



International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management
Volume 7, Issue 2, pp. 245-261. 2025

ISSN: 2735-9220

www.ijilpm.com.ng



INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP VALUES OF TRUST AND EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYEES WORK ETHICS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. Two objectives which were translated into two research questions and corresponding hypotheses were used. The study adopted descriptive and correlational research design. The target population for the study comprised 8,111 teaching and non-teaching staff drawn from the three public universities located in Rivers State, namely: University of Port Harcourt (3,494), Rivers State University (3,783) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (834). The sample of this study was 446 teaching and non-teaching staff drawn from the population of 8,111 teaching and non-teaching staff, thereby making up approximately 6% of the total population. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the staff from the three public universities in Rivers State. The instrument was a self-structured questionnaires titled: Institutional Leadership Values and Staff Work Ethics Questionnaire (ILVSWEQ). To test the reliability of the instrument Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used and reliability index of .87 and .90 were obtained for the study. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the various research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at .05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that trust and empowerment as institutional leadership values to a high extent improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. Furthermore, significant relationship was revealed to exist between the aforementioned variables. The study concluded that the institutional values of a university can have a significant impact on the behaviour of staff and the overall performance of the institution. These values like trust and empowerment determine how an institution function. It was recommended among others, that educational administrators and policymakers should prioritize transparent communication, involve staff in decision-making processes, and consistently demonstrate integrity and reliability to enhance trust as an institutional leadership value for staff adherence to work ethics

Keywords: Institutional Leadership, Values, Trust, Empowerment, Employees, Work Ethics, Public Universities, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Daerefamama, G. O., & Ololube, N. P. (2025). Institutional leadership values of trust and empowerment and employees work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 7(2), 245-261.

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INTRODUCTION

It is essential to understand the significance of work ethics in public universities. Work ethics encompass the moral and professional principles that guide individuals in their conduct and behaviour within the workplace. In academic institutions, particularly public universities, staff work ethics play a pivotal role in maintaining an environment of productivity, integrity, and excellence (Smith, 2015). As public universities are responsible for educating future generations, their staff members need to be held to high ethical standards. This includes maintaining a professional and respectful environment, behaving with integrity, and upholding the values of the institution. In addition to their impact on the overall academic climate, staff work ethics also have a significant influence on the success of individual students. The ethical standards of staff members can affect how students approach their studies, their level of engagement in class, and their motivation to succeed. For instance, if staff work ethics are not upheld, it can have a ripple effect that impacts the reputation of the institution, the morale of staff and students, and ultimately, the success of the institution.

When staff members demonstrate ethical behaviour and create a respectful and trusting environment, it can positively impact how students approach their studies. Students who feel respected and supported are more likely to be engaged in class, participate in discussions, and put forth their best effort in their work. In addition, when students feel that their needs are being met and that their education is being conducted with integrity, they are more likely to be motivated to succeed. Educational institutions are governed by a unique set of values and expectations, which inform the ethical standards of staff members. For example, the value of equity is especially important in the context of Rivers State, given the diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of its residents.

In the context of this study, institutional leadership values refer to the values and principles that guide the work of administrators, faculty, and staff members in public universities in Rivers State. Therefore, it is important to understand that these values are not just a list of abstract ideas, but rather a set of guiding principles that shape the way staff members behave and interact with each other. These values of respect are translated into an ethical standard of treating all staff members with dignity and respect, regardless of their differences. For example, a staff member should not make derogatory comments about another staff member's gender, race, or sexual orientation. Similarly, the value of trust translates into an ethical standard of honesty and integrity. For example, a staff member should not use their position to engage in unethical or illegal activities, such as accepting bribes or engaging in corruption (Smith & Jones, 2023).

