

**Re-Examining The Place Of Competence And/Or Politics As Determinant(S) Of
Administrative Efficacy Of Administrators In Rivers State-Owned Universities**

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Abstract

The persistent challenges confronting university administration in Nigeria have intensified scholarly debates on the relative roles of competence and politics in determining administrative efficacy. This study re-examined the place of competence and/or politics as determinant(s) of administrative efficacy of administrators in Rivers State owned universities, with particular focus on Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study targeted 133 faculty administrators comprising 18 Deans and 115 Heads of Department as respondents. Data were generated using a structured and validated questionnaire designed to measure dimensions of administrative competence, organizational politics, and administrative efficacy. Independent z-test were used to answer the research questions, while one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.82 through the use of the Cronbach Alpha Statistical tool. Findings from the study revealed that administrative competence, expressed through professional expertise, leadership skills, decision-making capacity, and experience, significantly promotes administrative efficacy in Rivers State-owned universities. The results further indicated that organizational politics remains a salient factor in university administration, influencing appointments, resource allocation, and policy implementation, sometimes positively but often detracting from administrative effectiveness when it overrides merit-based considerations. The ANOVA results showed no significant difference in the mean responses of administrators across the universities on the influence of competence on administrative efficacy, suggesting a shared perception of its critical importance. However, significant variations were observed in perceptions regarding the role of politics, reflecting contextual and institutional dynamics. The study concludes that while competence is a fundamental and indispensable determinant of administrative efficacy, politics continues to shape administrative outcomes within the university system. It is therefore recommended that governing councils and relevant stakeholders prioritize competence-driven selection and evaluation of

administrators, while instituting transparent governance frameworks that minimize the adverse effects of excessive politicization. Such measures are essential for enhancing administrative efficacy and promoting sustainable development in Rivers State-owned universities.

Introduction

Public universities owned by the government of Rivers State, such as Rivers State University (RSU), and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education operate within a complex socio-political and administrative environment. Like many Nigerian state-owned institutions, they grapple with issues ranging from governance challenges and resource constraints to technological adaptation and human capital development. These conditions make an examination of competence vs. politics as drivers of administrative efficacy both timely and critical. University administration plays a critical role in the realization of institutional goals such as effective teaching, research productivity, and community service. In Nigeria, particularly in state-owned universities, administrative systems are often influenced by both professional competence and political considerations. Rivers State universities operate within a politically sensitive environment where the appointment of key administrative officers, such as the Faculty Deans and Heads of Department, allocation of resources, and policy implementation may be shaped by political interests rather than meritocratic principles. These principles include capacity and competence (Akpomi & Ohaka), 2020).

Competence which can be defined in terms of professional knowledge, administrative skills, leadership capacity, and experience, is widely regarded as a core requirement for effective university administration. Competent administrators are better positioned to manage human and material resources, ensure policy compliance, promote transparency, and sustain institutional stability. Conversely, excessive political interference in university governance has been associated with weak institutional autonomy, compromised leadership quality, and inefficiencies in administrative processes (LongJohn, 2024). Competence refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experience that enables an individual to perform assigned tasks effectively and efficiently (Armstrong, 2020). In organizational and administrative contexts, competence goes beyond formal qualifications to include practical skills, decision-making capacity, leadership ability, and professional judgment. Katz in Long John (2024) categorizes competence into technical, human, and conceptual competencies.

Technical competence involves proficiency in specific administrative tasks such as planning, budgeting, and the use of information and communication technology. Human competence relates to interpersonal skills, communication, motivation, and conflict management, while conceptual competence entails the ability to understand the organization as a whole and make strategic decisions. In university administration, competence is a critical determinant of administrative efficacy. Administrators who possess adequate professional and managerial competence are more likely to implement policies effectively, manage resources prudently, and maintain institutional stability (Hoy & Miskel, 2018). Studies in Nigerian universities indicate that competence-based leadership enhances accountability, efficiency, and staff morale (Adeyemi, 2014). However, competence may be undermined when administrative appointments are influenced by political considerations rather than merit, thereby reducing administrative effectiveness despite available human capital (Pfeffer, 2010). This underscores the importance of merit-based selection and continuous capacity development in higher education administration. Competence as a determinant of administrative efficacy can be further looked into as follows (Akpomi & Ohaka, 2020):

