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Author: Sunday Sylva Togo Echono

Supervisor: Prof. Ukerto Gabriel Moti

**Title: Leadership Selection Process and Governance of Federal Universities in
Nigeria (1993- 2024)**

PROTOCOL

1.0 Introduction

The study investigates the relationship between leadership selection process and governance outcomes in federal universities in Nigeria. The study aims to explore how the various methods used in selecting university leaders impact the effectiveness of governance and the overall academic environment. Given Nigeria's complex sociopolitical landscape, understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing robust governance frameworks that enhance institutional integrity, accountability, and performance.

2.0 Background and Problem Statement

Traditionally, universities are established to provide higher education, research and community service (Alabi and Fagbohun, 2023). Globally universities are valued and respected as centres for intellectual life, specializing in research, teaching and

dissemination of knowledge (Tijani, 2019). Universities serve as trustees of the norms and values, that constitute the tenets of a people's civilisation (Andah and Iwayemi, 2021, Saka, 2020). They are fondly called "ivory towers," an imaginary haven, a place of retreat from the world and its "madness". Universities have the reputation of training leaders for the professions and for public life (Okoli et al, 2016, Ogunnode et al, 2022).

According to Ogunyemi (2018), Nigeria had one of Africa's most developed university systems at independence in 1960. He added that Nigerian universities were expected to play pivotal role in national development.

Adebayo (2021) asserted that the Nigerian higher education system has not been able to meet the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Jacob and Lawan (2020) identified the problems hindering smooth administration of Nigerian public universities to include inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain drain, incessant strikes by university unions, institutional corruption, insecurity, weak administrators and poor capacity development of academic staff, political interference in university administration, poor internally generated revenue and the dilemma of university autonomy.

The general perception of poor university governance in Nigeria arose from the ineffective and inefficient manner universities are administered leading to sub-optimal performance and unsatisfactory learning outcomes. This has manifested in

falling academic standards and quality, frequent disruptions in academic calendar (strikes), brain drain (Jappa syndrome), reduced global competitiveness and ranking (Okebukola, 2023; Nwokocha and Kenedy, 2020).

Nigeria lags behind most developing countries (23rd in Africa and 191 globally) in terms of educational advancement (World Population Review, 2025). Despite its youthful population and the inherent demographic dividends, it has failed to realize its potential across several development indices including human capital development.

The ascendancy of ethnicity in Nigeria, in the 1980's, after the restoration of democratic governance, explains why the federal government took steps to neutralise and eliminate such sentiments in the appointment of Vice Chancellors (VC) by posting selected chief executives of universities to states other than their states of origin.

The departure from this practice by succeeding administrations has produced a baleful harvest of deepening localization, declining academic and research outputs, and growing perception of irrelevance. Since then, the leadership selection process in Nigerian Federal Universities have been marred with nepotism, corruption, violence, trauma, and manipulation of university extant laws (Olaniyan, 2021). These have direct negative impacts on the governance outcomes in these institutions,

resulting in falling standards as exemplified by the absence of Nigerian Universities in the first one-hundred best universities in the world.

The Federal Government adopted the “federal character principle” as a panacea for solving the problem of majority domination. It was considered as an effective recipe for national integration and cohesion. The principle, which was enshrined in the 1979 constitution of the country for public offices and federal universities, was borne out of the need to ensure evenness in spreading government appointments to promote inclusion, representation, a sense of belonging and balance in the polity. Hitherto, the appointment of vice chancellors was based on merit, using criteria such as qualification, scholarship, experience, integrity among others. Unfortunately, these universally accepted standards and practices, including measures to diffuse ethnic sentiments have in recent times been abandoned.

The lack of inclusivity and diversity, particularly against women and marginalized groups encourages divisions along ethnic and religious lines as well as the perpetuation of gender and social inequalities (Kurga, 2022). Most often, political and financial muscle were the dominant or deciding factors, robbing the institutions of their autonomy, neutrality and associated freedoms (Nwafor & Joseph, 2021).

The malaise of localization, fueled by ethnic and religious bigotry has persisted. So also, the deterioration in the governance of Nigerian universities exemplified by the steep decline in their global ranking and perceived relevance to the Nigerian society.

There is little empirical evidence on how selection method affects actual governance outcomes. “How does the leadership selection process influence governance effectiveness in federal universities?”

The study sought to explore and shed light on the subject.

