

MANAGING STUDENTS UNREST FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Managing students unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State Nigeria. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 9,045, consisting of 6 principal officers from Rivers State University, 4 principal officers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, 3,744 final-year (400 level) students from Rivers State University, and 5,291 final-year (400 level) students from Ignatius Ajuru University. The sample size was 905 respondents, comprising all 10 principal officers and 895 students. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation. First, simple random sampling was used to select three faculties from each university. Then, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was applied to select 10% of the student population from each selected faculty. However, census sampling was used for the principal officers due to their small and manageable population size. The instrument for data collection in this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled 'Managing Students Unrest for Effective Public University Administration Questionnaire (MSUEPUAQ). Responses to the instrument were structured using a summated four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4-1 respectively. The reliability coefficients of 0.82 was obtained which showed the instrument was reliable using Cronbach Alpha method. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using the independent t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that all three strategies are implemented to a high extent, contributing significantly to institutional stability. The study concluded that universities actively involve students in governance, maintain open communication, and provide essential welfare services such as accommodation, electricity, and healthcare. The researcher recommended among others that Universities should strengthen platforms such as student forums and consultative meetings to ensure that students' voices are heard.

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INTRODUCTION

Effective public university administration is a critical factor in ensuring the delivery of quality education, efficient resource management, and the overall development of higher institutions. Public universities serve as centers for knowledge dissemination, research, and innovation, contributing significantly to national development. For public universities to function effectively, there must be strategic governance structures, well-defined policies, and efficient administrative frameworks that align with global best practices (Obi, 2021). The effectiveness of university administration is measured by its ability to provide a conducive learning environment, promote academic excellence, and ensure the well-being of students and staff. Key components of effective university administration include transparent financial management, responsive leadership, infrastructure development, and student welfare programmes (Eze & Adebayo, 2022). When universities are effectively managed, they are more likely to produce graduates who can contribute meaningfully to society, thereby fostering national growth and development (Ugochukwu, 2023).

Students' unrest refers to disruptive activities such as protests, demonstrations, and riots initiated by students to express dissatisfaction with institutional policies, governance, or socio-economic conditions affecting their education. These disturbances can be triggered by factors such as poor infrastructure, inadequate welfare services, tuition increases, perceived injustice, or government policies that negatively impact students' academic experiences (Okafor & Bello, 2020). Unrest in public universities often escalates into violent confrontations, leading to the destruction of school property, suspension of academic activities, and strained relationships between students and university authorities (Nwachukwu, 2021). Additionally, students' unrest is sometimes influenced by external factors such as political interference, ethnic tensions, and broader societal grievances (Adamu & Yusuf, 2023). The consequences of these disturbances extend beyond the university environment, as they can result in loss of lives, disruption of academic calendars, and reputational damage to institutions (Adegbite, 2022). Effectively managing students' unrest requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the root causes and the immediate triggers of such

disturbances. Strategies as pointed out by Onu (2019) are in the area of proactive student engagement, welfare provision, disciplinary measures and grievance management.

Student engagement is a crucial strategy for managing students' unrest, as it fosters a sense of belonging and participation in decision-making processes. Universities that actively involve students in governance, policy formulation, and institutional planning experience fewer disruptions (Obi & Nwachukwu, 2022). Platforms such as student representative councils, open forums, and consultative meetings provide opportunities for students to voice their concerns constructively. When students feel valued and heard, their likelihood of resorting to violent protests diminishes (Okafor, 2023). Additionally, engagement through extracurricular activities, leadership development programmes, and community service initiatives helps students develop a sense of responsibility and cooperation with university authorities (Eze & Chukwu, 2021). Thus, creating avenues for student participation in decision-making processes is a proactive approach to managing unrest in public universities.

