

The Interplay between Strength of Character and Institutional Traits in the Effective Planning and Leadership of Public Universities

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Abstract

This study is part of a wider research that determined the interplay between strength of character and institutional traits in the effective planning and leadership of public universities in Nigeria. The understanding remains that the interplay between strength of character and institutional traits becomes particularly evident when it comes to long-term planning and leadership strategic direction. The population for the study comprised all faculty members, non-academic staff, and doctoral students, in public universities in Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different demographics and characteristic. The sample size is 600 respondents—faculty members, non-academic staff, and doctoral students respectively. Authors self-structured questionnaire tagged the “Strength of Character and Institutional Traits in the effective planning and leadership Public Universities (SCITEPLPU)” was developed to assess stakeholders’ perceptions of the strength of character of their institutions. The internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's Alpha and reliability indices of $\alpha = .896$ and $.840$. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Mean and standard deviation were tallied along “agree and disagree. Any mean score of 3.50 or higher indicates agreement, while any mean score that fall below 3.50 represents disagreement. On the part of the correlation analysis, Kendall's Tau-b was employed and tested at .05 level of significance. The study found amongst others that institutional humility, perseverance, adaptability, etc., play significant role in improving the planning and leadership of public universities in Nigeria. The study concluded that to foster balance in public universities leadership must cultivate environments where both leaders and institutions thrives to guarantee the responsive needs of students, faculty, and staff for the good of society as a whole. From the findings, the study recommended that university leaders should further improve their humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles.

Keywords: Interplay, Strength of Character, Institutional Traits, Leadership, Planning Public Universities, Nigerian Higher Education.

Introduction

Planning and leadership in public universities are complex processes that require the careful coordination of many factors (Ololube, 2024). One of the most significant elements in shaping the trajectory of public universities is the interaction between the strength of

character of their leaders and the institutional traits of the universities themselves (Mora & La Porte, 2024; Ogonu & Mmom, 2023; Agwoje & Okeleke, 2023). The leadership of public universities are often embodied by the Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, Head of Departments and other senior administrators, etc., who play crucial role in determining the vision, mission, and strategic direction of the universities. At the same time, the institutional traits like the university's history, culture, organizational structure, and the expectations of stakeholders' heavily influence the decision-making and leadership approaches (Sonmez-Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020; Wang et al., 2022).

Strength of character refers to the moral and ethical qualities that leaders possess. Some of these qualities include humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Balcher, 2024). These traits empower leaders to make tough decisions, build consensus, and navigate challenges while maintaining a strong sense of purpose (Wang et al., 2022). If this is applied to the leadership of public universities, strength of character is essential in making decisions that align with the values in universities and the welfare of students, faculty, and staff (Ololube, 2017a). Universities leaders with strong character may focus on preserving academic integrity, advocating for equitable opportunities, and addressing social issues in ways that positively impacts both the university community and the wider society (Nkwor, 2020).

On the other hand, institutional traits are the underlying characteristics and attributes that define public universities. These traits may include the university's institutional culture, its governance model, academic traditions, the relationship with local and national governments, and its funding structure. Institutional traits also reflect the expectations placed on Nigerian public university by various stakeholders, including government bodies, accreditation agencies, alumni, faculty, students, and the broader community (Asiyai, 2014; Samuel & Umoh, 2023). Public universities are often held accountable not just to their internal members but the external forces as well, which makes the planning and leadership processes inherently complex. According to Agwoje and Okeleke (2023), institutional traits influence how leadership decisions are made and how they are received by the university community. Public universities with long-standing tradition of academic excellence value autonomy in decision-making; while some that are heavily reliant on state funding may prioritize alignment with state policies (Ololube, 2024).

The relationship between strength of character and institutional traits is one of interdependence because leaders must navigate the often-competing demands of their personal values and the institutional realities they face (Okere, 2020; Schaedler et al., 2022). The strength of leaders' character is capable of steering universities through turbulent times and can influence the direction of their planning (Enwereuzo, 2023). In the face of financial austerity, leaders with strong ethical principles might resist cuts to essential student services, even when pressured by budget constraints (Brigue & Orlu, 2023; Struckell et al., 2022). Ololube (2024) noted that leaders resilience and vision would provide moral compass that guides their decisions, and helping them prioritize the long-term well-being of their university's core mission over short-term financial gains.

Conversely, Adole (2024) observed that institutional traits shape the development of leadership styles and public universities with a deeply ingrained culture of shared governance may require leaders who are adept at building consensus and promoting collaboration. This might lead to leadership styles that emphasize inclusivity, transparency, and collective decision-making (Ololube, 2017b; Mukoro & Ojeje, 2024). Universities that place strong emphasis on research excellence and innovation might attract leaders who are particularly forward-thinking, entrepreneurial, and willing to take risks (Adole, 2024). Ololube et al. (2018) emphasized that the value functions and structure of public universities is able to influence what kind of leaders that may rise to the top and how they approach the challenges of leadership.

Therefore, the interplay between strength of character and institutional traits becomes particularly evident when it comes to long-term planning and strategic direction (Gandrita, 2023). In the planning process, according to Nkwor (2020), leaders with strong character are capable of pushing for bold initiatives that align with their values and vision, even if those initiatives challenge the existing institutional norms or the status quo. This might involve pushing for reforms in curriculum, advocating for diversity and inclusion, or securing funding for new research endeavors (Ololube, 2017a). Leaders' personal commitment to these goals must align with the broader institutional mission, and in cases where tensions arise, it is the leaders' character that will determine whether these conflicts are resolved in a constructive and forward-thinking way (Samuel & Umoh, 2023).

Furthermore, the role of institutional culture in shaping leadership cannot be understated, because universities with deeply ingrained tradition of service and civic engagement may expect their leaders to focus on social responsibility and involvement (Cheta-Maclean et al., 2024; Okuru et al., 2024). In contrast, universities with more competitive and achievement-oriented culture may expect their leaders to drive performance metrics and national rankings. In both cases, the strength of character of the leaders particularly their ability to uphold core values like humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles in the face of pressure becomes relevant in maintaining the integrity of public universities missions (Ololube, 2024).