3.0 Research Questions and Objectives

The study was conducted and guided by the following questions:

- i. What are the current leadership selection processes in Nigerian universities and how do they impact university governance?
- ii. What is the nexus between leadership selection processes and academic excellence, research productivity, innovation and prudent financial management in Nigerian federal universities?
- iii. How do political interference, nepotism and corruption influence leadership selection process in Nigerian federal universities; and what are the consequences for university governance?
- iv. How can leadership selection process and governance systems in Nigeria’s Federal universities be improved?

The objectives of the study include: -

- (i) To examine the current leadership selection process in Nigerian public universities and their impact on university governance.

- (ii) To investigate the relationship between leadership selection process and academic excellence, research productivity and innovation in Nigerian public universities
- (iii) To determine the influence of political interference, nepotism and corruption on leadership selection process and university governance in Nigeria
- (iv) To develop a framework for improving leadership selection process and university governance in Nigeria.

4.0 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested to achieve the objective of the thesis and answer the research questions.

H1: There is a significant positive correlation between transparent and inclusive leadership selection processes and effective governance in Nigerian federal universities

H2: Political interference, nepotism and exclusion in the leadership selection process result in poor governance, academic decline, corruption and discontent amongst stakeholders in Nigerian federal universities.

Ho: Leadership selection process has no significant impact on governance of federal universities in Nigeria.

5.0 Theoretical Framework

An analysis of four (4) prevalent theories was undertaken to select the most suitable philosophical framework to underpin and guide the study. They include:

5.1 Principal Agent Theory:

In the context of university governance, the principal-agent relationship can be observed between various stakeholders, such as:

- (a) Government or funding agencies (principals) and university administrator (agents).
- (b) University administrators (principals) and faculty members or staff (agents).
- (c) University councils (principals) and university vice-chancellors (agents).

The principal-agent theory can help explain issues in university governance, such as accountability, efficiency (managing moral hazard) and decision-making.

The application of principal-agent theory in university governance highlights several challenges, including information asymmetry; agents have more information than principals, making it difficult for principals to monitor and control agents' actions. Another challenge is where agents have their own interests, which may not align with those of the principals. It may entail additional effort and costs for the principal to monitor and control agents' actions, which can reduce the overall efficiency of the organisation.

5.2 Institutional Theory:

Institutional theory examines how organisations, including universities, are shaped by and respond to their environments. It focuses on the role of institutions, such as norms, values, and regulations, in influencing organisational behavior and decision-making. Key aspects of institutional theory in university governance include:-

- (a) Universities tend to adopt similar structures and practices as other institutions in their field, in order to gain legitimacy and resources.
- (b) Universities seek to maintain legitimacy by conforming to societal expectations and norms.
- (c) Universities have unique cultures that influence their governance and decision-making processes.

The implications of this theory for university governance is that universities must navigate the tension between maintaining autonomy and responding to external demands for accountability; balance the competing interests of various stakeholders, including faculty, students, administrators, and external bodies; while fostering a culture of transparency and participation: Universities should promote transparency and participation.

5.3 Stewardship Theory:

Stewardship theory posits that leaders and managers act as stewards of the organisation, prioritizing its long-term interests and well-being over personal gain. This approach emphasizes responsibility, accountability, and a commitment to serving the organisation and its stakeholders. In the context of university governance, stewardship theory suggests that:

- (a) University leaders, including Vice-Chancellors, and Governing Council members, should prioritize the long-term interests of the institution over personal or short-term gains.
- (b) University leaders are accountable to various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the broader community.
- (c) University leaders should manage resources, including financial, human, and physical resources, in a responsible and sustainable manner.
- (d) They should foster a culture of service encouraging faculty and staff to prioritize the needs of students and the broader community.

5.4 Stakeholder Theory:

Stakeholder theory, which originated in the business management field, posits that organisations have responsibilities to various groups beyond just shareholders. These stakeholders can include employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and

the environment. When applied to university governance, stakeholder theory suggests that institutions of higher learning should consider the interests and needs of multiple stakeholders, including students, faculty and staff alumni, local communities, government and funding agencies, and industry partners.

Applying stakeholder theory to university governance can lead to more inclusive and responsive decision-making processes. Some potential benefits include:

- (i) By prioritizing student needs and interests, universities can create more effective learning environments with improved learning outcomes.
- (ii) Enhanced faculty and staff engagement can lead to greater job satisfaction and commitment.
- (iii) By engaging with local communities, universities can build trust and foster partnerships that benefit both parties.
- (iv) Increased accountability: Considering the interests of multiple stakeholders can promote transparency and accountability in university decision-making.

However, implementing stakeholder theory in university governance can also present challenges, such as managing competing interests, ensuring representation and maintaining academic autonomy.

