International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research 12(4):297-304, Oct-Dec, 2024

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doi:10.5281/zenodo.14577115

University Management Implementation Of Favourable Admission Policies And Organization Of Students Community Projects As Correlates Of Harmonious Town And Gown Relationships In Rivers State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent to which universities' management implementation of favorable admission policies and student community projects as it correlate with harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The design of the study was correlational, with a population of all the 235 principal officers of the three public universities in Rivers State. All the 235 management staff in the three public universities served as the respondents of the study, using the census and sampling technique. Two validated self-structured instruments, titled University management implementation and favorable admission policies, (UMIFAP) and Harmonious Town and Gown Relationship Scale, (HTGRs) were used for data collection. Conbachs' alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability coefficient of both instruments which yielded 0.85 and 0.88 respectively. The research questions were answered using simple and multiple regression, while t-test and Analysis of Variance associated with simple regression and multiple regression, respectively, were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a high extent of correlation between universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. It also revealed that there a high extent of correlation between universities' management organization of student community projects to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationship in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that implementing a favourable admission policy for residents of catchment areas can improve the relationships between the universities and host communities. It was also recommended that the university should strongly consider organizing community projects that involves students and host communities.

Keywords: Management implementation, admission policies, student's project

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in general and the university in particular, is no longer a quiet place to teach and do scholarly work at a measured pace and contemplate the universe as in the past centuries. Universities today are increasingly penetrating into society by rendering some support services to the people of the communities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Hence in every society universities are prominent members of their communities by virtue of the vast complex of libraries, laboratories, museums, classrooms and offices they require to carry on their work. These universities cannot go unnoticed by their neighbours, and because they are placed in a community, they are likely to dominate the economy and hence be blamed for most of the social and economic pressures that distress their neighbours.

This harmonious relationships between universities and the local communities in which they operate is commonly referred to as the 'town and gown' relationship. The relationship serves as a foundation for collaboration, mutual understanding, and sustainable development (Burdge, 2019). Universities have the potential to act as catalysts for positive change within their communities by actively engaging in responsible practices and initiatives that address the societal needs and expectations of their stakeholders

The quota system in terms of favourable admission policies for catchment areas, when applied to the catchment areas, will give more indigenes the rear opportunities to get tertiary education, with its positive impact on the community involved. Public enlightenment programmes are meant to bring to the community information about government programmes and activities. The institution has a big role to play by helping the government to disseminate information to the communities. Whatever information the government needs to past the indigenes of the communities can easily be carried out through the university because of the trust that they have in the university management, a trust built over a considerable period of mutual relationship.

Implementation of Favourable Admissions Policy to Host Communities and Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships

The intricate dynamics between universities and their host communities are often influenced significantly by institutional policies, particularly those governing admissions. In the pursuit of fostering a harmonious town and gown relationship, one pivotal policy area to consider is the implementation of favourable admission policies for students from catchment area or local communities. Such policies carry the potential to redefine the boundaries of inclusivity and engagement between the "town" and "gown" (Johnson, 2018). Universities are not isolated entities; they are deeply embedded within the fabric of their host communities. The notion of catchment area signifies a geographical proximity that can be harnessed for the mutual benefit of both the university and the community. By providing preferential admission opportunities for students from these areas, universities signal their commitment to the well-being and advancement of their local communities (Smith & Brown, 2021). This discussion embarks on an exploration of the significance of favourable admission policies for catchment areas in nurturing a harmonious town and gown relationship. It delves into the potential advantages, socio-economic implications, shed light on the transformative potential they carry. Jones & Smith, (2021) examines how catchment area admission policies can impact student's success and contribute to community development.

University education has become very crucial for the socio-economic and technological development of any country including Nigeria because it provides the skilled manpower needed to transform the resources within a country into wealth (Farouq; Chaudhry; Shafiq & Beshanu, 2011). In recent past, university education has been overburdened with challenges of admitting her youths and adults to pursue diverse programmes within the university system as a result of huge number of eminently qualified candidates chasing limited admission space in the Universities. The crave for university education by Nigerian youths in particular and adult populace in general, grew in geometric proportion because of the belief that university education is more superior to all other tertiary education and that attainment of university education raises the social status of individuals and their households. This has led to admission crises in the few universities with limited carrying capacity and according to Abdulkadir, (1988).