The effective planning and leadership of public universities require a delicate balance between personal strength of character and the demands of institutional traits. Successful leaders are individuals who can integrate their values with the unique qualities of their universities, and guiding them towards success while maintaining the universities core principles (Mukoro & Ojeje, 2024). With the understanding of these dynamics, it is important that those involved in the leadership or strategic planning of public universities offers valuable insights into how leaders can effectively navigate challenges and shape the future of higher education in general. Figure 1 virtualizes the themes of the study.

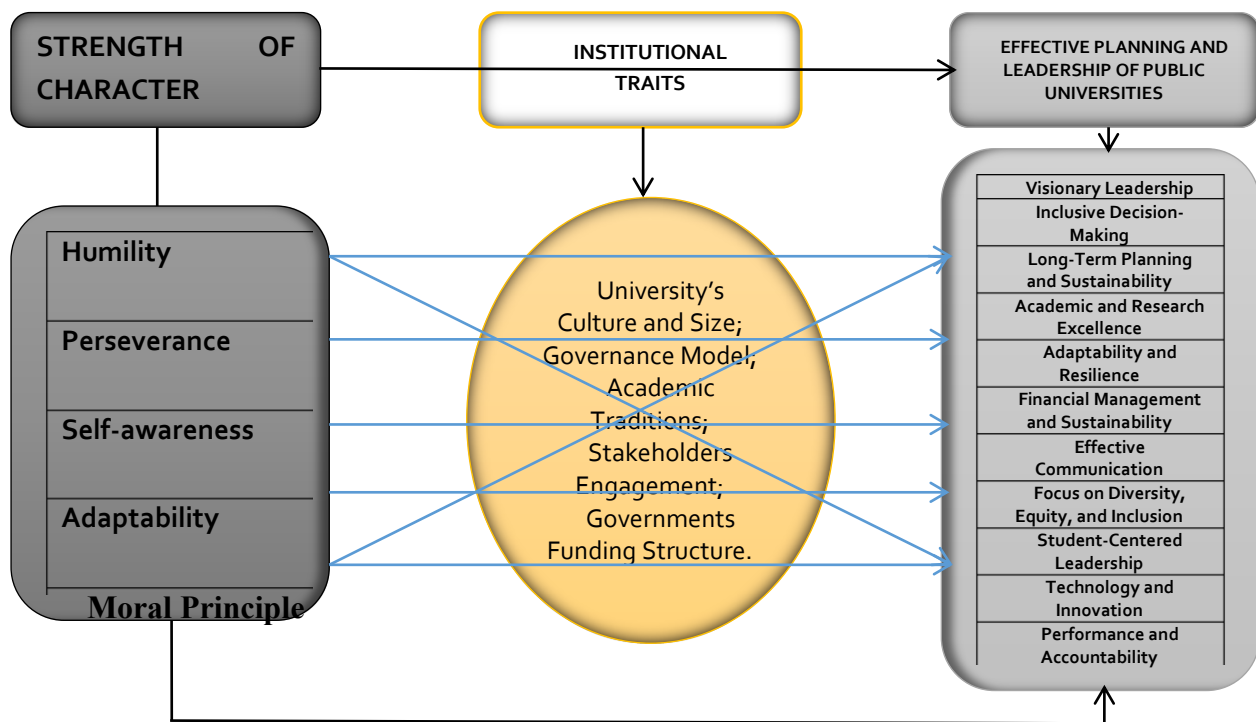


Figure 1: Virtualizing the themes of the study

Statement of the Problem

The interplay between strength of character and institutional traits in the planning and leadership of public universities presents a complex challenge that has significant implications for universities success and sustainability. Public universities operate within a unique context that involves balancing the personal values and ethical principles of their leaders with the long-standing traditions, governance structures, and expectations of various stakeholders. Leaders are often faced with making difficult decisions that impact not only the immediate future of the universities but also their long-term mission, culture, and alignment with public policies.

However, the relationship between individuals' leadership traits and institutional characteristics are not always straightforward. In some cases, the values and vision of leaders may conflict with the deeply ingrained norms of the universities, which may lead to tensions and difficulties in implementing strategic plans. Conversely, the institutional culture and structure may shape leadership styles in ways that constrain leaders' ability to endorse needed change, particularly in times of financial or political pressure. The challenges may rest in the understanding of how these factors interact and influence decision-making, governance, and long-term planning.

In spite of the importance of these relationships, limited researches have explored how the strength of character in universities leaders can either support or hinder the achievement of institutional goals, especially in the face of external pressures and internal challenges using humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles as

benchmarks. Therefore, understanding these dynamics is crucial for improving leadership effectiveness in strategic planning and leadership of public universities system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the interplay between strength of character and institutional traits in the planning and leadership of public universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is guided by five objectives to:

- Appraise how institutional humility improves the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Examine how institutional perseverance improves the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Ascertain how institutional self-awareness improves the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Determine how institutional adaptability improves the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Examine how institutional moral principles improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, five research questions were raised to guide the study:

- How does institutional humility improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How does institutional perseverance improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How does institutional self-awareness improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How does institutional adaptability improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How does an institutional moral principle improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Following the research questions that were raised, five corresponding was equally raised to further guide the study:

- Institutional humility does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Institutional perseverance does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Institutional self-awareness does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

- Institutional adaptability does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- Institutional moral principle does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Institutional Humility and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

In a dynamic landscape of university's education, characterized by rapid changes in technology, demographics, and societal needs, institutional humility offers a framework for effective governance and strategic planning. Institutional humility according to Ololube (2024), refers to universities capacity to acknowledge its limitations, how they remain open to diverse perspectives and engage collaboratively with their stakeholders. Institutional humility is increasingly recognized as a vital quality of public universities, particularly in the context of planning and leadership.

Public universities are often tasked with complex societal challenges, which necessitate adaptive and responsive leadership. Institutional humility encourages university leaders to recognize that they do not possess all the answers they need in all circumstance. As universities around the world and particularly in Nigeria strive to enhance diversity and inclusivity, institutional leaders must begin to embrace humility to foster a culture of openness and learning. This is exemplified in the work of Kegan and Lahey (2009), when they emphasized the importance of "the immunity to change," a concept that highlighted how leaders must confront their assumptions and biases to enact meaningful transformation by integrating institutional humility into their strategic planning processes to cultivate a more inclusive and responsive educational environment.