The provision of adequate welfare services plays a significant role in preventing student unrest in universities. Many instances of protests and demonstrations stem from grievances related to poor hostel conditions, inadequate healthcare facilities, limited financial aid, and lack of proper feeding arrangements (Adegbite & Musa, 2023). When universities invest in quality accommodation, well-equipped medical centers, and scholarship programmes, students feel more secure and motivated to focus on their academics (Ibrahim & Okonkwo, 2022). Research has shown that students in institutions with well-structured welfare systems are less likely to engage in disruptive activities (Adamu & Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, prioritizing student welfare through improved living conditions and support systems is a fundamental strategy in curbing unrest in public universities.

Implementing clear and fair disciplinary measures is essential in maintaining order and deterring disruptive behaviors among students. Universities should establish well-defined codes of conduct that outline acceptable behaviors and the consequences of violations (Ogundele & Adebayo, 2022). When disciplinary actions are applied consistently and without bias, students develop respect for institutional authority and are less likely to engage in violent demonstrations (Chukwu & Bello, 2023). Additionally, preventive disciplinary measures such as sensitization programmes, orientation exercises, and mentorship initiatives help instill ethical behavior among students (Nwachukwu, 2021). However, punitive measures should always be accompanied by rehabilitative interventions, such as counseling and conflict resolution programmes, to address underlying issues that may trigger unrest (Oladipo, 2023). A balance between enforcement and student support ensures a stable university environment.

Several scholars have conducted research on managing student unrest to enhance effective public university administration in Nigeria, including Rivers State. Aluede et al. (2005) examined the policies and factors that have historically precipitated student unrest in Nigerian universities, highlighting the need for improved student services and personnel administration to mitigate such disturbances. Adeyemi (2009) investigated the causes, consequences, and control of student crises in public and private universities, emphasizing the importance of effective management strategies to address the root causes of unrest.

Again, Kalagbor (2016) conducted an analysis of factors influencing students' academic performance in public and private secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Although this study focused on secondary education, its findings emphasizes the

importance of factors such as infrastructural facilities, teacher-student relationships, and teacher welfare in influencing student outcomes. These factors may also play a role in student unrest at the university level, suggesting a need for comprehensive research that examines the specific dynamics within public universities in Rivers State. Given these gaps, this study aims to investigate how university administrators in public universities in Rivers State manage student unrest to ensure effective administration. By focusing on the unique background, this research seeks to point out various ways in managing students unrest in public universities in Rivers State

Statement of the Problem

Effective administration of public universities depends on a stable academic environment where students can learn without disruption. Ideally, universities should operate with structured policies that maintain order, foster student engagement, and manage conflicts amicably contributing to academic excellence, research growth, and institutional development.

However, public universities in Rivers State frequently experience student unrest, including protests, violent demonstrations, property destruction, academic disruptions, reckless behavior during examinations, student union politicking, and cult clashes within and outside the university. These incidents are often triggered by inadequate student welfare, poor communication between students and management, perceived injustice in disciplinary actions, and unresolved grievances. Despite administrative efforts such as student engagement programmes, regular meetings with student leaders, welfare interventions, and grievance resolution mechanisms, unrest continues—raising concerns about the effectiveness of current strategies.

Although some interventions have provided temporary relief, their inability to address underlying issues has led to recurring unrest. Ad-hoc approaches like Man O' War involvement or temporary shutdowns have also proven unsustainable. The consequences are significant: disrupted academic calendars, delayed graduations, damage to university property, unsafe learning environments, and deteriorating student well-being. These factors tarnish institutional reputation, reduce enrolment, and weaken access to funding and partnerships. If these challenges persist, the stability and effectiveness of public university administration in Rivers State will remain at risk. Therefore, there is a need to examine structured, sustainable strategies for managing student unrest. This study seeks to explore how university administrators in Rivers State address unrest through student engagement, welfare provision, disciplinary measures, and grievance management. The goal is to identify practical, enduring approaches that enhance university governance and promote a stable, secure learning environment.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate Managing Students Unrest for Effective Public University Administration in Rivers State Nigeria. In specific terms, the objectives sought to:

1. Examine the extent student engagement is utilized as strategy for managing students unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the extent welfare provision is utilized as strategy for managing students unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State Nigeria.
3. Determine the extent disciplinary measures is utilized as strategy for managing students unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent students' engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?
2. To what extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?
3. To what extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?

