

**Leadership Rascality Among University Administrators: Implications on Work Climate in Nigerian Universities**

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**Abstract**

Leadership rascality among university administrators in Nigeria has become a pervasive issue with far-reaching implications for the quality of education and the overall work climate within these institutions. This study examined the phenomenon of leadership rascality among university administrators in Nigeria, exploring its root causes, prevalent forms, and its far-reaching implications on the work climate within higher institutions. Leadership rascality, in this context, refers to unethical, autocratic, self-serving, and abusive behaviors exhibited by university leaders that undermine institutional values and professional standards. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews and document analysis from selected federal and state universities. The findings reveal that key causes of leadership rascality include political interference in appointments, lack of accountability mechanisms, and a culture of impunity. Common forms observed include favoritism, financial mismanagement, victimization of staff, suppression of dissent, and disregard for due process. These practices have led to a toxic work environment characterized by low staff morale, frequent industrial disputes, poor organizational trust, and declining institutional performance. The study concludes by recommending the enforcement of ethical leadership practices, transparent governance structures, and stronger regulatory oversight to restore integrity and improve the work climate in Nigerian universities..

**Keywords:** Leadership Rascality, University Administrators, Implications, Work Climate, Nigerian Universities

## Introduction

The Nigerian university system is one of the largest and most diverse in Africa, designed to cater for the country's educational and developmental needs. It consists of three main categories of institutions: federal universities, state universities and private universities. All these categories of institutions are all regulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC). Nigerian university leadership refers to the governance and administrative structure responsible for the management, policy-making, and strategic direction of universities in Nigeria. These leadership structures ensure that universities fulfill their academic, research, and societal roles effectively. The leadership comprises a hierarchy of officials and governing bodies, including: the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor and Governing Council, the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Registrar, the Bursar, the Librarian, the Senate, Faculties and Departments. Bamiro (2012) stated that leadership in universities is distinct because of the complexity of these institutions, which require balancing academic freedom, collegiality, and bureaucratic decision-making.

It is perceived that university leaders, including vice-chancellors, provosts, deans, and department heads, are tasked with creating a vision for the institution, managing diverse stakeholders, and ensuring the efficient functioning of academic and administrative units (Bolden *et al.*, 2012). Effective leadership in universities must address both internal demands (such as curriculum development, faculty performance, and student satisfaction) and external pressures (such as funding challenges, global competition, and regulatory compliance). In the same vein, Olaleye, Oyewole and Aderibigbe (2020) asserted that leadership is a critical factor in shaping the direction and culture of any organization, including higher education institutions. In Nigerian universities, effective leadership is essential to fostering academic excellence, administrative efficiency, and a conducive work environment for staff and students. However, the persistent challenges faced by Nigerian universities, such as inadequate

funding, corruption, poor infrastructure, and strikes, have drawn attention to the conduct and attitudes of university administrators.

However, Okojie (2017) believed that Nigerian universities which were once bastions of academic excellence are currently grappling with a leadership crisis and a significant number of university administrators have been implicated in various forms of misconduct, ranging from financial impropriety to abuse of power. This leadership rascality has created a toxic work environment that undermines the core values of higher education. Ezema, Ugwu and Ezeani (2018) defined leadership rascality as unethical, unprofessional, and self-serving behaviours exhibited by individuals in leadership positions. These behaviours may include abuse of power, favoritism, embezzlement of funds, manipulation of processes, and a lack of accountability and transparency. In the context of Nigerian universities, such tendencies among administrators can have profound implications for the work environment.

In the light of this, the prevalence of leadership rascality among university administrators has been linked to a range of issues, including political interference in appointments, a lack of meritocracy, and an erosion of values in public service. These behaviours can lead to toxic work environments characterized by low morale, distrust, employee dissatisfaction, and a decline in productivity. Academic and non-academic staff often become victims of nepotism, discrimination, and a lack of clear career progression, which hampers their motivation and commitment to the institution's mission. Furthermore, the culture of leadership rascality can have a ripple effect on the overall performance of universities. It undermines institutional governance, creates divisions among staff, and erodes the confidence of students and stakeholders in the system. These negative outcomes ultimately contribute to the declining global ranking and reputation of Nigerian universities

## **Concept of Leadership Rascality among University Administrators**

Leadership rascality involves administrators adopting practices that contradict the ethical expectations and ideals of higher education leadership (Suleiman and Usman, 2016). The concept of "leadership rascality" among university administrators refers to a situation where those in leadership positions engage in unethical, corrupt, or self-serving behaviors that undermine the integrity of their institutions and the welfare of their stakeholders. This phenomenon is characterized by a lack of accountability, abuse of power, nepotism, and prioritization of personal or sectional interests over the collective good of the university community (Adetiba, 2021). In his view, Hannif (2023) posited that the concept of leadership rascality among university administrators is a complex issue with various perspectives and interpretations.

