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Impact Of Public-Private Partnerships On Administration Of Public Tertiary Institutions In North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the impact of Public-Private Partnerships on administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study is 35,376 respondents (18,296 academic staff & 17,080 senior administrative staff) from the 58 public tertiary institutions. A sample of 380 respondents were taken from six public tertiary institutions for the study using a multi-stage sampling procedure (purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques). PPP and Tertiary Institutions' Administration Questionnaire (PPPTIAQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.88 was validated by three experts and used for data collection. Mean scores and standard deviations were employed to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that public-private partnerships have significant impact on in staff development and student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. It was concluded that public-private partnerships have significant positive impact on the administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that government agencies and tertiary institution administrators should leverage PPPs to support continuous staff development through training, workshops, scholarships, and capacity-building programmes.
Keywords: public-private partnerships, staff development, student support services and administration.

INTRODUCTION

The administration of higher education institutions, which is crucial for ensuring quality education and promoting socio-economic growth, currently seems to be facing a global crisis. Effective administration, which depends on sound financial management, adequate infrastructure, fair resource allocation, and policies that promote innovation and better learning outcomes, is increasingly strained today (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). Rising operating costs, declining public funding, and administrative inefficiencies have set off a chain of challenges, from worsening infrastructure to diminished student services. In developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, these issues have sparked intense debates over sustainable funding models, as institutions struggle to maintain standards amid shrinking budgets (Johnstone, 2021).

Meanwhile, developing countries in the Western Hemisphere, such as Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, face even more serious challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and limited resources. Failing to address these issues effectively jeopardizes not only the quality of education but also the global flow of innovation and human capital, which are crucial for future advancement

(Salmi, 2022). In Asian countries such as India and China, the rapid growth in student enrollments has put pressure on resources and administrative systems, underscoring the need for innovative solutions, such as digitalization and strategic partnerships, to address these challenges (Chen, 2020). Likewise, Latin America has faced administrative issues in higher education that have worsened inequalities in access and quality, particularly in less developed areas (Salmi, 2022).

In Africa, the administration of higher education institutions faces even bigger challenges due to economic difficulties, political meddling, and institutional corruption. According to Teferra and Altbach (2022), many African universities and other tertiary institutions struggle with old infrastructure, limited funding, and a lack of independence, which greatly hinders their ability to provide quality education. For example, in South Africa, university protests such as the #FeesMustFall movements of 2015 and 2016 over poor funding and inadequate infrastructure revealed widespread administrative problems (Nganga, 2021). In Kenya, delays in disbursing government subsidies and weak management structures have led to inefficiencies in service delivery and strained stakeholder relationships (Owuor, 2023). Additionally, in Nigeria, the issues are especially severe, with tertiary institutions facing unstable funding, political interference, and administrative obstacles, including inadequate staff training, outdated curricula, and ineffective student support services. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has repeatedly identified overcrowded lecture halls, outdated equipment, and a shortage of academic staff as barriers to effective management (NUC, 2023). Furthermore, the heavy reliance on government funding, which often fails to keep up with the growing demands of higher education institutions, greatly limits effective administration.

Administration is broadly defined as the process of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling human and material resources to achieve predetermined goals effectively and efficiently (Koontz & Weihrich, 2019). Similarly, Peretomode (2020) describes administration as the art and science of mobilizing both human and non-human resources to accomplish organizational objectives. In higher education, the administration of tertiary institutions involves the systematic coordination of academic and non-academic activities to ensure institutional effectiveness and the delivery of quality education (Ogunu, 2020). Likewise, Nwankwo (2021) defines it as the process of guiding, directing, and managing institutional resources, including human, financial, and infrastructural resources, to achieve excellence in teaching, research, and community service. Therefore, effective administration in tertiary institutions serves as the backbone for achieving institutional goals, maintaining academic standards, and promoting sustainable educational development. Despite the critical role, the administration of public tertiary institutions faces numerous challenges that hinder effective administration. These include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, inefficient facility management, insufficient staff development, inadequate student support services, ineffective curriculum development, and challenges in maintaining sustainable risk management, staff shortages, and high academic and operational standards.