The stakeholder theory was adopted to provide the philosophical underpinning for the study due to its unique features and characteristics which are germane to the study. Its distinctive relevance is anchored on the following factors:-

- i. Federal universities in Nigeria have various stakeholders, including students, staff, government, alumni, and the broader community. Stakeholder Theory recognizes the importance of considering the interests and expectations of these diverse groups.
- ii. The leadership selection process in federal universities affects not only the selected leaders but also various stakeholders, including students, staff, and the community. Stakeholder Theory helps analyze the impact of leadership selection on these stakeholders.
- iii. Effective governance in federal universities requires consideration of stakeholder interests and expectations. Stakeholder Theory provides a framework for understanding how leadership selection processes can influence governance outcomes.

Leading Proponents of Theories

Theory	Leading Proponents	Period Formulated
Stakeholder Theory	R. Edward Freeman	1984
Principal-Agent Theory	Michael C. Jensen, William H. Meckling	1976

Institutional Theory	John W. Meyer, Brian Rowan, Philip Selznick	1970s-1980s
Stewardship Theory	James H. Davis, F. Robert Adams	1990s

Source: Compiled from (Jensen et al, 1976, Meyer & Rowan, 1977, Davis et al, 1997 and Freeman, 1984).

6.0 Gaps in Literature

The gaps identified from the existing literature include: -

- i Geographical Gap: Many studies focus on specific regions or select universities, which may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue across the entire country. Existing research primarily focuses on Nigeria without comparison to other countries with similar higher education contexts. There is need for a nationwide comparative study that includes a diverse sample of federal universities across different regions in Nigeria to assess variations in leadership selection processes and their impact on governance. Also, conduct comparative studies with universities in other African countries or emerging economies to identify best practices in leadership selection and governance.
- ii Under-exploration of Stakeholder Perspectives: While stakeholder involvement is noted as crucial, there is insufficient qualitative research that

digs deep into the perspectives of various stakeholders, particularly students and non-academic staff. There is need to utilize qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and focus groups, to gather in-depth insights from students, faculty, and administrative staff to understand their views on leadership selection and governance effectiveness.

- iii Methodological Gap: Most studies are cross-sectional, capturing data at a single point in time. This limit understanding of how leadership selection impacts governance over time. The need to conduct longitudinal studies that follow specific universities over several years to examine how changes in leadership and selection processes affect governance outcomes.
- iv Technological Changes Gap: Limited attention has been given to how technological advancements and digital tools can influence leadership selection processes and governance practices in universities. There is need to explore the role of technology in the leadership selection process, including the use of online platforms for transparent candidate evaluations and the impact of digital governance practices.
- v Diversity and Inclusivity in Leadership: Gap: There is a lack of focus on the effects of diversity and inclusion in the leadership selection process and how this impacts governance. There is need to investigate the implications of gender, ethnicity, and other forms of diversity in university leadership roles and their influence on governance effectiveness.

- vi Assessment of Governance Frameworks: While some studies acknowledge governance frameworks, none have systematically assessed their effectiveness or alignment with leadership practices. There is need to develop frameworks to evaluate the effectiveness of governance structures in selected federal universities, specifically focusing on how well they align with leadership selection processes.
- vii Role of External Influences: The impact of external factors such as government policies, funding bodies, and international partnerships on leadership selection and governance is underexplored. Consequently, a further examination of how external stakeholders influence leadership selection processes and governance structures, including the role of international collaborations in shaping governance policies is required.

This study addressed some of these gaps, within the limit of time availability. It is expected that the results of the study, and future research, can contribute to a deeper understanding of how leadership selection processes impact governance in federal universities in Nigeria, leading to more effective policies and practices.

7.0 Methodology

The research philosophy for the study is rooted in pragmatism, with emphasis on the practical application of knowledge and the importance of understanding the research context (Cresirell 2014).

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Key methods include:

Surveys: Conducted among 300 faculty, students, and administrators from 20 federal universities to gather quantitative data regarding perceptions of leadership selection processes and governance effectiveness.

Distribution of Federal Universities Across Geopolitical Zones.

S/No.	Geo-Political Zone	No. of Federal Universities	Conventional	Specialized	Participants
1	North – Central	20	15	5	75
2	North - East	9	6	3	36
3	North - West	17	9	8	50
4	South - East	8	3	5	27
5	South - South	14	6	8	42
6	South -West	12	4	8	70
	Total	80	43	37	300

Empirical Review: Several studies across Africa, Asia, North and South America Europe and China were revised with cross analysis to identify similarities and differences in selection methods.

Case Studies: To illustrate the complexities of governance, the effectiveness of leadership selection practices, and the outcomes influenced by these processes, a study of 12 universities across four generations was undertaken.