Akpan (2021) argued that leadership rascality is a significant problem in many universities, particularly in developing countries. Akpan pointed out to research findings that suggest a correlation between poor leadership and negative outcomes such as decreased student performance, faculty dissatisfaction, and institutional decline. Echu and Ocholi (2019) stated that leadership behaviours among university administrators in Nigeria often prioritize personal interests over the institution's core mandates, leading to suboptimal performance. However, Valentine (2022) argued that the concept of leadership rascality is subjective and may not accurately reflect the realities of university administration. Valentine suggested that the perceived "rascality" of some administrators may be a result of differing perspectives and expectations, rather than actual misconduct.

## **Concept of Work Climate in Nigerian Universities**

Work climate in Nigerian universities refers to the shared perceptions and experiences of employees regarding their work environment. It encompasses various factors that influence job satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being of academic and non-academic staff (Fajana, 2000). These factors can include organizational

culture, leadership styles, communication patterns, physical working conditions, and employee relationships. Research suggests that a positive work climate can enhance productivity, creativity, and innovation in Nigerian universities, while a negative work climate can lead to decreased morale, job dissatisfaction, and increased staff turnover (Eneh, 2011). Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013) explained that work climate in Nigerian universities refers to the overall environment and conditions in which academic and non-academic staff carry out their duties.

It includes factors such as relationships with colleagues and management, availability of resources, organizational culture, leadership styles, job satisfaction, and external pressures like government policies. Akinnaso (2016) stated that work climate is often described as the perception of the work environment that influences employee attitudes and behaviours. In Nigerian universities, it can include the adequacy of funding, staff welfare, collegiality, and institutional support for research and teaching. According to Akinyemi (2013), work climate in Nigerian universities can be broken into dimensions such as psychosocial climate (relationship with colleagues), organizational structure (hierarchy and bureaucracy), and external influences (government funding and policy). However, it is believed that understanding the work climate in Nigerian universities is crucial for improving the quality of education and fostering a conducive environment for teaching, research, and administrative activities.

### **Causes of Leadership Rascality among University Administrators**

Leadership rascality among university administrators is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. Azuka (2023) presented the causes of leadership rascality among university administrators to include:

**Weak Accountability Structures:** Weak accountability structures in university administration refer to a situation where there are insufficient or ineffective mechanisms to ensure that individuals and departments within the university are responsible for their actions and performance (Momoh, 2023). This can lead to a range

of problems, including financial mismanagement, poor academic standards, and a lack of transparency and trust. Momoh went further to present that the lack of robust mechanisms to hold university administrators accountable for their actions often enables leadership rascality. Without checks and balances, some administrators abuse their authority, engage in corrupt practices, and neglect their responsibilities. Universities with weak internal control systems and inadequate oversight mechanisms are more prone to administrative misconduct.

**Corruption and Favoritism:** Corruption, nepotism, and favoritism are common causes of unethical leadership in universities and some administrators prioritize personal gain or cater to specific groups at the expense of institutional integrity and fairness. Akomolafe (2011) stated that corruption in the context of university administration refers to unethical or illegal practices by individuals in positions of authority who exploit their roles for personal gain or to benefit specific groups. This can manifest in several ways, such as embezzlement of funds meant for academic or infrastructural development, selling admission slots to unqualified candidates, falsifying student grades or records for bribes, inflated contracts for university projects awarded to cronies and nepotism in hiring staff or appointing officials. On the other hand, favoritism in university administration involves giving undue advantages or preferential treatment to certain individuals or groups based on personal relationships, affiliations, or biases rather than merit or fairness. These include awarding scholarships, grants, or academic awards based on personal connections rather than qualifications, admitting students outside the merit list due to connections with influential persons, promoting faculty or staff not on the basis of performance but personal closeness or loyalty to administrators and Discriminating against others due to tribal, religious, or political differences (Danlatu, 2021). Gregory (2024) stated that both corruption and favoritism undermine the integrity, efficiency, and fairness of university systems, creating an environment of distrust and mediocrity as they often

lead to reduced educational quality and dissatisfaction among students, staff, and stakeholders.

