

GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of government interference on the effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Politics and education are closely intertwined, with political decisions often impacting educational outcomes. The research specifically examines the extent to which political considerations affect the siting of universities, the appointment of council members, and overall university governance. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 989 teaching and senior non-teaching staff across three public universities in Rivers State. The study employed a self-structured questionnaire and utilized statistical analysis to interpret the findings. Results indicate that political interference significantly influences the management of universities, often prioritizing political affiliations over merit and due process. This interference leads to challenges such as suboptimal siting decisions, the inclusion of unqualified individuals in key positions, and compromised academic standards. The study underscores the need for insulating university management from political influences to ensure decisions are made based on strategic planning and academic merit. The findings align with existing literature, highlighting the detrimental effects of political meddling on the quality and integrity of higher education. Recommendations include policy reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, merit-based appointments, and strategic decision-making to foster the growth and development of universities in Rivers State.

Keywords: Government interference, effective management, universities

Introduction

Background to the Study

Politics and education are like Siamese twins which cannot be separated from one another but has an advert effect on each other. Many has a common misconception of what politics is and what it stands for, as a result of gross abuse and bastardization of the concept of politics (Adiele, Obasi & Ohia, 2011). In Nigeria, the government continues to place the greatest priority on the education sector, and as a result, it works hard to expand the funding allotted to it. The educational sector is viewed as a way to build a strong and united country as well as a highly significant tool for socialisation and transformation. In Nigeria, this concept had been approved at all levels of government as a means of advancing social, economic, political, scientific, and technological advancement.

In each given civilization, education is the most effective tool for change. Education is a tool for the socioeconomic and political growth of Nigeria and other nations. The National Development Plans will continue to place a strong priority on education, as indicated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014). It serves as a tool for both social and national development. In certain nations, private school systems are permitted and accredited by the state to offer an equal education to that offered by public institutions. Elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools are all considered to be part of formal education (colleges, trades or technical schools, and universities). Therefore, a country's educational system will affect how quickly its population mature and how much change they experience. This suggests that if education is to bring about the necessary transformation, then teachers and students must fulfil their respective obligations of effective teaching and learning.

The term politics according to Okunamiri (2015) and Okwori and Ede (2012), consists of the struggle between and among actors pursuing conflicting interest on public issues, interest and values. Okwonkwo (2014) in Yawe, Ivagher and Ijov (2015) defined politics in terms of three interrelated component. These are: activities focused on the acquisition and use of power through control of institutions of government, activities in which public issues are discussed and demands upon governments expressed through political parties, interest groups, mobs or solidarity individuals and activities of the formal institutions of government which make laws, interpret them, allocate resources and carry them out. Okeke (2017) also defined politics as the mechanism used to lasting solutions to social, economic, political and educational problems.

Political leadership determines the educational goals, and philosophies of the educational system. The educational resources - funds, personnel, materials facilities, equipment's and services. The educational production processes - the curricular method administrative, supervision and evaluation. The educational outcomes - the knowledge, attitudes, behavior, impression etc.

The yearnings, needs, aspirations as well as the cultural heritage and environment of any society determine to a large extent, the kind of knowledge and skills to be acquired. Therefore, the kind of education operated should bring about skills development as this will enable individuals to live and contribute meaningfully to the overall development of the society in which they live. Politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live.

According to Okeke (2017), politics play a great role in decision making and controls the



management and the management of educational establishments. Okeke further pointed out that politics in education may be seen as the means for resource asiting to different ethnic groups to achieve their set educational goals. The role of politics is heightened in the educational sector in view of the fact that an educational system has political goals which are essential to justifying the existence of the system and the political order of society. While education develops an individual to participate effectively in politics, politics in turn initiates quality education at all levels of education within a country.

Tertiary education according to Onwusoanya (2015) occupies strategic position in Nigeria because of the important role it plays in preparing the students for useful living in the society and for higher education. The State government manages and provides funds for tertiary education. To ensure that secondary schools achieved what they are set to achieve, the attainment of high standard should be the strong point of the schools (Olanreweya, 2015). This is due to rapid growth of student enrolment in the 90's and stringent funding allocated for tertiary education institutions. Tertiary education spreads over the ages of 15 and 16, and then to 17 and 18 in the senior secondary grades. These are the years of adolescence, and late adolescence. These are the years of transition; indeed, most crucial years of life. There are steady and fast changes in the body structure transforming to adult form and image of life. At this age, the bodily changes take final shape and stabilize. This is also the stage of emotional transformation and maturity that swings between joy and trauma. Tertiary education essentially has to be the education of the adolescence. Experiences in schooling have to be designed to be responsive to the needs of transition and stabilization. Since large number of students is likely to transit from education to the world of work, it is also the stage of transition to work. Tertiary education must foster skills of transition.

The Nigerian government and its people seems to continuously sacrifices their educational needs on the altar of political affiliations, nepotism, ethnicity and selfishness by creating situations where people of no substance are being catapulted into positions of importance in the school management. In such circumstances, the spirit of hard work and excellence becomes truncated or aborted. Omemu (2015) observed that qualification and hard work which are supposed to be the parameters for the appointment of principal officers in tertiary institutions of learning are hardly adhered to when political forces set in. Yawe, Ivagher and Ijov (2015) also noted that the government interference in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria has degenerated so much that credibility is completely eroded, as principal officers of tertiary institutions such as vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, provosts, rectors and registrars among others are appointed on the basis of political affiliations, sectionalism, nepotism, tribalism as well as religious beliefs. The implication of qualification not been the yardstick for the appointment of such principal officers is that any Tom-Dick and Harry can be given such sensitive positions which may make the entire system ineffective and inefficient. Dun (2013) and McClendon (2013) in Abu (2015) observed that state governors often do handpick principal officers in tertiary institutions based on party affiliations. In most cases, such appointments may not necessarily result in the selection of qualified candidates in management positions to have positive influence on the affairs of these institutions. Most often when the Senate of such an institution rejects these kinds of candidates from the government, it creates an unhealthy relationship between the government and the management of these institutions to the extent that government does withdraw its support to the school.