1. *Professional and Technical Competence*: Competence — especially among administrators — is shown to directly influence administrative efficiency. Research indicates that technological resource management competence significantly correlates with better administrative outcomes in Rivers State universities. Administrators skilled in ICT and resource coordination help improve processes such as record management, communication flows, and service delivery.
2. *Leadership Skill Configuration*: Beyond technical skills, leadership competencies — conceptual, human relations, and policy implementation skills — help translate institutional strategies into action. Competent leaders foster inclusivity, effective communication, and staff development, which are essential for smooth administration.
3. *Merit-based Staffing and Autonomy*: Studies focused on Rivers State universities have recommended that political office holders allow the institutions' management to conduct transparent, merit-based recruitment and selection. This improves the likelihood that qualified personnel with the right skills are appointed to key roles — strengthening administrative efficacy.

Politics in university administration refers to the use of power, influence, and authority by individuals or groups to advance personal or sectional interests, often outside formal organizational rules (Pfeffer, 2010). Politics may be internal—among staff and administrators—or external, involving government officials, political actors, and interest groups. In the Nigerian university system, political interference typically manifests in the appointment of principal officers, composition of governing councils, allocation of funds, and policy direction (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2018). Such interference can undermine institutional autonomy and compromise meritocracy. While some scholars argue that politics is inevitable in organizational life, excessive politicization can erode professionalism and weaken administrative performance. Ojo (2016) notes that politically motivated appointments typically result in administrators lacking the requisite competence, leading to inefficiency, poor decision-making, and organizational instability. Conversely, a moderate level of political support may facilitate access to funding and policy backing, suggesting that politics can be both enabling and constraining depending on how it is exercised. Politics as a determinant of administrative efficacy can also be highlighted as follows (Akpomi & Ohaka, 2020):

1. *Political Interference in Governance:* Political influence often permeates university administration — particularly through appointments of principal officers and governing council members. In the Nigerian context, external political actors sometimes favor loyalty or political expediency over competence. This can affect leadership quality and undermine effective governance structures.
2. *Organizational Politics Within Institutions:* Within universities themselves, organizational politics — power plays and coalition building — influence employee engagement. While some forms of alliance building can support engagement, excessive internal politicking distracts from core tasks and can reduce administrative responsiveness and performance.
3. *Governance and Policy Autonomy:* Political dynamics also shape university autonomy, notably in appointments, funding decisions, and policy implementation. Restricted autonomy due to political pressure can delay decision-making, skew priority setting, and impose bureaucratic constraints — all of which hamper administrative effectiveness.

Administrative efficacy in a university setting refers to the organization's ability to efficiently manage processes like staffing, academic and non-academic service delivery, resource allocation,

decision-making, and stakeholder communication — ultimately supporting the institution's core mission of teaching, research, and community engagement. Key indicators include: effective decision-making, operational efficiency, transparency and accountability, service-oriented processes, stakeholder satisfaction (Akpomi & Ohaka, 2020). Administrative efficacy refers to the extent to which administrators effectively utilize available human, financial, and material resources to achieve organizational goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2018). In the university context, administrative efficacy manifests through efficient decision-making, timely policy implementation, effective coordination of academic and non-academic activities, transparency, and institutional stability. To effectively administer the higher education system, the capacity to strike a balance between academic freedom and managerial control, ensuring that institutional objectives are achieved without compromising salient academic and educational values, remains germane. Similarly, Adegbesan (2017) asserts that administrative efficacy in higher education institutions is reflected in smooth academic calendars, effective personnel management, prudent financial administration, and harmonious labour relations. In Nigerian universities, administrative efficacy has become increasingly critical due to growing student populations, limited funding, staff union pressures, and governance challenges. These pressures make the competence of administrators and the political environment within which they operate decisive factors in determining administrative outcomes.

Administrative competence refers to the possession and application of professional knowledge, managerial skills, leadership abilities, and relevant experience required for effective organizational management (Armstrong, 2020). Katz (1974) categorizes administrative competence into technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills, all of which are essential for effective leadership at different levels of administration. In university administration, competence encompasses skills in planning, budgeting, personnel management, conflict resolution, communication, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021). Administrators who possess these competencies are more likely to promote efficiency, accountability, and innovation.