**Political Interference:** Political involvement in Nigerian universities has often been linked to "leadership rascality" among university administrators. Adamu (2013) stated that political interference often lead to the appointment of university administrators, such as Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, and Bursars, based on political loyalty rather than merit or academic excellence. These appointments create a system where leaders prioritize political interests over the institution's welfare. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), the autonomy of Nigerian universities is frequently compromised by political involvement. Politicians manipulate administrators to align institutional policies with their agendas, which often leads to decisions that are detrimental to the academic and ethical standards of the universities.

Omole (2018) also stated that administrators who are products of political appointments may feel obligated to repay their political sponsors. This can lead to embezzlement, mismanagement of funds, and unethical financial practices. Nwagwu (2003) presented that university administrators influenced by political actors may engage in unethical practices such as nepotism, favoritism in employment and admissions, and the suppression of dissent from staff and students. Bruno (2020) is of the view that political involvement in the appointment of university administrators often results in the selection of leaders who prioritize the interests of political sponsors rather than the university. Such interference compromises meritocracy and creates avenues for administrative misconduct. Political influence in university appointments and decision-making can undermine meritocracy and encourage corruption. In the light of the foregoing, it is perceived that political involvement in Nigerian university leadership undermines institutional autonomy, fosters corruption, and prioritizes political agendas over academic integrity. This systemic interference is a root cause of

leadership rascality, contributing to the declining quality of education and governance in the nation's higher education system.

**Lack of Leadership Training and Development:** Many administrators ascend to leadership positions without formal training in leadership or management. This knowledge gap often leads to poor decision-making, mismanagement, and exploitative leadership practices. Babalola (2018) noted linked lack of leadership training and development to leadership rascality among Nigerian university administrators. According to Northhouse (2018), leadership training equips administrators with the knowledge, skills, and ethical frameworks needed to lead effectively. When such training is absent, leaders are more likely to act based on personal interests rather than institutional goals, leading to behaviours such as favoritism, embezzlement, and neglect of responsibilities. Obi (2013) stated that the lack of leadership training and development among Nigerian university administrators fosters leadership rascality by encouraging unethical behaviours, incompetence, poor conflict management, and resource mismanagement. Azughala (2020) opined that the lack of leadership training and development among Nigerian university administrators fosters leadership rascality by encouraging unethical behaviours, incompetence, poor conflict management, and resource mismanagement. In a similar view, Olatunji and Olatunji (2021) affirmed that inadequate leadership training and development can lead to poor decision-making, lack of accountability, and abuse of power among university administrators.

**Absence of Ethical Governance Frameworks:** Universities with weak ethical governance frameworks lack clear policies to guide leadership behavior and this vacuum provides fertile ground for administrative misconduct and abuse of office. Aina (2010) noted that the absence of ethical governance frameworks in Nigerian universities often leads to leadership rascality a term referring to irresponsible, self-serving, or unethical behavior by administrators. Without clear and enforceable ethical standards, university leaders may engage in practices that undermine the institutions'

integrity and their primary mission of providing quality education. Without ethical governance frameworks, university administrators often operate without oversight, enabling them to act with impunity. This fosters corrupt practices such as embezzlement of funds, nepotism, and bribery (Ogundele & Afolabi, 2017). Adepoju (20218) opined that the absence of ethical guidelines leads to unchecked authority, which administrators may abuse for personal gain. This includes arbitrary decision-making, favoritism in appointments, and high-handedness in dealing with staff and students.

Salawu (2019) is of the view that when ethical governance frameworks are absent, appointments, promotions, and admissions are often based on nepotism and favoritism rather than merit. This undermines the quality of education and breeds resentment among staff and students. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), ethical governance frameworks provide guidelines for financial management and the equitable allocation of resources. In their absence, funds meant for development are often misappropriated, leading to decayed infrastructure and low-quality research output. Nwadianni (2000) stated that the lack of ethical frameworks often results in poor conflict resolution mechanisms, which escalate disputes between staff, students, and administrators. This has led to strikes, protests, and even violence in many Nigerian universities. To mitigate leadership rascality in Nigerian universities, it is crucial to establish and enforce robust ethical governance frameworks. These frameworks should include clear codes of conduct, mechanisms for accountability, and transparent systems for financial and administrative operations. Without these measures, universities risk further degradation in their ability to fulfill their educational and developmental missions.

