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Impact Of Corrupt Practices Of University Administrators On Management Of Public Universities In North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated impact of corrupt practices of university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ex post facto survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 18,599 academic and senior administrative staff drawn from 16 public universities in North Central Nigeria. Using a multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 392 academic and senior administrative staff was selected from six public universities. Data were collected using Corrupt Practices of University Administrators and Universities Management Questionnaire (CPUAUMQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, two in the Department of Educational Foundations and one in the Department of Science and Mathematics Education from the Faculty of Education, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through a trial-test which yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88. 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 manipulation of procurement processes and mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has a significant negative impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. It was concluded that manipulation of procurement processes and mismanagement of research funds have a significant and far-reaching negative impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that university management should strengthen procurement governance by ensuring strict adherence to due process in tendering and contract awarding. This should include transparent competitive bidding, digital procurement tracking systems, and regular independent audits.

Keywords: corrupt practices, manipulation of procurement processes, mismanagement of research funds and management

INTRODUCTION

Globally, universities play a vital role in fostering innovation, economic growth, and social change. However, they still face significant management challenges that threaten their effectiveness. In many parts of the world, including Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Pakistan, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Ireland, issues such as insufficient funding (where many institutions are at risk of running deficits, with some universities ending the academic year with negative balances, making them to struggle), political interference, and insecurity have hindered the smooth operation of higher education institutions (Tamrat & Teferra, 2021). In Africa, these problems are even more severe due to ongoing economic instability, weak governance structures, and limited technological resources. Many African

universities deal with chronic underfunding, decaying infrastructure, and a lack of resources needed to sustain quality teaching, research, and community service (Okebukola, 2022). Moreover, the increasing insecurity across some regions, marked by kidnappings, campus violence, and social unrest, has interrupted academic activities and fostered a climate of fear among students and staff (Akinfolarin, Ojo, Adeoye & Yusuf, 2023).

In Nigeria, these continental challenges are further intensified by deep-rooted corruption and political interference in university management, security threats and underfunding persist (Transparency International, 2023). Yet funds meant for infrastructural and academic development are often mismanaged or diverted. Political influence encourages nepotism in leadership appointments and resource allocation, thereby undermining institutional autonomy and accountability. Corrupt practices among university administrators not only deplete scarce resources but also foster inefficiency, stifle innovation, and contribute to brain drain. All these ultimately hinder the overall effectiveness of university management (Transparency International, 2023).

Management is defined by Griffin (2022) as the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. It is a systematic and goal-oriented approach. Similarly, Jones and George (2021) describe management as the process of working with and through people to coordinate and oversee work activities to achieve desired objectives. These definitions emphasize the importance of collaboration, resource optimization, and strategic oversight, particularly in addressing contemporary challenges such as technological disruptions, global economic shifts, and evolving workplace dynamics. The management of public universities has been defined by Ahmed and Yusuf (2021) as the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling academic and administrative activities to achieve the goals of higher education while addressing societal needs.

Corruption is seen as the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It often results in unethical behavior by individuals in positions of authority (Moyo & Dube, 2023). According to Transparency International (2020), corruption involves the abuse of power or position for personal gain. It is a practice that significantly undermines public trust and hampers effective governance. Similarly, Mavungu (2021) describes corruption as the exploitation of public office for private benefits, which has a negative impact on societal development by diverting resources that should be used for the public good. These definitions highlight the detrimental effects of corruption, which erodes institutional integrity, distorts economic systems, and perpetuates inequality, ultimately stifling national development and progress. This form of corruption is often perpetuated or encouraged by university administrators, commonly referred to as corrupt practices.

Corruption in the accreditation process has become a significant challenge in Nigerian public universities. It further exacerbates the crisis in higher education. Many administrators who have failed to uphold academic standards and maintain institutional property resort to deceptive tactics during accreditation visits. Instead of addressing underlying deficiencies, they resort to temporary fixes, bribery, or hiring unqualified staff to create a false impression of compliance. These fraudulent practices undermine the credibility of the accreditation process, erode institutional integrity, and diminish public trust in the system. Beyond accreditation fraud, widespread corruption and financial mismanagement continue to weaken university governance. Manipulation of procurement processes, inclusion of ghost workers on payrolls and diversion of research funds have all contributed to the erosion of effective university management. University administrators often engage in these corrupt practices for personal or institutional gain, leaving behind a legacy of academic and financial instability. The consequences extend far beyond individual institutions, by affecting the overall quality of education, the global competitiveness of Nigerian universities, and the country's intellectual and economic progress. Without urgent and comprehensive reforms to promote transparency, accountability, and a renewed focus on educational excellence, the future of university education in Nigeria remains at serious risk.