Interviews: In-depth semi- structured interviews with 10 university leaders, (vice-chancellors) to explore personal experiences and insights related to governance and leadership.

Focus Group: Discussions among eight accomplished university administrators/vice-chancellors (past and present) to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and expectations regarding leadership selection. The discussion guide had both open-ended and probing questions.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics (AVoVA and t-test), Pearsons correlation coefficient, thematic analysis (using NViVo Software), content analysis, SPSS, IKA and Anotor tool were used to analyze the data.

8.0 The Existing Leadership Selection Process in Nigerian Federal Universities

The leadership selection process in Nigerian public universities, particularly for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and other Principal Officers, is guided by a combination of statutory provisions, university regulations, and government policies. They include the age of the candidate, academic qualification, experiences in teaching, research, professional, managerial, administration, honours and fellowship of appropriate societies/institutes, relevant trainings, ICT proficiency,

robust societal linkages, impeccable character, and community service. The process requires the Council and Senate Joint Search Committee to screen and recommend three names in order of merit to the Governing Council who will appoint the VC and notify the Visitor through the Honourable Minister of Education. Below is an outline of the typical process, though it may vary slightly depending on the university's governing rules:

(a) Vacancy Declaration

When the tenure of a Vice-Chancellor (VC) or any principal officer (such as a Registrar or Bursar) is about to expire, the University's Governing Council declares the position vacant via an official notice/advertisement in national newspapers, the university's website, and other platforms, inviting applications from qualified candidates.

(b) Eligibility Criteria

Applicants for the position of VC must meet specific requirements, including:

- i. Academic rank (usually a full professor for at least 10 years).
- ii. A demonstrable track record in research, teaching, and administration.

- iii. Visionary leadership and strategic planning capabilities.
- iv. Adherence to the age limit, which is sometimes specified (e.g., not exceeding 65 years at the time of appointment).

(c) Application Process

Interested candidates submit a detailed application, including:

- i. Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- ii. Vision statement for the University.
- iii. Supporting documents (credentials, publications, and administrative achievements).

(d) Shortlisting by a Search Committee

The Governing Council appoints a Sub Committee to review applications based on the stated criteria and subsequently, shortlists eligible candidates.

(e) Interview and Selection by a Joint Council and Senate Committee

The interview panel is composed of members from the Governing Council and Senate, ensuring representation of both administrative and academic interests. Shortlisted candidates are invited for interviews, which typically include: (i) Presentation

of their vision for the University and (ii) Assessment of their academic and administrative credentials.

(f) Final Appointment by the Governing Council

On conclusion of the selection process, the Committee makes a recommendation to the Governing Council, usually presenting the top three candidates ranked in order of preference. The Governing Council deliberates and selects one candidate based on merit and/or consensus.

(g) Ratification by the Visitor

For State Universities, the appointment is subject to ratification by the Visitor, who is the Governor of the respective state.

(h) Announcement

The decision is formally announced, and the appointed Vice-Chancellor assumes office. All other positions are appointed by the Governing Council.

9.0 Key Findings

9.1 Discussion of Major Findings

In this segment, the researcher will delve into the major themes identified during the research, linking them to the relevant academic literature and articulating the contributions to the field of educational leadership and governance. The research

identified that Nigerian federal universities employ various leadership selection processes, including Governing Council Appointments, Search Committees, and Stakeholder Consultations. Institutions such as Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK) and Bayero University, Kano have illustrated the effectiveness of these approaches in enhancing governance. Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) utilizes its governing council for appointing the vice-chancellor, where decisions are influenced by a mix of political considerations and institutional needs (Afolabi & Olaniyan, 2020).

Many universities like Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK) rely on search committees that include faculty, alumni, and external stakeholders to assess candidates' qualifications and visions for governance (Omenugha, 2022). Some universities of Nigeria, emphasizes stakeholder involvement, incorporating input from faculty and students to foster transparency and inclusivity in the selection process, which has been shown to enhance governance legitimacy (Nwogbaga, 2021).

The study established the following potential outcomes, stability and continuity: structured selection processes contribute to stable governance, as effective leaders are chosen based on merit and alignment with the university's strategic goals (Adedoyin & Adebayo, 2018).

Transparency in the selection process enhances stakeholder trust. Case studies have shown that when stakeholders feel involved, governance is perceived as more

legitimate and responsive (Ogunleye, 2019). Properly established leadership selection processes enhance accountability. Leaders appointed through transparent means tend to be more readily held accountable for their actions, improving governance (Kehinde, 2020).