**Personal Greed and Ambition:** Personal greed and ambition among Nigerian university administrators contribute significantly to leadership rascality. When administrators prioritize their self-interest over the institution's well-being, it leads to

unethical practices, corruption, and mismanagement. Akinyemi (2013) opined that personal greed often manifests in the form of financial mismanagement, where administrators siphon off funds meant for institutional development. Greedy leaders may engage in fraudulent activities such as inflating contracts, embezzling school funds, and diverting grants meant for academic advancement. According to Nwachukwu (2015), administrators driven by personal ambition often engage in nepotism, appointing friends, family members, and personal associates to key positions within the university, regardless of qualifications. This undermines meritocracy and leads to ineffective leadership, which negatively impacts the quality of education and research.

Ogunyemi (2016) confirmed that in their pursuit of power, university administrators may manipulate promotions and appointments to consolidate their control over the institution. Greedy administrators prioritize their political and personal goals by selecting subordinates who are loyal to them, rather than individuals who possess the qualifications and skills needed to move the university forward. Greed and personal ambition may lead administrators to exploit both staff and students. This could take the form of forcing staff into unfavorable conditions or charging students high fees for services and resources that are not being provided in return. Exploitative practices often arise when administrators seek to amass personal wealth and power (Salami, 2017). Some administrators seek to amass power beyond what is necessary for effective leadership, often by taking control of various aspects of the university, from *budget allocation* to student admissions. This unchecked accumulation of power results from personal ambition to dominate the institution and increase personal influence (Lawal, 2010). However, Yakubu (2024) noted that personal greed and ambition of university administrators often lead to leadership rascality in Nigerian universities by fostering corrupt practices, lack of transparency, and an environment of inequality. To counteract these issues, it is essential to create a culture of accountability, where

personal interests are subordinated to the mission of the institution. This could involve enforcing ethical guidelines, ensuring fair processes for appointments and promotions, and promoting transparency in financial management.

### **Forms of Leadership Rascality**

The forms of leadership rascality among Nigerian university administrators often manifest in various unethical and corrupt behaviours that hinder the effective management of institutions. Leadership rascality refers to the abuse of power, mismanagement, and disregard for ethical standards by those in positions of authority. In the context of Nigerian universities, these issues have been widely discussed in academic and media circles. The following are some of the forms of leadership rascality:

**Corruption:** One of the most prevalent forms of leadership rascality is corruption. University administrators have been accused of embezzling funds meant for infrastructural development, research, and staff welfare. This misappropriation of funds diverts resources from their intended purposes, hindering the growth and development of the institutions (Okunola, 2021). Corruption, in the context of university administration, often involves unethical practices that exploit positions of power for personal gain or advantages. Rascality, in this case, refers to behavior marked by deceit, dishonesty, and lack of integrity, which can be seen in the actions of corrupt university administrators. These administrators might engage in activities such as embezzling funds, awarding contracts to friends or family members, or engaging in fraudulent academic practices. The relationship between corruption and rascality is rooted in the abuse of trust and power by individuals who should uphold ethical standards (Sampson & Abubakar, 2022). Sampson and Abubakar also stated that the consequences of corruption among university administrators are far-reaching. The university becomes a breeding ground for unethical behavior, where rascality thrives and becomes normalized. Students, staff, and the general public lose trust in the

institution, which impacts its reputation, academic quality, and overall functionality. Eze and Nwachukwu (2018) are of the view that in Nigeria, for instance, corruption within university administration has been a major issue. Cases of mismanagement of funds, unethical hiring practices, and academic fraud have been reported in several institutions. Such actions not only damage the universities but also contribute to the wider societal issue of corruption, perpetuating a cycle of dishonesty and mismanagement.

**Nepotism and Favoritism:** Nepotism and favoritism are forms of leadership behavior that can be considered part of leadership rascality in university administration, particularly when these practices are used to serve personal or partisan interests rather than the greater good of the institution. According to Yusuf (2019), nepotism refers to the practice of favoring relatives or close family members in decisions related to employment, promotion, or other benefits, regardless of their qualifications or merit. In the context of university administration, it can manifest when university leaders appoint family members to key administrative or academic positions, or provide them with special treatment in terms of funding, promotions, or academic opportunities. Alabi (2023) stated that favoritism involves giving preferential treatment to certain individuals based on personal relationships, loyalties, or biases, even when these individuals may not be the most qualified for a particular task or position. Unlike nepotism, which directly involves family members, favoritism can apply to friends, allies, or supporters within the university.