There are many ways to address the administrative obstacles mentioned above; however, Public-Private Partnerships appear to be one of the most effective of all (Hartley, Kipnis and Perlmutter, 2021). According to Bouchal and Gash (2021), PPPs are collaborative arrangements between government agencies and private sector organizations designed to finance, deliver, and manage infrastructure and services traditionally handled by the public sector. In higher education, PPPs provide a platform to leverage private resources and expertise to support government efforts in improving infrastructure, service delivery, and institutional efficiency. In Nigeria, PPP initiatives have been used for constructing hostels, lecture halls, and research facilities, as well as providing ICT resources and capacity-building programmes for staff and students. These partnerships have helped some institutions close funding gaps, enhanced the quality of learning environments, and promoted innovation in university administration (World Bank, 2022).

In North Central Nigeria, public-private partnerships (PPPs) appear to offer a transformative solution to the ongoing administrative challenges facing tertiary institutions, including inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and limited staff development. By leveraging private sector expertise and resources, these partnerships can greatly enhance service delivery in key areas. This study examines the perceived impact of PPPs on administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria, focusing on key areas

such as funding, infrastructure, facility management, staff training, student support services, curriculum development, and sustainable risk management strategies. Through innovative collaborations, tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria can realize their potential to provide high-quality education and promote national growth.

Staff development is another essential aspect of tertiary institutions' administration that appears to have been impacted by PPPs. According to Smith and Brown (2023), staff development is a systematic process designed to improve employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities, enhancing performance and meeting institutional goals. PPPs play a transformative role in this process by providing resources, training opportunities, and expertise that strengthen staff capabilities and outcomes. Johnson and Adewale (2023) note that PPPs facilitate collaboration between public and private organizations to deliver tailored training, workshops, and certifications aligned with industry standards and global best practices. For instance, partnerships with technology companies often support training on emerging digital tools, helping academic staff incorporate modern technologies into teaching and research. Similarly, Osei and Mensah (2022) note that PPPs can fund staff exchange programmes and advanced academic pursuits, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing. However, Mwangi and Obado (2023) warn that some partnerships focus on short-term training that benefits private interests more than comprehensive staff development, and disparities in access to opportunities persist. Still, Johnson and Adewale (2023) argue that equitable and well-designed PPPs trainings, improve staff development, educational quality and student support services.

Student support services are another aspect of tertiary institution administration that seems to have been supported by PPPs. Student support services comprise the range of resources and services such as academic advising services, counselling and psychological services, financial aid and scholarship services, career guidance and placement services, health and wellness services and library and learning resource centres, provided by educational institutions to help students succeed academically, maintain personal well-being, and develop their careers (Brown & Green, 2022). PPPs are increasingly recognized as an effective way to improve student support services in higher education. According to Smith and White (2023), PPPs enable institutions to collaborate with private-sector organizations to offer a range of student services, including career counseling, mental health support, and academic advising, thereby enhancing student satisfaction and achievement. For instance, partnerships with private companies have led to the creation of advanced counseling centers that provide students with access to mental health professionals and career guidance tailored to industry needs. Moreover, private firms often introduce innovation into student support services, such as the use of digital platforms for academic tutoring and peer support networks (Brown & Johnson, 2022). However, critics like Osei and Mensah (2023) argue that commercializing student support services through PPPs could shift the focus toward profitability rather than students' overall well-being, potentially overlooking the needs of marginalized or underrepresented groups. Additionally, concerns exist regarding transparency and accountability in PPP contracts, which might lead to disparities in service quality or unequal access to support. When appropriately managed, PPPs can improve the quality and reach of student support services, resulting in better student outcomes and institutional success.