Furthermore, institutional humility facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders by actively seeking input to value their diverse perspectives. Bensimon (2005a) noted that collaboration and inclusive decision-making processes do not only enhance institutional effectiveness but also build trust that encourages sense of ownership among stakeholders. This collaborative approach is particularly crucial in providing solutions for pressing issues such as budget constraints, curriculum development, and community engagement (Ololube, 2019).

Likewise, institutional humility supports resilience in the face of external pressures. Therefore, when maintaining a posture of humility, university leaders must remain adaptable, ready to pivot strategies that are based on existing feedback and emerging trends in the economics of education. According to Anderson and Adams (2019), universities that practice the principles of humility are better positioned to innovate and thrive amid uncertainty.

Institutional Perseverance and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

Public universities are often seen as pillars of their immediate and far environments, and they are tasked with the responsibility of providing accessible education that promotes

social mobility. However, the landscape of university education is fraught with several challenges in the competitive academic environment.

To be able to confront the multiple challenges, institutional perseverance becomes critical for public universities, particularly in navigating the challenges and complexities of modern higher education. To do this, universities must have the ability to remain steadfast in their mission and values, not minding the adversity the changing circumstances. Therefore, the role of perseverance in planning and leadership becomes increasingly imperative and significant.

Institutional perseverance empowers leaders to remain focused on their long-term goals while adapting to the immediate pressures the environment offers. According to Schein (2010), effective leaders must develop and support a resilient organizational culture that can withstand external challenges while remaining committed to core values. To Schein, this does not only enhance institutional stability but also inspires confidence among faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders.

More so, institutional perseverance presents proactive approaches to planning and decision-making. Public universities that typify perseverance are more likely to engage in strategic foresight, anticipate potential challenges and opportunities. Universities that have forward-thinking mindsets manifest rapid technological advancements. In the same vein, Cummings and Worley (2014) highlighted that universities that prioritize resilience and perseverance in their planning and leadership processes stands better chance to traverse uncertainties more effectively, maintain sustainable growth and are proactive to innovative.

Collaboration is a key aspect of institutional perseverance and public university leadership that encourages engagement with diverse stakeholders, faculty, students, alumni, and community members stands a better chance to survive challenging circumstances. University leaders that leverage on collaborative expertise advance institutional success faster. Bensimon (2005b) emphasized that inclusive leadership do not only enhance institutional effectiveness but also shapes a sense of shared purpose. Therefore, collaborative approach in this context reinforces the institutional commitment towards its mission and values not minding the turbulent times.

Institutional Self-awareness and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

Institutional self-awareness includes the ability of universities to understand and identity their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the external environment in which they operate. Public universities often serve diverse populations and respond rapidly to the changing societal needs, therefore, self-awareness is critical for their strategic decision-making and sustainable growth.

Self-aware institutions accurately assess their capabilities and limitations, which enables them to make informed decisions. According to Ololube (2019), universities that possess a clear understanding of their core values and mission are better equipped to crisscross

uncertainties and maintain their focus on long-term objectives. Moreover, institutional self-awareness promotes a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating their performance and soliciting feedback from stakeholders such as students, faculty, and other employees. This reflective practice aligns with the findings of Agbor et al. (2023), when they argued that universities that are capable of double-loop learning do not only address their immediate issues but also question the underlying assumptions and practices within the system, which allows universities to adapt their strategies in alignment with their evolving mission.

Furthermore, self-awareness enhances collaboration and transparency within the university community. This can happen when university leaders understand their institution's strengths and weaknesses, and their ability to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue about institutional goals and challenges. This participatory approach by means of stakeholder's engagement can increase sense of ownership among stakeholders, which is vital for successful implementation of strategic initiatives. According to Bensimon (2005b), inclusive decision-making processes do not only improve institutional effectiveness but also build trust and accountability.

Therefore, institutional self-awareness is requisite for effective planning and leadership in public universities because it helps the system to cultivate a deep understanding of their identity and context, nurtures a culture of continuous improvement and enhanced stakeholder engagement.

Institutional Adaptability and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

Institutional adaptability is the capacity of universities to adjust their structures, processes, and strategies in response to changing internal and external environments. Adaptability is very significant towards the navigation of complex landscape of university education, which is characterized with rapid technological advancements, shifting demographic trends, and evolving societal needs. Effective planning and leadership are essential components that enable institutions to remain resilient and relevant in times like this (Ololube, 2024).

Effective leadership is necessary in creating visions that promotes adaptability. University leaders must stand-in a culture of innovation and encourage collaboration among faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders to achieve success. According to Kezar and Eckel (2008), transformational leadership plays critical role in facilitating institutional change by empowering stakeholders to contribute to the university's strategic objectives.

Strategic planning in universities involves the assessment of the external environment, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and aligning resources to meet the emerging challenges. This process is requires constant reevaluation of its assets to remain responsive to the emerging changes. The adoption of online learning platforms is a good example and it has become essential for universities to cater for their diverse student populations and enhance educational accessibility (Allen & Seaman, 2017). To Ololube (2011), educational institutions that successfully integrate technologies into their teaching and learning processes do not only improve student engagement but also expands their reach.

The role of leadership and governance in promoting institutional adaptability cannot be overstated, because effective leadership and governance structures enable timely decision-making and resource allocation, which are vital in the rapidly changing global educational landscape. According to a study by Dumas and Garrison (2018), universities that employ shared leadership and governance models, where faculty and administration collaborate on strategic initiatives, tend to exhibit greater institutional adaptability. This collaborative approach ensures that multiple perspectives are considered to promote a more inclusive environment for decision-making.

Therefore, public universities must prioritize stakeholder engagement to enhance their adaptability. Engaging students, alumni, and community members in planning processes can provide valuable insights to foster a sense of ownership among stakeholders. Research by Lincove et al. (2020) highlighted that universities with strong community ties are better equipped to adapt to local needs and expectations, which is essential for maintaining relevance in a competitive educational market.