Respect means that staff members should treat each other with dignity and consideration, regardless of their differences. This includes respecting each other's time, ideas, and opinions. It also means respecting each other's boundaries and privacy. For example, a staff member should not engage in gossip or share private information about another staff member without their consent. Similarly, a staff member should not make jokes or comments that could be perceived as offensive or disrespectful. Instead, they should make an effort to learn about and understand each other's backgrounds and perspectives. Trust means that staff members should be honest and transparent with each other, and should act with integrity at all times. This means being truthful in communications, keeping promises, and following through on commitments. It also means being open about mistakes and working to correct them. For example, a staff member should admit to a mistake rather than trying to cover it up and should make an effort to fix the problem. In this way, trust is built through honesty, transparency, and accountability.

Empowerment is the process of providing staff members with the resources and support they need to be successful. This includes access to training, tools, and growth opportunities. Empowering staff members can make them take ownership of their work and feel a sense of pride in their accomplishments. In addition, empowerment creates a sense of inclusion and belonging, which can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement. For example, a staff member could be empowered by providing them with access to professional development opportunities or by giving them more decision-making power in their role.

In other words, staff members who embody these values are more likely to have strong work ethics. For example, staff members who are respectful, trustworthy, responsible, and service-oriented are more likely to do their jobs with integrity and dedication. Service-oriented are more likely to do their jobs with integrity and dedication. Thus, institutions need to promote and instil these values in their staff. Staff members who are empowered and collaborative are more likely to be motivated and productive. In short, when staff members embody these values, they are more likely to have strong work ethics.

However, professionalism is a fundamental value that should guide the conduct of all staff in public universities. It encompasses traits such as punctuality, diligence, respect, and continuous professional development. The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service, in the belief that the quality of service of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens. Institutional leaders are expected to exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of trust to careers in education and to assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons (Igwe, 2015).

Professionalism promotes positive work culture, enhances productivity, and contributes to the overall reputation and success of the institution. Alongside institutional leadership values, staff work ethics play a crucial role in the functioning of public universities. Work ethics refer to the principles and values that guide individual staff members' behaviour and performance in their respective roles. In Rivers State's public universities, staff are expected to uphold good work ethics to ensure effective service delivery and overall success. For example, punctuality is an important aspect of professionalism, as it shows respect for others' time and demonstrates reliability. Second, diligence is another key aspect, as it means taking pride in one's work and giving one's best effort. Third, respect is essential for fostering a positive work environment. Staff members should treat each other with courtesy and kindness. Fourth, continuous professional development is a vital part of professionalism, as it allows staff members to keep up to date with the latest knowledge and skills in their field. All of these aspects work together to create a positive work. It is sequel to the aforementioned facts that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities has become increasingly apparent in recent years. This is particularly true in the case of public universities in Rivers State, where the values of respect, trust, responsibility, equity, empowerment, collaboration, integrity, transparency, and service have been shown to have a significant impact on the success of the university. Despite the importance of institutional

leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities, there is limited research on their impact in Rivers State. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship between these values and the performance of staff members in Rivers State's public universities. This will contribute to the understanding of how these values can be leveraged to improve the functioning of the universities and achieve their goals.

When institutional leadership values and staff work ethics are not prioritized, the performance of public universities can suffer. This can lead to reduced student retention and graduation rates, decreased funding, and a negative perception of the university among the public. Poor leadership values can also create a toxic work environment that can negatively impact staff morale and productivity. To prevent these consequences, it is essential to invest in promoting and cultivating institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities. One additional consequence could be a lack of community engagement. Without a strong commitment to values like respect and service, public universities may struggle to form meaningful partnerships with the communities they serve. They may also have difficulty attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff members. Furthermore, a lack of integrity and transparency could lead to scandals and reputational damage, which could ultimately impact the university's ability to attract students and funding.