The management of public universities in North Central Nigeria may be increasingly facing concerns that could be linked to the growing influence of corrupt practices among university administrators, which might be gradually undermining institutional effectiveness and credibility. There is a possibility that unethical behaviours such as procurement manipulation, contract inflation, admission fraud, and

mismanagement of research funds could be weakening financial accountability, distorting resource allocation, and reducing the capacity of universities to deliver quality academic and administrative services. If these tendencies continue unchecked, public universities may struggle to maintain infrastructural development, staff motivation, and research productivity, thereby potentially compromising the quality of graduates produced. More worrisome is the likelihood that persistent corruption within university administration could erode public trust, weaken governance structures, and discourage donor and government support, ultimately threatening the sustainability and global competitiveness of higher education institutions in the region.

Statement of the Problem

The management of public universities in North Central Nigeria appears to be increasingly threatened by various forms of corrupt practices among university administrators, particularly the manipulation of procurement processes. In many cases, procurement activities may be influenced by favoritism, contract inflation, and non-transparent bidding procedures, which could result in inflated project costs, delayed infrastructure development, and poor-quality service delivery. Such irregularities may weaken financial accountability and distort the equitable allocation of scarce institutional resources, thereby affecting the effective functioning of universities. Globally, similar concerns have been raised, as procurement corruption has been identified as a major factor undermining efficiency, transparency, and value-for-money in public sector institutions (Transparency International, 2021; World Bank, 2020). In developing countries, including parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, procurement fraud continues to hinder institutional performance and weaken governance structures in higher education (Okeke & Mhlaba, 2022). Despite these concerns, there seems to be limited context-specific evidence on how procurement manipulation affects the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria, thereby creating a critical gap this study seeks to address.

Similarly, the mismanagement of research funds by university administrators may also constitute a significant challenge affecting the management of public universities in the region. Research funds, which are intended to enhance innovation, academic productivity, and institutional development, may be diverted, misallocated, or inefficiently utilized, thereby undermining research quality and staff productivity. This situation could lead to delayed completion of research projects, reduced access to funding opportunities, and declining institutional credibility in both national and international academic communities. Studies have shown that poor financial governance in research administration negatively affects academic output, donor confidence, and institutional reputation (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). In African universities, weak accountability mechanisms and financial mismanagement have been identified as key constraints to research development and innovation (Teferra & Altbach, 2021). However, there is still insufficient empirical evidence on the specific impact of research fund mismanagement on the administration of public universities in North Central Nigeria, which this study aims to investigate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate impact of corrupt practices of university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

3. ascertain impact of manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.
4. determine impact of mismanagement of research funds by university administrators on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

3. What is the impact of manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?
4. What is the impact of mismanagement of research funds by university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

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

3. Manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.
4. Mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ex post facto survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 18,599 academic and senior administrative staff drawn from 16 public universities in North Central Nigeria. Using a multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 392 academic and senior administrative staff was selected from six public universities. Data were collected using Corrupt Practices of University Administrators and Universities Management Questionnaire (CPUAUMQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Mean scores and standard deviations were employed to answer the research questions.

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents analysis and interpretation of the data gathered for the study. A total of 392 copies of the questionnaire were taken to the field and administered to the respondents and 392 or 100% were returned. This was due to the high level of diligence of the research assistants and the cooperative attitude of the respondents. The data were analyzed and interpreted based on the questions raised and the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Question One: *What is the impact of manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?*

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Impact of Manipulation of Procurement Processes by University Administrators on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

S/No	Items Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	Decision
16	Manipulation of procurement processes leads to inflated costs of goods and services, reducing funds available for academic and infrastructural development.	116	139	72	65	2.78	1.05	Agreed
17	Procurement fraud in universities results in acquisition of substandard facilities and equipment, negatively affecting teaching and research quality.	95	147	88	62	2.71	1.01	Agreed
18	Lack of transparency in procurement processes fosters mismanagement of university resources.	115	142	79	56	2.81	1.02	Agreed
19	Unethical procurement practices create unfair competition and discourage reputable vendors from supplying quality goods and services to universities.	99	201	62	30	2.94	0.85	Agreed
20	Manipulated procurement processes weaken financial accountability, making it difficult for universities to achieve sustainable development goals.	88	214	59	31	2.92	0.83	Agreed
	Cluster Mean					**2.83**		**Agreed**

