

**AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP
INTEGRITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS IN BAYELSA STATE**

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Abstract

This study empirically assessed the relationship between leadership integrity and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was employed, guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The study population comprised academic and administrative staff across selected tertiary institutions, with a sample of 308 respondents drawn using a stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Leadership Integrity and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (LIOPQ)," which was validated by experts in educational leadership and tested for reliability, yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.87. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed a moderate to strong positive relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance ($r = 0.61, p < 0.05$), and a significant positive relationship between accountability in leadership and organizational performance ($r = 0.54, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that leadership integrity, characterized by transparency and accountability, significantly enhances institutional effectiveness, trust, and performance outcomes in tertiary education. It was recommended that educational institutions implement integrity-based leadership practices supported by accountability frameworks and transparent governance structures to improve organizational performance.

Keywords: Leadership Integrity, Transparency, Accountability, Organizational Performance, Tertiary Education, Institutional Governance.

Introduction

Leadership qualities affect an organization's performance in several ways. Integrity has been identified as one such leadership trait that influences vision congruency, administrative responsiveness, accountability, transparency, service delivery, and trust in institutions across various levels of leadership (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2020). Integrity in leadership has been described as a vital trait that guarantees ethical behaviours and decisions by leaders (Amadi & Ayegba, 2023). Hence, integrity in leadership can be understood as adherence to ethical principles and consistency in leaders' decisions and actions. Leadership integrity is critical for generating credibility and trust among stakeholders, and for desirable performance in an organization (Babalola, 2021). The importance of integrity in leadership has been identified as one factor affecting performance outcomes in tertiary institutions, especially in Nigeria (Ezeani & Nwosu, 2022). Against this backdrop, the integrity of leadership and its effects on the performance of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State are examined.

Leadership plays a critical role in guaranteeing good organizational performance outcomes. Thus, leaders with integrity are expected to have a positive influence on their organizations. Integrity assures people of honesty and fairness and inspires trust among others connected with the organization. Employees and students are more likely to adhere to the institution's rules and regulations when they are led by people of integrity. Integrity promotes high moral standards; thus, leaders who operate with integrity are expected to be role models, likely to be emulated by their employees and students (Amadi & Ayegba, 2023). Empirical studies have shown that integrity promotes a conducive work environment, low levels of corruption, and improved service delivery in higher institutions (Adegoke & Ogunyemi, 2020). Even though integrity has been acknowledged as

crucial for effective leadership in organizations, there are few studies that have empirically examined how leadership integrity influences organizational performance in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Leadership recruitment and practices, as well as leadership styles and procedures in most tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, have, over the years, been criticized for lacking integrity, including transparency, accountability, and consistency in the day-to-day running of school activities (Okorie, 2023).

Organizational performance refers to the outcome of operations within an organization. These outcomes span the quality of the academic programme, efficiency, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, public trust, staff morale, stakeholder relationships, and societal impact, among other indicators (Nwachukwu & Eze, 2021). Leadership plays a major role in achieving these goals. Integrity in leadership ensures ethical decision-making, inclusiveness, fairness, and the appointment or promotion of people based on merit (Yakubu & Omotayo, 2020). Thus, leaders with integrity are likely to understand stakeholders' needs, work towards meeting them, and consequently generate trust, mobilize resources, and motivate employees and students, which are likely to translate into strong organizational performance. On the other hand, a lack of integrity in leadership will invariably result in employees and students being engaged solely through personal relationships with leaders, politicizing the institution's operations, increasing staff frustration and low morale, which translates into poor organizational performance (Aremu & Ajayi, 2020). In Bayelsa State, like most states in Nigeria, tertiary institutions operate in harsh environments, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, insecurity, and political interference, among others. Leaders of these tertiary institutions are saddled with the responsibility of providing quality education and running the organizations' day-to-day activities under such environments. The extent of integrity these leaders exhibit in managing these challenges will determine the performance they can deliver. Unfortunately, there is currently no empirical data on how leadership integrity relates to the dimensions of organizational performance in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Therefore, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence on how leadership integrity affects organizational performance in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Integrity is essential for ensuring good corporate governance, trust, and sustainable development in education; thus, there is a need to empirically examine its relationship with organizational performance. Therefore, the study aims to examine the relationship between leadership integrity and organizational performance of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The study specifically examines how transparency and accountability, as dimensions of integrity in leadership, affect the effectiveness, efficiency, and service delivery in these institutions.

