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PROVOSTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF PUBLIC COLLEGES OF EDUCATION CLIMATE IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at provosts' demographic characteristics as predictors of public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria. The study was guided by one null hypothesis, and the population comprised all the provosts and staff members of the 11 public colleges of education in the Southwest, Nigeria out of which six colleges were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. As the sample size of the study, 300 participants were involved, who were chosen through a stratified sampling technique wherein the staff were stratified into teaching and non-teaching departments. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled "Staff Questionnaire on Provost Demographic Characteristics of Institutional Climate (SQPDCIC)." The instrument has successful face validity, and its reliability was ascertained through the test-retest method with a 0.743 reliability coefficient. The collected data were analysed through Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) at a 0.05 significant level. The results showed that there is no statistically significant joint relationship between the provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria ($F_{(4, 25)}$ =.979; P = 0.419 > 0.05); and no statistically significant separate relationship between the provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria, while none of them is statistically significant. However, work experience was the best predictor variable (β =.047; t =.718; P =.475 > 0.05). This study concluded that provosts' gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification

are not the major predictors of public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria, and that provosts' work experience is the greatest predictor of public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria. Based on the results, the study therefore recommended, among others, that the years of experience of the intending provost of a college of education in terms of their knowledge and skills in managing educational institutions be considered by the government in the appointment of provosts.

Keywords: *Provosts' demographic characteristics, Institutional climate, Public colleges of education.*

Introduction

Higher institutions of learning, otherwise referred to as tertiary institutions, which conventionally consist of monotechnics, polytechnics, colleges of education, and universities, are major vehicles of social, economic, and political transformation in any body politic. These institutions have the capacity to equip individuals with the technical know-how as well as the skills needed to navigate in the real world and with the knowledge needed to adjust to an ever-competitive biosphere. Recognizing the imperativeness of education as a pre-requisite for the sound economic, social, political, and technological development of any nation, Animoku, Haruna, and Attah (2016) emphasized that governments and individuals all over the world have established educational institutions to impart knowledge and skills to the populace. Animoku *et al.* (2016) further stressed that colleges of education are one of the tertiary institutions established to produce effective, competent, and dedicated teachers at both the primary and post-primary levels.

According to Animoku *et al*. (2016), the functions of the Colleges of Education as outlined in the Act that established them include: providing full-time courses for teaching instruction and training in technical, vocational, science, and the arts; conducting courses in education for qualified teachers; providing teachers with an intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment; and making them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of the college but also in the life of the university. According to Jamilah, Kabeer, and Jeffrey (2012), due to the role of education in transforming the fortune of a country, developing countries around the world are beginning to invest in their educational systems, including higher education. As such, Nigeria's quest to be among the top 20 economies in the world will not be achieved without a qualitative educational system that is effective in achieving the country's vision of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, in many countries of the world, including Nigeria, the goals of higher institutions of learning include contributing to national development through high-level manpower training, providing accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in

formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of Nigerians, providing high-quality career counseling and lifelong learning opportunities that prepare students with knowledge and skills for self-reliance, reducing skills shortages through the production of relevant skilled workers, promoting and encouraging scholarship, entrepreneurship, and community service, forging and cementing national unity, and promoting national and international understanding and interaction (Olatunji, 2018 cited in Lawal, Akinyemi & Gbenu, 2021).

Furthermore, Anyamele (2004) noted that these institutions produce new knowledge through research, serve as avenues for the transfer, adaptation, and dissemination of knowledge generated elsewhere in the world, and provide government and business with advice and consulting. In most countries, higher education institutions also play important social roles by forging national identity for the country and offering a forum for pluralistic debate. In order to carry out this important function, Nigerian colleges of education seem to be confronted with two challenges: one is getting committed employees, especially the academic staff; the other has to do with getting effective leaders that have the required skills for unleashing the potentials of the employees and, of course, the students.