Another challenge facing the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the involvement of political forces in admission process. It is evident that much preference has been given to political considerations rather than due process and merit system in students' admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Osuji, 2011). Although it is expected that admission into tertiary institutions should be conducted on merit and quota system. Ajayi (2015) noted that in any institution of learning, there are specific admission policy requirement. For instance, from secondary schools to university level, prospective applicants are expected to possess some minimum qualification before they could be considered for admission. However, it is still doubtful if the chances for admission are entirely based on stipulated guidelines. It is often suspected that some students who have already gained admission into the universities go back to rewrite the same entry examination that qualified them for the admission into these universities. The question that normally comes to mind is what qualification do they use for the admission?

Aboh (2014) noted that in Nigeria and other corrupt countries of the globe, admissions are sometimes given to students on the grounds that such students are from the same family, religious background or political affiliation with the person in authority. Abu (2015) added that female students do gain admission into institutions where their state of origin has no catchment area; this is basically because of favour either from their loved ones or family friends. This anomaly is attributed to undue involvement of those in power to bend the rules to favour their candidates. It is in relation to the above background that the researchers deemed it necessary to find out the influence of government interference and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Politics have become be a vital factor that influences decisions in the management of tertiary institutions in various situations. Since the government has taken over the control and management of tertiary institutions, political issues, societal interest and environmental influences on the management of tertiary institutions have come to the fore. Tertiary education has a link with society; hence each segment of society tries to interfere with the management of tertiary institutions to suit their roles in the society. The belief that politics influences the Expansion of National universities Commission (NUC) Powers, staff appointment, funding of university, staff remuneration, Siting of Public Universities, provision of basic infrastructure/equipment and school community relation is common among the institutions in Nigeria. Political influences have positive and negative impact on teaching and learning in schools. In the society, it seems that the management of tertiary institutions is a fertile ground for politicking and politicians influence the management of tertiary institutions while the principals, officers and staff of the tertiary institutions obey them to a fault.

Considerable concerns have been expressed by relevant stakeholders over the much preference given to political considerations rather than due process and merit in appointment of principal officers and admission of students into universities in Rivers State and Nigeria at large. Given the sensitive nature of such institutions in the development of skilled manpower that would boost the economy of the nation, it is expected that appointment of principal officers and admission of students into institutions of this magnitude ought to be conducted on merit. However, it is doubtful if the vacancies and chances for the appointment of principal officers of tertiary institutions and admission of students are entirely based on stipulated guidelines. It is against this



background that the researchers investigated government interference and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study was to investigate government interference and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Ascertain the influence of government interference in siting of public universities on the effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Identify the influence of government interference in the appointment of council members/ visitation panel on the effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. To what extent does government interference in the siting of public universities influence the effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does government interference in appointment of council members/ visitation panel influence the effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated to further guide the study:

The following null hypotheses were postulated and statistically tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in siting of public universities for effective management of universities in rivers state, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in the appointment of council members/ visitation panel for effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Behavioural Management Theory

The behavioral management theory by Elton Mayo in 1924 to 1932 is often called the human relations movement because it addresses the human dimension of work. Behavioral theorists believed that a better understanding of human behavior at work, such as motivation, conflict, expectations, and group dynamics, improved productivity. Elton Mayo's contributions came as part of the Hawthorne studies, a series of experiments that rigorously applied classical management theory only to reveal its shortcomings. The Hawthorne experiments consisted of



two studies conducted at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in Chicago from. The first study was conducted by a group of engineers seeking to determine the relationship of lighting levels to worker productivity. Surprisingly enough, they discovered that worker productivity increased as the lighting levels decreased — that is, until the employees were unable to see what they were doing, after which performance naturally declined.

In this case, Mayo and Roethlisberger concluded that the increase in productivity resulted from the supervisory arrangement rather than the changes in lighting or other associated worker benefits. Because the experimenters became the primary supervisors of the employees, the intense interest they displayed for the workers was the basis for the increased motivation and resulting productivity. Essentially, the experimenters became a part of the study and influenced its outcome. This is the origin of the term Hawthorne effect, which describes the special attention researchers give to a study's subjects and the impact that attention has on the study's findings.

Conceptual Framework

Government interference in Education

Politics infuses every human activity and education is not an exception. It is practically impossible for large group of people with diversified ideology, culture, background and belief to coexist as a polity or nation without the machinery of politics. It is succinct then to claim that politics determines and shapes all matters that borders any polity. Interaction among politics, education, and religion arouses passion in secularists and the faithful, civic leaders and educators, parents and taxpayers. The problem is intractable, in large part, because the debate is not limited to a narrow sector of society: it is not an teaching problem or a legal one; rather, each citizen is a stakeholder in the issues. As a result, bringing light rather than heat to the debate requires examining the positions taken by various subgroups and determining a potential synthesis (Lewis & Harris, 2012).

The notion that formal educational attainment is the primary mechanism behind many citizenship characteristics is largely uncontested. Education has consistently been found to increase political participation, electoral turnout, civic engagement, political knowledge, and democratic attitudes and opinions. Missing from the literature, however, is a theoretical and empirical investigation of why education is such a powerful explanatory variable. Little is known about how the educational process has such a profound effect on so many aspects of democratic behaviour. Decades of political science research have concluded that education directly influences an individual's tendency to participate in the political realm. In most empirical analyses, education is in fact the strongest predictor of political participation even when other socioeconomic factors are considered (Shields & Goidel, 2017).