The lack of effective leadership and staff work ethics has led to a decline in student performance, measured by low graduation rates and poor student satisfaction. It has also caused a decrease in community engagement, as evidenced by declining enrollment and a lack of community partnerships. These issues have negatively impacted the reputation of public universities in Rivers State and have resulted in a loss of funding and resources. There is a gap in the literature on the impact of institutional leadership values and staff work ethics on the performance of public universities in Rivers State. Most of the existing research focuses on the impact of these values in other regions or countries, or on the impact of only one or two specific values. This study will contribute to the literature by examining the impact of a comprehensive set of institutional leadership values and staff work ethics on university performance in Rivers State. This will provide valuable insights that can inform the development of policies. It is therefore against this background that this study aims to fill this gap and contribute to the understanding of the role of institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in the performance of public universities in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examined the relationship between institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

- Examine the extent to which institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.
- Investigate the extent to which empowerment as an institutional leadership value improves staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- To what extent does trust as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State?
- To what extent does empowerment as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and statistically tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Leadership Values

Institutional leadership values in the context of public universities refer to a set of fundamental principles, beliefs, and standards that guide the actions, decisions, and behaviours of those in leadership positions within these academic institutions (Parsons et al., 2019). These values serve as a foundation for creating a positive and effective leadership culture that fosters collaboration, accountability, innovation, and excellence (Montgomery & Rupp, 2020). The importance of institutional leadership values in public universities cannot be overstated. These values do not only shape the overall organizational culture but also influence the motivation, morale, and satisfaction of both staff and students. When leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to these values, it sets the tone for a dynamic and inclusive environment that promotes personal and professional growth. Institutional leadership values play a crucial role in shaping the culture, direction, and success of public universities in Rivers State. These values, which include trust and empowerment are key drivers in promoting a conducive work environment and ensuring effective leadership practices (Shepard et al., 2018; Lombardi, 2016).

Trust is a fundamental leadership value that fosters effective relationships and promotes organizational cohesion. When leaders cultivate a culture of trust, it creates an environment where staff members feel comfortable sharing ideas, voicing concerns, and taking on new challenges. Trust facilitates open communication, encourages transparency, and builds mutual respect between leaders and staff (Ololube, 2024). This value is essential in public universities as it encourages teamwork, supports decision-making processes, and enhances overall productivity.

Empowerment is another integral aspect of institutional leadership values. When employees are empowered, leaders enable such employees to take ownership of their work, make independent decisions, and contribute meaningfully to the success of the institution. Empowered staff members feel valued, motivated, and inspired to go beyond their job descriptions, leading to increased innovation, creativity, and higher job satisfaction. In public universities, empowering staff fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth, which ultimately contributes to the overall quality of education and research.

Employees Work Ethics

Employees' work ethics in the context of this paper refers to the principles, values, and behaviours that guide the conduct of employees within public universities in Rivers State. It encompasses the moral and professional codes that dictate how staff members should carry out their duties and responsibilities (Gardner & Lohfeld, 2018). In addition to having a clear code of conduct, it is also important to ensure that the values of staff work ethics are embedded in the organizational culture. This includes providing training and development opportunities, modelling ethical behaviour, and fostering a culture of accountability. Work ethics play a crucial role in shaping the overall work culture and environment in any organization, and public universities are no exception.

Staff work ethics do not only contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of day-to-day operations but also impact student success and the reputation of the institution (Ololube, 2024). To understand staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State, it is vital to delve into the core values that underpin institutional leadership. These values are essential to establishing a shared sense of purpose, unity, and direction among staff members, ensuring that everyone is aligned towards the institution's goals and objectives.

Trust and Staff Work Ethics

Institutional leadership values and staff work ethics are fundamental components of any organization, and public universities in Rivers State are no exception. The relationship between these two aspects can significantly impact the overall functioning and success of the institution. One dimension of institutional leadership value that plays a crucial role in enhancing staff work ethics is trust. Trust, as a dimension of institutional leadership, refers to the reliance and confidence that individuals have in their leaders. When leaders foster trust within the organization (Burke et al., 2007), it establishes a strong foundation for effective communication, collaboration, and the development of staff work ethics. Trust is essential in public universities as it promotes a positive work environment, increases employee engagement, and leads to improved performance.