A College of Education in Nigeria is headed by a Provost who is in charge of administrative tasks related to instructional management, internal relations, organisation management, administration, student performance, and school community relations toward achieving the College goals and objectives. She is also assisted by a number of functionaries for the day-to-day administration. These functionaries are the Deputy Provost, the Registrar, the Bursar, the College Librarians, the Directors of Academic Planning and Statistics, the Deans of Schools, the Heads of Departments, and the Heads of Units, who are charged with the general responsibility for matters relating to the administration of the college. They individually or collectively plan, direct, control, supervise, discipline, and evaluate the staff and programs of the college. These are groups of administrators who also carry out the administrative functions of the educational institution. As the Chief Executive of the College, the Provost is responsible for all that happens in the school. Yet, Oyedeji and Fasasi (2006) noted that the college's growth plan is directly related to the identification, attraction, development, and appointment of a performing provost. The position the provost occupies places him or her on a pedestal to coordinate the entire college's operations and move them forward. In the words of Adeniyi (2014), more importantly, it is the administrative responsibility of a college provost to strive to create a climate that will foster students' and staff's growth. As the head, the Provost needs to work with the staff, empower them, and get them involved in developing wholeness, connectedness at work, deeper values, initiative, and team spirit in a way that benefits the college as a whole.

The college administrator, otherwise known as the provost, needs to deliberately model a

positive climate in a college. The existence of quality relationships between the head and staff, among the staff, and between the staff and students reflects a positive climate (Taylor, 2002). Ribbins and Marland (2010) hold that the college leader is significant in determining the quality of an institution and the achievement of its students. Hoy and Sabo (2008) highlight various types of institutional climates: an institution may have an open climate, an autonomous climate, a controlled climate, a familiar climate, a paternalistic climate, or a closed climate. Thus, it can be assumed that the provost's demographic characteristics principally determine the kind of climate that prevails in the college. Ordinarily, the main task of the Provost is to help create a healthy working environment in which students are happy and prepared to learn and staff members identify with the college's mission and goals. Similarly, Gîrneață and Potcovaru (2015) averred that the provost as a result-based person should incorporate a number of factors, such as leadership qualities and characteristics, organisational culture, motivation systems, and others, such as hierarchical position, psychological and functional autonomy, information systems, and others. Therefore, the provost should know how to empower their subordinates to create skilled teams, which will result in increased organisational productivity at the college.

Meanwhile, organisational climate has everything to do with the atmosphere, tone, or feeling that prevails in a particular school or institution. It is brought about by the interaction between the school head and staff, among staff and students, and between the staff and students. The institution as a system of social interaction compels the institution head, staff, and students to interact at the administrative level in the areas of planning, decision-making, problem solving, and control. These personnel also interact through personal matters, which are part of normal school routine (Oyetunji, 2006).

According to Lojpur, Aleksi, Vlahovi, Peji, and Pekovi (2014), it was averred that different attributes and behaviours determine effective leadership and leadership style. Different theories and assumptions, based on personality, behaviourist, and contingency theories, also known as demographic characteristics, have been used by many scholars. Consequently, the demographic characteristics of the leader as a manager of an organisation or institution have received much attention among researchers (Adeyemi & Jimoh, 2014). According to Bell, Rvanniekerk, and Nel (2015), scholars have spent more than a century trying to comprehend the characteristics or demographic theory behind effective leadership due to their importance in predicting workers' behavioural outcomes such as efficiency (Shadare, 2011), effectiveness (Craven, 2006), and communication style (Gilley, 2009). With this in mind, it has been widely observed that male and female behaviour differs (Manning, 2002) or is similar (Barbuto et al., 2007). According to Kakabadse (1998) and Kabacoff and Stoffey (2001), the reasoning behind demographic theory is that demographic factors or traits such as age,

years of experience, level of education, tenure, occupation, gender, and ethnicity of the leader affect the working dynamics of the people, which influences organisational goals.

Greenberg (2004) therefore defines workplace demographic characteristics as the variety of differences between people in an organisation, including race, ethnic group, gender, age, education background, tenure, personality, cognitive style, and organisational function. Bell, cited in Thakur (2015), also defines demographic characteristics as personal statistics on information such as gender, age, education level, income level, marital status, occupation, religion, birth rate, death rate, average size of family, and average age at marriage. Fletchl (2010) points out that demographic characteristics have an influence on whether employees will be committed to their work or not. The author observes that how well the employee performs, how many years they are ready to dedicate to service, and how well they act in the best interest of the college objectives heavily depend on how much the organisation takes care of the needs that are related to their demographic characteristics. Thakur (2015) posits that diversity allows for increased creativity, a wider range of perspectives, better problem definition, more alternatives, and better solutions.

