



## **Administrative Strategies For Managing Social Problems In Tertiary Institutions In Rivers State, Nigeria**

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### ***Abstract:***

*The study investigated strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was used. The proportional stratified random sampling was used in the selection of 1,320 respondents from a total population of 1,650 consisting of administrators (academic and non-academic) and management staff of the three tertiary (university) institutions in Rivers State. A structured Likert format questionnaire called “Administrative strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State (ASFMPITIIRS), validated with Cronbach alpha reliability index of 0.75 was used for data collection. One thousand, three hundred and twenty (1,320) copies of questionnaire were administered, but 1,000 copies were retrieved and used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics as the mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while the z-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the following findings amongst others were made. The strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions include: accurate record-keeping, reduction in student enrolment, proper orientation of student on diverse issues, healthy interaction and co-operation between management staff and students and commitment of administrators to duty. There is significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female administrators for five (5) out of twenty (20) dependent variables tested. The null hypothesis is therefore, retained in all the other fifteen (15) dependent variables respectively. It was recommended that there should be accurate record-keeping in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Also, there should be healthy interaction and co-operation between students, staff and management of the tertiary institutions in Rivers State.*

## **1.Introduction**

Tertiary education refers to the third tier of Nigerian educational system. It is described by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her national policy on education as the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. The goals of tertiary education according to the policy document (2004:36) include;

- contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- promote and encourage scholarship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and
- promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria usually pursue these goals through teaching, research and community service, virile staff development programmes, dissemination of knowledge and industrial work experience. The story of tertiary education in Nigeria has largely been a story of mixed fortune. For instance, Ibukun (1997) observed that administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria today is nothing, but crises administration with student unrest and constant strikes by both academic and non-academic staff respectively.

Administrative strategies in this context simply refer to better ways by which administrators of tertiary institutions provide framework for social justice, equitable distribution of wealth and democratic order. Improved facilities for campuses, academic freedom, autonomy and proper democratization of education will ensure a full participation of students and other marginal segments of the academic community in the process of policy formulation and decision making (Mgbekem, 2007 and Smah, 2007).

Consequently, social problems in tertiary institutions are those devices that seem to inhibit the effective and efficient administration of the institutions. They are undesirable conditions in the academic community. Such social problems can be found at the local, state, national and international institutions of higher learning. The most prevalent social

problems in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria include excessive unionism, secret cults, deteriorated infrastructure, indiscipline, examination malpractice among others (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN), 2001).

One of the banes of effective administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria in recent times is the unbridled student violent reaction to national issues and internal problems. Ibukun (1997), Akindutire (2004) and Ajayi and Haastrup (2011) revealed that the result of student militancy and violent unionism has been the constant closure of universities, removal of Vice-Chancellors among others.

Perhaps the most important problem facing tertiary institutions administration in Nigeria is how to handle the menace and aggressiveness of cult members. Never before has the potential for the destruction of lives and property on campuses been as great or escalated so fast and horrible as now (Ogunbameru, 2004). Similarly, Ogidefa (2008) remarked that the issue of cultism among students has opened a new and very dangerous dimension to the situation of things in our educational institutions. Smah (2007) posited that where cults exists, there is no guarantee that academic programmes and activities would run normally. Hence, the tertiary institutions may run the risk of constant closure or disruption. The results of these cult activities as submitted by Smah (2007) have been feeling of fear on campus, killings and deaths, and campus disturbances.

It is worrisome to note that Nigerian tertiary institutions are fast decaying. All the resources required for education production process are in short supply. Lecture halls, laboratories, student's hostels, library space, books and journals, office spaces are all seriously inadequate (Ochuba, 2011). According to the World Bank (1994), the equipment for teaching, research and learning are either lacking or very inadequate and in a bad shape to permit tertiary institutions freedom to carryout the basic functions of academics. Still, according to the NUC (2004), the Presidential Visitation Panels which looked into the operations of all federal universities between 1999 and 2003 reported that physical facilities at the universities were in deplorable condition. Meanwhile, this condition of resource inadequacy is what Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) described as an offshoot of the endemic financial crises in the sector.

Indiscipline is the direct opposite of discipline. It is a situation in which the rules are broken frequently and attitudes do not conform to acceptable norms. When this is the situation in any university, there is in-disciplinary problem. These types of problems may arise from students or from staff. Features of indiscipline among staff include frequent lateness, dereliction of duties, battery of students, sexual molestation of students,

diversion of school fund, frequent exhibition of violence, indecent use of language, indecent dressing, and aiding examination malpractice.

Features of indiscipline among students include: frequent lateness to school, regular absence from class activities, and indolence in the execution of assignments, indecent dressing, drug abuse, and alcoholism, cheating at examinations, involvement in clandestine/cult activities, rudeness and general disrespect for constituted authorities, stealing, frequent exhibition of violent behaviour (tendency to fight often and cause bodily harm to others) (Akinwumiju and Agabi, 2008).