First and foremost, trust within the institution encourages open and transparent communication. When leaders establish trust, they create an atmosphere where staff members feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and suggestions. This open communication enables the exchange of information, fosters collaboration, and enhances problem-solving capabilities. As a result, staff members are more likely to engage in meaningful discussions, contribute their insights, and work collectively towards achieving the institution's goals. Trust empowers employees to voice their opinions without fear of negative repercussions, which ultimately strengthens the overall work ethic within the organization. Furthermore, trust promotes accountability and integrity among staff members (Wong & Cummings, 2009). When leaders demonstrate trust in their employees' abilities and judgement, it encourages individuals to take ownership of their work and be accountable for their actions. Staff members feel valued and respected, which leads to increased job satisfaction and motivation. Trust also acts as a catalyst for ethical behaviour and integrity. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to uphold ethical standards and make decisions that align with the institution's values. This fosters a culture of integrity and professionalism, enhancing staff work ethics in public universities.

Additionally, trust allows leaders to delegate responsibilities effectively. When leaders have trust in their team members, they can delegate tasks and projects with confidence. This delegation empowers staff members, as they feel trusted and valued for their skills and expertise. The trust-based delegation also encourages staff members to step out of their comfort zones, take on new challenges, and develop their professional capabilities. Moreover, trust as a dimension of institutional leadership value has a positive impact on staff morale and job satisfaction. When leaders build trust, they create a supportive and inclusive work environment where individuals feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions. Trust-based leadership fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among staff members, which leads to higher levels of job satisfaction (Håvold et al., 2021). As a result, employees are more motivated, engaged, and committed to their work, leading to improved work ethics and overall organizational performance.

Trust plays a critical role in enhancing staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. It promotes open communication, accountability, integrity, effective delegation, and employee morale. This, in turn, leads to the overall success of the institution and the fulfilment of its mission of providing quality education and research.

Impact of Trust on Employee Performance

The impact of trust on employee performance is profound, influencing various aspects of an employee's work behavior and outcomes. Trust in leadership and colleagues can significantly boost employees' motivation levels. When employees trust that their efforts will be recognized and rewarded fairly, they are more likely to be motivated to perform at their best. This trust creates a positive work environment where employees feel valued and appreciated, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to their roles (Nwagwu, 2017). Additionally, trust reduces the fear of failure, as employees believe that mistakes will be viewed as learning opportunities rather than grounds for punishment. This encourages employees to take on new challenges and strive for excellence in their work, ultimately enhancing their performance.

Trust in the workplace is a key driver of job satisfaction. When employees trust their organization and colleagues, they are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs and committed to the organization's goals (Okeke, 2018). Trust creates a positive work environment where employees feel safe, valued, and respected, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, trust reduces job-related stress, as employees feel confident in their abilities and the support of their colleagues and leaders. This increased job satisfaction can lead to higher levels of engagement, productivity, and overall performance.

Trust is essential for effective collaboration among team members. When employees trust each other, they are more willing to share information, ideas, and resources, leading to better teamwork and improved performance (Ajayi, 2020). Trust fosters open communication and a willingness to listen to others' perspectives, which are crucial for successful collaboration. Additionally, trust encourages team members to rely on each other's expertise and judgment, leading to more innovative and effective solutions to problems. Overall, trust enhances team cohesion and effectiveness, leading to higher levels of performance. Trust in the workplace can significantly reduce stress levels among employees. When employees trust their colleagues and leaders, they are less likely to experience stress related to interpersonal conflicts or uncertainty about their roles (Ololube, 2024). Trust creates a supportive environment where employees feel safe expressing their concerns and seeking help when needed. This reduces feelings of isolation and anxiety, leading to lower levels of stress. Additionally, trust reduces the fear of negative

consequences for mistakes, allowing employees to focus on their work without the distraction of worry. Overall, trust contributes to a healthier and more productive work environment.

Trust is a catalyst for innovation in the workplace. When employees trust that their ideas will be valued and respected, they are more likely to think creatively and take risks (Adeyemi, 2019). Trust creates a safe space for experimentation and exploration, leading to new and innovative solutions to problems. Additionally, trust encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing, which are essential for innovation. When employees trust each other, they are more willing to share their ideas and build on each other's contributions, leading to more robust and creative outcomes. Overall, trust fuels a culture of innovation that drives organizational success.