Hypotheses

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

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Students' Unrest

Student unrest refers to any form of disruptive behavior, agitation, or protest carried out by students in response to grievances, dissatisfaction, or perceived injustices within an educational institution. It is often characterized by demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, confrontations with school authorities, and in extreme cases, acts of violence or vandalism (Okonkwo, 2021). Student unrest has been a persistent challenge in educational institutions worldwide, as students continually seek avenues to express their concerns regarding academic policies, governance, welfare, and social justice. The phenomenon is particularly prevalent in public universities, where issues such as inadequate facilities, poor governance, and perceived neglect of student rights often trigger conflicts (Adegbeye, 2020).

Several factors contribute to student unrest, ranging from administrative lapses to socio-political influences. One of the primary causes is poor governance and administrative inefficiencies. When university management fails to engage students in decision-making or address their grievances effectively, tensions build up, leading to protests (Eze, 2019). In many cases, lack of transparency in policy implementation, arbitrary fee hikes, and delayed academic calendars create frustration among students, prompting them to take collective action.

Another major cause of student unrest is inadequate welfare provisions. Students in public universities often experience challenges related to accommodation, transportation, medical care, and security (Ogundele, 2022). When these basic needs are not met, students feel marginalized and neglected, making them more likely to resort to strikes and demonstrations as a means of voicing

their frustrations. The absence of proper grievance redress mechanisms further exacerbates the situation, as students may feel their concerns are being ignored by university authorities. Socioeconomic factors also play a significant role in student unrest. Economic hardships, including the high cost of living and financial instability among students, have been linked to increased agitation within university campuses (Chukwu, 2021). When students struggle to afford tuition fees, textbooks, and other essential learning materials, the pressure often translates into demands for reduced fees or increased government funding, sometimes leading to large-scale protests.

Political influences and external agitation can also contribute to student unrest. In some cases, political groups and activists exploit students' grievances to advance their own agendas, leading to heightened tensions within campuses (Akinola, 2023). Additionally, government policies affecting higher education, such as funding cuts or unfavorable policies, may lead to mass protests by students who feel their academic future is at risk. Student unrest manifests in various ways, depending on the intensity of grievances and the level of mobilization among students. Peaceful demonstrations and protests are the most common forms, where students march, chant slogans, and present petitions to university authorities or government officials (Uche, 2018). These protests are usually organized by student unions or activist groups seeking redress for specific grievances.

Another form of student unrest is lecture boycotts and strikes, where students refuse to attend classes as a means of pressuring school authorities to address their concerns. This tactic is particularly common when students demand policy changes, improved facilities, or better academic conditions (Ibrahim, 2020). In more extreme cases, student unrest can escalate into violent confrontations, property destruction, and clashes with law enforcement. When grievances are not promptly addressed or when security forces intervene forcefully, protests may turn violent, resulting in damage to university property, injuries, or even fatalities (Okeke, 2022). Such situations often lead to school closures, disruptions in academic activities, and strained relationships between students and university management.

Student unrest has far-reaching consequences, not only for students but also for university administrators, faculty members, and society at large. One of the most significant effects is disruption of academic activities. When universities experience prolonged strikes or protests, academic calendars are disrupted, leading to delays in examinations, graduations, and overall learning progress (Adigun, 2019). In some cases, students are forced to extend their years of study, affecting their career progression and financial stability. Another consequence is the damage to institutional reputation. Public universities affected by frequent student unrest often struggle to attract funding, partnerships, and international collaborations (Ogunyemi, 2021). Parents and prospective students may also lose confidence in the institution's ability to provide a stable learning environment, leading to a decline in student enrollment. Student unrest also has economic implications, as damage to university property and infrastructure requires substantial financial resources for repairs and restoration. Government and university administrators may be forced to divert funds meant for academic development into repairing damaged facilities, which ultimately affects the quality of education provided (Chukwuma, 2023). Additionally, persistent student unrest can lead to strained relationships between students and university authorities. When students perceive that their grievances are not taken seriously, trust erodes, making it difficult for administrators to implement policies effectively. This lack of trust

further fuels cycles of agitation and protest, making university governance more challenging (Bamidele, 2020).