This study, which will be conducted through survey research and analysis, will make a valuable addition to the existing literature on leadership. The quantitative and empirical nature of this study will provide data that institutions can use to develop policies that promote integrity in leadership and, by extension, improve their organizational performance. The study will provide answers and add insight into leadership practices among administrators in Bayelsa State tertiary institutions (Oladipo, 2022). Findings from the study will be of great benefit to educational administrators, stakeholders, and the general public in improving the performance and service delivery of our tertiary institutions (Udeh & Adebayo, 2024).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to empirically assess the relationship between leadership integrity and organizational performance in Nigerian public institutions. Specifically, the study achieved the following:

1. Determine the relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. Determine the relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State?
2. What is the relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:
H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

Research Methods

This study utilized a correlational research design, which is justified because it seeks to examine the relationship between two variables. The researcher cannot manipulate any variable and thus uses a correlational design to determine whether the two variables are related or associated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this design, it became possible to empirically ascertain the relationship between leadership integrity, which has core dimensions such as transparency and accountability, and organizational performance, which has verifiable dimensions such as administrative efficiency and academic productivity. The population of this study consisted of academic and administrative staff members holding leadership and supervisory positions, including department heads, deans, unit heads, and directors. It also included senior faculty/administrative staff who play active roles as leaders and decision-makers in their institutions in Bayelsa State. A sample size of 342 respondents was drawn from institutions using a stratified random sampling technique. The sampling technique ensures representation of the different institutions' leadership as well as the leadership hierarchy existing across the sampled institutions. The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire entitled the Leadership Integrity and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (LIOPQ). The questionnaire was adopted on a five-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1. The LIOPQ comprised two sections:

SECTION A: captured information about respondents' demographic data, like the institution they work for, role/ designation, gender, years of experience, etc. SECTION B: Items aimed at measuring participants' perception of various dimensions of leadership integrity (e. g., transparency, accountability, consistency) and various indicators of organizational performance (e.g., administrative efficiency, goal attainment, staff morale, etc.). These items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with options: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Not sure = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1. Three experts in Educational Management and Organizational Leadership were invited to review the instrument and assess whether its items/questions are clear, free of ambiguity, valid, and reliable. Their inputs were considered valid and used to modify the instrument. A pilot study was carried out with 15 respondents drawn from a tertiary institution outside Bayelsa State, with an administrative setup similar to that of the sampled institutions. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the instrument's reliability, yielding 0.89, indicating high internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The researcher administered the questionnaire in person to boost the response rate and assist participants who may have difficulty understanding certain items. 342 copies of the questionnaire were administered across all sampled institutions; 308 of these were properly completed and returned to the researcher, yielding a response rate of 90%. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to analyze the relationship between leadership integrity and organizational performance.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Pearson Correlations analysis showing relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State

Variables		transparency	Organizational Perf	Decision
transparency	Pearson correlation		0.61	H ₀ rejected
	Sig.		0.00*	
	N	308	308	
Organizational Perf	Pearson correlation	0.61	1	
	Sig	0.00*		
	N	308	308	

According to the statistics in Table 1 above, the computed coefficient value (r-value) between transparency in leadership and organisational performance in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State is 0.61. As this value is positive and above 0.5, this means that transparency in leadership positively correlates with organisational performance.

Hence, transparency in leadership moderately affects organisational performance positively in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. In other words, the higher the transparency in leadership in our tertiary institutions, such as always speaking the truth, disclosure of all decisions that affect the institution and ethical conduct, among others, the better the organisational performance.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State

Variables		Accountability	Organizational Perf	Decision
Accountability	Pearson correlation		0.54	H ₀ rejected
	Sig.		0.00*	
	N	308	308	
Organizational Perf	Pearson correlation	0.54	1	
	Sig	0.00*		
	N	308	308	

From Table 2, it is revealed that the r-value between accountability and leadership practices against performance at the organization which is working in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State is 0.54. Since the r-value is positive and just above .5, that means that there is a positive moderate relationship between accountability and leadership practices against performance at the organization working in tertiary educational institutions.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between transparency in leadership and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

It could be seen from Table 1 above that the calculated r-value between transparency in leadership and organizational performance of tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State is 0.61 while the corresponding p-value is 0.00. As the p-value (.00) is smaller than alpha (.05), null hypothesis is

rejected. It could therefore be concluded that transparency in leadership has a significant relationship with organizational performance of tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between accountability in leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