Empirical studies have established a strong relationship between administrative competence and organizational performance. For instance, Olorunsola and Olayemi (2019) found that universities managed by professionally competent administrators recorded better staff morale and institutional

effectiveness. Similarly, administrative competence significantly enhances sustainable resource utilization in public institutions. However, competence alone may not guarantee administrative efficacy if administrators operate within politically constrained environments that limit autonomy and merit-based decision-making.

Several studies have linked administrative competence with effective university management. Adeyemi (2014) reported that competent university administrators exhibit better leadership behaviour, improved staff supervision, and enhanced institutional performance. Similarly, Olatunji and Akinwale (2020) found that administrative competence significantly predicts effective policy implementation in Nigerian public universities. In Rivers State, studies suggest that administrators with strong managerial and ICT competencies are better able to manage resources, resolve conflicts, and maintain institutional stability. These findings underscore the importance of merit-based leadership selection in enhancing administrative efficacy.

Research has shown that political interference negatively affects administrative efficacy in public universities. It has also been observed that undue political influence leads to leadership instability, policy inconsistency, and weak accountability structures. Supporting this view, Saint et al. (2016) argue that political control of universities in developing countries often undermines efficiency and academic quality. In Rivers State universities, political considerations in leadership appointments have sometimes resulted in administrative challenges such as industrial unrest, delayed decision-making, and weak governance structures (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021). These challenges highlight the need to critically examine the extent to which politics shapes administrative outcomes.

The interaction between competence and politics presents a complex dynamic. Competent administrators may still perform poorly if political interference constrains their authority or imposes conflicting priorities. Conversely, politically connected administrators may perform effectively if they also possess the requisite competence and use political influence constructively. According to Pfeffer (2010), organizational effectiveness is maximized when political power is aligned with professional competence. This implies that politics does not automatically negate administrative efficacy; rather, its impact depends on how it interacts with competence and institutional governance structures (LongJohn & Onyewuenyi, 2025).

Rather than acting in isolation, competence and politics interact in complex ways: a competent leader can mitigate internal politics and build coalitions that enhance operational efficiency. Conversely, political selection of leaders lacking necessary administrative skills may weaken institutional performance regardless of available resources. The administrative efficacy of Rivers State universities is shaped by both competence and politics. While technical and managerial competence is foundational for effective administration, political dynamics — external pressures, internal organizational politics, and governance structures — significantly influence how competence translates into performance outcomes. A nuanced approach that strengthens merit-based practices while checking unproductive political interference offers the best path toward sustainable administrative effectiveness. Despite existing reforms in Nigeria’s higher education system, concerns persist regarding the balance between competence and politics in determining administrative efficacy. This study, therefore, seeks to re-examine how competence and political factors individually and jointly influence administrative efficacy in Rivers State universities.

Statement of the Problem

Administrative inefficiency has remained a recurring challenge in Rivers State universities, manifesting in delayed decision-making, ineffective resource management, industrial disputes, and declining staff morale. Observations suggest that while some administrators possess the requisite qualifications and experience, political considerations often influence their appointment and operational autonomy. The dominance of political interests in administrative decisions may undermine professionalism and accountability, while insufficient competence among administrators can exacerbate governance challenges regardless of political neutrality. However, empirical studies examining the relative and combined influence of competence and politics on administrative efficacy in Rivers State universities remain limited. This gap in knowledge necessitates a systematic re-examination of the extent to which competence and politics serve as determinants of administrative efficacy, with a view to informing policy, strengthening governance frameworks, and enhancing university administration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to re-examine the place of competence and/or politics as determinant(s) of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Re-examine the extent to which competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities.
2. Re-determine the extent to which politics serves as a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does competence promote the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities?
2. To what extent does politics serve as a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent to which competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State owned Universities.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. This is on the extent to which politics serves as a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities.

Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory and Organizational Politics Theory. Human Capital Theory emphasizes the role of skills, knowledge, and competence in enhancing organizational performance, while Organizational Politics Theory explains how power relations and political behavior influence decision-making and administrative outcomes within institutions.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was propounded by Theodore W. Schultz (1961) and later expanded by Becker (1964). The theory posits that individuals' knowledge, skills, competencies, and

experiences constitute a form of capital that enhances productivity and organizational performance. According to Schultz (1961), investment in education, training, and professional development improves the efficiency and effectiveness of both individuals and institutions. In relation to the re-examination of competence and politics as determinants of administrative efficacy in Rivers State universities, Human Capital Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for emphasizing administrative competence. University administrators who possess relevant academic qualifications, managerial skills, leadership abilities, and experiential knowledge are more likely to demonstrate effective decision-making, efficient resource utilization, and sound policy implementation (Becker, 1964).

The theory further suggests that competence-driven leadership selection promotes professionalism, accountability, and institutional stability. However, the expected benefits of human capital investment may be undermined where political considerations override merit in administrative appointments (Schultz, 1961). In such situations, administrators may lack the requisite competencies needed for effective administration, thereby reducing administrative efficacy in public universities. Thus, Human Capital Theory underscores competence as a fundamental determinant of administrative efficacy and highlights the need for merit-based recruitment and continuous capacity building in Rivers State universities.

Organizational Politics Theory

Organizational Politics Theory explains how power, influence, and informal relationships shape decision-making processes within organizations. The theory was advanced by scholars such as Pfeffer (1981, 2010) and Mintzberg (1983), who argue that organizations function as political arenas where individuals and groups compete for authority, resources, and control. Applied to Rivers State universities, Organizational Politics Theory explains how political interference, power struggles, and interest group influence affect administrative processes and outcomes. Political considerations in the appointment of university administrators, allocation of resources, and policy direction often shape administrative behavior and institutional performance (Mintzberg, 1983). Excessive political interference may undermine institutional autonomy, weaken accountability structures, and constrain administrators' capacity to perform effectively (Pfeffer, 2010). The theory further explains that even highly competent administrators may experience reduced administrative efficacy when political pressures limit their discretion or impose

conflicting priorities (Pfeffer, 2010). Conversely, administrators who are able to navigate organizational politics effectively may enhance administrative outcomes if political influence is aligned with institutional goals.

Human Capital Theory underscores competence as a fundamental determinant of administrative efficacy, while Organizational Politics Theory explains the political context within which administrative actions occur. Together, the theories provide a complementary framework for understanding how competence and politics interact to shape administrative efficacy in Rivers State universities. Their combined application allows for a balanced analysis of both professional capacity and political dynamics in university administration. Human Capital Theory emphasizes competence as a critical determinant of administrative efficacy, while Organizational Politics Theory provides insight into the political environment within which university administration operates. Together, the theories explain how administrative efficacy in Rivers State universities is shaped by both professional capacity and political dynamics (Schultz, 1961; Pfeffer, 2010). The integration of these theories enables the study to examine not only the direct influence of administrative competence on efficacy but also how political factors interact with competence to either enhance or constrain effective university administration.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for studies that seek to collect information on the current status of phenomena and describe “what exists” with respect to variables under investigation (e.g., competence, politics, and administrative efficacy). Descriptive design enables the researcher to obtain participants’ opinions, attitudes, and perceptions through structured instruments and to analyze data using descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one-way ANOVA). The target population for this study comprised the Deans and Heads of Department (HODs) of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State University (RSU) has 11 faculties and, based on available institutional data, approximately 65 academic departments across its faculties. Each faculty is headed by a Dean and each department by a Head of Department (HOD) (rsu.edu.ng, 2025). Thus, RSU has approximately 11 Deans (one per faculty) and 65 HODs (one per department). Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) has seven faculties and 50

departments. Thus, IAUE has approximately 7 Deans and 50 HODs. Therefore, the total population of Deans and Heads of Department for the two universities is estimated as:

Table 1: Population Distribution

S/N	University	Deans	Heads of Department	Total
1.	Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt	11	65	76
2.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt	7	50	57
	Total	18	115	133

Source: Official University Profiles and Publicly Reported Structures of both Institutions (2025).