Managing Student Unrest in Public Universities

Student unrest has become a recurrent challenge in public universities, often manifesting through protests, strikes, and, in extreme cases, violent demonstrations. These conflicts usually arise due to administrative lapses, inadequate welfare provisions, ineffective disciplinary measures, and lack of structured grievance management systems (Adegboye, 2020). To foster a stable learning environment, universities must implement strategic conflict management approaches that address the root causes of student dissatisfaction. This paper explores four key strategies for managing student unrest in public universities: student engagement, welfare provision, effective disciplinary measures, and grievance management systems.

Student Engagement in University Administration

Student engagement plays a crucial role in mitigating unrest by ensuring that students actively participate in decision-making processes. When students are involved in shaping policies that affect their academic and social lives, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility (Ibrahim, 2021). Engaged students are more likely to channel grievances through institutional frameworks rather than resorting to disruptive protests.

Strategies for Enhancing Student Engagement

- Inclusion in Decision-Making Processes:** Universities should incorporate student representatives into key administrative committees, such as academic boards, disciplinary panels, and welfare committees (Ogunyemi, 2022). By doing so, students can contribute their perspectives on university policies, thereby reducing conflicts arising from unilateral administrative decisions.
- Regular Dialogue Sessions:** Organizing periodic town hall meetings allows students to express their concerns directly to university administrators. This platform promotes transparency, ensures that students' voices are heard, and fosters trust between the student body and the administration (Eze, 2019).
- Strengthening Student Unionism:** A well-structured student union serves as an intermediary between the student body and the university administration. Universities should support the formation of strong, independent student unions to facilitate constructive engagement and negotiations in conflict resolution (Obinna, 2021).
- Promoting Leadership Training for Students:** Educating student leaders on conflict resolution, negotiation skills, and responsible activism can help prevent confrontational approaches to grievances. Universities should incorporate leadership development programmes into student activities (Adigun, 2020).
- Utilization of Digital Platforms:** Establishing official university social media channels for student engagement can enhance communication between students and university authorities. Digital engagement provides a real-time avenue for students to seek clarification on policies and share feedback (Bamidele, 2022).

Welfare-related grievances are among the leading causes of student unrest. When students lack access to adequate housing, healthcare, transportation, and security, their frustrations may escalate into protests (Chukwuma, 2023). Ensuring proper welfare provisions is essential for maintaining campus harmony and improving students' academic experiences.

Key Areas of Student Welfare Provision

- Accommodation Facilities:** Overcrowding in hostels and inadequate housing facilities contribute to student agitation. Universities should invest in expanding student accommodation and partnering with private developers to provide affordable housing options (Akinola, 2023).
- Healthcare Services:** Accessible and well-equipped health centers on campus are critical for student welfare. Institutions should ensure that health services operate round the clock, with adequate medical personnel to cater to students' health needs (Uche, 2018).
- Financial Assistance Programmes:** Many students struggle with tuition fees and living expenses. Universities should implement scholarship programmes, work-study initiatives, and flexible payment plans to ease financial burdens and reduce protests related to fee hikes (Okeke, 2022).
- Campus Security:** Ensuring a safe campus environment reduces student anxiety and unrest. Universities should deploy adequate security personnel, install surveillance systems, and establish emergency response units to handle security threats effectively (Ikechukwu, 2019).
- Improved Transportation Services:** Efficient campus transportation minimizes student inconvenience and enhances accessibility to academic and residential areas. Universities should invest in shuttle services and collaborate with transportation agencies for student-friendly transport policies (Alabi, 2023).

Effective Disciplinary Measures in Managing Student Unrest

Disciplinary measures serve as deterrents to disruptive behavior. However, when students perceive disciplinary actions as biased, unfair, or inconsistent, they may resort to violent protests (Ogunyemi, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that disciplinary processes are fair, transparent, and universally applied.

