PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN SCHOOL FUNDING, MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated professional ethics in school funding, management and supervision in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Three research question and three hypotheses guided the study. Hypotheses was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1586 academic and non-academic staff of Rivers State University, with a sample of 360 academic and non-academic staff derived using Taro Yemane formula. Sample random sampling technique was adopted. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire title. Professional Ethics in School Funding, Management and Supervision in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire. Cronbach alpha method was used to establish reliability coefficient of professional ethics in school, management and supervision in tertiary institutions Questionnaire at 0.81. A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire was retrieved representing 80.2% success rate. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test. The findings revealed that professional ethical standards are largely observed, common ethical challenges are recognized, and existing policies are considered effective, with no significant gender differences in perceptions. The study concludes that adherence to professional ethics is crucial for ensuring institutional credibility, efficiency, and trust. Based on the findings, it recommends regular training in professional ethics, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the promotion of an ethical organizational culture through leadership modeling and enforcement of codes of conduct. The study underscores the importance of ethics in sustaining the integrity and

performance of tertiary institutions, ultimately contributing to quality education and societal development.

Keywords: Professional, Ethics, School Funding, Management, Supervision, Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Professional ethics refer to the moral principles and standards that guide behavior in the workplace. In the context of education especially in tertiary institutions. Zuboff, (2019), state that professional ethics are critical for maintaining trust integrity and accountability among educators, administrators, and supervisors. As higher education continues to evolve due to globalization, technological advancement, and increased student diversity. Ahmed, (2020), state that ethical practices in management and supervision have become even more crucial. Tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges play a vital role in shaping the intellectual and moral capacities of students. Tierney & Lanford, M. (2018), opined that the integrity of these institutions is largely upheld through adherence to professional ethics by all stakeholders, particularly those involved in leadership, management, and supervision. Professional ethics in education involve a commitment to values such as honesty, respect, fairness, responsibility, and transparency. Amsberry, (2019), posited that these values serve as a compass for decision-making and behavior. Educators and administrators are entrusted with the academic, social, and emotional development of students, and their actions significantly influence the credibility and performance of the institution. However, the administrators have several role and responsibility they play to achieve educational goals are as follows. Holding Institutional Values and Mission Tertiary institutions often have a mission and set of values that reflect their educational philosophy. Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley. (2019), asserted that Managers and supervisors are responsible for aligning their strategies and decisions with these values. This alignment ensures that all organizational efforts contribute to student development and societal good. Wilkinson & Kemmis, (2015), opined that fairness in Administrative principles in supervision is fairness. This includes equitable treatment in staff promotion, disciplinary measures, allocation of resources, and student assessments. Bozalek, & Leibowitz. (2013), State that an ethical manager resists all forms of nepotism, corruption, and bias. Transparency and Accountability Ethical administrators must be transparent in how decisions are made, especially regarding funding, hiring practices, and academic programming. They must also be accountable to stakeholders' students, staff, governing councils, and the public. Bertram Gallant, (2018), opined that Confidentiality and Data Protection Supervisors often have access to sensitive information about staff and students. Ethically, they must protect this information and only disclose it when legally required or ethically justifiable. Conflict of Interest Managers and supervisors must avoid conflicts between personal interests and professional responsibilities. This includes refraining from using their positions for personal gain

or to advance relatives or friends. Biesta, (2015). State that Respect for Academic Freedom Tertiary education thrives on the free exchange of ideas. Ethical supervision includes respecting the academic freedom of staff and students to express opinions, conduct research, and teach without undue interference, as long as it aligns with the institution's mission and the law. (Horbach, & Halffman, 2017).

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, tertiary institutions serve as crucial pillars for individual development, societal advancement, and national progress. These institutions universities, colleges, and other higher learning establishments are entrusted with the significant responsibility of providing quality education, fostering research and innovation, and contributing to socio-economic growth. Collini, (2012), asserted that Central to their effective functioning is the adherence to a set of professional ethics, particularly in the domains of school funding, management, and supervision. Selwyn, N. (2019), state that these ethical principles are vital for ensuring transparency, accountability, efficiency, and integrity in the administration of resources and operational processes. The importance of ethical conduct amid the increasingly complex financial and managerial environments of tertiary institutions cannot be overstated. With substantial public and private funds allocated to these institutions. Fanelli, (2009), opined that the potential for ethical breaches such as misappropriation of funds, favoritism, corruption, and mismanagement becomes palpable if strict ethical guidelines are not observed. Therefore, cultivating a culture of professionalism marked by integrity accountability, and equity is indispensable for safeguarding the public trust and advancing the mission of higher education. Funding is the lifeblood of tertiary institutions. Giroux, (2014), opined that It determines the quality of infrastructure, the caliber of academic programs, the availability of research opportunities, and the overall educational experience. Ethical considerations in school funding involve transparent allocation, fair distribution of resources