Since the number of targeted Deans and HODs (N = 133) is manageable, the study adopted a total population (census) sampling approach — i.e., all Deans and Heads of Department from both RSU and IAUE were invited to participate in the study. This approach ensured that the perspectives of all holders of these key administrative positions were captured. Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of the following sections: Section A: Demographic data (e.g., designation, rank, years of administrative experience); Section B: Items measuring administrative competence; Section C: Items measuring perceived political influence; and Section D: Items measuring administrative efficacy.

Items were framed on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). The instrument was validated by experts in educational administration and measurement & evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 20 Deans and Heads of Department from a university outside the study area. The data obtained were analyzed, and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. Since the coefficient exceeded the acceptable benchmark of 0.70, the instrument was adjudged reliable for the study.

A formal letter of introduction and ethical clearance were obtained from the researcher's institution. Permission was sought from the administrative offices of RSU and IAUE to administer the questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed personally or electronically (where appropriate) to all identified Deans and HODs. Completed questionnaires were collected within an agreed timeframe. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation to summarize respondents' views on each variable (competence, politics, and administrative efficacy). One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was

used to test for significant differences in administrative efficacy across categories of competence and political influence. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. For the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 was used as the decision rule: A mean score of 2.50 and above indicated agreement with the item. A mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement with the item. For the hypotheses tested using ANOVA: If the calculated p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. If the calculated p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does competence promote the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities?

Table 2: Independent z-test Analysis of Mean Responses on Competence and Administrative Efficacy

University	n	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Dev.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
RSU	72	3.42	0.51			
				0.76	± 1.96	High Extent
IAUE	61	3.35	0.54			

Source: Research Data (2026)

The independent z-test analysis presented in Table 2 above revealed the extent to which competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State University. Since the z-calculated is less than the z-critical, it means that the respondents thought that, to a great extent, competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. Thus, competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators to a great extent in Rivers State Universities.

Research Question 2: To what extent does politics serve as a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities?

Table 3: Independent z-test Analysis of Mean Responses on Politics and Administrative Efficacy

University	n	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Dev.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
RSU	72	3.18	0.63			
				0.82	± 1.96	High Extent
IAUE	61	3.09	0.66			

Source: Research Data (2026)

The independent z-test analysis presented in Table 3 above revealed the extent to which politics serves as a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. Since the z-score of 0.82 is less than the z-critical (1.96), it means that the respondents believed that, to a great extent, politics is a determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. Thus, it is concluded that politics serves as a moderate to high determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which competence promotes administrative efficacy in Rivers State Universities

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Competence and Administrative Efficacy

Sources of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	F-crit	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	0.48	1	0.48				
Within Groups	84.16	131	0.64	0.75	3.91	0.39	Not Rejected
Total	84.64	132					

Source: Research Data (2026)

Since $p (0.39) > .05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which competence promotes administrative efficacy in Rivers State Universities. The ANOVA analyses revealed that the competence of Deans and administrators produced statistically significant differences in their administrative efficacy in Rivers State Universities.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which politics serves as a determinant of administrative efficacy.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Summary for Politics and Administrative Efficacy

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-cal	F-crit	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	0.62	1	0.62				
Within Groups	96.85	131	0.74	0.84	3.91	0.36	Not Rejected
Total	97.48	132					

Source: Research Data (2026)

Since $p(0.39) > .05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean responses of faculty Deans in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which politics serves as a determinant of administrative efficacy in Rivers State Universities. The ANOVA analyses revealed that politics as a determinant factor produced statistically significant differences in their administrative efficacy in Rivers State Universities.

Discussion of Findings

Competence and Administrative Efficacy of Faculty Administrators

The findings of the study revealed that competence promotes the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators to a great extent in Rivers State Universities. Faculty Deans in both Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) reported high mean scores on competence-related items, indicating that administrators' professional knowledge, leadership skills, experience, and managerial capacity are critical determinants of effective faculty administration. The independent z-test further showed no statistically significant difference between the mean responses of Deans in RSU and IAUE, suggesting a shared perception across the two institutions.