Institutional Moral Principles and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

Institutional moral principles are fundamental beliefs that guide the actions and decision-making processes in universities and organizations. These principles play essential role towards shaping the planning and leadership strategies of institutions; influence their missions and their commitments to ethical standards, social responsibility, and equity. The modern era is marked by increasing scrutiny over accountability and ethical governance; therefore, public universities must integrate the moral principles into their operational frameworks.

Institutional moral principles are again seen as the commitment to equity and social justice. Therefore, universities have the responsibility to serve their diverse stakeholders to ensure that access to education is equitable. According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU, 2018), universities that embrace equity-driven policies do not only promote inclusivity, they also enhance their overall institutional effectiveness. As such institutional leaders must promote the principles of strategic planning to ensure that their initiatives mitigate the barriers faced by the underrepresented groups.

Furthermore, the moral principle of integrity is essential in guiding universities' actions and decisions. Ethical leadership, characterized by transparency and accountability is crucial to foster trust among stakeholders. According to Brown and Treviño (2006), ethical leaders set the tone for organizational culture and promote values that encourage ethical behavior throughout the university.

In addition to equity and integrity, public universities are beginning to consider the moral implications of their research and academic undertakings. Research ethics and social responsibility is at the forefront of planning and decision-making processes. As such, universities have been increasingly called to assess the societal impact of their research

initiatives. Bok (2003) observed that universities have the moral obligation to ensure that their research contribute positively to society and to address pressing global challenges.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive and correlational design to investigate the role of the strength of character of institutions in the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The population for the study comprised all faculty members, non-academic staff, and doctoral students, in public universities in Rivers State. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different demographics and characteristic. The sample size is 600 respondents—faculty members, non-academic staff, and doctoral students respectively. The choice to use Cochran's formula was that it is commonly used in statistics to determine the minimum sample size required for estimating a population proportion with a specified level of confidence and margin of error.

Authors self-structured questionnaire tagged the “Strength of Character and Institutional Traits in the effective planning and leadership Public Universities (SCITEPLPU)” was developed to assess stakeholders’ perceptions of the strength of character of their institutions. The questionnaire included a six-point (Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1; Disagree (D) = 2; Slightly Disagree (SLD) = 3; Slightly Agree (SLA) = 4; Agree (A) = 5; Strongly Agree (SA) = 6) Likert-scale items focusing on dimensions such as humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principle. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample to ensure clarity and reliability, and necessary adjustments were made based on feedback. The internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's Alpha and reliability indices of $\alpha = .896$ and $.840$ was obtained respectively for section ‘B’ and ‘C’ of the instrument.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. Mean and standard deviation were tallied along “agree and disagree. Any mean score of 3.50 or higher indicates agreement, while any mean score that fall below 3.50 represents disagreement. On the part of the correlation analysis, Kendall’s Tau-b was employed and tested at .05 level of significance. Kendall’s Tau-b was selected as the most appropriate statistical method for this study based on the nature of the data, the research objectives, and the limitations of alternative techniques.

Results

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Information

Categories	Gender	Age	Institution	Academic Position
Male	325(54.2%)			
Female	275(45.8%)			
20-29 years		115(19.2%)		
30-39 Years		219(36.5%)		
40-49 years		142(23.7%)		
50-59 years		90(15%)		
60-69 years		34(5.7%)		
IAUE			227(37.8%)	
RSU			211(35.2%)	
UNIPORT			162(27%)	
Senior Lecturer				123(20.5%)
Reader				100(16.7%)
Professor				94(15.7%)
Non-Academic Staff				140(23.3%)
Doctoral Student				143(23.8%)

Table 1 presents a detailed analysis of the demographic information of the respondents is based on various categories. Data on gender distribution revealed that the male respondents represented the majority, with 325 individuals (54.2%), while the female respondents comprised 275 individuals (45.8%). This nearly even distribution indicates a balanced gender representation, with slightly more males participating.

Information on the age distribution showed that those aged between 20–29 years were 115(19.2%) respondents, representing younger individuals, likely at the early stages of their careers or studies. Those that aged 30–39 years, the largest group of 219(36.5%) respondents, reflect mid-career professionals or advanced students. Respondents that aged between 40–49 years were 142(23.7%) and they show a strong presence of experienced professionals. Respondents who are 50–59 years were 90(15%), and are likely to be seasoned professionals. The respondents that were 60–69 years were 34(5.7%) and they represent a smaller proportion of older and highly experienced professionals. The age distribution highlights a diverse range of respondents. It shows that majority of the respondents were in their active professional age bracket of 30–49 years.

Results for institutional affiliation revealed that IAUE (Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) had the highest representation with 227(37.8%) respondents. This is followed by RSU (Rivers State University) with 211(35.2%) respondents. Respondents from UNIPORT (University of Port Harcourt) were the smallest group, which consisted of 162 respondents 27%.

Outcome from the data analysis on academic positions established that Doctoral Students, which were the largest single group had 143 respondents, representing (23.8%) and they reflect a focus on higher education and research. Non-Academic Staff had 140 respondents representing 23.3%, and they showcase efforts for administrative and support roles. Senior Lecturers represented 123(20.5%) respondents, signify mid-level academic leadership. Readers presented 100(16.7%) respondents, which indicate a significant number of advanced academic staff on the verge of professorship, while Professors remain the smallest academic group, with 94(15.7%) respondents, and they represent top-level academics.

Research Question 1: How does institutional humility improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of how institutional humility improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

s/n	Institutional Humility and Public Universities Planning and Leadership	Mean	SD.	Remarks
1.	In a dynamic landscape of university's education, characterized by rapid changes in technology, demographics, and societal needs, institutional humility offers a framework for effective governance and strategic planning.	3.6833	1.77058	Agree
2.	Institutional humility refers to universities capacity to acknowledge its limitations, how they remain open to diverse perspectives and engage collaboratively with their stakeholders.	3.8083	1.79079	Agree
3.	Institutional humility encourages university leaders to recognize that they do not possess all the answers they need in all circumstance.	3.5700	1.80754	Agree
4.	Institutional humility facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders by actively seeking input to value their diverse perspectives.	3.8283	1.79747	Agree
5.	Institutional humility supports resilience in the face of external pressures especially when maintaining a posture of humility.	3.9450	1.61957	Agree
	Grand Mean and SD	3.7669	1.75719	Agree

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' views regarding the role of institutional humility in enhancing the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that respondents agree that institutional humility provides a valuable framework for effective governance and strategic planning in a rapidly changing educational landscape, with a mean score of 3.6833 (SD = 1.77058).