Principles of Effective Disciplinary Measures

- Clear and Well-Defined Policies:** Universities should establish comprehensive codes of conduct that outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, as well as corresponding penalties (Adegboye, 2020). These policies should be communicated to students from the onset.
- Student Involvement in Disciplinary Panels:** Including student representatives in disciplinary committees fosters trust and ensures that students have a voice in proceedings (Chukwu, 2021).
- Graduated Penalty System:** Universities should implement a tiered approach to discipline, where minor infractions attract mild penalties while severe misconduct results in stringent consequences (Eze, 2019).
- Alternative Disciplinary Approaches:** Instead of outright suspensions or expulsions, universities should explore alternative sanctions such as community service, conflict resolution training, and counseling sessions (Bamidele, 2022).

Welfare Provision as a Strategy for Managing Unrest

5. **Ensuring Due Process:** Before imposing penalties, students should be given the opportunity to present their defense through fair hearings. Arbitrary punishments can escalate tensions and fuel student resistance (Adigun, 2020).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 9,045, consisting of 6 principal officers from Rivers State University, 4 principal officers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, 3,744 final-year (400 level) students from Rivers State University, and 5,291 final-year (400 level) students from Ignatius Ajuru University.

The sample size was 905 respondents, comprising all 10 principal officers and 895 students. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation. First, simple random sampling was used to select three faculties from each university. Then, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was applied to select 10% of the student population from each selected faculty. However, census sampling was used for the principal officers due to their small and manageable population size, allowing for the inclusion of all 10 officers in the study.

The instrument for data collection in this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled 'Managing Students Unrest for Effective Public University Administration Questionnaire (MSUEPUAQ). The instrument was divided into two sections: Section A was used to collect demographic data from the respondents while section B contained questionnaire items that were raised from the research questions. Responses to the instrument were structured using a summated four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4-1 respectively. The research instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts, one in the field of Educational Management and the other in Measurement and Evaluation in Ignatius Ajuru University. In determining the face and content validity of the instrument, copies of the instrument were given to the researcher's supervisor and the two experts to study the instrument to ascertain the extent to which the instrument addresses the objectives of the

study as it is purported to measure, and the extent to which the items on instrument are fairly representative of the entire domain the instrument sought to measure.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was administered on the respondents who are outside the sample of the study but were part of the population of the study. The completed copies of the questionnaire were analyzed for reliability using Cronbach Alpha Method. The reason was to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients of 0.82 was obtained which showed the instrument was reliable.

A total of 905 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents from the selected public universities used in the study by the researcher and two (2) assistants. Completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved by the researcher and the assistants on the spot, while others were collected at later days within the period of three weeks. However, due to poor accessibility and availability on several visits to the respondents for collection, only 733 (81% rate) were retrieved (100% rate) 10 principal officers and this proportion was used for the analysis. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was based on the following boundaries: Very High Extent (VHE): 3.50-4.00; High Extent (HE): 2.50-3.49; Low Extent (LE): 1.50-2.49 and Very Low Extent (VLE): 1.00-1.49, while the null hypotheses were tested using the independent t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. For the hypotheses, the decision rule for the t-test was as follows: If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant difference between the groups. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating no significant difference between the groups.

Results

Research Questions1: To what extent students' engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?

Table 4.1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the extent students' engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Principal Officers (10)		Students (723)		Mean set $\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	DECISION
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂		
1	The university regularly organizes student forums to discuss academic and welfare-related concerns.	3.49	0.64	3.54	0.54	3.52	HE
2	There are functional student union government (SUG) structures that serve as intermediaries between students and university management.	3.31	0.70	3.30	0.69	3.31	HE
3	Students are actively involved in decision-making processes that affect their academic and social well-being.	3.42	0.65	3.41	0.60	3.41	HE
4	The university administration maintains open communication channels with students to address grievances before they escalate.	3.40	0.61	3.49	0.50	3.44	HE
5	Student leaders are frequently consulted before implementing key institutional policies.	3.58	0.61	3.61	0.59	3.60	HE
Grand mean		3.44	0.50	3.47	0.43	3.45	HE