Employees are more likely to stay with an organization where they feel trusted and valued (Ogundipe, 2021) because trust fashions a sense of loyalty and commitment among employees, leading to lower turnover rates. Additionally, trust fosters a positive work environment where employees feel supported and respected, reducing the likelihood of seeking opportunities elsewhere. Organizations that prioritize building trust among employees are more likely to retain top talent and maintain a stable workforce. This continuity leads to higher levels of performance and organizational success. Employees have a significant impact on customer relations, and customers are more likely to trust and be loyal to organizations where they perceive employees as trustworthy and reliable (Adewale, 2019). When employees demonstrate trustworthiness in their interactions with customers, it enhances the overall customer experience and satisfaction. Trust creates a positive perception of the organization, leading to repeat business and customer loyalty. Additionally, trust in employees can lead to positive word-of-mouth recommendations, further enhancing the organization's reputation and customer base. Overall, trust in employees is essential for building strong and lasting relationships with customers, which are crucial for organizational success.

Empowerment and Staff Work Ethics

Empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value plays a crucial role in enhancing staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. Empowerment refers to the process of enabling individuals to make decisions and take ownership of their work, thereby fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment (Ongori, 2009). It involves providing staff members with the necessary resources, information, skills, and authority to effectively perform their duties and make decisions that align with the institution's goals and objectives. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, leading to improved productivity and enhanced organizational effectiveness.

Staff work ethics, on the other hand, refers to the moral principles and values that guide employees' behaviour and actions in the workplace. It encompasses various aspects such as professionalism, integrity, accountability, and diligence, all of which contribute to maintaining high standards of performance and promoting a positive work environment (Grass et al., 2020). In the context of public universities in Rivers State, the importance of institutional leadership values and staff work ethics cannot be overstated. These universities serve as vital institutions for the development of educational, research, and administrative activities, and therefore require a strong foundation of effective leadership and ethical behavior. The leadership values exhibited by the institution's top management, such as transparency, fairness, and inclusivity, significantly influence the work ethics of the staff.

Empowering staff in these universities goes beyond the provision of resources and authority. It involves creating a supportive and collaborative work environment where individuals are encouraged to contribute their ideas, take risks, and learn from their experiences. This approach not only enhances staff members' sense of belonging and job satisfaction but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. When capacities are built, staff members will experience continued growth and will perceive the quality of their work-life more positively especially where opportunities are provided for the advancement on jobs, this will improve their work behaviour, efficiency and ultimately staff performance (Okogbaa, 2019). Moreover, empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value positively impacts staff work ethics by fostering a sense of trust and mutual respect. When leaders trust their employees to make decisions and take ownership of their work, it creates a positive cycle of trust, accountability, and improved performance. Staff members, in turn, feel valued and respected, leading to increased loyalty, engagement, and commitment to the organizational goals.

It is essential to recognize that empowering staff should not be seen as relinquishing control or authority. On the contrary, it involves creating a framework where employees are provided with the necessary support and guidance to make informed decisions aligned with the institution's vision and mission (Huq, 2010). Institutional leaders must strike a balance between centralized control and decentralized decision-making, ensuring that empowerment is implemented effectively and consistently across all levels of the organization. Empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value significantly enhances staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. This approach creates a positive work environment, fosters a culture of trust and accountability, and enhances staff members' job satisfaction and commitment. Recognizing the importance of empowerment and its impact on staff work ethics is crucial for the effective functioning and success of public universities in Rivers State.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive and correlational research design. This is because the researcher intends to establish the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. In this regard, Institutional leadership values is the independent variable while staff work ethics is the dependent variable.