The findings align with Afolabi and Olaniyan (2020), who noted that diverse selection methods in governance structures lead to different outcomes in organizational effectiveness. Additionally, Ogunleye (2019) emphasized that transparent and inclusive processes foster stakeholder trust, which is vital for effective governance. The stability offered by structured selection processes enhances not only the operational efficacy of universities but also the overall academic environment, as corroborated by Adedoyin and Adebayo (2018), who pointed out the connection between well-defined governance structures and improved academic performance.

The study highlighted that effective leadership selection processes positively correlate with academic excellence, research productivity, innovation, and sound financial management. For instance, some universities that appointed visionary leaders were able to foster an environment conducive to academic and research advancements. Leadership selection processes prioritizing academic credentials lead to enhanced academic standards and a commitment to educational improvement (Okebukola, 2019). Leaders who value and support research initiatives have been

linked to increased research output, as seen in initiatives fostering collaborations and providing funding for research projects (Aliyu et al., 2021).

The study further revealed that leaders who emerge from inclusive selection processes promote innovative practices, facilitating a culture that encourages new ideas among faculty and students (Salami, 2020). Similarly effective governance in some institutions have been attributed to the selection of leaders with financial expertise, thereby ensuring efficient management of university resources (Garba & Shehu, 2020).

These findings resonate with literature that discusses the impact of leadership quality on academic outcomes. Okebukola (2019) noted that institutions led by competent and visionary leaders tend to exhibit higher academic standards. Similarly, Aliyu et al. (2021) provided evidence that robust leadership, focused on promoting research initiatives, correlates significantly with increased research output. The connection between prudent financial management and leadership characteristics is echoed in Garba and Shehu (2020), who assert that leaders' financial acumen is crucial for navigating economic challenges in universities.

9.2 Influences of Negative Factors:

- (a) Political Interference: Political dynamics often affect leadership selection in federal universities. In nearly all Federal Institutions, appointments have been observed to align more closely with political

affiliations than institutional requirements, detracting from effective governance (Musa, 2021).

(b) Ethnic and religious Bias: Tribalism and favoritism sometimes undermine the pursuit of meritocracy, Federal Universities have become increasingly local. The federal character principle is often ignored. The role of universities as melting pots to foster national unity and integration has been lost in the process. When candidates are chosen based on connections rather than merit, it undermines the potential for qualified leaders to emerge (Okwu & Bassey, 2021).

(c) Corruption: Corruption in the form of bribery can strongly influence the selection process, leading to the appointment of leaders who may not prioritize institutional integrity. Studies indicate that this compromises the quality of leadership and governance in universities (Eze, 2020). Contractors have been known to sponsor candidates for vice-chancellor in return for patronage.

(d) Involvement Elections: INEC involvement of university leaders in the conduct of elections has become counter-productive as politicians now sponsor candidates for Vice-Chancellor in anticipation of returning the favour during subsequent elections.

(e) Role of staff Unions: Staff unions are becoming increasingly involved in the selection process with mixed results. Sometimes they serve as

guard rails against impropriety and corruption. At other times, they can be desire and overbearing, brewing conflicts and crisis in the institutions,

- (f) Lack of Inclusiveness: The odds are stacked against external candidates, and until recently, almost formally short against female candidates. Cultural barriers and perception staff pursuit, denying equal opportunity.

The research revealed that undue external influences significantly undermine the leadership selection processes across Nigerian federal universities, leading to governance challenges.

9.3 Consequences for University Governance:

- i. Decline in Quality: The influence of political interference and corruption typically results in the appointment of subpar leaders, which can lead to poor governance and declines in academic standards (Umar & Adebayo, 2021).
- ii. Erosion of Trust: Stakeholder trust in the university system diminishes when leadership appointments are perceived as driven by personal agendas rather than the institution's interests (Ibrahim, 2022).
- iii. Impediment to Progress: Ineffective leadership due to described influences impedes universities' abilities to innovate, secure funding, and achieve academic and administrative goals, negatively impacting their overall reputation (Akanbi & Olatunji, 2022).

These findings are consistent with the studies by Eze (2020) and Musa (2021), who examined how political factors erode institutional integrity and contribute to ineffective governance. The phenomenon of nepotism, as documented by Okwu and Bassey (2021), disrupts the meritocratic framework necessary for selecting qualified leaders, thereby diminishing the overall effectiveness of university governance. The erosion of stakeholder trust as a result of perceived corruption is highlighted in Ibrahim (2022), demonstrating that when administrative decisions are seen as politically motivated, it diminishes the quality of governance and the institution's ability to fulfill its mission.