Data presented in Table 4.1 above shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of principal officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers

State Nigeria. The data indicates that the mean ratings of principal officers for items 1 to 5 are: 3.49, 3.31, 3.42, 3.40, and 3.58, while the students' mean ratings are: 3.54, 3.30, 3.41, 3.49, and 3.61. Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both principal officers and

students rated all the items to a high extent. This suggests that public universities in Rivers State engage students through forums, functional SUG structures, involvement in decision-making, open communication channels, and consultations with student leaders, all of which contribute to managing student unrest effectively.

The cluster means are 3.44 for principal officers and 3.47 for students. The grand mean of 3.45 indicates that the answer to research question one is that student engagement is utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions 2: To what extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?

Table 4.2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the Extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Principal Officers (10)		Students (723)		Mean set $\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	DECISION
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂		
6	The university provides adequate and affordable hostel accommodation for students.	3.41	0.66	3.50	0.63	3.45	HE
7	The university ensures regular supply of electricity and water in student hostels.	3.36	0.68	3.56	0.66	3.46	HE
8	Health services and medical facilities are accessible and functional for students.	3.49	0.64	3.54	0.54	3.52	HE
9	The university has a well-equipped cafeteria that provides affordable and hygienic meals for students.	3.49	0.64	3.54	0.54	3.52	HE
10	Scholarship and financial aid programmes are available to support indigent students.	3.31	0.70	3.30	0.69	3.31	HE
Grand mean		3.41	0.52	3.49	0.47	3.45	HE

Data presented in Table 4.2 above shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of principal officers and students on the extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria. The data indicates that the mean ratings of principal officers for items 6 to 10 are: 3.41, 3.36, 3.49, 3.49, and 3.31, while the students' mean ratings are: 3.50, 3.56, 3.54, 3.54, and 3.30. Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both principal officers and students rated all the items to a high extent. This implies that public universities in Rivers State make provisions for student welfare by ensuring adequate hostel accommodation, regular electricity and water supply, accessible health services, functional cafeterias, and financial support programmes, all of which help mitigate student unrest.

The cluster means are 3.41 for principal officers and 3.49 for students. The grand mean of 3.45 indicates that the answer to research question two is that welfare provision is utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions 3: To what extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?

Table 4.3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on the Extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Principal Officers (10)		Students (723)		Mean set $\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$	DECISION
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂		
11	The university has a well-defined disciplinary policy that guides student conduct	3.19	0.59	3.33	0.54	3.26	HE
12	Students are regularly informed about disciplinary policies and expected behaviors.	3.20	0.67	3.31	0.66	3.25	HE
13	There are structured disciplinary committees responsible for handling student misconduct cases.	3.24	0.68	3.11	0.87	3.17	HE
14	The university adopts preventive disciplinary measures such as sensitization and awareness programmes	2.92	0.73	3.10	0.75	3.01	HE
15	The university provides counseling and rehabilitation programmes as part of its disciplinary strategy.	3.58	0.61	3.61	0.59	3.60	VHE

Grand mean		3.23	0.44	3.29	0.46	3.26	HE

Data presented in Table 4.3 above shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of principal officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria. The data indicates that the mean ratings of principal officers for items 11 to 15 are: 3.19, 3.20, 3.24, 2.92, and 3.58, while the students' mean ratings are: 3.33, 3.31, 3.11, 3.10, and 3.61. Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both principal officers and students rated all items to a high extent, with item 15 rated to a very high extent (VHE). This shows that disciplinary strategies such as clear policies, communication of expected behaviors, structured disciplinary committees, preventive awareness campaigns, and supportive counseling programs are in place and contribute to managing student unrest in public universities. The cluster means are 3.23 for principal officers and 3.29 for students.