Population of the Study

The target population for the study comprised eight thousand, one hundred and eleven (8,111) teaching and non-teaching staff drawn from the three (3) public universities in Rivers State; University of Port Harcourt [UNIPORT], Rivers State University [RSU] and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education [IAUE] in Rumuolumeni. The population distribution is as follows:

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample of this study was 446 teaching and non-teaching staff drawn from the population of 8,111 teaching and non-teaching staff, thereby making up 5.5% of the total population. A simple

random sampling technique was used to select the staff from the three public universities in Rivers State.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection were two set of questionnaires titled: Institutional Leadership Values Questionnaire (ILVQ) and Staff Work Ethics Questionnaire (SWEQ). The instrument was divided into three sections namely A, B and C. Section A was used to elicit information on respondents' demographic data while section B contains thirty (30) items that elicit information on the independent variables under investigation from the respondents as well. Section C was used to elicit respondents' opinion on Staff Work Ethics. The instrument was structured based on a four-point modified Likert rating scale with the numerical value assigned to them as follows: Very High Extent (VHE)=4 points, High Extent (A)=3 points; points; Low Extent(D)=2 points and Very Low Extent (SD)=1 point.

Validation of the Instrument

A copy of the instrument was given to three other experts in the Department of Educational Management from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education to correct and modify after which the final draft was made.

Reliability of the Instrument

To test the reliability of the instrument, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) is considered suitable for the study by the researcher because it measures internal consistency between items in sections. Reliability indices of .870 and .900 were obtained for the study.

Methods of Data Collection

The researcher and three trained research assistants administered the instrument personally to the respondents. After three weeks they were retrieved and the ones duly filled were used for the analysis. The research issued 446 copies of the questionnaire and retrieved 412 useful copies of the questionnaires, this represent 92.4% response rate and it was considered manageable for the analysis of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the various research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses formulated in the study. The criterion means of 2.50 was achieved thus $4+3+2+1/4$. Mean scores of 2.50 with the decision rule to be as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) = 3.00-Above, High Extent (HE) = 2.5-2.90; Low Extent (LE) = 2.49-2.00 and Very Low Extent (VLE) =1.90-Below.

RESULTS

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent does trust as institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation on the extent trust as institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Decision
1	Trust is essential in public universities as it promotes a positive work environment for staff members	2.6141	1.18140	High Extent
2	When leaders demonstrate trust in their employees' abilities and judgement, it encourages individuals to take ownership of their work and be accountable for their actions	2.5922	1.15206	High Extent
3	Trust also acts as a catalyst for ethical behaviour and integrity	2.5583	1.16477	High Extent
4	When leaders have trust in their team members, they can delegate tasks and projects with confidence	2.6117	1.14822	High Extent
5	Trust-based leadership fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among staff members, which leads to higher levels of job satisfaction	2.6068	1.12081	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.5966	1.15342	High Extent

The Table 1 presents analysis of research question one which states that to what extent does trust as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State? The table represents the accumulated sum from the respondents indicating the mean score and standard deviation. The first item which ascertained how trust is essential in public universities as it promotes a positive work environment for staff members, showed a mean score (\bar{x}) of 2.61 (S.D.=1.18). The second item opined that when leaders demonstrate trust in their employees' abilities and judgement, it encourages individuals to take ownership of their work and be accountable for their actions, the result showed a mean score (\bar{x}) of 2.59 (S.D.=1.15). The third item opined that Trust also acts as a catalyst for ethical behaviour and integrity, the responses had a mean score (\bar{x}) of 2.55 (S.D.=1.16). The fourth item revealed a mean score (\bar{x}) of 2.61 (S.D.=1.14) which showed that when leaders have trust in their team members, they can delegate tasks and projects with confidence. Lastly, the item five depicts a mean score (\bar{x}) of 2.60 (S.D.=1.12), interpreting that trust-based leadership fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among staff members, which leads to higher levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, having a calculated grand mean of 2.59 (1.15) revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that to a high extent trust as institutional leadership values significantly improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

Research Question 2: To what extent does empowerment as institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent empowerment as institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Decision
6	Empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value plays a crucial role in enhancing staff work ethics	2.7209	1.15354	High Extent
7	When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, leading to improved productivity	2.5874	1.13542	High Extent
8	Empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value positively impacts staff work ethics by fostering a sense of trust and mutual respect.	2.7087	1.16210	High Extent
9	When leaders trust their employees to make decisions and take ownership of their work, it creates a positive cycle of trust, accountability, and improved performance	2.5243	1.14704	High Extent
10	By empowering employees, institutional leaders enable them to take ownership of their work, make informed decisions, and contribute to the institution's success	2.5097	1.13875	High Extent
		2.610	1.147	High Extent