Christmann (2017) and Amparo *et al*. (2018) support this claim by defining "demographic characteristics" as attributes that describe the status of people or a person, such as age, gender, ethnicity, or income. Despite efforts made to ensure that female representation is achieved at all levels of governance, women are still underrepresented in many government and non-governmental organisations, particularly in positions of power and leadership (De la Rey, 2005). Gender inequality has existed and appeared to be widespread, even in developed countries. For instance, in education, out of 40,000 professors in higher education in the United Kingdom in 2003, 13% were female and 87% were male, while 73% of senior lecturers and researchers were male and 27% female (Gumbi, 2006). In Nigeria, out of 9,252 full professors in Nigerian higher educational institutions in 2017, 85% were male and 15% were female (National Universities Commission, 2018). Meanwhile, in 2019, the principal officers in universities in Nigeria were 17.2% female and 82.8% male (NUC, 2023). With the above-mentioned countries and many others, it is, therefore, clear that men dominate the governance and management levels of higher education. As a result, men wield decision-making power and authority over strategic direction and resource allocation.

According to Jackson (2003), there are many stereotypes in existence concerning the differences in abilities between men and women in many organisations. Andoh, Biako, and Afranie (2011) point out the importance of recognizing the observation that there are only a few gender-related differences that will affect the performance of men and women. It is observed that while women are good at obeying rules and following instructions, men, on the other hand, are more aggressive and aim to see

results quickly. However, the differences are minor and may not be universally accepted as an explanation for why men and women achieve different performance standards (Murray, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Colleges of Education in Nigeria, like other higher institutions of learning, are laden with a myriad of challenges that are either staff-related or student-related, all or some of which could stem from the provost's characteristics and traits. More so, subordinates' behaviour in terms of their environment and satisfaction in achieving organisational goals and objectives could be influenced by their perceptions of the authority, power, and influence applied by their heads and the climate condition of the organisation. It is then perceived that a provost with inappropriate traits can potentially lead to a non-conducive climate. Provosts that fail to establish an open and honest environment may create institutional climates that lack the strategic data conducive to taking proper risks and making proper decisions (Northouse, 2016).

However, according to Adeniyi (2014), some administrators of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, especially in the southwest, seem not to possess the required skills and personal attributes for school management, which has resulted in the prevailing administrative problems in some tertiary institutions in the region. This suggests that there is a link between demographic characteristics and the performance of heads of tertiary institutions. Based on this, it is necessary to determine the extent to which demographic characteristics of provosts influence the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria.

Thus, the primary goal of this research was to investigate how demographic factors such as provosts' age, gender, work experience, and educational qualification influence the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, it was the purpose of the study to determine to what extent demographic characteristics such as gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification of provosts influence the public college climate in Southwest, Nigeria; and find out which of the identified demographic characteristics has the greatest influence on the public colleges of education climate in Southwest, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship,
i. jointly and
ii. separately, between Provosts' demographic characteristics and Public Colleges of Education climate in Southwest, Nigeria.

Research Method

The research design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey to describe and establish the relationship between two or more variables. The demographic characteristics for the study included age, gender, educational qualification, and experience. These constituted the

independent variables, while the dependent variable was the colleges of education climate. The target population for this research consisted of all the provosts and staff members of the public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. As of the time of the study, there were a total of 11 public colleges of education (federal and state) in southwest Nigeria.

One college of education was chosen from each of the states in Southwest Nigeria, namely Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, and Ondo States, for a total of six colleges that were selected using purposive and simple random techniques, wherein three federal and three state colleges of education constituted the study sample. Furthermore, the members of staff selected for the study were drawn from both academic and non-teaching departments. A total of 300 staff were selected across the six colleges. For each college selected, a stratified sampling technique was used, wherein the staff were stratified into teaching and non-teaching departments. Having divided them into strata, 25 staff members were disproportionally selected from the teaching line across five departments, namely Education, Sciences, Arts, and Social Sciences, Vocational and Technical Education, and Languages, each with five participants, while 25 staff members were selected from the non-teaching line across five departments, namely Personnel, Academic Affairs, Staff Development, Student Affairs, and Bursary, each with five participants. There was a fairly equal selection of both sexes throughout.