Government interference in Funding of University and Effective Management of Universities

Research and higher education in universities are dependent on proper funding and sound management. These two elements are intrinsically linked and have a profound impact on the quality and progress of academia. They also significantly influence the rate of innovation, economic growth, and societal development. Unfortunately, these elements can be compromised by various forms of government interference, a situation that is evident in the case of universities



in Rivers State, Nigeria. government interference in the funding of universities, a trend that is common worldwide, can hamper the operations of these institutions. It involves the manipulation of funding procedures or decisions for political purposes (Boggs, 2020). The significance of funding in university operations cannot be overstated. Universities rely on funding for research, teaching, hiring of competent staff, procurement of necessary facilities and equipment, and students' welfare, among other things. Thus, any form of interference, political or otherwise, can disrupt the smooth functioning of universities, making them less effective in fulfilling their mandates.

The case of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, provides a poignant illustration of government interference in funding and its consequent effects. The Rivers State Government is a major funder of the state universities. This puts the state universities in a precarious position, as they are often caught in the crosshairs of political wrangling and power struggles. government interference has reportedly manifested in various forms, such as budget cuts, irregular funding, biased alighting of resources, and patronage-based appointments (Adeyemi, 2021). Budget cuts have been a significant challenge for universities in Rivers State. They result in inadequate funds to carry out essential functions, thereby negatively impacting teaching, research, and other activities. These cuts, often implemented without proper justification, are frequently used as political weapons to control and manipulate universities (Olukoju, 2012). Consequently, they create financial instability, making it difficult for these institutions to plan and implement their projects and programs effectively.

Government interference in Siting of Public Universities and Effective Management of Universities

Siting of universities in Nigeria has come under great political influence. Universities are not located based on needs and national interest but based on political interest and influence. Okoli, Oghondah, & Ewor (2016) observed that there has been government interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria. With the return of civil rule in 2019, the spate of government's establishment of Federal universities continued, beginning in 2012 when the Obasanjo management resuscitated the National Open University Nigeria Lagos, which was suspended in 1984. Ogunode & Ajape (2021) and Ogunode, & Omenuko, (2021) opined that political influences is a major problem hindering effective planning of universities education in Nigeria. Nigerian politicians both at legislative arm and executive arm of government are always influencing siting of universities in their states, local government and towns. Strategic planning on universities distribution are always been alter to favour politician in power. Educational planners are influenced to site universities in their communities. Nigerian politician have taking establishment of universities as a constituent projects. Bills are sponsored every year by honourable members National assembly for universities establishment in their state and senatorial district. Ogunode & Ajape (2021) observed politicians both at the federal and states level especially those at the position of president and state governors influences siting of higher institutions to their states and communities to attract development and achieve political gain by altering the national document on siting of educational institutions in the country. Presently, a university of transportation has been sited in Katsina state, the state of the current president. Ogunode & Ajape (2021) stated that a *bill to establish Aerospace and Aeronautics University in Oka Akoko, Ondo State*, passed second reading on the floor of the Nigerian Senate. The bill was sponsored by Senator Prof. Boroface representing northern senatorial district in Ondo state. The



university would be sited in the home town of the senator in Ondo state. Another example was given by Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) who noted that the political crises that surrounded the establishment of this university manifested when the Yar'Adua's regime attempted to relocate the university to Kaduna State.

Review of Empirical Studies

Shijian and Agyemang (2022) conducted an empirical study on the impact of covid-19 on international student enrollment for higher education in China. The majority of prior research on COVID-19 and international higher education has employed a qualitative research design. Few of the studies have employed a quantitative research approach. Our study, therefore, in an attempt to fill in the literature gap, explores the impact of COVID-19 on international students' enrollment in China using a quantitative approach. Using cross-sectional data for thirty-one provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions on the Chinese mainland, the study utilized Dynamic Ordinary Least Squares for the long-run relationship analysis. Our findings revealed that an inverse and statistically significant relationship exists between total confirmed cases and international students enrolled. Similarly, a negative relationship was found between total deaths and the number of international students enrolled for the 2020/2021 teaching year. On the contrary, a positive and statistically significant relationship was found between total recoveries and the number of enrolled international students at higher education. Our findings add up to existing literature on COVID-19 and international higher education.

Levy et al. (2015) examined students blogging about politics with a study of students' political engagement and a teacher's pedagogy during a semester-long political blog assignment. Many scholars have written about the Internet's potential for engaging youth in public issues, but there has been little empirical research on the political engagement outcomes from students' classroom-based use of web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, or the pedagogies involved in designing such experiences. The study begins by addressing this gap by analyzing the development of political engagement among several dozen high school students who were required to complete political blogs for their required U.S. government course and by exploring their teacher's pedagogical strategies and challenges. They analyzed data from 22 classroom observations, 15 student interviews, three teacher interviews, and surveys from over 300 students (including a large comparison group) given at the beginning and end of the fall 2012-13 semester. Quantitative and qualitative analyses indicate that students in the blog-focused classes developed greater political interest, internal political efficacy, and self-efficacy for political writing than other students. They also found that the teacher did not actively encourage interactive posting in order to avoid heated exchanges but that many students expressed an interest in seeing more responses to their online writing. We discuss implications for practice and research.

Adesola et al. (2013) carried out an empirical study of the relationship between staff training and job satisfaction among Nigerian banks employees. This research work examined the relationship between staff training and job satisfaction among Nigerian banks employees with special reference to the selected banks in Osogbo metropolis. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from eighty (80) respondents through simple random sampling method. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was employed to know the relationship between staff training and job satisfaction, while multiple regression was used to determine the effect. The



result showed that staff training has positive significant relationship with job satisfaction. The study also revealed that the combined influence of age, working experience, and qualification have a strong association with job satisfaction of Nigerian banks' employees. Subsequently, recommendations were made that Management should increase budget for staff training and also staff training must be in line with organizational objectives.