The Table 2 presents analysis of research question two which states that to what extent does empowerment as institutional leadership values improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State? The table represents the accumulated sum from the respondents indicating the mean score and standard deviation. The first item which ascertained how empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value plays a crucial role in enhancing staff work ethics, showed a mean score (x) of 2.72 (S.D.=1.15). The second item assert that when employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, leading to improved productivity, the result showed a mean score (x) of 2.58 (S.D.=1.13). The third item opined that empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value positively impacts staff work ethics by fostering a sense of trust and mutual respect, the responses had a mean score (x) of 2.70 (S.D.=1.16). The fourth item revealed a mean score (x) of 2.52 (S.D.=1.14) which showed that when leaders trust their employees to make decisions and take ownership of their work, it creates a positive cycle of trust, accountability, and improved performance. Lastly, the item five depicts a mean score (x) of 2.50 (S.D.=1.12), interpreting that by empowering employees, institutional leaders enable them to take ownership of their work, make informed decisions, and contribute to the institution's success. Therefore, having a calculated grand mean of 2.61 (1.14) revealed that majority of the respondents agreed to a high extent that empowerment as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

Test of Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: PPMC analysis for the relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics

		Trust as Institutional Leadership value	Staff Work Ethics
Trust as Institutional Leadership value	Pearson Correlation	1	.140**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	412	412
Staff Work Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.140**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	412	412

. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The SPSS output on Table 8 reveals a correlation coefficient of .140 between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics, indicating a moderate significant relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics. More so, the probability value (.004) is less than the critical value (0.05), this shows that there is a strong positive relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics. The findings reject the null hypothesis (HO₁) as there is a significant positive relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: PPMC analysis for the relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics

		Empowerment as Institutional Leadership values	Staff Work Ethics
Empowerment as Institutional Leadership values	Pearson Correlation	1	.164**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	412	412
Staff Work Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.164**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	412	412

. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The PPMC analysis in Table 4 revealed a correlation coefficient of .164 between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics, indicating a moderate significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics. Therefore, the probability value (.001) is less than the critical value (0.05), this shows that there is a strong positive relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics. The findings reject the null hypothesis (HO₂) as there is a significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

Trust as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

Hypothesis one of this study stated that there is no significant relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. The hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant relationship between trust as institutional leadership value and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. From the findings of this research trust is essential in public universities as it promotes a positive work environment, increases employee engagement, and leads to improved performance. Trust within the institution encourages open and transparent communication. When leaders establish trust, they create an atmosphere where staff members feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and suggestions. This open communication enables the exchange of information, fosters collaboration, and enhances problem-solving capabilities. As a result, staff members are more likely to engage in meaningful discussions, contribute their insights, and work collectively towards achieving the institution's goals.

Wong and Cummings (2009) asserted that when leaders demonstrate trust in their employees' abilities and judgment, it encourages individuals to take ownership of their work and be accountable for their actions. Staff members feel valued and respected, which leads to increased job satisfaction and motivation. Trust also acts as a catalyst for ethical behaviour and integrity. According to Nwagwu (2017), trust reduces the fear of failure, as employees believe that mistakes will be viewed as learning opportunities rather than grounds for punishment. Additionally, when employees trust their colleagues and leaders, they are more likely to feel valued and respected, which can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation.

Ojo (2018) asserted that trust allows leaders to delegate responsibilities effectively. When leaders have trust in their team members, they can delegate tasks and projects with confidence. This delegation empowers staff members, as they feel trusted and valued for their skills and expertise. The trust-based delegation also encourages staff members to step out of their comfort zones, take on new challenges, and develop their professional capabilities. By delegating tasks, leaders can not only enhance staff work ethics but also facilitate their growth and development. Moreover, trust as a dimension of institutional leadership value has a positive impact on staff morale and job satisfaction. When leaders build trust, they create a supportive and inclusive work environment where individuals feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions.