The main instrument for data collection in this study was a developed questionnaire titled "Staff Questionnaire on Demographic Characteristics of Provosts and Institutional Climate (SQDCPIC)." The questionnaire has three sections. Section A consisted of demographic data of the respondents, while Section B contained demographic characteristics of the college provost, and Section C contained items on the institution's climate. The instrument (SQDCPOC) was a closed-format questionnaire with a four-point Likert type rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 point, respectively.

In order to catch any errors, some experts in the Department of Educational Management at Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria, carefully inspected each item of the instrument and commented on its suitability or lack thereof. The experts, for instance, corrected imprecise statements, incorrectly conceived ideas, missing information, and other discovered problems. A few things were changed, and occasionally new things were added. For face validity, the instrument was modified based on their feedback, recommendations, and changes before the final copy was created. After completing the aforementioned steps, all suggestions and changes from the experts were taken into account before creating the questionnaire's final draft. However, to ascertain the degree to which the questionnaire consistently measured what it was meant to measure, it was administered in two departments of the Federal College of Education, Akoka, Lagos State, which was not part of the institutions

that were sampled, using a total of 40 members of staff. Using the test-retest method, the questionnaire was administered twice within an interval of two weeks, and the scores obtained from the two sets of responses were correlated using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient analysis. The coefficient obtained was 0.743. Thus, the questionnaire was found to be substantially reliable.

The questionnaire items were classified, scored, and totalled according to the research hypothesis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the responses. Analysis of the data was conducted using Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) at the 0.05 level of significance with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 version.

Presentation of Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship

a. jointly, and

b. separately between Provosts' demographic characteristics and Public Colleges of Education climate in Southwest Nigeria.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis on the Joint Relationship between Provosts' Demographic Characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and Public Colleges of Education Climate in Southwest Nigeria

Tests	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.447	4	.112	.979	.419[b]
Residual	30.271	265	.114		
Total	30.719	269			

R= .121[a] R^2 = .015 Adj. R^2= 0.000312

a. Dependent Variable: Institutional climate

b. *b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age, Work experience, and Educational qualification*

Results in Table 1 show that there is no significant joint relationship between the provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria ($F_{(4, 265)}$ =.979; R^2 =.015; p =.419). Therefore, since the p-value of the F-ratio was not significant, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant joint relationship between the provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria, is not rejected. Gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification of provosts accounted for 1.5% of the total

variance in the public colleges of education climate (R^2 =.015). The outcome confirms Amachukwu and Obijuru's (2015) observation that the organisational atmosphere is favourably connected with both the provost's experience and educational background. The authors did note, however, that although age, attitudes, sex, and socio-economic status have been given some weight in some research, they have not always had cross-validity. Kurgat and Gordon (2008) came to the conclusion that there is only a weak correlation between provosts' age, educational background, and experience and academic success.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on the Separate Relationship between Provosts' Demographic Characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and Public Colleges of Education Climate in Southwest Nigeria

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Gender	-.086	.063	-.097	-1.368	.172
Age	.001	.04	.001	.016	.987
Work Experience	.014	.02	.047	.718	.474
Educational Qualification	.01	.044	.015	.238	.812

Results in Table 2 show that all of Provost's demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) are correlated variables, although none of them has a separate statistically significant relationship with the public college climate in Southwest Nigeria. Provosts' work experience was the best correlated variable (β =.047; t =.718; p =.474), followed by provosts' educational qualification (β =.015; t =.238; p =.812), age (β =.001; t =.016; p =.987), and gender (β =.097; t =.016; p =.987). The result is not in line with the findings of Northouse (2016), who emphasized that a provost's age is one of the most significant demographic factors associated with the provost's activity. The author reached the conclusion that a provost's efficacy and efficiency are not affected by his or her gender or age.