Tabotrdip, (2010) conducted a research to determine the influence of the state primary Education board on primary school management. The study used survey research design. Proportionate stratified random samplings were used to draw a sample size of 607 primary school heads. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the four research questions and t-test was used to answer the four null hypotheses. The findings agreed that the state primary education board influenced the funding of primary schools and teachers welfare in Imo State school system. The finding also shows that the provision of physical facilities and equipment in the school were affected because of inadequate fund. This study is related to the present study in the sense that, the state primary school board influences the management of primary schools which shows that government interference affects the management of secondary schools like wise it's funding.

Adam and Sharma (2013) in their paper "The effect of political instability in public education quality" provided a preliminary analysis to evaluate the implications of political stability for educational quality, evident in the survival rate measure. Secondary analyses were conducted for data drawn from the Political Risk Service Report, the World Bank Report, the United Nations Report, using a sample comprising 47 countries, 26 politically stable and 21 politically unstable during a ten-year period of time (2018D2018). The study reveals that political stability plays a major role in explaining the survival rate in education when used as a single predictor or, when introduced in the analysis with the GDP per capita. Following previously reported findings suggesting causal relations between high economic growth and regime stability, the authors' analyses show that as far as educational quality is concerned, political stability plays a far more significant role compared to countries' economic circumstances evident in the GDP per capita, originality/value. These initial findings suggest that economic conditions create an essential infrastructure which in itself is not sufficient. Political stability which fosters continuity seems to be essential to enable professional considerations to dominate educational processes and allow educators to conduct pedagogical programs from start to finish. Political instability can be defined in at least three ways. A first approach is to define it as the propensity for regime or government change. A second is to focus on the incidence of political upheaval or violence in a society, such as assassinations, demonstrations, and so forth. A third approach focuses on instability in policies rather than instability in regimes (i.e., the degree to which fundamental policies of, for instance, property rights are subject to pent changes). Frequent changes in the political leadership tend to affect the reliability and implementation of educational plans/policies. Sometime, forceful termination of government had affected the continuing in the systematic development of National education policies. For this reasons, educational planners therefore are often forced to drop a plan in the making to take up new programs and decisions in the bid to comply with the political demands of the time.

Akinwale (2018) carried out a study with the working title "Political Dynamics and University Governance in Nigeria." With the purpose of gaining an understanding of the part that politics plays in the administration of universities, this study adopted a mixed-methods strategy, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. The findings suggested that political



considerations play a considerable role in the appointment of university leaders, and that these considerations frequently take precedence over merit-based standards. This, in turn, had an impact on the autonomy of the institution as well as teaching freedom. Akinwale came to the conclusion that political intervention lowers the quality of higher education, and as a result, he suggested the construction of appointment processes that are more merit-based and transparent.

The research that Eze and Okonkwo (2020) conducted was titled "The Impact of government interference on Teaching Excellence in Nigerian Universities." The purpose of the study was to investigate the role that political considerations played in student admissions and staff recruitment, and how those roles influenced teaching standards. The researchers gathered information from three of Rivers State's public colleges by employing an approach known as case study research. According to the conclusions of their investigation, political intervention frequently resulted in decreased admission standards and the employment of professionals with inferior qualifications. The investigation led to the conclusion that political influence is a substantial obstacle to teaching success, and the subsequent proposal was to implement more stringent admission and recruitment criteria in order to protect teaching integrity.

Udoh's research, which she titled "Politics and University Expansion in Nigeria," had the overarching goal of determining the extent to which political decisions have an impact on the growth and development of university facilities. She took a qualitative approach to the problem by conducting interviews with administrators at universities and executives in government agencies. According to the findings of the study, choices regarding the expansion of universities are frequently influenced more by political concerns than educational requirements, which results in the inappropriate distribution of resources. Udoh came to the conclusion that political influence in the siting decisions of universities can impede the strategic expansion of higher education institutions. He recommended a more balanced strategy that takes into consideration educational demands in addition to political considerations.

The researchers Madu and Ibrahim (2021) conducted a study with the working title "Funding Realities: government interference in Nigerian Universities." The purpose of the research was to investigate the influence that political considerations have on the amount of money allocated to public institutions. The research consisted of conducting interviews with various university financial officers and analysing patterns of funding from a variety of educational institutions. According to the findings of the study, there is a direct connection between political objectives and the allocation of financing, which frequently results in financial instability within institutions. The authors came to the conclusion that political influence in funding severely hinders the financial autonomy and stability of universities, and they suggested the development of an independent agency to oversee university finance as a solution to this problem.

Their study attempted to analyse how government interference impacts the regulatory role of the National Universities Commission (NUC). Bello and Yusuf (2022) performed research on "The Influence of Politics on the National Universities Commission's Powers." They identified this by conducting document analysis and interviews with NUC officials, which led them to the conclusion that political pressures frequently result in standards and regulatory oversights being undermined. The findings led to the conclusion that political intervention in the NUC reduces the efficacy of its regulatory function. As a result, the solution was to increase the independence of the NUC in order to assure objective oversight.