9.4 Implications of Stakeholder Engagement in university governance:

- (i) Enhanced accountability and transparency
- (ii) Integration of diverse perspectives
- (iii) Alignment with institutional goals
- (iv) Empowerment of stakeholders
- (v) Mitigating conflicts and Resistance, and
- (vi) Accountability in leadership selection

10.0 Limitations of the Study

1. Scope of Research Sample: The study is limited by the sample size of 300; and the selection of the small number of federal universities (20 out of 80 – 25%) may not fully capture the complexities of leadership selection and governance across all

Nigerian federal universities. This was mitigated by the adoption of multiple methods including interviews, focus group, case studies and their triangulation.

2. Subjectivity of Qualitative Data: The reliance on qualitative data from interviews and focus groups can introduce biases based on individual perceptions and experiences. Participant responses may be influenced by personal backgrounds or institutional cultures, potentially leading to inconsistent conclusions or overgeneralizations.

3. Limited Generalizability: While the findings provide valuable insights into Nigerian federal universities, they may not be directly generalizable to other education systems or contexts outside Nigeria. Variations in governance structures, cultural factors, and institutional frameworks could yield different outcomes in other countries or regions as observed in the comparative studies.

4. Focus on Perceptions Rather Than Outcomes: The study emphasizes perceptions regarding leadership selection processes and governance effectiveness. However, it may lack quantitative measures that quantify actual governance outcomes, such as academic performance, financial health, or stakeholder satisfaction, making it challenging to draw definitive causal relationships.

11.0 Contribution to Knowledge

The study has significant implications for both theoretical frameworks and practical approaches in higher education governance. The study therefore contributes to the

body of knowledge on leadership and governance of tertiary institutions, and as a guide for policy makers, university administrators, and stakeholders in enhancing governance structures and outcomes.

11.1 Contribution for Tertiary Institution Governance Theories

a. Development of Governance Theories

The study contributes to the existing body of governance theories in higher education by highlighting the critical role of leadership selection processes. It reinforces the argument that effective governance is not solely dependent on established institutional structures but also on the processes by which leaders are chosen. This research aligns with, and extends the concept of “Participatory Governance”, suggesting that inclusive leadership selection can lead to better governance outcomes.

b. Integration of Stakeholder Theory

The findings emphasize the relevance of “Stakeholder Theory” in university education leadership. The inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives in the leadership selection process enhances transparency and legitimacy, supporting the argument that universities should operate as collaborative entities that address the interests of various stakeholders. This integration can lead to the development of more comprehensive models of governance that prioritize stakeholder engagement.

c. Insights into Ethical Leadership

The research underscored the importance of ethical leadership in fostering a culture of integrity within universities. By exploring the negative impacts of political interference, nepotism, and corruption, the study contributes to the development of theories surrounding “Ethical Leadership”. It suggests that leaders who embody ethical principles and advocate for transparent practices can enhance institutional integrity and trust.

11.2 Contribution for Practical Protocols in Tertiary Institution

a. Policy Formulation: The study highlights the need for policymakers to develop and implement clear, evidence-based policies that govern leadership selection processes in federal universities. These policies should prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, establishing a robust framework for appointments that can serve as a model for institutions across Nigeria.

b. Enhancing Leadership Development Programs: The research identified the need for investment in leadership development programs that emphasize ethical governance and best practices in leadership selection. By preparing future leaders with a strong understanding of governance principles and stakeholder engagement, universities can cultivate a new generation of administrators committed to fostering integrity and excellence.

c. Strengthening Governance Structures: The research reveals that effective governance requires not only leadership but also strong governance structures. Universities should consider revising their governance frameworks to include clear guidelines for leadership selection, mechanisms for stakeholder involvement, and processes for accountability. The restructuring will enable institutions to better address the complexities of leadership in university education.

d. Promoting a Culture of Inclusivity: To effectively implement the findings, universities must actively promote a culture of inclusivity and transparency within their operations. This can involve initiatives such as stakeholder forums, collaborative decision-making processes, and regular assessments of governance practices. By fostering a sense of ownership among students, faculty, and external stakeholders, universities can enhance legitimacy and trust in their leadership.

e. Addressing Issues of Corruption and Political Interference: The study's findings serve as a call to action for university leaders and policymakers to combat corruption and political interference in leadership appointments. Practical measures such as establishing independent oversight bodies, implementing whistleblower protections, and creating transparent reporting mechanisms for leadership selection can help mitigate these challenges and enhance governance integrity.

f. Academic Research and Community Engagement: Finally, the study encourages universities to engage in academic research that examines the impact of governance

practices on educational outcomes. By fostering collaborations with industry partners, alumni, and community stakeholders, universities can create avenues for knowledge exchange, innovation, and shared accountability.