In the view of Aliyu (2023), in university settings, favoritism might manifest in the allocation of research grants, promotions, committee appointments, or even academic awards. An administrator may favor certain faculty members for lucrative research funding or preferential teaching schedules based on personal relationships rather than the merit or contribution of the faculty member. Audu (2023) believed that when administrators engage in nepotism and favoritism, it can be viewed as leadership

rascality, a term that captures unethical, manipulative, and self-serving behavior by those in power. This term implies a lack of accountability, transparency, and fairness in leadership, which are essential for fostering an environment of trust and academic excellence. Theophilus (2024) presented that both nepotism and favoritism are detrimental to the health of university governance. They promote unfair practices, undermine public trust in academic institutions, and hinder the development of a merit-based, productive academic environment. Leadership rascality, when left unchecked, can perpetuate a cycle of poor administration and stagnation in universities.

**Autocratic Leadership Styles:** Many university administrators in Nigeria adopt autocratic leadership styles, characterized by centralized decision-making and a lack of consultation with staff. This top-down approach stifles creativity, innovation, and open dialogue, leading to a culture of fear and mistrust. Tenimu (2020), Autocratic leadership refers to a style where the leader holds absolute power and decision-making authority, and rarely seeks input or feedback from others. This style often involves a "top-down" approach to management, where the leader dictates policies, sets objectives, and oversees operations without much consultation or collaboration with subordinates. While autocratic leadership can be effective in situations requiring quick decision-making or where uniformity is critical, it is often criticized for fostering a lack of creativity, disengagement, and an unhealthy power dynamic within organizations. In the context of university administration, autocratic leadership can sometimes manifest as what might be referred to as "leadership rascality," a term that denotes the abusive, unaccountable, and excessive exercise of authority by administrators (Ibrahim, 2021).

Jimoh (2020) stated that university administrators who adopt autocratic leadership may make critical decisions (such as budget allocations, student admissions, or faculty promotions) without consulting other key stakeholders, such as faculty, students, or even other administrative units. This can lead to dissatisfaction and

mistrust, as decisions are seen as unilateral or disconnected from the needs and opinions of the academic community. Bolanle (2020) stated that in an autocratic leadership structure, power is often highly centralized, with one or a few individuals making key decisions for the entire institution. This might lead to a situation where university policies, academic direction, and student services are dictated without input from those with expertise or experience in those areas. Such centralization often breeds a disconnect between leadership and the university community, diminishing collaboration and innovation.

**Financial Mismanagement and Embezzlement:** One of the most common forms of leadership rascality is the mismanagement of funds allocated to universities. University administrators sometimes divert funds meant for infrastructure, research, or staff welfare into their personal accounts or use them for personal gain. This has led to infrastructural decay and inadequate resources for students and staff. According to an article in *The Punch* (2019), there have been numerous reports of university administrators being implicated in financial scandals, ranging from inflated contracts to unauthorized expenditure.

**Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** University administrators often lack transparency in decision-making processes, leading to poor governance and mistrust among staff and students. For example, crucial decisions such as the allocation of research funds, hiring of staff, and awarding of contracts are sometimes made behind closed doors without proper consultations. According to a report by *Vanguard* (2020), the lack of accountability in Nigerian universities contributes to inefficiencies and corruption.

**Victimization and Suppression of Dissent:** Victimization and suppression of dissent in university settings can be considered forms of leadership rascality when administrators abuse their power to silence opposing views, punish critics, or prevent constructive engagement. This type of behavior is not only unethical but also