METHODOLOGY

The design used by the researcher in this study is the descriptive survey. The population of the study consisted all the teaching and senior non-teaching staff of three public universities in Rivers State. There are 4,946 teaching and senior non-teaching staff in the three public universities in Rivers State which are: University of Port Harcourt (1,462 teaching staff and 1114 senior non-teaching staff), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (394 teaching staff and 639 senior non-teaching staff), and Rivers State University (424 teaching staff and 737 senior non-teaching staff), summing up to 2,382 teaching staff and 2,490 senior non-teaching staff and a total of (Establishment units of universities). The study's sample comprised 989 staff members, representing 20% of the total population at three public universities in Rivers State. This sample included 491 teaching staff and 498 senior non-teaching staff. To ensure a representative and unbiased selection, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled "**Government Interference and Effective Management of Universities Questionnaire (GIEMUQ)**". The instrument was structured using the modified 4-point Likert type rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) – 4points, High Extent (HE) – 3points, Low Extent (LE) – 2points, Very Low Extent (VLE) - 1 point. In scoring the questionnaire responses, the weighted point was added as $4+3+2+1=10/4= 2.5$. Thus 2.5 was the Criterion Mean. The instrument for this study was subjected to face and content validation by the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers in the Department of Educational Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Their corrections and comments were highly considered before the final instrument was drafted. A test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The researcher administered twenty copies of the instrument to twenty lecturers who were outside the study sample but part of the population. Two weeks later, another set of the same instrument was re-administered to the same respondents and retrieved. The two scores obtained from these exercises were collated, computed and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula (r) and a reliability coefficient of 0.88 (88%) was obtained.

Nine hundred and eighty-nine (989) copies of the instrument were administered to 989 teaching and senior non-teaching staff in the three public universities in Rivers State. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the teaching and senior non-teaching staff of the three public universities in Rivers State who were selected with the help of two trained research assistants who are not related or known to the respondents. The data collected from the respondents were properly organized in tables, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while, independent sample t-test was used to test the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

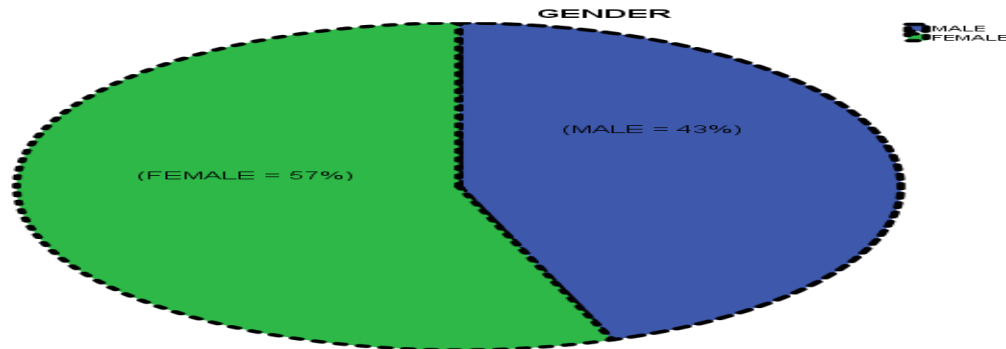
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented the analysis of the data collected from the field with respect to the research questions and hypotheses. This chapter also presented the summary of findings and discussion of findings.

4.1 Presentation of Data

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

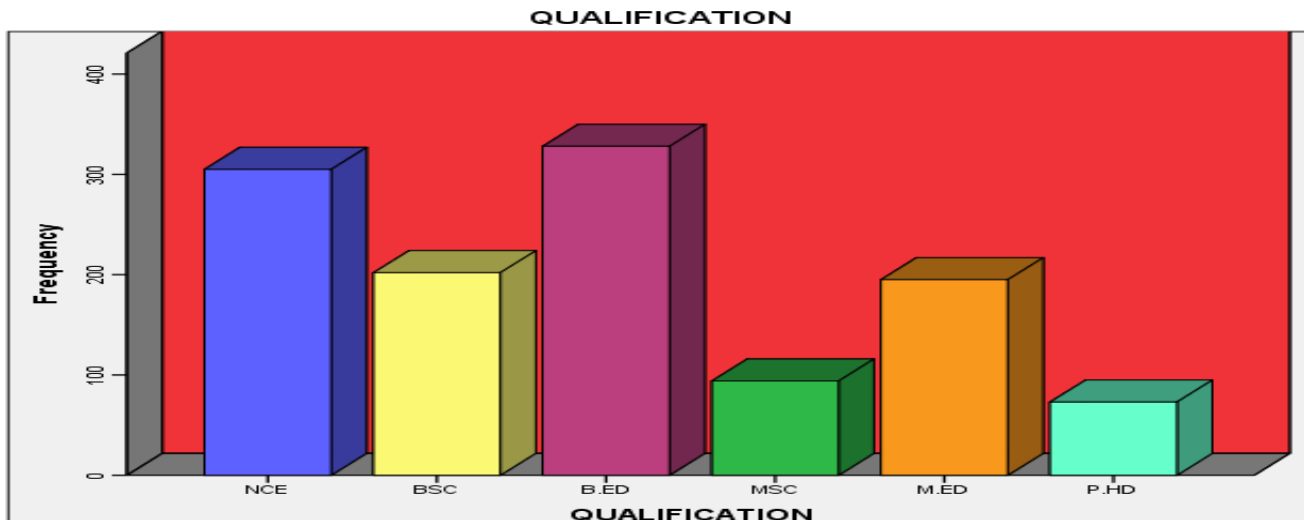
Figure 4.1: Gender of the Respondents



Source: Researcher's Concept, 2023.

Figure 4.1: indicates that out of 923 respondents, 406 (44%) respondents were male, while 517 (56%) were females. Therefore, females constituted larger population of the respondents of the sampled size.