In North Central Nigeria, the situation is particularly troubling, as increased private sector involvement seems not to have translated into meaningful improvements in administrative efficiency. Instead, essential components of effective institutional administration appears to remain weak, poorly coordinated, or largely ineffective. Persistent problems such as inefficient resource allocation, prolonged delays in project execution, weak accountability mechanisms, and limited transparency suggest that the anticipated benefits of PPPs have not only fallen short but may be undermined altogether. These unresolved challenges cast doubt on the sustainability, credibility, and long-term effectiveness of PPPs as a governance strategy in higher education. Consequently, there is an urgent need for rigorous empirical research to critically assess the actual impact of PPPs on the administration of public tertiary education institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing demand for quality higher education across the globe has placed enormous pressure on governments to adequately fund and effectively administer public tertiary institutions, yet available evidence indicates that public funding alone is often insufficient to meet institutional needs. As a result, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have been widely advocated as a viable strategy for improving educational administration through enhanced funding, staff capacity development, innovation, and improved service delivery (Ahmad & Alam, 2021). Despite these potential benefits, many public tertiary institutions, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, continue to face challenges such as inadequate staff development programmes and poor student support services, which hinder effective teaching, learning, and research activities (Ogunode, Yusuf & Musa, 2023). Empirical studies suggest that PPPs can contribute to staff training, provision of modern learning facilities, and improvement in student welfare services; however, the extent to which these partnerships have effectively enhanced administrative efficiency remains uncertain (Ahmad & Alam, 2021). This situation raises concern about whether PPP initiatives are being optimally utilized to strengthen staff development and improve student support services in public tertiary institutions.

In North Central Nigeria, public tertiary institutions appear to be confronted with persistent administrative challenges, particularly in the areas of staff professional development and provision of adequate student support services. Evidence indicates that inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and weak administrative practices adversely affect staff performance, limit opportunities for continuous professional training, and reduce the quality of services provided to students (Mack, 2024). Although PPPs have been identified as a strategic mechanism for improving institutional capacity, enhancing staff competencies, and strengthening student support systems through private sector involvement (Toriola-Coker, Alade & Aina, 2022), there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which these partnerships have significantly impacted these key administrative domains in the region. This gap in empirical knowledge creates uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of PPPs in improving staff development and student support services, thereby necessitating a systematic investigation into their impact on the administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate impact of Public-Private Partnerships on administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the impact of public-private partnerships on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.
2. find out the impact of public-private partnerships on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What impact are public-private partnerships on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of public-private partnerships on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Public-private partnerships have no significant impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.
2. Public-private partnerships have no significant impact on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study is 35,376 respondents (18,296 academic staff & 17,080 senior administrative staff) from the 58 public tertiary institutions. A sample of 380 respondents were taken from six public tertiary institutions for the study using a multi-stage sampling

procedure (purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques). PPP and Tertiary Institutions' Administration Questionnaire (PPPTIAQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.88 was validated by three experts and used for data collection. Mean scores and standard deviations were employed to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study. A total of 380 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, out of which 364 (96%) were properly completed and returned, while 16 (4%) were returned but not completed. The incomplete questionnaire were largely attributed to the busy schedules of some staff, who intended to complete them but were unable to do so due to time constraints. The data were analyzed and interpreted based on the questions raised and the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Question One: *What impact are public-private partnerships on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria?*

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on the Impact of Public-Private Partnership on Staff Development in Public Tertiary Institutions in North Central Nigeria

S/No	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	Decision
1	Public-private partnerships have contributed to funding academic conferences for staff development.	95	139	79	51	2.76	0.99	Agreed
2	Public partnerships with private organizations have facilitated staff exchange programmes and professional internships.	62	65	134	103	2.24	0.74	Disagreed
3	Staff in my institution have benefitted from scholarships and fellowships sponsored by public-private partners.	70	77	129	88	2.35	0.95	Disagreed
4	Public-private partners sponsor ICT training programmes for academic and administrative staff in my institution.	78	144	77	65	2.65	0.91	Agreed
5	Public-private collaboration has supported research training workshops for academic staff.	103	121	84	56	2.75	0.83	Agreed
	Cluster Mean					**2.55**		**Agreed**