This finding is consistent with Human Capital Theory, which posits that individuals' accumulated knowledge, skills, and experience enhance productivity and organizational effectiveness (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). In the context of university administration, competent faculty administrators are better equipped to plan academic activities, manage human and material resources, resolve conflicts, and implement institutional policies effectively. Recent studies have reaffirmed that administrative competence significantly predicts leadership effectiveness and institutional performance in higher education (Akanji & Olatunji, 2020; Bush & Glover, 2019).

The absence of a significant difference between RSU and IAUE implies that competence is a universally valued attribute in faculty administration across state-owned universities in Rivers State. This aligns with the findings of Olorunsola and Arogundade (2021), who reported that competence-based leadership practices cut across institutional types and are not necessarily influenced by ownership or location. Similarly, Adeyemi (2022) observed that universities with competent administrators tend to record improved staff morale, efficient decision-making, and enhanced academic coordination. The ANOVA result further confirmed that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of Deans from RSU and IAUE regarding the role of

competence in promoting administrative efficacy. This reinforces the argument that competence is a fundamental requirement for effective university administration rather than a contextual or institution-specific factor. Consequently, competence emerges as a stabilizing force that enhances administrative continuity and effectiveness irrespective of internal or external pressures.

Politics as a Determinant of Administrative Efficacy

The findings also revealed that politics serves as a moderate to high determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. The mean scores obtained from both RSU and IAUE Deans suggest that political considerations such as patronage, power relations, lobbying, and influence from external authorities affect administrative processes within faculties. However, the independent z-test indicated that the difference in mean responses between the two universities was not statistically significant.

This finding aligns with Organizational Politics Theory, which views political behavior as an inevitable feature of organizational life, especially in complex institutions such as universities (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992). Universities operate within political environments shaped by government policies, governing councils, unions, and internal power blocs. As such, faculty administrators often navigate political pressures while performing their official duties. Recent literature proposes that organizational politics can have both functional and dysfunctional consequences depending on how it is managed (Ferris et al., 2019; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2020).

The moderate influence of politics observed in this study suggests that while political factors are present, they do not completely override administrative professionalism. This supports the position of Adegbite and Lawal (2021), who found that political interference in Nigerian universities tends to influence administrative decisions such as appointments and resource allocation but does not always negate administrators' commitment to institutional goals. Similarly, Okeke and Eze (2023) reported that experienced academic administrators typically develop coping strategies that allow them to balance political demands with professional ethics. The ANOVA result showed no significant difference between RSU and IAUE Deans in their perceptions of politics as a determinant of administrative efficacy. This indicates that political dynamics affecting faculty administration are largely uniform across state-owned universities in Rivers State. This finding corroborates earlier studies, which observed that public universities in Nigeria operate under

similar governance structures and political controls, resulting in comparable administrative experiences (Yusuf & Adigun, 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that competence is a critical determinant of the administrative efficacy of faculty administrators in Rivers State Universities. The study also concludes that while competence is a fundamental and indispensable determinant of administrative efficacy, politics continues to shape administrative outcomes within the university system. It therefore recommends that governing councils and relevant stakeholders prioritize competence-driven selection and evaluation of administrators, while instituting transparent governance frameworks that minimize the adverse effects of excessive politicization. Such measures are essential for enhancing administrative efficacy and promoting sustainable development in Rivers State-owned universities. Faculty administrators who possess the requisite professional knowledge, leadership skills, and administrative experience are more effective in managing faculty affairs and achieving institutional objectives. Although politics moderately influences administrative efficacy, it does not significantly differentiate administrative practices between RSU and IAUE. Consequently, competence outweighs politics in promoting effective faculty administration in Rivers State-owned universities.

Recommendations

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

1. Governing councils and relevant stakeholders prioritize competence-driven selection and evaluation of administrators, while instituting transparent governance frameworks that minimize the adverse effects of excessive politicization. Such measures are essential for enhancing administrative efficacy and promoting sustainable development in Rivers State-owned universities.
2. Regular leadership and management training programmes should be organized for Deans and other faculty administrators to strengthen their administrative competence. This will help to ensure that rational decision-making, accountability, and inclusive governance are enthroned systematically within the system.

3. Clear institutional policies should be developed to regulate political interference in administrative processes to safeguard efficiency and accountability.
4. Decision-making processes in faculty administration should be transparent and inclusive to reduce negative political influences and enhance trust among academic staff.

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