Respondents recognized that institutional humility entails the university's capacity to acknowledge its limitations and remain open to diverse perspectives, as reflected in a mean of 3.8083 (SD = 1.79079). The data also highlight the importance of university leaders understanding that they do not have all the answers, evidenced by a mean score of 3.5700 (SD = 1.80754). Furthermore, institutional humility facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students, as demonstrated by a mean of 3.8283 (SD = 1.79747). Respondents agreed that maintaining a posture of humility supports resilience in facing external pressures, indicated by a mean score of 3.9450 (SD = 1.61957). With a grand mean of 3.7669 and a standard deviation of 1.75719, the data reinforce the conclusion that institutional humility plays a significant role in improving the planning and leadership of public universities.

Research Question 2: How does institutional perseverance improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of how institutional perseverance improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

s/n	Institutional Perseverance and Public Universities Planning and Leadership	Mean	SD.	Remarks
6.	The landscape of Nigerian university education is fraught with several challenges in the competitive academic environment.	4.0433	1.56489	Agree
7.	To confront the multiple challenges, institutional perseverance becomes critical for public universities in navigating the challenges and complexities of modern higher education.	3.9083	1.66870	Agree
8.	Universities must have the ability to remain steadfast in their mission and values, not minding the adversity the changing circumstances.	3.9150	1.72319	Agree
9.	Institutional perseverance empowers leaders to remain focused on their long-term goals while adapting to the immediate pressures the environment offers.	3.7650	1.71892	Agree
10.	Public universities that typify perseverance are more likely to engage in strategic foresight, anticipate potential challenges and opportunities.	3.5600	1.85979	Agree
	Grand Mean and SD	3.8383	1.70709	Agree

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' views on the role of institutional perseverance in improving the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that respondents agree that the Nigerian university education landscape is characterized by numerous challenges within a

competitive academic environment, as shown by a mean score of 4.0433 (SD = 1.56489). Additionally, respondents emphasized that institutional perseverance is critical for public universities in navigating the complexities of modern higher education, reflected in a mean of 3.9083 (SD = 1.66870). The data further highlight the necessity for universities to remain steadfast in their mission and values despite changing circumstances, evidenced by a mean score of 3.9150 (SD = 1.72319). Moreover, institutional perseverance enables leaders to focus on long-term goals while adapting to immediate environmental pressures, indicated by a mean of 3.7650 (SD = 1.71892). Respondents also noted that public universities exemplifying perseverance are more likely to engage in strategic foresight, which involves anticipating potential challenges and opportunities, reflected in a mean score of 3.5600 (SD = 1.85979). With a grand mean of 3.8383 and a standard deviation of 1.70709, the data reinforce the conclusion that institutional perseverance plays a significant role in enhancing the planning and leadership of public universities.

Research Question 3: How does institutional self-awareness improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of how institutional self-awareness improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

s/n	Institutional Self-awareness and Public Universities Planning and Leadership	Mean	SD.	Remarks
11.	Institutional self-awareness is the ability of universities to understand and identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the external environment in which they operate.	3.9033	1.87702	Agree
12.	Self-aware institutions accurately assess their capabilities and limitations, which enables them to make informed decisions.	4.0633	1.66150	Agree
13.	Universities that possess a clear understanding of their core values and mission are better equipped to crisscross uncertainties and maintain their focus on long-term objectives.	3.9433	1.69161	Agree
14.	Universities that are capable of double-loop learning do not only address their immediate issues but also question the underlying assumptions and practices within the system.	4.1750	1.76434	Agree
15.	Public universities in Nigeria self-awareness enhance collaboration and transparency within the university community.	2.1167	1.20420	Disagree
	Grand Mean and SD	3.6403	1.63973	Agree

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' views on the role of institutional self-awareness in improving the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that respondents agree that institutional self-

awareness involves the ability of universities to understand and identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within their operational environment, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.9033 (SD = 1.87702). Additionally, self-aware institutions are recognized for accurately assessing their capabilities and limitations, enabling them to make informed decisions, as shown by a mean of 4.0633 (SD = 1.66150). Respondents also emphasized that universities with a clear understanding of their core values and mission are better equipped to navigate uncertainties and maintain focus on long-term objectives, reflected in a mean score of 3.9433 (SD = 1.69161). Furthermore, universities capable of double-loop learning not only address immediate issues but also question underlying assumptions and practices within the system, indicated by a mean score of 4.1750 (SD = 1.76434). However, respondents disagreed that self-awareness enhances collaboration and transparency within the university community, as indicated by a mean of 2.1167 (SD = 1.20420). With a grand mean of 3.6403 and a standard deviation of 1.63973, the data reinforce the conclusion that institutional self-awareness plays a significant role in enhancing the planning and leadership of public universities.

Research Question 4: How does institutional adaptability improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of how institutional adaptability improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

s/n	Institutional Adaptability and Public Universities Planning and Leadership	Mean	SD.	Remarks
16.	Institutional adaptability is the capacity of universities to adjust their structures, processes, and strategies in response to changing internal and external environments.	3.9783	1.81752	Agree
17.	Effective leadership is necessary in creating visions that promotes adaptability.	3.5683	1.74463	Agree
18.	Effective planning and leadership are essential components that enable institutions to remain resilient and relevant as a result of adaptability.	3.8933	1.74366	Agree
19.	University leaders must stand-in a culture of innovation and encourage collaboration among faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders to achieve adaptability and success.	3.9300	1.82318	Agree
20.	Universities that employ shared leadership and governance models, where faculty and administration collaborate on strategic initiatives, tend to exhibit greater institutional adaptability.	3.7150	1.75182	Agree
21.	Public universities in Nigeria have prioritized stakeholder engagement to enhance their adaptability through engaging students, alumni, and community members in the planning processes.	3.1650	1.64990	Disagree