However, Okoroma (2019) points out that the problems of admissions into Nigerian Universities and the maintenance of adequate standards have been associated with some unpopular policies adopted by

the Federal Government of Nigeria to address the inadequacy in the number of admission places in the University system. Okoroma identifies those unpopular policies to include (a) Catchment areas policy which provided that a certain percentage of admission places must be reserved for the indigenes of the areas in which universities are located. (b) Backwardness factor policy ensured that a certain percentage of admission chances was reserved for the indigenes of States considered to be educationally disadvantaged or backward. (c) Quota system policy provided the allocation of certain percentages of admission places into Nigerian Universities based on populations, ethnic considerations and States of Origin. (d) Discriminatory fees policy provided for lower fees to be paid by the indigenes of the localities where Universities are established.

Organization of Students' Community Projects to Host Communities and Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships

Within the intricate tapestry of the town and gown relationship, the involvement of students in community projects shines as a beacon of synergy and social progress. Universities, as pillars of knowledge and innovation, have an inherent responsibility to extend their influence beyond the classroom walls. One impactful avenue through which they fulfill this obligation is by organizing students' community projects that actively engage, empower and elevate their host communities. Students, the lifeblood of any university, possess a unique blend of energy, creativity and idealism. When channeled into community-driven initiatives, this potent force becomes a catalyst for transformation. These projects extend the boundaries of traditional town and gown engagement, breaking down barriers and forging connections rooted in mutual respect and shared aspirations (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

This discussion embarks on a journey to explore the profound significance of organizing students' community projects within host communities and their instrumental role in nurturing a harmonious town and gown relationship. It delves into the multifaceted dimension of such projects, examining their socio-economic implications, their capacity for community empowerment, and their potential to bridge divides and foster enduring partnerships. By mobilizing students as agents of positive change, universities create a dynamic bridge that connects the academic, built upon the principles of service and collaboration, not only benefits the immediate stakeholders but also contributes to the broader societal well-being, setting the stage for a harmonious and mutually enriching town and gown relationship (Brown & Davis, 2021).

Students' community projects or community service, which is one of the core mandates of university constitutes part of its Corporate Social Responsibilities to its host communities. Participating in community service activities helps to enhance student resumes by allowing students to obtain work-related skills prior to graduation, builds good references for employers in regards to community involvement, and provides a forum to network with future potential employers

In the tapestry of town and gown relationships, the active engagement of students in community projects emerges as a vibrant thread weaving together the aspirations of universities and the needs of their host communities. Students, with their boundless energy and a passion for positive change, stand as catalysts for transformation when empowered to take part in community-driven initiatives. These projects transcend the boundaries of traditional town and gown interaction, creating spaces where shared values of services, collaboration and mutual respect flourish. Through these projects, students offer vital resources, fresh perspectives and a genuine commitment to community well-being. Organizing students' community projects represents a dynamic bridge that connects universities. It signifies a commitment to mutual growth and shared prosperity, benefiting not only the immediate stakeholders but also contributing to broader societal well-being. As universities continue to harness the potential of their students as agents of positive change, the town and gown relationship evolves into harmonious tapestry of shared aspiration and genuine collaboration, poised to shape a brighter and more interconnected future (Jones, et al, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Relations between the host community, commonly referred to as the "Town," and universities, commonly referred to as the "Gown," are cordial in most countries of the world, especially developed industrialized ones. As part of their corporate social responsibility and a way of reciprocating to the host community, these universities embark on voluntary activities that inculcate into their operations social, environmental, and economic concerns of society. These universities provide services such as

scholarship awards to indigent citizens; make provisions for social amenities such as implementation of favourable admission policies, and organization of students' community projects and so on.

It seems that Nigerian universities in general and Rivers State in particular, these provisions are not being made available in totality thereby leaving the impression that the universities are not carrying out their corporate social responsibilities to their host communities which they are made to serve. For instance, it is not surely known whether university the implementation of admission policies s contributing to the wellbeing of the people of the community. Therefore, what bothers the researcher is that when these universities fail in carrying out their corporate social responsibilities in their host communities, that harmonious relationships expected of Town and Gown may not be realized. This study will close the gap created by that erosion of foundation for collaboration, mutual understanding and sustainable development in the state.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the extent to which universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.
2. Establish the extent to which universities management organization of student community projects correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does universities management implementation of favourable admission policies to host community's correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships Rivers State?
2. To what extent does universities management organization of student community project to host community's correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships Rivers State?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of statistical significance