11.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

The study provides a foundation for future research into the dynamics between leadership selection processes and governance outcomes. It invites further exploration into the impact of contextual factors—such as geographical challenges and socio-cultural influences—on leadership effectiveness in higher education settings, thus broadening the theoretical discourse surrounding university governance. Areas for future research include: -

1. Longitudinal Studies: longitudinal studies will track governance and leadership changes in a particular institution over a longer timeframe. This could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of leadership selection processes on university performance. These studies can help identify trends, challenges, and best practices in governance within the evolving educational landscape.

2. Comparative Studies: The study benefitted from comparative leadership selection models between Nigerian federal universities and institutions in other countries. Future research could explore different governance models, leadership selection processes, and their impact on academic outcomes, offering valuable lessons for policy development and institutional reform.

3. An Exploration of Stakeholder Dynamics: Further investigation into the dynamics of stakeholder engagement could provide valuable insights into how various groups interact during the leadership selection process. Research focusing on power dynamics, alliances, and conflicts among stakeholders can enrich understanding and inform more effective engagement strategies.
4. Integrating Political and Social Changes: Future studies could examine how changes in the political landscape, such as new government policies or shifts in public opinion, affect governance and leadership dynamics in universities. Understanding these impacts can help institutions adapt to external pressures and make informed decisions.
5. Inclusion of Effective Leadership Development Programs: Researching the effectiveness of existing leadership development programs within universities could shed light on how well-prepared future leaders are for ethical governance and stakeholder engagement. Evaluating these programs can inform curriculum design and training initiatives.
6. Review of the Underrepresentation of Stakeholders: Future studies should consider engaging underrepresented stakeholders, such as non-academic staff, local communities, and alumni members outside the leadership. Understanding their perspectives can provide a more comprehensive view of governance and foster a more inclusive decision-making process.

12.0 Recommendations

There is significant positive correlation between transparent and inclusive leadership selection processes and effective governance in Nigerian federal universities. Institutions that prioritize stakeholder engagement in their selection processes tend to exhibit enhanced accountability, trust, and overall governance effectiveness. For example, the research showed that some universities have experienced improved governance outcomes due to their commitment to inclusive practices.

The impact on academic excellence and research productivity as highlighted in the study indicated that effective leadership selection directly influences academic excellence, research productivity, and innovation. Leaders selected through inclusive and transparent processes are more likely to implement policies that foster a supportive academic environment, enhance research funding, and promote collaboration among faculty members.

Federal universities that actively engage with their communities and stakeholders in the leadership selection process demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and ethical governance. This engagement not only strengthens the legitimacy of leadership appointments but also fosters a sense of ownership and involvement among various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and alumni.

The research has identified significant challenges that hinder effective governance, particularly political interference, nepotism, and corruption. These factors

negatively impact the integrity of leadership selection processes and, consequently, the overall governance of universities.

Premised on the findings from the research, several practical steps and strategies are recommended for policymakers, university administrators, and stakeholders to address the identified challenges in leadership selection processes and promote good governance in Nigerian federal universities. These recommendations aim to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and accountability within leadership appointments, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

1. Establish Clear Guidelines for Leadership Selection to include:

- a. Policy Development: Policymakers should establish and enforce clear, standardized guidelines for the leadership selection processes in federal universities. These guidelines should outline procedures for appointments, criteria for qualifications, and mechanisms for stakeholder involvement.
- b. Public Accessibility: Ensure that these guidelines are publicly accessible, allowing all stakeholders—students, faculty, alumni, and the community—to understand the selection criteria and processes.

2. Promote Stakeholder Engagement, such as:

- a. Inclusive Committees: University administrations should create diverse search committees for leadership positions that include representatives from various stakeholder groups such as faculty, students, alumni, and industry partners. The

diversity will foster broader perspectives and increase the legitimacy of the selection process.

b. Conduct Surveys and Forums: Regularly conduct surveys and hold forums to gather input from stakeholders regarding desired qualities and qualifications of leaders. The feedback can inform the selection criteria and help build a culture of inclusivity.