Grand Mean and SD	3.7083	1.75511	Agree
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Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' views on the role of institutional adaptability in improving the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that respondents agree that institutional adaptability is the capacity of universities to adjust their structures, processes, and strategies in response to changing internal and external environments, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.9783 (SD = 1.81752). Additionally, the data highlight the necessity of effective leadership in creating visions that promote adaptability, reflected in a mean score of 3.5683 (SD = 1.74463). Respondents also emphasized that effective planning and leadership are essential for institutions to remain resilient and relevant due to adaptability, as shown by a mean of 3.8933 (SD = 1.74366). Furthermore, university leaders are recognized for fostering a culture of innovation and encouraging collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders to achieve adaptability and success, indicated by a mean of 3.9300 (SD = 1.82318). The findings suggest that public universities that utilize shared leadership and governance models, where faculty and administration collaborate on strategic initiatives, tend to exhibit greater institutional adaptability, reflected in a mean score of 3.7150 (SD = 1.75182). However, respondents disagreed that public universities in Nigeria have prioritized stakeholder engagement to enhance their adaptability through Involving students, alumni, and community members in planning processes, as evidenced by a mean of 3.1650 (SD = 1.64990). With a grand mean of 3.7083 and a standard deviation of 1.75511, the data reinforce the conclusion that institutional adaptability significantly enhances the planning and leadership of public universities.

Research Question 5: How does institutional moral principles improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation of how institutional moral principles improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

s/n	Institutional Moral Principles and Public Universities Planning and Leadership	Mean	SD.	Remarks
22.	Institutional moral principles are fundamental beliefs that guide the actions and decision-making processes in universities and organizations.	4.7383	1.79310	Agree
23.	Institutional moral principles play essential role towards shaping the planning and leadership strategies of institutions.	4.2917	1.65161	Agree
24.	Institutional moral principles are the commitment to equity and social justice, and have the responsibility to serve the diverse stakeholders to ensure that access to education is equitable.	4.2017	1.77376	Agree
25.	Moral principle of integrity is essential in guiding universities' actions and decisions.	3.9483	1.81415	Agree
26.	Ethical leadership, characterized by transparency and accountability is crucial to foster trust among stakeholders.	3.8667	1.77223	Agree
27.	Ethical leaders set the tone for organizational culture and promote values that encourage ethical behavior throughout the university.	3.8533	1.71661	Agree
28.	In addition to equity and integrity, public universities are beginning to consider the moral implications of their research and academic undertakings.	3.3733	1.44248	Disagree
	Grand Mean and SD	4.0390	1.70913	Agree

Table 6 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' views on the role of institutional moral principles in improving the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings indicate strong agreement that institutional moral principles are fundamental beliefs guiding actions and decision-making processes in universities, with a mean score of 4.7383 (SD = 1.79310). Respondents also highlighted the essential role these principles play in shaping planning and leadership strategies, as evidenced by a mean of 4.2917 (SD = 1.65161). Moreover, the commitment to equity and social justice was emphasized, with a mean score of 4.2017 (SD = 1.77376), reflecting the responsibility to serve diverse stakeholders and ensure equitable access to education. The moral principle of integrity in guiding universities' actions and decisions received a mean of 3.9483 (SD = 1.81415), while the importance of ethical leadership characterized by transparency and accountability was supported by a mean of 3.8667 (SD = 1.77223). Furthermore, ethical leaders set the tone for organizational culture and promote values encouraging ethical behavior, indicated by a mean score of 3.8533 (SD = 1.71661). However, there was disagreement regarding the consideration of moral implications in research and academic undertakings, with a mean of 3.3733 (SD = 1.44248). The grand mean of 4.0390

and standard deviation of 1.70913 confirm the significant role of institutional moral principles in enhancing planning and leadership.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Institutional humility does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 7: Kendall's Tau-b analysis of institutional humility and the planning and leadership of public universities

		Institutional Humility	Planning and Leadership
Institutional Humility	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	600	600
Planning and Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.604**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	600	600
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 7 presents the results from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of hypothesis eleven, which posits that institutional humility does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .604, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). These results led to the rejection of the initially proposed null hypothesis. This rejection highlights the significant role of institutional humility in enhancing leadership and strategic planning within public universities in Rivers State, contrary to Hypothesis one, which suggested no significant relationship. Consequently, the rejected null hypothesis suggested that institutional humility positively accounted to substantial improved planning and leadership in public universities. This implies that higher levels of institutional humility are associated with more effective planning and leadership practices. Thus, the data indicate that institutional humility plays a fundamental role in shaping the planning and leadership outcomes in these institutions.

Hypothesis 2: Institutional perseverance does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 8: Kendall's Tau-b analysis of institutional perseverance and the planning and leadership of public universities

		Institutional Perseverance	Planning and Leadership
Institutional Perseverance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	600	600
Planning and Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.718**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	600	600
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 8 presents the results from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of hypothesis two, which posits that institutional perseverance does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .718, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). These results led to the rejection of the initially proposed null hypothesis. This rejection underscores the important role of institutional perseverance in enhancing leadership and strategic planning within public universities in Rivers State, contrary to Hypothesis two, which suggested no significant relationship. Consequently, the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis suggests that institutional perseverance is positively correlated with improved planning and leadership in public universities. This implies that higher levels of institutional perseverance are associated with more effective planning and leadership practices. Thus, the data indicate that institutional perseverance plays a crucial role in shaping the planning and leadership outcomes in these institutions.

Hypothesis 3: Institutional self-awareness does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 9: Kendall's Tau-b analysis of institutional self-awareness and the planning and leadership of public universities

		Institutional Self-Awareness	Planning and Leadership
Institutional Self-Awareness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	600	600
Planning and Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.567**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	600	600
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 9 presents the results from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of hypothesis three, which posits that institutional self-awareness does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .567, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). These results led to the rejection of the initially proposed null hypothesis. This rejection highlights the significant role of institutional self-awareness in enhancing leadership and strategic planning within public universities in Rivers State, contrary to Hypothesis three, which suggested no significant relationship. Consequently, the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis suggests that institutional self-awareness is positively correlated with improved planning and leadership in public universities. This implies that higher levels of institutional self-awareness are associated with more effective planning and leadership practices. Thus, the data indicate that institutional self-awareness plays a decisive role in shaping the planning and leadership outcomes in these institutions.