Source: *Field Survey (2026)*

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of items 16-20 are 2.78, 2.71, 2.81, 2.94, and 2.92 with the corresponding standard deviations of 1.05, 1.01, 1.02, 0.85, and 0.83, respectively. The respondents agreed that the manipulation of procurement processes leads to inflated costs of goods and services, reducing funds available for academic and infrastructural development and that procurement fraud in universities results in acquisition of substandard facilities and equipment, negatively affecting teaching and research quality. Respondents were also of the opinion that the lack of transparency in procurement processes fosters mismanagement of university resources. The respondents further agreed that unethical procurement practices create unfair competition and discourage reputable vendors from supplying quality goods and services to universities. Moreover, the respondents agreed that manipulated procurement processes weaken financial accountability, making it difficult for universities to achieve sustainable

development goals. The cluster mean of 2.83 is above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators have impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Question Two: *What is the impact of mismanagement of research funds by university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?*

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Respondents on Impact of Mismanagement of Research Funds by University Administrators on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	Decision
21	Mismanagement of research funds reduces availability of grants for staff and students, thereby limiting research output.	114	162	72	44	2.88	0.95	Agreed
22	Diversion of research funds into unauthorized expenditures hinders innovation and technological advancements in public universities.	100	159	78	55	2.75	1.02	Agreed
23	Lack of accountability in use of research funds leads to a decline in the university's reputation and credibility in securing future grants.	92	138	85	77	2.63	1.05	Agreed
24	Mismanagement of research funds by university administrators discourages staff members from engaging in meaningful research activities, which affects knowledge production.	120	152	74	46	2.88	0.98	Agreed
25	Improper allocation of research funds weakens collaborations with international funding agencies and reduces opportunities for global partnerships.	113	170	44	65	2.84	1.02	Agreed
	Cluster Mean					**2.80**		**Agreed**

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

Table 2 reveals that the mean ratings of items 21-25 are 2.88, 2.75, 2.63, 2.88 and 2.84 with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.95, 1.02, 1.05, 0.98, and 1.02, respectively. The respondents were of the opinion that the mismanagement of research funds reduces the availability of grants for staff and students, thereby limiting research output and that the diversion of research funds into unauthorized expenditures hinders innovation and technological advancements in public universities. The respondents further agreed that lack of accountability in the use of research funds leads to decline in the university's reputation and credibility in securing future grants. The respondents further agreed that mismanagement of research funds by university administrators discourages staff members from engaging in meaningful research activities, which affects knowledge production. Moreover, the respondents agreed that improper allocation of research funds weakens collaborations with international funding agencies and reduces opportunities for global partnerships. The cluster mean of 2.80 is above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that mismanagement of research funds by university administrators have impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis one: Manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square test of Impact of Manipulation of Procurement Processes by University Administrators on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	df	Level of Sig.	χ	*P-value*	Decision
SA	103	98.0					
A	169	98.0	3	0.05	84.102[a]	.000	Significant
D	72	98.0					
SD	48	98.0					
Total	**392**						

P=.000<0.05; df=3; and χ^2-calculated = 84.102.

Table 3 shows that *P<.05* with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria was rejected. This result implies that the

manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators has significant negative impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4: *Chi-square test of Impact of Mismanagement of Research Funds by University Administrators on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria*

Responses	**Observed Frequency**	**Expected Frequency**	**df**	**Level of Sig.**	χ^2	***P-value***	**Decision**
SA	108	98.0					
A	156	98.0	3	0.05	59.939[a]	.000	Significant
D	71	98.0					
SD	57	98.0					
Total	**392**						

P=.000<0.05; df=3; and χ^2-calculated = 59.939.

Table 4 shows that *P<.05* with 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis, which stated that mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has no significant impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria was rejected. This result clearly showed that mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has significant negative impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated impact of corrupt practices of university administrators on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's variables.