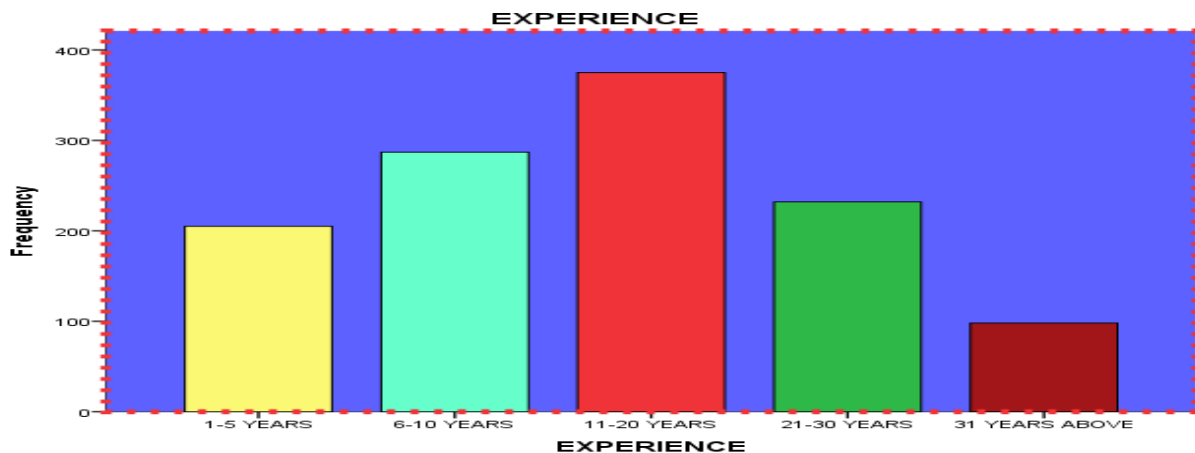
Figure 4.2: Qualification of the Respondents



Source: Researcher's Concept, 2023.

In figure 4.2, out of a total of 923 respondents 231 (25%) had NCE, 157 (17%) had BSC, 249 (27%) had B.ED, 73 (7.9%) had MSC, 148 (16%) had M.ED while 65 (7.1%) had terminal degrees. The above figure reveals that B.ED holders were more in number with MSC and Ph.D bringing up the rear.

Figure 4.3: Years of Experience of the Respondents



Source: Researcher’s Concept, 2023.

Data in figure 4.3 revealed that out of 923 respondents 190 (20.6%) had 1-5 years of experience, 236(25.6%) had 6-10 years of experience, 212(23.0%) had 11-20 years of experience, 194(21.0%) had 21-30 years of experience, while 91 (9.9%) 31 years above experience. Therefore, more of the respondents as analysed from the table had 11-20 years of experience, while less number of respondents had 31 years and above experience.



4.2 Data Analysis

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent does government interference influence the citing of public universities and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 4:1 Mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent government interference influence the citing of public universities and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Extent government interference influence the citing of public universities and effective management								
		Teaching Staff = 453		Non- Teaching Staff = 470				
S/N		\bar{X}	S.D	\bar{X}	S.D	Weighted Mean	Rank Order	Remark
1	Playing politics with the choice of where to cite a university could affect the effective management of the institution	2.96	1.12	2.99	1.07	2.98	4 th	High Extent
2	Politicians choosing to cite a university in a bid to honor a superior leader could potentially lead to mismanagement in the university system.	2.96	1.03	3.02	1.02	2.99	3 rd	High Extent
3	The growth of a university could be affected detrimentally if the siting of the university is not strategic	3.06	1.03	2.98	0.95	3.02	1 st	High Extent
4	Politics of situating a university campus contributes to staff lateness to work	2.96	1.03	3.04	1.04	3.00	2 nd	High Extent
5	Politics of siting a university in a congested environment will lead to noise pollution and thereby limiting the effective management of university.	2.91	1.09	2.66	1.08	2.78	5 th	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.97	1.07	2.94	1.03	2.96		High Extent

Source: Survey Data, 2023



Table 4.1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent government interference influence the citing of public universities and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The table indicates that both the teaching staff and non-teaching staff agree that Playing politics with the choice of where to cite a university could affect the effective management of the institution, Politicians choosing to cite a university in a bid to honor a superior leader could potentially lead to mismanagement in the university system, The growth of a university could be affected detrimentally if the siting of the university is not strategic, Politics of situating a university campus contributes to staff lateness to work and Politics of siting a university in a congested environment will lead to noise pollution and thereby limiting the effective management of university in Rivers State to a high extent as noted on 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with the weighted mean scores of 2.98, 2.99, 3.02, and 2.78, respectively.

More also, the ranking order showed that item came 18 came first with the mean weighted mean score of 3.02 while item 20 came last with the weighted mean score of 2.78 respectively. This implies that more respondents agreed on item 18 to a high extent, while few respondents agreed on item 20 to a lesser extent. In all, the grand weighted mean value of 2.96 indicates that government interference influence the citing of public universities and effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria to a high extent.



Research Question Two: To what extent does government interference influence the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 4.2: Mean ratings and Standard deviation on the extent government interference influence the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

Government interference influences the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management								
		Teaching Staff = 453		Non- Teaching Staff = 470				
S/N		\bar{X}	<i>S.D</i>	\bar{X}	<i>S.D</i>	Weighted Mean	Rank Order	Remark
6	The lobbying for unqualified staff into university council based on godfatherism and political alignment, could affect the growth of the university over the years.	3.03	0.96	3.27	0.75	3.15	1 st	High Extent
7	Appointing candidates who do not have strong educational background and experience into the university council would affect the quality of education provided by the university	2.83	1.04	3	1.01	2.91	4 th	High Extent
8	Nominating Council members from the government house based on party alignment could affect the efficient management of the university detrimentally	2.94	1.01	3.23	0.78	3.08	2 nd	High Extent
9	The appointment of university council members by political leaders based on their tribe, will hinder the growth of the institution.	2.93	1.05	3.15	0.88	3.04	3 rd	High Extent
10	Politicians hijacking the process of appointment of council members would affect the standard of education the university offers.	2.06	1.05	1.83	0.93	1.95	5 th	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.8	1.01	2.9	0.88	2.85		High Extent