Hypothesis 4: Institutional adaptability does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 10: Kendall's Tau-b analysis of institutional adaptability and the planning and leadership of public universities

		Institutional Adaptability	Planning and Leadership
Institutional Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	600	600
Planning and Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.567**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	600	600
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 10 presents the results from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of hypothesis four, which posits that institutional adaptability does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .567, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). These results led to the rejection of the initially proposed null hypothesis. This rejection underscores the significant role of institutional adaptability in enhancing leadership and strategic planning within public universities in Rivers State, contrary to Hypothesis four, which suggested no significant relationship. Consequently, the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis suggests that institutional adaptability is positively correlated with improved planning and leadership in public universities. This implies that higher levels of institutional adaptability are associated with more effective planning and leadership practices. Thus, the data indicate that institutional adaptability plays a crucial role in shaping the planning and leadership outcomes in these institutions.

Hypothesis 5: Institutional moral principle does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 11: Kendall's Tau-b analysis of institutional moral principle and the planning and leadership of public universities

		Institutional Moral Principle	Planning and Leadership
Institutional Moral Principle	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.581**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	600	600
Planning and Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.581**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	600	600
**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 11 presents the results from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of hypothesis five, which posits that institutional moral principle does not significantly improve the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .581, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). These results led to the rejection of the initially proposed null hypothesis, highlighting the important role of institutional moral principle in enhancing leadership and strategic planning within public universities in Rivers State. Consequently, this acceptance of the alternative hypothesis suggests that institutional moral principle is positively correlated with improved planning and leadership in public universities. This implies that higher levels of institutional moral principle are associated with more effective planning and leadership practices. Thus, the data indicate that institutional moral principle plays a significant role in shaping the planning and leadership progress in universities.

Discussion

Institutional Humility and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

The findings from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of Hypothesis one, which posited that institutional humility does not significantly enhance the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .604, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The data affirm that institutional humility plays a crucial role in shaping effective leadership and strategic planning practices within public universities.

Institutional humility refers to the ability of leaders to recognize their limitations, actively seek input from stakeholders, and value the contributions of others in the decision-making process. Research by Daniel-Ozah (2024) highlighted that leaders who demonstrate humility are more likely to foster inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued. Their findings suggest that such leaders create a culture of openness that

encourages collaboration, which is essential for effective planning and decision-making in universities.

Ololube (2024) contend that humility in leadership promotes a learning orientation among staff and faculty. They argue that humble leaders are more receptive to feedback and criticism, which can lead to improved practices and innovation in planning processes. This is exemplified in the work of Kegan and Lahey (2009), when they emphasized the importance of “the immunity to change,” a concept that highlighted how leaders must confront their assumptions and biases to enact meaningful transformation by integrating institutional humility into their strategic planning processes to cultivate a more inclusive and responsive educational environment.

This study’s findings reinforce the notion that humility is integral to ethical decision-making processes in higher education, positively influencing both planning and leadership. This collaborative approach is particularly crucial in providing solutions for pressing issues such as budget constraints, curriculum development, and community engagement (Ololube, 2019). In summary, the data strongly suggest that institutional humility is a vital component in shaping the planning and leadership development of public universities in Rivers State. This study contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of humility in educational leadership, underscoring its role in fostering collaborative and innovative planning practices.

Institutional Perseverance and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

The findings from the Kendall’s Tau-b analysis of Hypothesis two, which posited that institutional perseverance does not significantly influence the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .718, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that institutional perseverance is a crucial factor in enhancing leadership effectiveness and strategic planning within public universities.

In the same vein, Cummings and Worley (2014) highlighted that universities that prioritize resilience and perseverance in their planning and leadership processes stands better chance to traverse uncertainties more effectively, maintain sustainable growth and are proactive to innovative. Their study indicates that leaders who exhibit resilience and determination are better equipped to guide their institutions through periods of uncertainty, fostering an environment conducive to sustained growth and improvement. Bensimon (2005a) emphasized that inclusive leadership do not only enhance institutional effectiveness but also shapes a sense of shared purpose. Therefore, collaborative approach in this context reinforces the institutional commitment towards its mission and values not minding the turbulent times.

Additionally, Avolio and Gardner (2021) stressed the significance of perseverance in developing transformative leadership. Their research indicates that leaders who

demonstrate persistence not only inspire their teams but also cultivate a shared vision that motivates all stakeholders. In sum, the data strongly indicate that institutional perseverance is vital in shaping the planning and leadership developments of public universities in Rivers State. Leaders who embody perseverance create an environment that encourages resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to institutional objectives. This study contributes to the growing literature on the importance of perseverance in educational leadership, highlighting its critical role in fostering effective planning and governance practices.

Institutional Self-awareness and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

The findings from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of Hypothesis three, which posited that institutional self-awareness does not significantly affect the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .567, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This highlights the essential role that institutional self-awareness plays in enhancing leadership effectiveness and strategic planning within public universities. This reflective practice aligns with the findings of Agbor et al. (2023), when they argued that universities that are capable of double-loop learning do not only address their immediate issues but also question the underlying assumptions and practices within the system, which allows universities to adapt their strategies in alignment with their evolving mission.

According to Ololube (2019), universities that possess a clear understanding of their core values and mission are better equipped to crisscross uncertainties and maintain their focus on long-term objectives. Moreover, institutional self-awareness promotes a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating their performance and soliciting feedback from stakeholders such as students, faculty, and other employees. Agbor et al. (2023) further argued that self-aware leaders can manage their emotions effectively, which in turn influences their interactions with faculty, staff, and students.

The data strongly indicate that institutional self-awareness is a critical factor in shaping the planning and leadership outcomes of public universities in Rivers State. Leaders who embody self-awareness create an environment conducive to reflection, collaboration, and strategic alignment, which are essential for achieving institutional goals. This study adds to the growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of self-awareness in educational leadership, highlighting its pivotal role in fostering effective planning and governance practices.