The first finding revealed that manipulation of procurement processes by university administrators has a significant negative impact on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This finding is justified by the widespread occurrence of procurement irregularities, where administrators manipulate tendering and contract awarding processes to favor certain contractors or to divert funds, resulting in inflated costs, delays in project execution, poor-quality infrastructure, and weakened financial accountability. Such practices compromise resource allocation, undermine governance frameworks, and diminish stakeholder trust in university management, ultimately affecting the delivery of academic and administrative services. This finding aligns with Mwangi and Kamau (2020), who found that procurement fraud led to inflated costs, delayed project completion, and a decline in academic service delivery, demonstrating a direct link between procurement manipulation and institutional inefficiency. Similarly, Dlamini and Moyo (2021) reported that tender caused financial losses, reduced stakeholder confidence, and disrupted budgeting and infrastructure maintenance, highlighting how procurement corruption erodes the integrity of university administration. Furthermore, Banda and Phiri (2022) reported that manipulated procurement processes resulted in inflated contract costs, poor-quality infrastructure, and mismanagement of funds, reinforcing the notion that procurement fraud is a critical factor undermining institutional credibility and operational efficiency. The consistency of these findings suggests that procurement fraud remains a persistent and damaging challenge in public universities. Fieldwork observations revealed frequent cases of inflated contract costs, delayed project execution, and substandard infrastructure, leaving staff and students frustrated and questioning the integrity of administrative processes. These ongoing irregularities indicate a systemic vulnerability in tendering and oversight, raising serious concerns about the effective management of resources and the overall governance of Nigerian universities.

The second finding revealed that mismanagement of research funds by university administrators has a significant negative impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This finding is justified by the widespread diversion, misallocation, and inefficient utilization of research funds, which hinder the timely completion of research projects, compromise the quality of research output, reduce staff engagement, and diminish institutional credibility. Such mismanagement not only undermines financial accountability but also erodes donor confidence, disrupts strategic planning, and

weakens governance frameworks within the universities. This finding aligns with Njoroge and Wanjiru (2021), who reported that research fund mismanagement in public universities resulted in delayed project completion, poor-quality academic output, and reduced institutional credibility, emphasizing the direct link between financial corruption and weakened university administration. Similarly, Banda and Tembo (2022) found that inadequate oversight of research funding led to low research productivity, loss of donor trust, and staff dissatisfaction, reinforcing the critical role of accountability in research fund utilization. In addition, Dlamini and Mthembu (2023) report that mismanagement of research grants caused declining staff research engagement, inefficient project execution, and a drop in institutional reputation, highlighting how financial mismanagement negatively affects both academic performance and institutional standing. The alignment of these findings shows that mismanagement of research funds continues to be a persistent and damaging problem in university administration. Observations from the field revealed frequent diversion of allocated funds, delayed project completion, and poor-quality research outputs, leaving staff demotivated and institutional credibility weakened. These ongoing issues highlight serious gaps in oversight and financial control, raising concerns about the effective use of resources and the overall integrity of research in Nigerian universities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that manipulation of procurement processes and mismanagement of research funds have a significant and far-reaching negative impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The manipulation of procurement procedures appears to distort fair competition, inflate contract costs, and result in delayed or substandard project execution, thereby weakening financial accountability, institutional transparency, and overall governance effectiveness. Similarly, the mismanagement of research funds seems to hinder the successful execution of research activities, reduce staff productivity, and undermine the quality and credibility of research outputs. These corrupt practices collectively erode stakeholder confidence, disrupt institutional planning, and compromise the efficient utilization of scarce resources. If not urgently addressed, these challenges may continue to weaken administrative structures, diminish academic excellence, and reduce the ability of public universities to fulfill their core mandates of teaching, research, and community service.

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

1. University management should strengthen procurement governance by ensuring strict adherence to due process in tendering and contract awarding. This should include transparent competitive bidding, digital procurement tracking systems, and regular independent audits. Governing councils and anti-corruption agencies should also intensify monitoring of procurement activities to detect and sanction cases of manipulation, inflated contracts, and substandard project execution.
2. University authorities should establish robust financial monitoring systems for research fund allocation and utilization. This includes ensuring that all research grants are subjected to transparent disbursement procedures, periodic financial reporting, and strict accountability measures. In addition, external research sponsors and funding agencies should conduct regular audits and enforce compliance mechanisms to ensure that research funds are used strictly for their intended purposes, thereby improving research quality, productivity, and institutional credibility.

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