Common Ethical Challenges in Tertiary Institutions

Despite the recognized importance of professional ethics, several challenges persist in the management and supervision of tertiary institutions. (Wisker, G.2012).

Corruption and Financial Mismanagement Misappropriation of funds, bribery in staff recruitment, or manipulating student grades are ethical issues that undermine institutional integrity. Israel, (2015), state that Abuse of Power Some leaders use their authority to suppress dissent, promote their allies, or punish perceived enemies. This can lead to a toxic organizational culture and low staff morale. Kehm, & de Boer (2017), opined that Sexual Harassment and Exploitation Unethical behaviors, such as sexual harassment by faculty or supervisors, continue to plague some institutions. Thomas & de Villiers Scheepers, (2018), state that these incidents not only harm individuals but also damage the institution's reputation. Discrimination In some cases, favoritism based on ethnicity, religion, or gender may influence hiring, promotion, or academic decisions,

which goes against the principle of equity. Lee, (2018), asserted that Lack of Professional Development When institutions fail to invest in the continuous professional growth of their staff, it can result in incompetence and ethical lapses due to ignorance or outdated knowledge. (Martin .2013), state that Strategies for Promoting Professional Ethics in Tertiary Institutions Development and Enforcement of Ethical Codes Institutions should have clear codes of ethics that define acceptable behavior for all employees. These codes must be communicated and enforced through appropriate disciplinary mechanisms. Macfarlane, (2021), opined that Training and Capacity Building Continuous training in professional ethics, conflict resolution, and ethical leadership should be made mandatory for staff and administrators. Middlehurst. (2013), state that Ethical Leadership Leaders must model ethical behavior. When top management demonstrates integrity and fairness, it sets a standard for others to follow. Marginson, (2016), asserted that Transparent Governance Structures Decision-making should involve representation from all stakeholders, including students and academic staff, to promote fairness and accountability. Whistleblower Protection Institutions should provide safe channels for reporting unethical conduct and protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Manathunga, (2019), state that Regular Ethical Audits Conducting periodic ethical audits helps identify gaps and improve institutional compliance with ethical standards.

Role of Regulatory and Accreditation Bodies

Government and professional bodies also have a role in upholding ethics. Regulatory agencies such as ministries of education, national universities commissions and accreditation bodies must enforce standards that ensure institutional accountability. These bodies can: Conduct independent assessments Investigate complaints of ethical violations. Rhodes, (2016), asserted that Revoke licenses or accreditations where necessary Provide ethical guidelines for institutions to adopt. Professional ethics in the management and supervision of tertiary institutions are not just aspirational ideals they are essential components of effective, inclusive, and trustworthy higher education systems. McWilliam, & Palmer, (2019), state that Upholding these ethical standards promotes academic integrity, staff morale, and institutional excellence. Shamoo & Resnik, (2015), state that Tertiary institutions serve as custodians of knowledge and character; therefore, their leaders must embody the highest ethical values to lead by example and foster environments conducive to learning, growth, and innovation. To maintain relevance and societal trust. Morley, (2012), state that institutions must commit to ethical governance by strengthening internal mechanisms, fostering transparency, and prioritizing the welfare of all stakeholders. Ultimately, the future of tertiary education depends not only on academic prowess but also on the moral compass of its leaders. (Nussbaum, 2010). Tertiary institutions play a pivotal role in fostering national development, innovation, and societal progress. O'Connor, (2020), opined that these higher education institutions including universities, colleges, and technical institutes are central to cultivating skilled professionals, conducting research, and contributing to the socio-economic fabric of countries worldwide. Resnik, (2020), posited that Effective functioning of these