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 4.2 shows the Mean ratings and Standard deviation on the extent government interference influence the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The table reveals that the majority of the respondents agreed that, The lobbying for unqualified staff into university council based on godfatherism and political alignment, could affect the growth of the university over the years, Appointing candidates who do not have strong educational background and experience into the university



council would affect the quality of education provided by the university, Nominating Council members from the government house based on party alignment could affect the efficient management of the university detrimentally, The appointment of university council members by political leaders based on their tribe, will hinder the growth of the institution, and Politicians hijacking the process of appointment of council members would affect the standard of education the university offers in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria to a High extent as seen on item 6, 7, 8, and 9 with the weighted mean ratings of 3.15, 2.91, 3.08, and 3.04.

In this same vein, from the ranking order item 21 came 1st with the mean value of 3.15 and item 25 came last with the mean score of 1.95, indicating that, majority of the respondents agreed that government interference influence the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria to a high extent. From the foregoing, the grand weighted mean value of 2.85 shows that government interference influence the appointment of council members/ visitation panel and effective management of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria to a high extent.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in siting of public universities for effective management of universities in rivers state, Nigeria.

Table 4.3: T-test analysis of the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in siting of public universities for effective management of universities in rivers state, Nigeria.

	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Calculated t	Critical Table t.	Significant level	Decision
Teaching staff	453	2.97	1.07					
Non-teaching staff	470	2.94	1.03	921	0.5	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Teaching staff	453	2.97	1.07					
Total	923							

Not Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 4.3 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.5 is less than the critical table value of 1.96 at a



degree of freedom of 921. Since calculated table value (0.5) is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in siting of public universities for effective management of universities in rivers state, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in the appointment of council members/ visitation panel for effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.4: T-test analysis of the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in the appointment of council members/ visitation panel for effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Calculated t	Critical Table t.	Significant level	Decision
Teaching staff	453	2.8	1.01					
Non-teaching staff	470	2.9	0.88	921	0.48	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Teaching staff	453	2.8	1.01					
Total	923							

Not Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 4.4 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.48 is less than the critical table value of 1.96 at a degree of freedom of 921. Since calculated table value (0.48) is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference in the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff on the influence of government interference in the appointment of council members/ visitation panel for effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

Government interference in Siting of Public Universities on the Effective Management of Public Universities

The significance of the geographical placement of an institution, particularly in the case of a university, cannot be overemphasised. The accessibility, suitability for teaching pursuits, growth



potential, and feasibility of infrastructural development of a location are determined by various factors. The present study extensively examines a critical subject matter: the degree of political intervention that influences the decision-making process for the establishment of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Additionally, the aim is to comprehend the cascading impact that this intervention has on the efficient administration of these educational establishments.

The data reported in Table 4.5 reveals a major finding. Both teaching and non-teaching personnel concur unanimously that a decision driven by political motives regarding the location of a university can have significant consequences for its administration. The compromise of strategic planning occurs when the site of an institution is influenced by political factors. This statement is supported by the findings of item 18, which received the highest average score. It may be deduced from this statement that universities that are built without a proactive approach to planning may encounter difficulties such as inadequate infrastructure, restricted capacity for future growth, and other related infrastructural obstacles. Additionally, selecting a location without taking strategic factors into account could lead to operational inefficiencies. One example of this phenomenon is the occurrence of tardiness among staff members, which has the potential to greatly disrupt the day-to-day functioning of an institution. An associated concern, as emphasised in item 20, pertains to the scholarly milieu. The establishment of a university in a densely populated area may result in the introduction of noise pollution, which could have a negative impact on the teaching environment and hinder effective management.

Examining prior empirical research enhances the depth and breadth of this study. Turner et al. (2015) emphasised the crucial significance of effective leadership. Based on this analysis, it may be argued that the onus lies on university administrators to ensure that their institutions are situated in strategic locations, hence enabling more effective governance. Nevertheless, when the decision-making process is too influenced by political factors, it jeopardises the integrity of leadership. The sentiment expressed in the statement resonates with the research conducted by Nelson (2017), which highlights how political agendas within universities can undermine confidence among important stakeholders.

Martins (2020) conducted a notable study that advocated for the importance of diversified



leadership. By drawing parallels with existing studies, it may be inferred that decisions on the location of a university should incorporate a wide range of inputs. The decision-making process should take into account a comprehensive analysis of environmental, teaching, and infrastructural factors, rather than being influenced by political dynamics. The thesis presented in this discourse is bolstered by the findings of Sánchez and Andrews (2019), who expressed concern regarding the lack of alignment between teaching leadership agendas. The worries expressed by individuals hold significance within the present setting. The geographical placement of a university, influenced by political motivations, has the potential to create a disconnect between its teaching priorities and the practical circumstances of its surroundings.

The foundation of this analysis is based on the statistical inference derived from Table 4.12. There is a clear consensus that has emerged among both teaching and non-teaching employees regarding the consequences of political meddling in the decision-making process for the location of universities. The consensus among scholars and experts highlights the widespread acknowledgement and collective apprehension over the difficulties arising from judgements impacted by political factors.

The selection of a university's location is not solely a matter of logistics, but rather plays a crucial role in determining its teaching vibrancy, infrastructural stability, and long-term viability. According to the findings of the study, the presence of political intervention in these decisions might give rise to a range of complex difficulties. There is an immediate and pressing need for stakeholders in Rivers State, Nigeria, and potentially beyond, to reassess their approaches to decision-making. The primary objective should consistently remain unchanged: making decisions that prioritise the long-term success of a university, guaranteeing its expansion, and enhancing the broader community it is committed to serving.