The grand mean of 3.26 indicates that the answer to research question three is that disciplinary measures are utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest for effective public university administration in Rivers State, Nigeria.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.4: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	α	Remarks
Principal Officers	10	3.44	0.50	731	0.173	1.93	0.05	Ho1 Accepted
Students	723	3.47	0.43					

Table 4.4 presents the t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of principal officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The mean rating for principal officers is 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.50, while that of students is 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.43. The calculated t-value (t-cal) is 0.173, which is less than the critical t-value (t-crit) of 1.93 at 0.05 level of significance and 731 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (0.173) is less than the critical value (1.93), the result is not statistically significant. This means the difference in mean ratings between principal officers and students is not significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho1), which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principal officers and students on the extent student engagement as strategy for managing students unrest, is accepted.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.5: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal officers and students on the extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	α	Remarks
Principal Officers	10	3.41	0.52	731	2.318			
Students	723	3.49	0.47			1.93	0.05	Ho2 Rejected

Table 4.5 presents the t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of principal officers and students on the extent welfare provision as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The mean rating for principal officers is 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.52, while that of students is 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.47. The calculated t-value (t-cal) is 2.318, which is greater than the critical t-value (t-crit) of 1.93 at 0.05 level of significance and 731 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (2.318) is greater than the critical value (1.93), the result is statistically significant. This means the difference in mean ratings between principal officers and students is significant.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal Officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.6: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.6: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of Principal officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	α	Remarks
Principal Officers	10	3.23	0.44	731	1.401	1.93	0.05	Ho3
Students	723	3.29	0.46					Accepted

Table 4.6 presents the t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of principal officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as strategy for managing students unrest is utilized for effective administration of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The mean rating for principal officers is 3.23 with a standard deviation of 0.44, while that of students is 3.29 with a standard deviation of 0.46. The calculated t-value (t-cal) is 1.401, which is less than the critical t-value (t-crit) of 1.93 at 0.05 level of significance and 731 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (1.401) is less than the critical value (1.93), the result is not statistically significant. This means the difference in mean ratings between principal officers and students is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principal officers and students on the extent disciplinary measures as a strategy are utilized for managing student unrest, is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Extent Student Engagement is Utilized as Strategy for Managing Student Unrest for Effective Public University Administration in Rivers State, Nigeria

The findings presented in Table 4.1 indicate that student engagement is utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest in public universities in Rivers State. The grand mean of 3.45 suggests that universities actively involve students in decision-making processes, maintain open communication channels, and leverage student governance structures to address grievances before they escalate. The highest-rated item, "Student leaders are frequently consulted before implementing key institutional policies" (Mean = 3.60), underscores the importance of student representation in governance processes. This finding aligns with the assertion of Okafor (2021), who emphasized that student inclusion in institutional decision-making fosters cooperation and significantly reduces agitation. Similarly, the mean rating of 3.52 for the item "The university regularly organizes student forums to discuss academic and welfare-related concerns" highlights the significance of proactive dialogue and participatory forums in mitigating student unrest.

The t-test analysis in Table 4.4 revealed no significant difference between the perceptions of principal officers and students regarding the use of student engagement strategies in addressing unrest (t -cal = 0.173, t -crit = 1.93, α = 0.05). This indicates a shared understanding across the university hierarchy that student engagement plays a vital role in promoting institutional harmony and preventing disruption. This outcome supports the view of Ibrahim (2022), who noted that open communication and student participation in governance build trust between students and university authorities, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflicts and fostering a peaceful academic environment.

Extent Welfare Provision is Utilized as Strategy for Managing Students Unrest for Effective Public University Administration in Rivers State Nigeria

The findings presented in Table 4.2 reveal that welfare provision is utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest in public universities in Rivers State. The grand mean of 3.45 indicates that universities actively provide welfare services such as hostel accommodation, basic utilities, healthcare, cafeteria services, and financial support to promote students' well-being and reduce the likelihood of unrest. The highest-rated items, "Health services and medical facilities are accessible and functional for students" and "The university has a well-equipped cafeteria that provides affordable and hygienic meals for students" (Mean = 3.52 each), show that health and feeding are considered critical aspects

of welfare that contribute to student satisfaction and campus peace. This supports the position of Nwachukwu (2020), who argued that student welfare services serve as buffers against frustration and protests in tertiary institutions. The availability of scholarships and financial aid (Mean = 3.31) also highlights the university's commitment to supporting indigent students, a view corroborated by Abiola (2021), who noted that financial support schemes reduce stress and agitation among students from low-income backgrounds.