Moreover, Ajayi (2020) opined that trust is a key driver of organizational effectiveness. When employees trust their leaders and colleagues, they are more likely to align their efforts with the organization's goals and values. This alignment leads to improved coordination and cooperation among team members, resulting in greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving organizational objectives. Trust also fosters a positive work culture where employees feel empowered to take initiative and contribute their best work, further enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Empowerment as institutional leadership value improve staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State

Hypothesis two of this study stated that there is no significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. The hypothesis was rejected because there is a significant relationship between empowerment as institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. From the findings of this study, empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value plays a crucial role in enhancing staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. the empowerment of employees has become increasingly recognized as a critical factor in organizational success. It involves providing staff members with the necessary resources, information, skills, and authority to effectively perform their duties and make decisions that align with the institution's goals and objectives. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, leading to improved productivity and enhanced organizational effectiveness. Grass et al. (2020) opined that by empowering staff members, institutional leaders can foster a sense of ownership and accountability, which in turn influences their work ethics positively

Huq (2010) asserted that empowering staff in these universities goes beyond the provision of resources and authority. It involves creating a supportive and collaborative work environment where individuals are encouraged to contribute their ideas, take risks, and learn from their experiences. This approach not only enhances staff members' sense of belonging and job satisfaction but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Moreover, empowerment as a dimension of institutional leadership value positively impacts staff work ethics by fostering a sense of trust and mutual respect. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to be engaged in their work and motivated to perform at their best. This can lead to a more positive work environment, where employees are supportive of one another and willing to go above and beyond to achieve organizational goals (Okeke, 2018).

Adeyemi (2020) posited that empowered employees are more likely to think creatively and contribute innovative ideas. When employees feel empowered, they are encouraged to take risks and explore new ways of doing things. This can lead to the development of new products, services, or processes that can give the organization a competitive edge in the market. By fostering a culture of creativity and innovation, organizations can stay ahead of the curve and adapt to changing market conditions more effectively.

Additionally, Ajayi (2019) opined that empowered employees are better equipped to make decisions that benefit the organization. When employees feel empowered, they are more likely to take ownership of their decisions and consider the long-term impact of their actions. This can lead to more informed and effective decision-making, as employees are more likely to weigh the pros and cons of different options and choose the best course of action. Additionally, empowered employees are more likely to collaborate effectively with their colleagues, leading to improved teamwork and communication. This can result in better decision-making, faster problem-solving, and more efficient processes, all of which contribute to enhanced organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This study on “Institutional leadership values and staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State” has shed light on the challenges and strategies related to staff work ethics within the educational context. The findings revealed that the institutional values of a university can have a significant impact on the behaviour of staff and the overall performance of the institution. These values can include things like honesty, integrity, accountability, and service to the community. Institutional values like integrity, morals, effectiveness, competence, honesty, accountability and fairness usually determine how an institution function

The importance of institutional leadership values in public universities cannot be overstated. These values not only shape the overall organizational culture but also influence the motivation, morale, and satisfaction of both staff and students. This implies that if a university values integrity, likely, its staff will be committed to behaving with integrity. Similarly, if a university values accountability, its staff will be more likely to be accountable for their actions. The institutional values of a university can have a profound impact on the behaviour of its staff and the performance of the institution as a whole. These values can shape everything from the way decisions are made to the overall learning environment. Institutional leadership values such as trust, empowerment, collaboration, integrity, innovation, and service play crucial roles in shaping staff work ethics in public universities in Rivers State. These values foster positive work environments, encourage staff engagement, and contribute to the overall success of the institution.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following two recommendations were made:

- Educational administrators and policymakers should prioritize transparent communication, involve staff in decision-making processes, and consistently demonstrate integrity and reliability to enhance trust as an institutional leadership value.
- School governing bodies and boards should empower staff by delegating authority, providing opportunities for professional development, and recognizing their contributions to increase motivation and job satisfaction among staff.

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