institutions depends heavily on three interconnected elements: funding, management, and supervision. These elements are critical in ensuring that institutions operate efficiently, transparently, and ethically, ultimately serving their educational mission and societal roles. Funding in Tertiary Institutions. Strike & Soltis, (2015), state that Funding constitutes the financial backbone of tertiary institutions. It encompasses all sources of financial support, including government allocations, tuition fees, research grants, donations, endowments, and income-generating activities. Shapiro & Stefkovich, (2021), state that Adequate and sustainable funding is essential for the development of infrastructure, recruitment of qualified staff, procurement of learning materials, and the maintenance of academic excellence. Sources of Funding. Public Funding: In most countries, government funding constitutes the largest share of the financial resources allocated to tertiary institutions. Sword, (2017), opined Governments recognize the importance of higher education in national development and often provide subsidies, grants, and infrastructural support. However, the extent and distribution of this funding can vary widely, impacting the quality and accessibility of education. Tuition Fees: Tuition fees paid by the students, also donations from well-wishers to support the school to function effectively. (Sutherland-Smith, 2013). In recent years, the role of professional ethics in the administration of tertiary institutions has come under increasing scrutiny, particularly in the areas of funding, management, and supervision. Despite the existence of established ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, many tertiary institutions continue to face significant challenges that stem from unethical practices among key stakeholders. One of the major problems lies in the mismanagement of funds allocated to tertiary institutions. Reports of embezzlement, lack of transparency, and diversion of resources for personal gain are widespread, undermining trust in the financial governance of educational institutions. This unethical handling of funds often leads to poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching resources, and delayed payment of staff salaries, which in turn affects the quality of education. In terms of institutional management, unethical practices such as favoritism, nepotism, and lack of accountability have resulted in inefficiency and demotivation among staff and students. Leadership decisions are at times influenced by personal interests rather than professional standards, compromising the integrity and performance of the institution. Additionally, the supervision and oversight mechanisms in place are often weak or compromised. Supervisory bodies tasked with monitoring the implementation of policies and maintaining ethical standards may lack the independence, capacity, or willingness to enforce compliance. This results in a culture of impunity, where unethical behaviors go unchecked and are sometimes even normalized. the persistent lack of adherence to professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision threatens the credibility, effectiveness, and sustainability of tertiary education systems. There is an urgent need to identify the root causes of these ethical lapses and to develop strategies that can strengthen ethical practices across all levels of institutional governance.

The goal of the research

The study examined the professional ethics in school, management and supervision in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The objective sought to:

☐ Determine the extent to which professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

☐ Identify common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

☐ Examine the evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Study question

The following research questions guided the study.

15. To what extent professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

16. To what extent Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

17. To what extent does evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

11. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

12. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

13. There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female administrators on the extent to which evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1586 academic and non- academic staff. The sample of 360 academic and non-academic staff was used as sample size for the study using Taro Yamane sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Professional Ethics in School, Management and Supervision in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. Questionnaire (PESMSTIQ). The internal consistency of the instrument was established through Cronbach alpha method. The reliability coefficient showed 0.81 for Professional Ethics in School, Management and Supervision in Tertiary Institutions. The sub scales professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, 0.81, Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, 0.81, evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, 0.73. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of 2 research assistants, out of 360 copies of instrument administered, 300 copies were retrieved representing 80.2% return rate. The research question was answered using mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) statistics, while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the z-test statistics, A criterion mean of 2.50 was used to determine the decision on the study. The hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Result Presentation.

Research Question One: To what extent does professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State**?**

Table 1: **Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent Analysis skill influence the preparing of business education students for the workplace in Rivers State Universities.**

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Male administrators = 207			FEmale administrators = 133		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Tertiary institutions in Rivers State strictly follow ethical standards in allocating and managing their funds.	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
2.	Management of tertiary institutions ensures that financial decisions are transparent and accountable to relevant authorities.	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
3.	Supervisory bodies monitor tertiary institutions effectively to ensure adherence to professional ethical standards.	2.97	0.86	High Extent	2.98	0.86	High Extent
4.	Ethical principles guide the approval and disbursement of resources in tertiary institutions.	2.94	0.86	High Extent	2.99	0.86	High Extent
5.	Decision-making in the management of tertiary institutions reflects integrity and fairness.	2.92	0.85	High Extent	3.00	0.87	High Extent
Grand Total		**2.90**	**0.85**		**2.97**	**0.86**	**High Extent**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 showed the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent analysis skill influence the preparing of business education students for the workplace in Rivers State Universities. The result on Table 1 above revealed that the respondents agreed that to high extent, analysis skill influence

the preparing of business education students for the workplace in Rivers State Universities with a grand mean 2.90/0.85 for Male administrators and 2.97/0.86 for FEmale administrators, respectively.