Government interference in the Appointment of Council Members/ Visitation Panel on the Effective Management

Located in the central region of Rivers State, Nigeria, there exists a significant concern pertaining to the proficient administration of universities and its fundamental components, namely the council members and visitation panels. These individuals assume a crucial role in teaching institutions, offering guidance and supervising essential decision-making processes.



The major issue revolves around the method of appointment for these individuals and the potential impact of political involvement on this process, therefore affecting the direction and calibre of an institution's teaching pursuits.

The data obtained from the investigation provides a comprehensive and rather disconcerting portrayal of the current situation. This observation reveals a discernible pattern in which individuals lacking the necessary qualifications, motivated by political associations and the contentious practise of 'godfatherism,' are gaining entry into university councils. The implications of such practises have wide-ranging consequences. For example, the inclusion of persons lacking a robust educational foundation or pertinent expertise in these prominent roles undermines the fundamental integrity of teaching governance. Placing greater emphasis on political party affiliation rather than true merit when making these selections can impede the effective operation of universities. Moreover, the nomination of individuals based on tribal affiliations rather than their qualifications poses a hindrance to the development of institutions, impeding the possibility of fostering innovation and advancement. The data reveals a prevailing theme: the quality of education is compromised when politicians manipulate the process of making appointments.

The inclusion of past empirical reviews serves to strengthen the validity of these findings. The study conducted by Turner et al. (2015) underscores the significant influence that leadership exerts on organisations. By establishing a comparison, it becomes evident that the quality of leadership, particularly within university councils, significantly impacts the efficacy of an institution. When political intervention is introduced into this context, it poses a threat to the integrity of the institution. Nelson's 2017 insights regarding the erosion of trust in leadership contribute an additional dimension to the existing narrative. In the event that council appointments are perceived by university personnel and stakeholders as being driven by political motivations, there is a potential for a significant decline in trust towards the governing body. This erosion of trust may subsequently result in institutional instability.

Martins (2020) provides more perspective on the significance of diversified leadership in promoting teaching performance. The presence of political reasons poses a challenge to the diversity inside teaching institutions, as it promotes a limited and perhaps biased viewpoint that



may not be in line with the institution's overarching objectives or the varied requirements of its teaching community. Furthermore, as highlighted by Sánchez and Andrews (2019), the prevalence of political incentives over teaching ones results in a distinct mismatch of priorities. The presence of this distorted alignment has the potential to misguide institutions, causing them to deviate from their fundamental teaching goals.

Upon conducting a more comprehensive analysis of the data using the z-test, a notable consensus emerges. Both teaching and non-teaching personnel agree on the degree of political meddling in these nominations, highlighting its substantial impact on the process. The consensus among individuals is indicative of the urgent nature of the issue, highlighting its significance as a common concern among many levels of academia.

This study highlights a concerning pattern of political intervention in critical university appointments within Rivers State. The consequences of such intervention are many, posing a threat to the standards, credibility, and fundamental principles of teaching administration. The teaching community in Rivers State is being urged to prioritise the insulation of critical appointments from political influences and prejudices in order to facilitate the thriving and realisation of universities' maximum potential. This entails a steadfast emphasis on merit, competence, and aptitude.

Conclusion

This study has meticulously examined the intricate relationship between government interference and the effective management of universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is evident that political influences significantly affect various aspects of university management, including the siting of universities, the appointment of council members, and the overall governance of these institutions. The research findings underscore the pervasive nature of political interference, which often prioritizes political considerations over merit and due process, thereby compromising the quality and integrity of higher education.

Government interference in the siting of public universities has been shown to lead to suboptimal decisions that hinder the strategic growth and operational efficiency of these institutions. The



politically motivated siting decisions often result in infrastructural challenges, accessibility issues, and an overall environment that is not conducive to academic excellence.

Similarly, the appointment of council members and visitation panels, when influenced by political affiliations rather than qualifications and merit, detrimentally impacts the governance and quality of education provided by the universities. The study highlights how political patronage and godfatherism in the appointment process can lead to the inclusion of unqualified individuals in key positions, thereby undermining the effective management and academic standards of the universities.

The empirical evidence presented in this study aligns with existing literature, reinforcing the notion that political interference in higher education governance leads to a decline in institutional trust, academic freedom, and overall educational quality. The statistical analysis further confirms that both teaching and non-teaching staff recognize the adverse effects of political interference on the effective management of universities.

In conclusion, the study calls for a reassessment of the decision-making processes involved in the management of universities in Rivers State. There is an urgent need for policies that insulate educational institutions from political influences, ensuring that decisions are based on merit, strategic planning, and the overarching goal of academic excellence. By prioritizing these principles, the universities in Rivers State can better fulfill their mandates, contribute to national development, and enhance the socio-economic and political landscape of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the insights and results derived from the research, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. **Establish Oversight Committees:** Establish the formation of autonomous oversight committees consisting of scholarly professionals, financial auditors, and community representatives to oversee and assess the distribution and utilisation of money, hence promoting transparency and accountability.
2. **Review and Reform Policies:** It is important to conduct regular assessments of educational policies, with particular emphasis on those pertaining to the allocation of



resources for higher education institutions. The objective of such studies should be to identify and mitigate factors that facilitate or encourage political intervention in the functioning of universities.

3. **Capacity Building:** Allocate resources towards the implementation of capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills and capabilities of university administrators and leadership. Provide individuals with the necessary abilities and understanding to effectively manage political influences, all the while maintaining a steadfast dedication to achieving teaching excellence and fostering institutional advancement.

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