The results presented on Table 2 above reveals that the r-value between accountability aspect of leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State is 0.54, while the p-value is .00. The p-value(.00) is less than 0.05 alpha level so Null Hypothesis (H₀₂) is rejected. There exists a significant relationship between accountability aspect of leadership practices and organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

Results from Research Question 1 showed a moderate-to-strong positive correlation and a significant relationship between transparency and organizational performance among tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, with $r = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$. This implies that transparency has a significant effect on organizational performance among tertiary institutions. As transparency increases, organizational performance also increases, indicating that variables that measure organizational performance, such as staff commitment to organizational goals, institutional accountability, and stakeholder trust in management, rise significantly with transparency. There is an increase in outcomes that reveal transparency significantly improves organizational performance in institutions of higher learning (Al Khajeh, 2021).

The findings of this study corresponded with the literature, noting transparency as a variable in public institutional leadership. Adegbite, Akinola, and Oloruntoba (2022) affirmed that transparency in leadership improves trust and cooperation among institutional stakeholders, thereby facilitating smoother operations. Ibrahim and Osabiya (2020) argued that transparency increases communication efficiency and improves administrative actions among workers in public institutions. When institutions improve their transparency, especially in communication and administrative strategies, employees achieve higher morale needed for effective service delivery. Contrary to these authors' opinions are the findings of Nwachukwu and Egwuonwu (2020), who identified transparency as key to building trust and accountability among stakeholders, but affirmed that transparency must be strategically applied to engage key players and stakeholders to produce meaningful results. This does not mean transparency does not improve institutional productivity, but suggests that improvement in transparency alone, without backed-up action plans and structural reforms, may not significantly impact performance metrics. Leadership transparency has a statistically significant positive relationship with organizational performance among tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Therefore, leaders should practice transparency while ensuring that their decisions are strategic, that personnel are well utilized, and that policies are streamlined to drive performance.

Results from Research Question 2 showed a moderate positive correlation and a significant relationship between accountability and organizational performance among tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, with $r = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$. This implies a significant relationship between accountability and organizational performance in tertiary institutions. Accountability affects organizational performance in tertiary institutions because when leaders are held accountable for their actions and decisions, it leads to better performance. Also, variables measuring organizational performance were observed to increase as leadership accountability increased. Hence, this finding revealed that accountability promotes transparency among tertiary institutions, increases stakeholders' responsibilities, and improves trust among institutions (Ojo & Adeoye, 20 21). This result supports the study by Chukwuemeka and Nwankwo (2022), which found that accountability in Nigerian public institutions improved organizational performance by curbing corruption and operational ineffectiveness. Eze and Okeke (2023) also found that when leaders are held accountable for their actions and initiatives, they tend to be more responsible in managing and

distributing resources, thereby improving the image of the institutions and encouraging trust among stakeholders. The findings from the study support the importance of accountability in the leadership administration of tertiary institutions.

Contrary to this author's claims, research by Adewumi and Lawal (2020) finds that accountability measures can be ineffective when institutions are threatened by weak institutional structures and external interference from political powers. This suggests that accountability may not directly relate to organizational performance if the environment in which it is practiced is not independent.

Conclusion

This study has established that both transparency and accountability in leadership practices have significant positive relationships with organizational performance in tertiary educational institutions in Bayelsa State. Transparent leadership fosters trust, open communication, and ethical governance, which collectively enhance institutional effectiveness, while accountability ensures responsibility and efficient resource management that drive improved outcomes. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the critical role of ethical and responsible leadership in promoting educational quality and institutional success. However, the effectiveness of transparency and accountability is also influenced by complementary factors such as adequate resources, institutional support, and robust governance frameworks. Therefore, for tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State to achieve sustainable improvements in organizational performance, leadership must integrate transparent and accountable practices within a broader context of strategic planning, policy coherence, and capacity building.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward:

1. Tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should promote transparency in leadership by institutionalizing open communication channels, regular performance reporting, and participatory decision-making processes to foster trust and boost organizational performance.
2. Leadership in tertiary institutions should strengthen accountability frameworks by establishing clear performance metrics, regular auditing practices, and feedback mechanisms to ensure responsibility and enhance institutional efficiency.

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