undermines the values that universities are meant to uphold, such as academic freedom, autonomy, and open discourse. Victimization refers to the intentional targeting and harm of individuals who express opposing viewpoints, challenge authority, or criticize decisions made by the university administration. In many cases, university administrators resort to punitive measures such as harassment, threats of dismissal, or formal disciplinary actions against students, faculty, or staff who dissent. This behavior can manifest in various ways, such as intimidation, harassment, and retaliation against faculty or students who express dissenting views or challenge administrative decisions (Awel, 2020). Sanusi (2020) stated that administrators may target student activists who organize protests or faculty members who critique university policies. Such actions might include suspension, job termination, or other forms of retaliation that could damage the careers or reputations of those involved. The goal is often to intimidate others and maintain control over the narrative, ensuring that no dissent is tolerated. In the same vein, suppression of dissent occurs when university administrators employ strategies to prevent or limit the expression of differing opinions, ideas, or critiques. This could involve restricting access to platforms for debate, limiting student union activities, or instituting policies that inhibit free speech (Uyi, 2021). The suppression of dissent can be overt (e.g., banning protests, censoring student media) or more subtle (e.g., creating a culture of fear where individuals are too afraid to speak out).

Owoeye (2020) is of the view that in Nigeria, there have been several instances where university administrators have been accused of suppressing dissent to maintain control. For example, the University of Lagos (UNILAG) has faced criticism for restricting student protests and threatening students involved in activism with expulsion or other punitive measures (Adeyemi, 2021). Such actions deter students and staff from engaging in debates on university policy, limiting the exchange of ideas and stifling academic progress. Abdulkareem (2022) believed that the victimization and suppression of dissent are key signs of leadership rascality, as they reflect an

administration more focused on maintaining control than on fostering an environment conducive to learning and growth. In the light of the foregoing, it is believed that the use of victimization and suppression to maintain power creates an environment where students and faculty are less likely to challenge poor policies, corruption, or injustice, which undermines the integrity and credibility of the institution. Leadership rascality in universities is dangerous as it not only stifles academic freedom but also hinders societal progress by keeping important issues from being openly discussed and addressed (Ojo, 2023).

**Failure to Prioritize Education Quality:** Some administrators prioritize personal interests over the quality of education, leading to the decline in academic standards. This includes disregarding the welfare of lecturers, compromising on the admission process, and tolerating subpar research and teaching practices. As noted by the University World News (2022), the neglect of academic excellence in favor of personal or political gains has contributed to the decline in the quality of education in many Nigerian universities. These forms of leadership rascality have long-term consequences for the development of Nigerian universities. To address these issues, there is a need for reforms that promote transparency, meritocracy, and accountability in the management of higher education institutions

### **Implications of Leadership Rascality on Work Climate in Nigerian Universities**

Leadership rascality has a profound negative impact on the work climate in Nigerian universities. It erodes trust between administrators and staff, leading to decreased employee morale and job dissatisfaction. The implications of leadership rascality on work climate in Nigerian universities are multifaceted and deeply influential, impacting the overall functioning of these institutions. Leadership rascality refers to the poor behavior, corruption, and unethical practices by university leaders (such as vice-chancellors, deans, and heads of departments) who fail to perform their duties with integrity, accountability, and fairness. This phenomenon has numerous

implications on the work climate within Nigerian universities, and it affects various aspects of university life, including productivity, staff morale, student outcomes, and institutional reputation.

Ibrahim (2021) asserted that when university leadership is characterized by rascality, staff members, including lecturers and administrative workers, are likely to experience a decline in morale. Employees often feel demotivated when leadership engages in corruption, nepotism, or abuses of power. This can manifest in frustration, dissatisfaction, and a sense of disillusionment with the institution. Staff may feel underappreciated, as they witness unjust promotions, the mismanagement of resources, or lack of accountability for misconduct. Studies like Salisu *et al.* (2020) highlight that poor leadership can significantly decrease the work satisfaction of employees, especially in environments where management practices are perceived as unfair or ineffective. As staff morale plummets, productivity also suffers, as employees are less likely to go above and beyond their basic duties when they feel the institution's leadership does not value their contributions.

Ogunyemi (2018) argued that leadership rascality can have detrimental effects on the efficiency of operations within Nigerian universities. When university leaders engage in corrupt practices, they divert resources meant for academic development, research funding, and infrastructural improvements. This results in a lack of essential tools and resources for both teaching and research, which negatively impacts the overall educational experience. For example, lecturers may have to teach with outdated or inadequate materials, and research initiatives may suffer from a lack of funding or support. Ogunyemi (2018) also stated that Nigerian universities often face challenges like inadequate infrastructure, poor management of funds, and underfunded research, all of which are exacerbated by poor leadership. The inefficiency stemming from these issues ultimately harms both academic and administrative performance within the institutions. According to Adegboye & Olufemi (2019), the erosion of trust within the

institution leads to a toxic environment, where employees and students become disengaged, leading to reduced participation in university activities and lower levels of collaboration. A lack of confidence in the leadership reduces overall productivity and hinders the establishment of a cohesive academic community.