1. There is no significant correlation of universities, management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant correlation of universities, management organization of community project to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the correlational design. The population for this study comprised all the three (3) public universities in Rivers State. The sample for the study was 235 management staff of the three public universities in Rivers State. The researcher designed two (2) self-structured instruments, titled: University management implementation and favorable admission policies, (UMIFAP) and Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships Scale (HTGRS) for data collection In order to ascertain the reliability index of the instruments, 50 copies of the instruments were administered to the respondents. The instruments were administered to the respondents in their respective institutions between December05, 23 and January 02, 2024, with assistance from 3 research assistants who were properly briefed on their expected roles. In all, 235 (100%), were administered, while 230 were retuned representing 97.9% from the number administered. In the process of coding 4 were discarded as a result of errors in responses, leaving a total of 226(98.3%) and (97.9%) from the number administered and number retrieved. These 226 were therefore used in the statistical analysis for answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions, while t-test associated with simple regression was used to test the null hypotheses. Analysis of variance associated with multiple regression was used to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does universities management implementation of favourable admission policies to host community's correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships Rivers State?*

Table 4.1: Simple Regression Analysis of the Extent Universities' Management Implementation of Favourable Admission Policies to Host Community Correlates with Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	**.733[a]**	**.537**	**.523**	**High extent correlation**

* The scale of table 1 applies

Data on table 4.1 present's simple regression analysis on the extent to which universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. The regression score came out as 0.733[a], the regression square as .537, while the adjusted regression square came out as .523. With .537, as the coefficient of determination, when reference is made to the table of measurement, .523% falls between 0.51 and 0.75, indicating a high extent of correlation. Consequently, it is decided that, there is a high extent of correlation between universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does universities management organization of student community project to host community's correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships Rivers State?*

Table 4.2: Simple Regression Analysis of the Extent Universities' Management Organization of Student Community Project to Host Community Correlates with Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	**.746[a]**	**.556**	**.505**	**High extent correlation**

* The scale of table 1 applies

Data on table 4.2 presents simple regression analysis on the extent to which universities' management organization of student community projects to host communities correlates with harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. The regression score came out as 0.748[a], the regression square as .556, while the adjusted regression square came out as .505. With .556, as the coefficient of determination, when reference is made to the table of measurement, .505% falls between 0.51 and 0.75, indicating a high extent of correlation. Consequently, it is decided that, there is a high extent of correlation between universities' management organization of student community projects to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation of universities, management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

Table 4.3: Summaries of t-test Associated with Simple Regression Analysis on the Correlation of Universities' Management Implementation of Favourable Admission Policies to Host Communities on Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships in Rivers State.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	**(Constant)**	**37.446**	**.739**		**50.657**	**.000**
	Favourable admission policies	**.011**	**.022**	**.733**	**.493**	**.622**

Data on table 4.3, presents the summaries of t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the correlation of universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. The t-test calculated value,

used in testing the null hypothesis resulted in .493, while the significant value came out as .622, with alpha value of 0.05.At 0.05 alpha value, and t-test observed value of .493,the significant value of .622 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05.Hence,there is no significant correlation between the two variables. Based on these observations, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis by maintaining that there is no significant correlation of universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant correlation of universities, management organization of community project to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

Table 4.4: Summaries of t-test Associated with Simple Regression Analysis on the Correlation of Universities' Management Organization of Community Project to Host Communities on Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	38.338	.872		43.943	.000
	Student community project	.636	.025	.796	1.446	.150

Data on table 4.4, presents the summaries of t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the correlation of universities' management organization of community project to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. The t-test calculated value, used in testing the hypothesis resulted in 1.446, while the significant value came out as .150, with an alpha value of 0.05. At 0.05 alpha value, and t-test observed level of 1.446, the significant value of .150 is greater than the alpha level 0.05. Hence there is no significant value between the two variables. Based on these observations, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis by maintaining that there is no significant correlation of universities' management organization of student community project to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Universities' Management Implementation of Favourable Admission Policies to Host Communities as Correlates of Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships Rivers State.

The finding of the study is that, there is a high extent of correlation between universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. This finding agrees with Johnson (2018), Smith and Brown (2021), Smith (2021), Farouq et al (2011), Abdulkadir (1988), Okoroma (2019) For universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies, some reasons for the positive result could include; the policy may have increased the diversity of the students body, which can lead to a more vibrant and dynamic campus environment, the policy may have made it easier for qualified students to attend the university, regardless of their backgrounds or financial situations the policy may have improved the university's reputation and increased it's attractiveness to prospective students. Also, a corresponding finding from the test of hypothesis establishes that, there is no significant correlation of universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. But contrary to this result, the following scholars support and are of the opinion that, there is a significant correlation universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. But contrary to this result, the following scholars support and are of the opinion that, there is significant correlation of universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. Thus; Johnson (2018), Smith (2021), Farouq (2011), Smith and Brown (2021), Abdulkadiri (1988), Orike (2011), Okoroma (2019) and Bola 2010) are the ones with contrary supports.