Research Question Two: To what extent does identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State**?**

Table 2: **Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.**

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Male administrators = 207			FEmale administrators = 133		
		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
6.	Misappropriation or diversion of funds is a recurring ethical challenge in tertiary institutions.	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
7.	Nepotism and favoritism influence administrative decisions in some tertiary institutions.	2.72	0.82	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
8.	Lack of accountability and poor oversight contribute to unethical practices in financial management.	2.75	0.83	High Extent	2.93	0.85	High Extent
9.	Procurement processes in tertiary institutions are sometimes compromised by corrupt practices.	2.69	0.82	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
10.	Conflicts of interest among management and supervisory staff undermine ethical governance.	2.67	0.82	High Extent	2.87	0.85	High Extent
	Grand Total	**2.73**	**0.83**		**2.90**	**0.85**	**High Extent**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 showed the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The result on Table 2 above revealed that the respondents agreed that to high extent, identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State with a grand mean 2.73/0.83for male administrators and 2.90/0.85 for female administrators, respectively.

Research Question Three: To what extent do evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 3:   **Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Extent Evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State**

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Male administrators = 207			FEmale administrators = 133		
		Mean $\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
11.	Ethical policies in tertiary institutions are effective in guiding financial management and administrative decisions.	2.72	0.82	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
12.	Existing frameworks promote transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption within tertiary institutions.	2.67	0.82	High Extent	2.87	0.85	High Extent
13.	Accountability mechanisms within tertiary institutions ensure responsible use of resources.	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
14.	Staff and management comply with ethical guidelines due to	2.86	0.84	High	2.86	0.84	High

clear policies and monitoring systems.			Extent				Extent
15. The presence of ethical frameworks enhances the integrity and credibility of tertiary institutions.	2.78	0.83	High Extent	2.91	0.85		High Extent
Grand Total	**2.78**	**0.83**		**2.89**	**0.85**		**High Extent**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 showed the Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The result on Table 3 above revealed that the respondents agreed that to high extent, evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State with a grand mean 2.73/0.83 for Male administrators and 2.90/0.85 for FEmale administrators, respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Male and female administrators on the extent professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State**.**

Table 4:   Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Status	N	$\overline{\text{X}}$	Std. Dev.	df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision
Male Administrators	207	2.90	0.85					
				338	1.24	±1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Female Administrators	133	2.97	0.86					

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis on Table 4 indicated that the z-cal of 1.24 is less than the z-crit of ±1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is less than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Male and female administrators on the extent Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State..

Table 5:   Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent Identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Dev.	df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision
Male Administrators	207	2.73	0.83					
				338	1.39	±1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Female Administrators	133	2.90	0.85					

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis on Table 5 showed that the z-cal of 1.39 is less than the z-crit of ±1.96, at a degree of 338. Since the z-cal (1.39) was less than the z-crit (±1.96), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent identifying common ethical challenges and malpractices affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Male and female administrators on the extent evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 6: **Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State**

Status	N	$\overline{\text{X}}$	Std. Dev.	df	z-cal	z-crit	P. V.	Decision
Male Administrators	207	2.78	0.83					
				338	0.19	±1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Female Administrators	133	2.89	0.85					

Source: Researcher's Field work, 2025.

The analysis on Table 6 revealed that the z-cal of 0.19 is less than the z-crit of ±1.96, at a degree of 338. Since the z-cal (0.19) was less than the z-crit (±1.96), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Male and female administrators on the extent evaluations of the effectiveness of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within tertiary institutions in Rivers State**.**

Discussion of Findings

Observation of Professional Ethical Standards in Funding, Management, and Supervision

The discussion on the extent to which professional ethical standards are observed in the funding, management, and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State showed that respondents generally agreed that ethical standards are largely upheld. This indicates that administrators recognize the importance of adhering to professional ethics in managing institutional resources, making administrative decisions, and supervising academic and non-academic activities. The findings further revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female administrators in their perception of the observation of professional ethics, suggesting a consensus among stakeholders regarding ethical compliance. In support of these findings, Zuboff (2019) stated that professional ethics are critical for maintaining trust, integrity, and accountability among educators and administrators. Ahmed (2020) emphasized that ethical practices in management and supervision are particularly crucial in the evolving landscape of higher education, characterized by globalization and technological advancement. Tierney and Lanford (2018) argued that the

integrity of tertiary institutions largely depends on adherence to professional ethics by all stakeholders, especially those in leadership and supervisory positions. Amsberry (2019) further noted that values such as honesty, fairness, transparency, and responsibility guide administrators in decision-making and behavior, thereby sustaining institutional credibility and performance.