3. Implement Transparent Selection Processes which is indispensable and should include:

a. Public Announcements of Vacancies: All leadership vacancies should be publicly announced, detailing the qualifications and application procedures. The openness ensures that a wider pool of candidates can apply for leadership positions.

b. Transparency in Decision-Making: The decision-making process for leadership appointments should be transparent, with clear documentation of the rationale behind selections made by governing bodies. The role of the Pro-Chancellor/Chairman of Governing Council as also chair of the selection committee should be reviewed.

c. Leverage on Technology: Implement centralized application system with a dedicated online platform which allows for document uploads and real-time tracking of status of applications. Electronic voting, virtual town hall meetings, online achieving and transparent reporting will enhance the integrity of the process. Also,

vital are blockchain technology for immutable records, secure voting platforms, data analytics for insights and performance and metrics for evaluation over time.

4. Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms in all public Universities, and these should include:

a. Regular Audits: Implement regular audits of leadership appointments and governance practices to ensure compliance with established guidelines. Independent bodies should conduct these audits, providing objective evaluations of the selection processes.

b. Feedback Mechanisms: Establish feedback mechanisms that allow stakeholders to report grievances or concerns related to the leadership selection process. Institutions should take these reports seriously and address them promptly.

5. Enhance Leadership Training and Development: This is a major undeniable requirement that should be practically carried out in these format:

a. Capacity Building Programs: Develop leadership training programs for potential candidates that emphasize ethical leadership, governance principles, and strategic planning. These programs should be offered to individuals interested in pursuing leadership roles in the university system.

b. Mentorship Initiatives: Create mentorship programs where experienced leaders can guide emerging leaders in understanding the dynamics of university governance and leadership best practices.

6. Combat Political Interference and Corruption in an manner to include:

- a. Legislative Reforms: Encourage policymakers to introduce legislative reforms that limit political interference in university governance. Such reforms could include ensuring the autonomy of universities in leadership appointments.
- b. Whistleblower Protections: Establish robust protections for whistleblowers to encourage reporting of corruption and unethical practices in the leadership selection process without fear of intimidation or victimization.

7. Foster a Culture of Integrity and Ethics in all the public universities, with preference for:

- a. Ethical Standards Framework: Develop and communicate a clear framework of ethical standards and integrity expected from leaders within federal universities. The framework should be integrated into the selection process and reinforced through induction programmes and training.
- b. Recognition Programs: Introduce recognition programs that highlight and reward ethical leadership and excellence within universities. Celebrating leaders who demonstrate integrity can promote a culture of ethical behavior across the institution.

13.0 Conclusion

By implementing these recommendations, federal universities in Nigeria can significantly enhance their leadership selection processes, resulting in improved governance, enhanced academic integrity, and better educational outcomes. These strategies not only aim to solve the immediate challenges identified in the research

but also serve to build a sustainable framework for leadership excellence that aligns with the values and aspirations of the academic community. Collectively, these efforts will foster an environment in which universities can thrive, empowering them to fulfill their foundational mission of providing quality education and contributing positively to society.

Ideal Vice-Chancellor Qualities and Personal Specifications

Annex I

Qualities of an Ideal Candidate	Personal Specifications (Competencies)
Vast knowledge base for flourishing academic environment	Achievement
Knowledge on attracting, sustaining, and developing research	Analytical thinking
Capacity to promote economic, cultural, and social advancement	Customer service orientation
Deep commitment to attracting and developing students	Entrepreneurship
Understanding of income diversification and sustainable financial models	Flexibility
Judgment and sensitivity in decision-making	Holding people accountable
Effective engagement with diverse stakeholders	Intercultural competence
Ability to ensure effective and accountable management and leadership	Leading and developing others
	Professional confidence
	Relationship building for influence
	Self-awareness
	Team working
	Working strategically

Source: Prof. Yakubu Ochefu (2015) as amended by Researcher.

Current vs. Proposed Vice-Chancellor Selection Workflow

Aspect	Current Process	Proposed Interview Workflow
Application & Initial Screening	Call for application; 70% score from CV, 30% from interview	Upload application to portal; Upload 3-min video profile
	Claims on CV not verified by independent agency	Verification of claims on CV by professional verification agency
	No benchmarks for previous positions; uniform scoring for positions held	Shortlist based on independent verification outcome
		Aptitude test (Nigerian higher education, budget/finance, security, ICT)
Assessment & Evaluation	Interview of candidates	Assessment center type competency test
		Scenario-based world café interaction on key challenges (funding, unions, student welfare, etc.)
		PowerPoint presentation of vision plan; Scenario-based case studies with selection committee
Selection Committee & Support	Set up of selection committee	Expanded committee (congregation, alumni, independent actors like former VCs, CEOs, technocrats)
		Two consultants support committee (former VC, serving CEO/development partner)
Final Selection	Declaration of results by council	Top three candidates interact with council for final selection
		Further independent assessment for security status, medical, financial standing before Council appointment

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