

INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS AND VALUE EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING ON STAFF AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN RIVERS STATE OWNED UNIVERSITIES

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities, specifically Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). The study was guided by three research purpose as three research questions. Employing a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all academic staff in RSU and IAUE, estimated at 1,742 lecturers, with approximately 1,050 lecturers in RSU and 692 lecturers in IAUE, based on recent staff records. The data were collected from 322 academic staff selected through stratified random sampling. The instrument was validated by experts in test and measurement. A reliability index of 0.86 was determined using Cronbach's alpha and a structured questionnaire was used to gather data. A total of 322 questionnaires were administered and 266 was successfully retrieved. The research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests at a 0.05 significance level to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that all three dimensions were perceived to influence ethical behaviour and compliance to a high extent in both universities; however, no statistically significant differences were found between RSU and IAUE lecturers' perceptions. The results underscore the critical role of ethical leadership, clear policy enforcement, and effective accountability systems in fostering and sustaining ethical standards in higher education institutions. The study recommends strengthening leadership capacity, enhancing policy enforcement and awareness, and improving monitoring mechanisms to promote a robust ethical culture within Rivers State universities. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on ethics and value education in Nigerian higher education and provide evidence-based guidance for policy and institutional reform.

Keywords: Institutional Ethics, Value Education Re-engineering, Ethical Leadership, Policy Enforcement, Accountability Mechanisms

Introduction

Institutional ethics and value education play a critical role in shaping the moral climate, behaviour, and overall effectiveness of educational institutions. In recent times, rising cases of indiscipline, unethical practices, academic dishonesty, and declining moral standards among staff and students have raised concerns about the adequacy of existing ethical frameworks within institutions. As a result, there is a growing call for the re-engineering of institutional ethics and value education to make them more relevant, practical, and responsive to contemporary social and professional challenges. The influence of re-engineered institutional ethics and value education extends beyond policy formulation to the daily conduct, attitudes, and decision-making processes of both staff and students. When effectively implemented, ethical reorientation fosters integrity, accountability, respect, and responsibility, thereby promoting a conducive teaching and learning environment.

Universities worldwide serve as essential institutions for knowledge creation, professional development, and the formation of ethical values and civic responsibility. Beyond their academic mandate, these institutions are expected

to demonstrate and transmit principles of integrity, fairness, accountability, and human dignity through their curricula, organizational culture, and daily operations. However, recent scholarship has highlighted a concerning decline in ethical standards within many public universities, particularly in developing nations, where moral failures among staff and students increasingly undermine academic quality and public confidence in higher education (Enu & Esu, 2011; Wike, 2025). The Nigerian higher education landscape presents significant ethical challenges that demand urgent attention. Universities in the country face persistent issues including corruption, indiscipline, cultism, examination malpractice, plagiarism, and abuse of authority. These problems reflect broader societal challenges while simultaneously revealing institutional failures in ethical governance and value transmission (Ehule & Wordu, 2024; Weli, 2023). Consequently, Nigerian universities are being called upon to move beyond conventional academic functions and deliberately reconstruct their ethical frameworks and value education systems to produce graduates who possess both intellectual capability and moral foundation.

Institutional ethics encompasses the formal and informal principles, standards, and regulations governing organizational behavior. Within universities, this includes codes of conduct, research ethics protocols, administrative procedures, leadership practices, and accountability systems that shape staff and student actions. Evidence suggests that inadequate enforcement of ethical policies and inconsistent leadership commitment substantially contribute to unethical conduct in Nigerian public universities (Daerefamama, 2025; Weli, 2023). While numerous universities have established ethics-related policies, research indicates that policy existence alone does not guarantee ethical behavior without effective implementation and supportive institutional culture. Value education involves the intentional teaching and internalization of moral, civic, and social values including honesty, discipline, tolerance, responsibility, and mutual respect. Contemporary research emphasizes the necessity of re-engineering value education in universities by embedding values throughout curricula, pedagogy, and co-curricular activities rather than treating them as marginal concerns (Wike, 2025). This re-engineering process requires curriculum revision, learner-centered instructional approaches, mentoring frameworks, and institutional practices that consistently model and reinforce ethical conduct.