Identification of Common Ethical Challenges and Malpractices

The discussion on the extent to which common ethical challenges and malpractices are identified in tertiary institutions revealed that respondents generally perceive that these challenges are recognized to a high extent. Administrators acknowledged the prevalence of ethical issues affecting financial management, administrative decisions, and oversight functions, indicating awareness of the potential threats to institutional integrity. The study also showed no significant difference between male and female administrators regarding their perceptions, highlighting a shared understanding of the ethical challenges faced by tertiary institutions. Supporting literature corroborates these findings. Wisker (2012) observed that despite the recognized importance of professional ethics, challenges such as corruption, financial mismanagement, and abuse of power persist. Israel (2015) stated that such practices undermine institutional integrity, while Kehm and de Boer (2017) noted that misuse of authority can foster a toxic organizational culture and low staff morale. Thomas and de Villiers Scheepers (2018) highlighted that sexual harassment and exploitation further compromise institutional credibility, while Lee (2018) emphasized that discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or gender contravenes equity and fairness principles. These insights underscore the need for proactive identification and management of ethical challenges to safeguard institutional values.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Ethical Policies and Frameworks

The discussion on the evaluation of existing ethical policies and frameworks in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity indicated that respondents generally agree that these policies are effective. The findings suggest that regular assessment of institutional policies contributes to ensuring ethical governance and compliance with professional standards. No significant difference was observed between male and female administrators' perceptions, indicating uniform recognition of the role and effectiveness of these frameworks. The findings align with prior scholarship emphasizing the importance of ethical governance. Selwyn (2019) stated that adherence to ethical principles ensures transparency, accountability, and efficiency in tertiary institutions. Fanelli (2009) noted that without strict ethical guidelines, institutions are vulnerable to misappropriation of funds, favoritism, and corruption. Bertram Gallant (2018) emphasized that ethical administration requires confidentiality, conflict-of-interest avoidance, and respect for academic freedom (Horbach & Halffman, 2017). These frameworks reinforce institutional credibility, guide decision-making, and promote a culture of accountability. Overall, the study reveals that professional ethics are generally observed within tertiary institutions in

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Rivers State, common ethical challenges are well-recognized, and existing ethical policies are considered largely effective. The uniformity in responses between male and female administrators indicates consensus on these issues. The findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting the importance of professional ethics in higher education. Upholding ethical standards promotes fairness, transparency, accountability, and integrity, which are critical for institutional credibility and performance (Zuboff, 2019; Tierney & Lanford, 2018; Asberry, 2019). The study underscores that ethical governance in funding, management, and supervision is essential for safeguarding public trust and advancing the mission of tertiary institutions. Effective ethical policies, proactive identification of challenges, and commitment to professional standards collectively foster institutional excellence, equitable administration, and a conducive environment for learning and research. These findings reinforce the critical role of ethics in ensuring the sustainability and credibility of tertiary education in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study revealed that professional ethical standards are largely observed in the funding, management, and supervision of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Administrators, regardless of gender, recognize the importance of ethics in guiding decision-making, promoting transparency, and ensuring accountability. Common ethical challenges and malpractices are acknowledged, while existing policies and frameworks are perceived as effective in maintaining institutional integrity. Overall, adherence to professional ethics is central to fostering trust, fairness, and efficiency within tertiary institutions, thereby enhancing their credibility and performance.

Recommendations

- Strengthen Ethical Training and Capacity Building**:** Tertiary institutions should organize regular training programs and workshops on professional ethics for administrators and staff to enhance awareness and adherence to ethical standards in funding, management, and supervision.

- Implement Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Institutions should conduct periodic audits and evaluations of ethical policies and practices to identify gaps, mitigate malpractices, and ensure transparency and accountability in administrative and financial processes.

- Promote an Ethical Organizational Culture: Leadership should model ethical behavior, enforce clear codes of conduct, and establish whistleblower protection mechanisms to cultivate a culture of integrity, fairness, and professional responsibility throughout the institution.

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