The issue of examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions has assumed alarming proportion and has become a national embarrassment. Over the years, it has been observed that despite what appears to be elaborate plans and strict measures by both government and examination bodies to ensure hitch free exams, the incident of malpractice has continued to take high toll in Nigerian schools. The direction, intensity and magnitude of such practices point to the unpalatable fact that all is not well with the methods exams are conducted. The trend is worsened by the direct involvement of examination officials, supervisors, school authorities, parents and teachers. The causes of widespread examination malpractice include: hopeless and frustrating experience of the teaching profession, poor quality of teaching and learning; over-emphasis on certificates for admission and employment; emphasis on cognitive skill and high value attached to money (Nwafor, 2011).

There is a number of multifaceted social problems that have inhibited effective administration of tertiary institutions in Rivers State and this is raising questions, doubts and fears, all of which combine to suggest that the system is at a cross road or nearing extinction. Therefore, this study identified the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the strategies used for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. One research question and a corresponding hypotheses guided this study.

## **2. Research Question**

What are the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

### **3. Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female administrators of tertiary institutions on the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

### **4. Methodology**

#### *4.1. Research Design*

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This is because the study sought for the facts and opinions of the respondents.

#### *4.2. Population*

The population for this study comprised of the three universities in Rivers State with a population of 1365 Administrators, 45 Deans, 180 Heads of Department and 60 administrative staff. Thus, the total population for the study is 1,650.

#### *4.3. Sample And Sampling Technique*

A total of one thousand, three hundred and twenty (1,320) administrators from the three tertiary institutions in Rivers State were used for the study. The researchers adopted a stratified random sampling technique to select the 1,320 administrators. (Nwana (1981:70) stated that if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do). Out of the 1,320 administrators, 900 were males and 420 were females respectively.

#### *4.4. Instrumentation*

A structured and modified 4-point Likert rating scale was used for data collection as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

#### *4.5. Validity*

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts from the Department of Educational Management in the University of Port Harcourt. Their suggestions were used to modified the instrument before administration.

#### *4.6. Reliability*

The instrument was administered to ten (10) administrators who were not part of the study. Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained.

#### *4.7. Administration Of Instrument*

The 1,320 copies of questionnaire were administered by the researchers with the help of two trained Research Assistants. The respondents properly completed and returned 1,000 (76.0%) of the instrument which were used for data analysis.

#### *4.8. Method Of Data Analysis*

The research question was answered using weighted mean scores and rank order. Any item in which the respondents have a weighted mean score of 2.50 and above is regarded as agreed while items with weighted mean scores less than 2.50 are regarded as disagreed. The only null hypothesis stated for the study was tested with the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

### **5. Results**

The results of the research question and test of hypothesis are presented in Tables below.

#### *5.1. Research Question*

What are the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

S/No.	Variables	Male $\bar{x}$	Female $\bar{x}$	Mean set ( $\bar{x}$ )	Rank order
1.	Parent-staff forum	2.52	2.97	2.75	12 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Enactment of appropriate legislation	3.67	3.03	3.35	6 <sup>th</sup>
3.	Appropriate legislation application	2.84	3.67	3.26	7 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Effective guidance/ counselling services	2.68	2.88	2.78	9 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Healthy interaction and cooperation between management, staff and students.	2.69	2.87	2.78	9 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Non-politicization of appointment	1.74	2.78	2.26	19 <sup>th</sup>
7.	Commitment of officials to duty	3.12	3.66	3.39	5 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Provision of staff support services	2.33	2.89	2.61	14 <sup>th</sup>
9.	Provision of student support services	2.13	2.78	2.46	16 <sup>th</sup>
10.	Participatory decision-making	2.55	2.98	2.77	11 <sup>th</sup>
11.	Reduction in student enrolment	3.66	3.84	3.75	2 <sup>nd</sup>
12.	Proper orientation of students on diverse issues.	3.67	3.55	3.61	3 <sup>rd</sup>
13.	Provision of financial aid services	2.00	2.45	2.23	20 <sup>th</sup>
14.	Accurate record keeping	3.66	3.89	3.78	1 <sup>st</sup>
15.	Focused leadership	2.01	2.67	2.34	18 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Pro-activeness to issues	2.74	2.03	2.39	17 <sup>th</sup>
17.	Originality of Vice-Chancellor (innovator)	2.45	2.88	2.67	13 <sup>th</sup>
18.	Efficiency of Vice Chancellor (adaptor)	2.23	2.89	2.56	15 <sup>th</sup>
19.	Group conformity of Vice Chancellor (adaptor)	3.11	3.78	3.45	4 <sup>th</sup>
20.	Provision of adequate hostel facilities.	3.28	3.01	3.15	8 <sup>th</sup>

*Table 1: Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) rating and rank order of administrators on strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.*

Table 1 showed that fifteen (15) out of the twenty (20) weighted listed (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20) have weighted mean scores higher than the cutoff mean of 2.50 with weighted mean scores of 2.75, 3.35, 3.26, 2.78, 2.78, 3.39, 2.61, 2.77, 3.75, 3.61, 3.78, 2.67, 2.56, 3.45 and 3.15 respectively were agreed to be related to administrative strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State while item 6, 9, 13, 15, and 16 with weighted mean scores of 2.20, 2.46, 2.23, 2.34 and 2.39 were considered negatively.