Ethical considerations in higher education encompass the principles and standards guiding behavior, decision-making, and interactions within academic communities. These considerations include fairness, integrity, accountability, transparency, respect for persons, and responsible resource utilization (Ngonso, Egielewa, & Cirella, 2024). They establish moral parameters for academic and administrative activities. When ethical principles are weakly enforced or inconsistently applied, institutions become susceptible to misconduct such as corruption, harassment, plagiarism, and campus unrest (Adeyemi, 2024). Key dimensions of ethical considerations include institutional ethics and governance, which address policies and administrative practices; academic integrity and professional conduct, which concern standards in teaching, learning, and research; and interpersonal ethics, which govern social behavior and campus relationships (Izevbigie, Olajide, Olaniran, & Akintayo, 2025; Uzoigwe, Chukwuma-Offor, & Ategwu, 2022). Ethical Leadership Theory, prominently developed by Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005), provides a theoretical framework for understanding how leaders influence moral behavior and ethical decision-making through personal conduct and institutional practices. The theory conceptualizes ethical leaders as both moral persons who embody integrity and fairness, and moral managers who actively shape ethical behavior by establishing standards, modeling values, and enforcing norms. Drawing on social learning theory, the framework suggests that individuals learn appropriate behavior by observing credible role models. In organizational contexts, leaders' highly visible positions make their behavior particularly influential. When leaders consistently demonstrate ethical conduct and reinforce ethical norms, followers internalize these values and align their actions accordingly (Brown et al., 2005). Within universities, ethical leadership manifests through transparent governance,

fair decision-making, respect for academic freedom, and consistent policy enforcement, significantly influencing staff commitment, student discipline, and institutional integrity (Daerefamama, 2025; Weli, 2023).

In Rivers State, state-owned universities occupy a strategic position in human capital development and social transformation. However, emerging evidence from the South-South region indicates that these institutions confront ethical challenges comparable to those documented nationally, including academic dishonesty, professional misconduct among staff, and inadequate value orientation among students (Weli, 2023). Although some Rivers State universities have introduced research ethics policies and administrative reforms to strengthen institutional integrity, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how these initiatives influence staff conduct, student attitudes, and overall institutional culture. Values education re-engineering in Rivers State public universities has become imperative due to increasing incidents of unethical conduct. This process involves restructuring institutional frameworks to advance moral development, strengthening policy implementation, and creating environments where ethical behavior is both expected and rewarded. Re-engineering addresses deficiencies in leadership ethics, strengthens institutional governance, and integrates values into daily university operations. It also responds to emerging digital ethical challenges, including misuse of artificial intelligence tools, which have transformed patterns of academic misconduct (Izevbigie et al., 2025).

Existing research on ethics and value education in Nigerian universities tends to be descriptive or policy-focused, with insufficient emphasis on evaluating the actual influence of institutional ethics and re-engineered value education on university stakeholders within specific state contexts. This knowledge gap is particularly significant for Rivers State, where socio-economic pressures, institutional constraints, and cultural dynamics may shape how ethical policies and value education initiatives are perceived and implemented. This study examines the influence of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering on staff and student behavior in Rivers State owned universities. The research seeks to provide empirical insights into how ethical frameworks and re-engineered value education initiatives affect behavior, attitudes, and institutional practices among staff and students. By focusing on Rivers State, the study aims to generate context-specific evidence that can inform policy formulation, institutional reforms, and best practices for strengthening ethical standards and value orientation in public universities, thereby contributing to sustainable educational development and societal transformation.