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey (2026)*

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of items 16-20 are 2.76, 2.24, 2.35, 2.65, and 2.75 with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.99, 0.74, 0.95, 0.91, and 0.83, respectively. From Table 4, respondents agreed that public–private partnerships have contributed to funding academic conferences for staff development and that public–private partners sponsor ICT training programmes for academic and administrative staff in their institutions. They also indicated that public–private collaboration has supported research training workshops for academic staff. However, respondents disagreed with the view that partnerships with private organizations have facilitated staff exchange programmes and professional internships. They also disagreed that staff in their institutions have benefited from scholarships and fellowships sponsored by public–private partners. The cluster mean of 2.55 was above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means public-private partnerships have an impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Question Two: *What is the impact of public-private partnerships on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria?*

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on the Impact of Public-Private Partnership on Student Support Services in Public Tertiary Institutions in North Central Nigeria

S/No	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	Decision
6	Public-private sector collaboration has enhanced the availability of career counselling services for students in my institution.	99	116	81	68	2.68	0.77	Agreed
7	Public-private partnerships have supported the provision of health care services for students in my institution.	99	109	83	73	2.64	0.89	Agreed
8	Public-private partnerships have improved financial aid and scholarship opportunities for students in my institution.	103	138	78	45	2.82	0.98	Agreed
9	Public-private partnerships have enhanced the availability of mental health and psychological counselling services for students in my institution.	116	126	84	38	2.87	0.98	Agreed
10	Public-private partnerships have contributed to improving on-campus accommodation and housing services for students.	91	134	52	87	2.63	0.70	Agreed
	Cluster Mean					**2.73**		**Agreed**

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey (2026)*

Table 2 revealed that the mean ratings of items 21-25 are 2.68, 2.64, 2.82, 2.87, and 2.63 with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.77, 0.89, 0.98, 0.98, and 0.70, respectively. From the results on Table 5, the respondents were of the opinion that public-private sector collaboration has enhanced the availability of career counselling services for students in their institutions and that public-private partnerships have supported the provision of health care services for students in their institutions. The respondents further agreed that public-private partnerships have improved financial aid and scholarship opportunities for students in their institutions and that public-private partnerships have enhanced the availability of mental health and psychological counselling services for students in their institutions. Moreover, the respondents agreed that public-private partnerships have contributed to improving on-campus accommodation and housing services for students. The cluster mean of 2.73 was above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that public-private partnerships have impacted student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: Public-private partnership has no significant impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square test of the Impact of Public-Private Partnerships on Staff Development in Public Tertiary Institutions in North Central Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	Level of Sig.	χ^2-Cal.	*P-value*	Decision
SA	82	91.0					
A	109	91.0	3	0.05	9.516[a]	.023	Significant
D	101	91.0					
SD	72	91.0					
Total	**364**						

$P=.000<0.05$; $df=3$; and χ^2-calculated = 9.516.

Table 3 shows that $P<.05$ with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis, which stated that public-private partnerships have no significant impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria, was rejected. This result implies that public-private partnerships have significant impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Public-private partnerships have no significant impact on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-square test of the Impact of Public-Private Partnerships on Student Support Services in Public Tertiary Institutions in North Central Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	Level of Sig.	χ^2-Cal.	*P-value*	Decision
SA	102	91.0					
A	125	91.0	3	0.05	26.396[a]	.000	Significant
D	76	91.0					
SD	61	91.0					
Total	**364**						

P=.000<0.05; df=3; and χ^2-calculated = 26.396.

Table 4 shows that *P<.05* with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis, which stated that public-private partnerships have no significant impact on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria, was rejected. This result clearly showed that public-private partnerships have significant impact on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the perceived impact of Public-Private Partnerships on the administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's variables.