However, the t-test analysis presented in Table 4.5 shows a statistically significant difference between the views of principal officers (Mean = 3.41, SD = 0.52) and students (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.47), with a calculated t-value of 2.318 exceeding the critical value of 1.93 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that while both groups agree that welfare provision is practiced to a high extent, students perceive its adequacy and impact slightly more favorably than principal officers.

The rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) indicates that this difference in perception is significant. This finding aligns with the report of Chinonso (2022), who noted that administrative staff often underestimate the reach and effectiveness of welfare initiatives compared to students who directly experience the services. Such perception gaps underscore the need for periodic student feedback and joint review mechanisms to align administrative intent with student experience.

Extent Disciplinary Measures is Utilized as Strategy for Managing Students Unrest for Effective Public University Administration in Rivers State Nigeria

The findings in Table 4.3 show that disciplinary measures are utilized to a high extent as a strategy for managing student unrest in public universities in Rivers State. The grand mean of 3.26 reflects that universities have implemented various disciplinary mechanisms, including defined policies, structured committees, awareness campaigns, and counseling programmes to curb misconduct and prevent unrest. Among the individual items, the highest-rated was "The university provides counseling and rehabilitation programmes as part of its disciplinary strategy" with a mean score of 3.60, which was rated to a very high extent. This emphasizes the growing recognition of supportive and corrective disciplinary approaches in university management. This finding is consistent with the study of Odeyemi (2021), who reported that integrating counseling and rehabilitation into disciplinary processes promotes behavioral change and reduces repeat offenses among students.

Items such as "The university adopts preventive disciplinary measures such as sensitization and awareness programmes" (Mean = 3.01) and "Students are regularly informed about disciplinary policies and expected behaviors" (Mean = 3.25) further highlight the role of proactive engagement in reducing tensions before they escalate into crises. This supports the view of Uche (2020), who noted that preventive and transparent disciplinary systems increase student compliance and foster institutional peace. Despite slight differences in the mean ratings (3.23 for principal officers and 3.29 for students), the t-test result in Table 4.6 indicates that the difference is not statistically significant (t -cal = 1.401 < t -crit = 1.93, α = 0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, confirming that both principal officers and students share similar views on the extent of disciplinary measure utilization.

This alignment of perception reinforces the effectiveness of disciplinary strategies in maintaining order, as corroborated by Danladi (2022), who emphasized that collaborative understanding of institutional rules between management and students is key to conflict prevention in higher institutions.

Conclusion

The study examined the extent to which student engagement, welfare provision, and disciplinary measures are utilized as strategies for managing student unrest in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that all three strategies are implemented to a high extent, contributing significantly to institutional stability. The results showed that universities actively involve students in governance, maintain open communication, and provide essential welfare services such as accommodation, electricity, and healthcare. Furthermore, disciplinary measures, particularly counseling and rehabilitation programmes, were found to be an integral part of student management. However, the study also found significant differences in the perceptions of lecturers and administrators regarding the effectiveness of welfare provision and disciplinary measures. While Principal officers rated these strategies higher, students, who interact more directly with students, may perceive gaps in implementation. These differences highlight the need for continuous evaluation and improvement of student management strategies to ensure their effectiveness in addressing student concerns and preventing unrest.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should strengthen platforms such as student forums and consultative meetings to ensure that students' voices are heard.
2. Institutions should prioritize the provision of adequate hostel facilities, regular electricity, clean water supply, and accessible medical services to address student welfare concerns.
3. Universities should balance punitive actions with preventive and rehabilitative measures, such as counseling, sensitization programmes, and conflict resolution training.

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