Discussion of Findings

The hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship, jointly and separately, between the provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the public college climate in Southwest Nigeria. The result of the hypothesis showed that there is no significant joint relationship between the demographic characteristics of provosts and

the public college climate in Southwest Nigeria (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification). As a result, the demographic characteristics of provosts, including their level of education, gender, and work experience, accounted for a reasonable variation in the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. This shows that the age, gender, educational qualification, and work experience of a provost did not jointly affect the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. The result of this study is supported by Van Vugt (2006), who emphasized that the age of a provost is of a complex nature and cannot be used as a yardstick to measure the relationship of provosts with organisational climate. A provost's educational background is a significant and reliable indicator of good leadership, according to Bell *et al*. (2015) and Sadeghi and Lope (2012). The authors also argued that by receiving the appropriate education and training, a provost can improve their style of administration and meet the objectives set by the college of education. This shows that in order to successfully lead their institutions, provosts of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria need to keep up with their knowledge and skills through further education, training, and seminars. While Raman, Mey, Don, Daud, and Khalid (2015) and Sawati, Anwar, and Majoka (2013) asserted that there is no correlation between provosts' demographic characteristics and their level of education, Kotur and Anbazhagan (2014) found a significant relationship, disproving the claim. In the same vein, Northouse (2016) stated that provost demographic characteristics are not defined by a person's gender but by their ability to influence others, to direct attention to common goals, and to promote success with groups. However, the scholar went further to state that there are some inherent traits that are indicative of all leaders, regardless of gender.

The second part of the hypothesis states there is no separate relationship between provosts' demographic characteristics (gender, age, work experience, and educational qualification) and the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. The finding revealed that all are correlated variables, but none of them separately have a statistically significant relationship with the workplace of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria, according to the hypothesis. The study went on to identify that provosts' work experience was the best-associated variable, followed closely by their educational backgrounds, among others. The study's findings agreed with those of Mayo (2011), who found a substantial correlation between the organisational climate of institutions of higher education in Southwest Nigeria and the provost's demographic characteristics, such as work experience, influencing the provost's performance. The finding, however, differed from one from Sharp (2009) that discovered detrimental effects of provost characteristics on the organisational atmosphere of colleges of education. The outcome is consistent with Khan's (2012) report, which discovered that the organisational climate of institutions of higher education in southwest Nigeria is influenced by the personality of the provost.

The results of Okorji, Igbokwe, and Ezeugbor (2016), which demonstrated a moderately positive association between Provost demographic features, organisational climate, and work performance, were corroborated by this information. This finding may be due to the fact that a positive organisational climate allows staff to use their initiative, creativity, and ideas when doing their tasks. Provosts who foster a positive workplace environment allow staff the freedom to carry out their responsibilities. As a result, staff with greater autonomy in how they carry out their duties are more innovative, devoted, loyal, and effective in their work. This is also consistent with the findings of Adejumobi and Ojikutu (2013), who found a substantial correlation between the organisational climate and the demographics of the provost. The findings' agreement is not surprising given that a positive corporate atmosphere enables staff to choose their own timetables and take initiative in carrying out their duties. Zacher et al. (2011), as well as Omari and Sharaah (2012), emphasized the link between age, maturity, and experience and organisational climate. In addition, Ng and Sears (2012) found that an individual's age may partly influence the organisational climate of colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. The scholar further stated that the importance of age as a factor influencing the organisational climate of colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria is a commonly held belief among the academic audience. In contrast to the above findings, the study by Liu and Zhang (2010) revealed that educational level, position, and length of time working had significant main effects on organisational climate; specialty, enterprise character, and enterprise size also had significant main effects on organisational climate.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, it has been determined that provosts' gender, age, work experience, and educational qualifications are not the major predictors of the climate of public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. Nonetheless, there is a weak relationship between the demographic characteristics of provosts and the climate of public colleges of education. Among the provosts' demographic variables considered in the study, work experience is the best predictor of the climate of public colleges of education in southwest Nigeria.

Recommendations

The researchers, having looked at the objectives and findings of the study, considered the following recommendations as desirable:

i. Personal characteristics such as gender and age should not necessarily be taken into account when selecting a provost for public colleges of education in southwest Nigeria, as these factors were found to have little bearing on the provost's performance in affecting the institutional climate favourably. However, while hiring, choosing, and appointing provosts for the public colleges of education, the government should, as a matter of policy, take into account the years of work experience of candidates and their educational qualifications in

terms of their knowledge and skills in managing educational institutions.

ii. The provost of colleges of education should develop a sense of shared interest and problems and a climate of mutual respect and understanding among members of staff in which each is willing to help and be helped by others.

iii. Intending provost of colleges of education should be appraised on the characteristics to determine their capabilities to manage educational institutions of such magnitude.

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