The first finding revealed that public-private partnerships have significant impact on staff development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. This finding is justified by the fact that collaboration with private sector organizations expands access to funding, expertise, and professional networks that support continuous capacity building for academic and administrative staff. Through such partnerships, institutions are better able to provide opportunities for training, skills upgrading, and exposure to industry best practices, which are critical for improving staff competence and institutional performance. This finding aligns with Adeyemi and Aluko (2021), who found that public-private partnerships facilitated access to professional training programmes, international workshops, and industry-based internships for lecturers and administrative personnel. Similarly, Bediako and Mensah (2020) discovered that institutions with active public-private partnership initiatives recorded higher staff participation in international collaborations and research grants, alongside notable improvements in staff retention and job satisfaction. In addition, Kim and Lee (2019) reported a strong positive correlation between the depth of public-private partnership engagement and staff access to training in emerging technologies, entrepreneurship, and industry-driven research. The present finding is therefore consistent with the studies of Adeyemi and Aluko (2021), Bediako and Mensah (2020), and Kim and Lee (2019), as it demonstrates that effective public-private collaboration significantly enhances staff development opportunities and contributes to improved human resource capacity in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. As the researcher, I therefore contend that strengthening public–private partnership frameworks in staff development policies will not only enhance professional competence but also promote innovation, research productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

The second finding revealed that public–private partnerships have significant impact on student support services in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. This finding is justified by the fact that private sector participation often brings additional resources, innovation, and service-oriented approaches that enhance the quality and accessibility of student welfare services. Through such collaborations, tertiary institutions are better positioned to address students' academic, health, career, and psychosocial needs, thereby promoting a more supportive learning environment. This finding aligns with Olatunji and Eze (2020), who found that public-private partnerships significantly improved access to health clinics, career development centres, and campus shuttle bus services for students. Similarly, Moyo and Sibanda (2021) discovered that public-private partnerships contributed to improvements in hostel accommodation,

online counselling platforms, and inclusive learning tools for students with disabilities. In addition, Alvarez and Moreno (2019) reported that public-private partnerships had a positive impact on structured mentorship programmes, increased access to industry-based internships, and the availability of free online learning platforms for students. The present finding is consistent with the studies of Olatunji and Eze (2020), Moyo and Sibanda (2021), and Alvarez and Moreno (2019), as it demonstrates that effective public-private collaboration plays a crucial role in strengthening student support services and enhancing the overall student experience in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. As the researcher, I therefore assert that embedding well-regulated public–private partnership structures into student support frameworks is essential for ensuring inclusive, responsive, and sustainable service delivery that holistically supports students' academic success and personal development in public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that public-private partnerships have significant positive impact on the administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. The study reveals that public-private partnerships in staff development and student support services have significant positive impact on the administration of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria. Effective collaboration in staff development has enhanced capacity building, improved professional competencies of academic and non-academic staff and promoted efficiency in institutional service delivery, thereby strengthening human resource capacity. Similarly, public-private partnerships in student support services have improved access to welfare programmes, enhanced the quality of academic and non-academic support systems, and promoted a more conducive learning environment that supports students' academic success and personal development. Together, these dimensions of public-private partnerships have contributed to improved administrative effectiveness, strengthened institutional capacity, and enhanced overall performance of public tertiary institutions in North Central Nigeria.

1. Government agencies and tertiary institution administrators should leverage PPPs to support continuous staff development through training, workshops, scholarships, and capacity-building programmes. Private sector partners should contribute expertise, technology, and funding for professional development initiatives, while staff should actively participate in these programmes to enhance institutional performance.
2. Tertiary institution administrators should collaborate with private sector partners to improve student support services such as accommodation, health services, transportation, ICT access, and career guidance. Students should provide feedback on the quality and accessibility of these services, while the government should regulate costs to ensure affordability and inclusiveness.

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