should periodically review the implementation of professional standards and as well strengthen accountability and documentation of managerial decisions.

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