## 6. Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female administrators of tertiary institutions on the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

S/No.	Variables	Male ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Female ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	z-cal value	z-crit value (1.96)
1.	Parent-staff forum	2.52	0.016	2.97	0.004	1.336	Not sig.
2.	Enactment of appropriate legislation	3.67	0.323	3.03	0.001	1.901	Not sig.
3.	Appropriate legislation application	2.84	0.04	3.67	0.108	2.465	sig.
4.	Effective guidance/ counselling services	2.68	0.000	2.88	0.014	0.594	Not sig.
5.	Healthy interaction and cooperation between management, staff and students.	2.69	0.000	2.87	0.015	0.180	Not sig.
6.	Non-politicization of appointment	1.74	0.359	2.78	0.031	0.336	Not sig.
7.	Commitment of officials to duty	3.12	0.055	3.66	0.015	1.603	Not sig.
8.	Provision of staff support services	2.33	0.058	2.89	0.012	0.336	Not sig.
9.	Provision of student support services	2.13	0.131	2.78	0.031	1.930	Not sig.
10.	Participatory decision-making	2.55	0.011	2.98	0.003	1.227	Not sig.
11.	Reduction in student enrolment	3.66	0.316	3.84	0.182	0.534	Not sig.
12.	Proper orientation of students on diverse issues.	3.67	0.323	3.55	0.068	0.356	Not sig.
14.	Accurate record keeping	3.66	0.316	3.89	0.207	0.683	Not sig.
15.	Focused leadership	2.01	0.189	2.67	0.057	1.960	Sig.
16.	Pro-activeness to issues	2.74	0.000	2.03	0.363	2.109	Sig.
17.	Originality of Vice-Chancellor (innovator)	2.45	0.028	2.88	0.014	1.277	Not sig.
18.	Efficiency of Vice Chancellor (adaptor)	2.23	0.091	2.89	0.012	1.960	Sig.
19.	Group conformity of Vice Chancellor (adaptor)	3.11	0.052	3.78	0.154	1.989	Sig.
20.	Provision of adequate hostel facilities.	3.28	0.065	3.01	0.058	1.752	Not sig.

*Table 2: z-test analysis of the difference between male and female administrators for the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.*



Table 2 showed that there is significant difference at the 0.05 level for five (5) out of the 20 dependent variables (item 3, 15, 16, 18 and 19) respectively. The null hypothesis is therefore retained in all the other 15 dependent variables (items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 20) respectively. That is, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female administrators on the strategies for managing social problems in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

## **7. Discussion Of Findings**

### *7.1. Administrative Strategies For Managing Social Problem In Tertiary Institutions*

The administrative strategies as presented in Table 1 include reduction in student enrolment, proper orientation of students and staff on diverse issues, participatory decision making, commitment of officials to duty, appropriate legislation application among others. The administrative strategies that work are having the right people in the right place doing the right things at the right time for the right people. From this perspective, the autonomy of the tertiary institutions in matters of political inference has to be reduced. Most especially in the appointment/selection of key principal officials of the institutions, the academic should be free to choose their leader without the influence of the visitor. Where the situation is not free, then the governance of the system will still depend on external influence.

Jaiyeoba (2006) stressed that the place of school head in the administration of tertiary institutions cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, there is the need to follow the conditions for the appointment to the letter. The issue of political interference, etc. should be disregarded in the appointment of head(s) of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria (Ajayi and Hasstrup, 2011).

It is apparent that tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria have over the years been incessantly entangled in one form of social problems or the other either with students and their respective school authorities or between staff of tertiary institutions and their various administrators or even with the State Government. It is observed that despite the sources of these social problems, the tertiary institutions are often subjected to immeasurable stress and set-backs especially as it concerns students and their academic performance, thereby leading to low standard of education generally (Articbase, 2008).

**8. Conclusion**

Based on the results of this study which has been presented and discussed, it is clear that administrative strategies are crucial to managing social problems. If congenial social environment of tertiary institutions is to be attained, the twenty (20) variables (strategies) used in this study must be given priority attention as important determinants. Thus, the selection of appropriate niche and design of administrative functions and operations to respond to the various preferences of this niche are necessary to the successful adaptations of tertiary institutions to solution of social problems. The finding of this study is very significant for the selection of administrative officials of tertiary institutions who must strive to reduce student enrolment in line with National Universities Commission (NUC) guidelines, maintain accurate record-keeping, organize proper orientation of students and staff on diverse issues among others. Thus, tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria are at liberty to employ any strategy as situation demands.

**9. Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Tertiary institutions should look beyond paper qualification in admission of students and commence thorough character screening before registering students. There should be accurate record-keeping in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State. There
- There should be reduction in student enrolment to match with the available facilities in the tertiary institutions.
- There should be proper orientation of students and staff on diverse issues in the tertiary institutions.
- There should healthy interaction and co-operation between the students, staff and management of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- Students and staff should participate in decision-making of policies/statutes that affect them.

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