Institutional Adaptability and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

The findings from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of Hypothesis four, which posited that institutional adaptability does not significantly impact the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .567, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant

at the .01 level (2-tailed), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This reinforces the critical role that institutional adaptability plays in enhancing leadership effectiveness and strategic planning within public universities. Lincove et al. (2020) highlighted that universities with strong community ties are better equipped to adapt to local needs and expectations, which is essential for maintaining relevance in a competitive educational market.

According to a study by Dumas and Garrison (2018), universities that employ shared leadership and governance models, where faculty and administration collaborate on strategic initiatives, tend to exhibit greater institutional adaptability. Moreover, Allen and Seaman (2017) emphasize that adaptability is essential for educational leaders to foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within their institutions. Their research indicates that leaders who prioritize adaptability can effectively integrate new ideas and practices, which is crucial for meeting the evolving demands of higher education.

The findings from this study support the idea that institutional adaptability enhances leadership effectiveness, as leaders who are open to change and responsive to feedback create an environment conducive to collaborative planning and execution. Therefore, leaders who embody adaptability are more likely to foster a culture of innovation and responsiveness, ultimately leading to more effective governance and strategic planning. This study contributes to the existing literature on educational leadership, reinforcing the notion that adaptability is not merely beneficial but essential for public universities to navigate the complexities of the contemporary educational landscape successfully.

Institutional Moral and Public Universities Planning and Leadership

The findings from the Kendall's Tau-b analysis of Hypothesis five, which posited that institutional morality does not significantly influence the planning and leadership of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed a correlation coefficient (τ) of .581, with a significance level (p-value) of .000, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This highlights the vital role that institutional morality plays in enhancing leadership effectiveness and strategic planning within public universities.

The findings of this study are in line with assertion of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU, 2018), universities that embrace equity-driven policies do not only promote inclusivity, and they also enhance their overall institutional effectiveness. As such institutional leaders must promote the principles of strategic planning to ensure that their initiatives mitigate the barriers faced by the underrepresented groups. Bok (2003) observed that universities have the moral obligation to ensure that their research contribute positively to society and to address pressing global challenges.

Moreover, Agbor et al. (2023) asserted that moral integrity in leadership is crucial for fostering transparency and accountability within public universities. Their research highlights that leaders who exhibit moral behavior are more likely to implement policies

and practices that align with the institution's mission and values, thereby positively impacting strategic planning outcomes. Brigue and Orlu (2023) discussed the significance of moral leadership in navigating complex ethical dilemmas that often arise in higher education settings. The results from this study further emphasize that institutional morality is integral to the decision-making processes of university leaders, facilitating more ethical and sustainable planning results.

The data indicate that institutional morality significantly influences the planning and leadership upshots of public universities in Rivers State. Leaders who prioritize ethical considerations create a culture of integrity and accountability, ultimately leading to improved governance and strategic planning. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on educational leadership by reinforcing the notion that moral integrity is essential for public universities to achieve their strategic goals and effectively address the challenges facing higher education today.

Conclusion

This study determined the interplay between strength of character and institutional traits in the planning and leadership of public universities in Nigeria. The submissions remains that the effective planning and leadership of public universities hinge on the complex interplay between the strength of leaders character and the institutional traits that shape universities culture and size, governance model, academic traditions, stakeholders engagement, and governments funding structure. Strong leaders, defined by traits such as humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles, play critical role in steering public universities toward success. Strength of character allows leaders to navigate the challenges of higher education, make decisions that prioritize both academic excellence and institutional sustainability, and inspire others to follow a shared mission.

However, the effectiveness of leadership cannot be understood in isolation from the institutional framework in which it operates. Institutional traits, including governance structures, resources, organizational culture, and policy frameworks, significantly influence how leaders' decisions are enacted and whether those decisions lead to long-term success. When institutional structures support collaborative leadership, promote accountability, and foster environment conducive to innovation through humility, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, and moral principles, leaders will be more capable to effectively implement strategic planning and adapt to the changing demands of the public universities in Nigeria.

The synergy between strength of character of leaders and institutional traits creates dynamics that can propel public universities toward achieving their educational goals and fulfilling their mission and vision. As a result, the success of public university leadership does not only rely on the abilities and capabilities of leaders but also on how well leaders leverage and align institutional strengths to drive positive change. Therefore, to foster balance in public universities leadership must cultivate environments where both leaders and

institutions thrive to guarantee the responsive needs of students, faculty, and staff for the good of society as a whole.

Recommendations

From the findings from this study, university leaders should further improve on the following:

- University leaders should be trained to listen actively, acknowledge their limitations, and seek input from all levels of the university. Humility allows leaders to build trust, foster collaboration, and recognize the value of diverse perspectives, creating a more inclusive and supportive university culture.
- University leaders should be encouraged to approach challenges with resilience and a long-term view because when they persevere through setbacks and demonstrate commitment to the university's mission and vision, leaders can inspire confidence in their vision and lead the institution through periods of uncertainty and change.
- University leaders must engage in regular self-reflection to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and biases. This self-awareness enables them to make more informed decisions, identify areas for personal growth, and align their leadership style with the needs and values of the institution.
- University leaders should be encouraged to stay flexible and open to change because when they embrace new ideas, technologies, and strategies, leaders can effectively navigate shifts in student expectations, funding models, and educational priorities.
- University leaders should base their decisions on a strong ethical framework, prioritizing fairness, equity, and transparency, and adhere to moral principles to certify that leadership actions are in the best interest of all stakeholders to foster culture of integrity and accountability within the university systems.

Future Research Direction

Three future research directions are suggested to further explore the interplay between the strength of character and institutional traits in the effective planning and leadership of public universities:

- Future research could investigate how specific character traits, such as perseverance and adaptability influence university's ability to remain resilient and innovative in the face of external pressures.
- Researchers could explore how institutional culture and values either support or hinder leaders in aligning their moral principles with decision-making processes.
- Examination of how universities' governance structures, values, and expectations shape the ethical frameworks of leaders and their capacity to implement equitable and sustainable policies within the public universities.

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