Although the literature and the literature and empirical review support the hypothesis that, there is a correlation between universities' management implementation of favourable admission policies and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State, the results of the hypothesis test do not

support this idea. This may have been due to some reasons such as; that the policy may have created resentment among some members of the community, who did not benefit from the policy, the policy may have created unrealistic expectations for the university's ability to improve the relationship with the community, the policy may have been implemented in a way that was not effective or sustainable.

The research question found evidence to support a positive relationship, while the hypothesis test did not find a statistically significant relationships. However, the difference in these findings does not necessarily mean that the research question was wrong or that the hypothesis test was wrong, instead it means that, there are other factors that need to be considered when interpreting the results. Another area of overlap between the positive literature and empirical review and the negative hypothesis test result is that, it is possible that the universities' management implementation of employment opportunities were not a direct result of the policy. In other words, the literature and empirical review may be identifying a potential mechanism for the relationship, but it may not have been fully activated in this particular study.

In terms of philosophical implications, the reconciliation of the positive literature and empirical review and negative hypothesis test result raises questions about the nature of research itself. For example, it's possible that research can only ever provide a partial picture of a complex phenomenon like the relationship between a university and it's community. Additionally, it raises questions about the role of social science research in evaluating public policy. It also raises questions about the value of quantitative research in capturing the intangible aspect of social relationships. This perspective suggests that research should be seen as a way to illuminate certain aspects of a relationship, but that it will always be limited in it's ability to capture the full picture.

Universities' Management Organization of Students Community Projects to Host Communities as Correlates of Harmonious Town and Gown Relationships in Rivers State.

The finding of the study is that, there a high extent of correlation between universities' management organization of student community projects to host communities and harmonious town and gown relationship in Rivers State. This finding agree with Smith and Johnson (2019), Brown and Davis (2021), Florida National University (FNU) (2013), Patrick and Ijah (2020), Jones et al (2020) and Adjei et al (2014). One of the reasons for this positive result could be that the research design was well-constructed and rigorous, and that the data analysis was sound. Another reason could be that the sample size was large enough to provide reliable results and that the study was able to control for any potential confounding variables, it could also be that the research may have been conducted by a well-respected and experienced research, which adds credibility to the findings. Also, an opposing finding from the hypothesis establishes that, there is no significant correlation of universities' management organization of student community projects to host communities on harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. But contrary to this result, the following scholars supports that, there is a significant correlation between universities' management organization of student community projects and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State. Thus; Smith and Johnson (2019), Brown and Davis (2021), Florida National University (FNU) (2013), Parick and Ijah (2020), Jones et al (2020) and Adjei et al (2014). Although the literature and empirical review support the hypothesis that, there is a significant correlation between universities' management organization of student community projects and harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State, the result of the hypothesis do not support this idea. This may be due to some reasons such as; it may be due to the context in which the study was conducted. For example, the relationship between universities' management organization of student community projects and community relations may be different in different regions or countries. Additionally, the relationship may be influenced by the political, economic or social climate at the time of study. These factors could make it difficult to generalize the findings of a single study to a broader context.

When there is a discrepancy between the results of a research study and the findings of the literature and empirical review, it is important to consider the strengths and limitations of each source evidence. For example, while the literature review provides a broad overview of the existing research. It may not be as rigorous or detailed as a specific study. On the other hand, while the study may be more rigorous, it may be limited by it's specific context or sample size. Ultimately, the most important goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, which may require synthesizing the evidence from multiple sources.

One philosophical implication of this type of discrepancy is the idea of multiple ways of knowing. This perspective suggests that, there are different ways to understand and interpret the world, and that no single method or source of evidence is infallible. In this case, the literature review and empirical review may provide one way of knowing, while the hypothesis test may provide another way of knowing. Both approaches can contribute to our understanding of the topic, but they may also have different limitations and bias.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study has established that University management implementation and favorable admission policies can enhance harmonious town and gown relationships in Rivers State.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The findings of the research suggest that, implementing a favourable admission policy for residents of catchment areas can improve the relationships between the universities and host communities.
- Given the positive findings of the research, the university should strongly consider organizing community projects that involves students and host communities. This can help to create a sense of shared responsibility and ownership over the project which can lead to a more positive relationships between the two groups.

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