Itueke (2020) presented that one of the most critical areas affected by leadership rascality is the academic standard within universities. Corrupt or inept leadership may allow subpar educational practices to thrive. The appointment of unqualified individuals to key academic positions based on nepotism rather than merit often results in the deterioration of academic standards. This also affects the quality of graduates produced by these institutions, as students are taught by unqualified staff or in environments lacking necessary academic resources. As Ogunyemi (2018) points out, the failure to uphold academic integrity through proper governance often leads to substandard education. Universities that neglect merit-based systems and opt for political patronage undermine the academic rigor essential for producing well-prepared graduates.

Atibi (2023) stated that leadership rascality can foster an environment of persistent conflict between university management and staff unions, particularly in Nigerian universities, where unions like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) play a prominent role in advocating for staff welfare. When leadership fails to engage in constructive dialogue or address concerns raised by unions, strikes become a common response. The frequent strikes disrupt academic schedules, affect research timelines, and generally create instability within the academic environment. Olaleye (2016) highlights that the failure of university leadership to engage in fair negotiations and address the genuine concerns of staff unions often leads to prolonged industrial actions, which in turn disrupts the work climate and undermines academic performance.

Omorodion (2024) noted that leadership rascality tarnishes the reputation of the university at both national and international levels. Universities are judged by their leadership in terms of academic excellence, governance, and social responsibility. When leadership is perceived as corrupt or inefficient, the university's reputation is at risk. This can lead to a decrease in student enrollment, reduced partnerships with international institutions, and a loss of funding from both public and private sources. Akpan (2021) argued that the reputation of Nigerian universities is continually jeopardized by leadership failures, affecting their global standing and ability to attract top talent, faculty, and research opportunities. Leadership rascality in Nigerian universities has far-reaching consequences for the work climate within these institutions. It leads to a decline in staff morale, reduced organizational efficiency, a lack of transparency, deterioration in academic standards, frequent strikes, and a tarnished institutional reputation. To improve the work climate, it is imperative that universities adopt ethical, transparent, and accountable leadership practices that prioritize academic excellence, staff welfare, and institutional development.

## **Conclusion**

This study has brought to light the disturbing trend of leadership rascality among university administrators in Nigeria, highlighting its deep-rooted causes, diverse manifestations, and the damaging effects on the work climate within tertiary institutions. The findings clearly demonstrate that factors such as politicization of leadership appointments, weak accountability systems, personal aggrandizement, and a lack of ethical orientation contribute significantly to the rise of leadership rascality. The various forms ranging from favoritism and abuse of power to financial impropriety and suppression of academic freedom have collectively eroded trust, professionalism, and morale among university staff. The implications for the work climate are profound: deteriorating staff welfare, increased industrial unrest, low productivity, and a pervasive culture of fear and silence. If left unchecked, these issues will continue to

undermine the quality of education and the overall mission of universities as centers of learning, research, and societal development. Therefore, urgent reforms are needed as these include enforcing transparent recruitment processes, strengthening internal governance mechanisms, promoting ethical leadership training, and ensuring independent oversight of administrative conduct. Only through deliberate efforts to uphold integrity and accountability can Nigerian universities reclaim their roles as models of excellence and innovation.

### **Suggestions**

To improve leadership quality and foster a positive work climate in Nigerian universities, several recommendations can be implemented. These include:

1. The selection and appointment of university administrators be based strictly on merit, competence, and proven ethical standards rather than political affiliations or external influences.
2. There should be clear and enforceable codes of conduct for all university leaders, with robust mechanisms for accountability and periodic performance evaluations to detect and address abuse of office.
3. The establishment of independent oversight bodies with the power to investigate and sanction administrative misconduct is crucial to curbing leadership rascality.
4. Capacity-building programmes focusing on ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, and transparent governance should be institutionalized as part of leadership development within universities.
5. Academic communities should also be empowered to speak out against administrative excesses without fear of victimization.
6. By fostering a culture of transparency, inclusiveness, and integrity, Nigerian universities can create a healthier work climate that promotes productivity, innovation, and mutual respect among all stakeholders.

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