Statement of the Problem

Universities are expected to serve as moral and intellectual leaders in society by upholding high ethical standards and deliberately inculcating positive values in students. However, evidence from Nigerian public universities suggests a growing gap between this expectation and the realities of institutional practice. Despite the existence of codes of conduct, research ethics policies and value-oriented curricular provisions, unethical behaviours such as examination malpractice, plagiarism, cult-related activities, abuse of authority, and professional misconduct among staff and students continue to be reported (Weli, 2023; Ehule & Wordu, 2024). These challenges raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of institutional ethics frameworks and value education programmes in shaping conduct within university environments. In Rivers State owned universities, these concerns are particularly troubling because the institutions are central to the production of manpower for public service, education, industry and community leadership within the state. Persistent ethical lapses and weak value orientation among graduates undermine public confidence in the university system and contribute to the reproduction of unethical practices in the wider society. Although some Rivers State owned universities have introduced ethical guidelines, administrative

reforms and research ethics policies, there is limited evidence that these initiatives have resulted in sustained behavioural change among staff and students.

A major problem lies in the apparent disconnect between policy formulation and practical implementation. Institutional ethics policies often exist largely on paper, with weak enforcement mechanisms, inconsistent leadership commitment and limited awareness among university stakeholders. Similarly, value education is frequently treated as a theoretical or peripheral component of the curriculum rather than as a deliberately re-engineered process embedded across teaching, learning and campus life. As a result, students may graduate with academic qualifications but without the ethical dispositions and civic values expected of university-trained professionals. Furthermore, most existing studies on ethics and value education in Nigerian universities focus on general national trends or isolated issues, leaving a significant empirical gap regarding Rivers State owned universities. There is insufficient empirical evidence on the extent to which institutional ethics and value education re-engineering actually influence staff behaviour, student attitudes and institutional culture within this specific context. Without such evidence, policy interventions and reforms risk being poorly targeted and ineffective. Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the continued prevalence of unethical practices and weak value orientation in Rivers State owned universities despite the presence of institutional ethics policies and value education initiatives. The lack of empirical understanding of how these ethics frameworks and re-engineered value education efforts influence behaviour and institutional practices necessitates systematic investigation. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering on stakeholders in Rivers State owned universities, with the aim of providing evidence-based insights to guide policy, practice and institutional reform.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the Influence of Institutional Ethics and Value Education Re-engineering in Rivers State Owned Universities. The specific objectives of the study is to;

1. examine the influence of ethical leadership and governance practices on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities.
2. determine the influence of institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement on ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities.
3. evaluate the influence of institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms on the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities.

Research Questions

1. How do ethical leadership and governance practices influence staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities?
2. To what extent do institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement influence ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities?
3. How do institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms influence the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Ethical leadership and governance practices have no significant influence on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities.

H₀₂: Institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement have no significant influence on ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities.

H₀₃: Institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms have no significant influence on the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design, which is suitable for examining existing conditions, practices and relationships as they naturally occur without manipulation of variables. The design was considered appropriate for investigating the influence of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering in Rivers State owned universities, as it enables the collection of data on perceptions, practices and experiences of respondents regarding ethical standards and value-oriented initiatives within the university system. The study was conducted in the two public universities owned by the Rivers State Government, namely Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). These institutions were selected because they represent the major state-owned universities in Rivers State and play a strategic role in the development of human capital and the promotion of ethical values in higher education. The population of the study consisted of all academic staff in RSU and IAUE, estimated at 1,742 lecturers, with approximately 1,050 lecturers in RSU and 692 lecturers in IAUE, based on recent staff records. Academic staff were considered appropriate for the study because they are directly involved in curriculum delivery, student mentoring, enforcement of institutional rules and the transmission of ethical values, making them central to assessing institutional ethics and value education re-engineering in universities. A sample size of 322 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To ensure proportional and adequate representation of respondents from both institutions, a stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Faculties in each university were treated as strata, after which respondents were randomly selected from each stratum in proportion to its academic staff strength. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Institutional Ethics and Value Education Re-Engineering Questionnaire (IEVEERQ). The instrument comprised sections on institutional ethics, ethical leadership and governance, codes of conduct and policy enforcement, accountability and monitoring mechanisms, and value education re-engineering practices. The content validity of the instrument was established through expert review by specialists in Educational Management and Educational Measurement and Evaluation to ensure that the items adequately measured the constructs of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using the independent samples t-test at a 0.05 level of significance to determine whether significant differences existed in perceptions of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering among academic staff in the two universities. This methodological approach provided a systematic and objective basis for examining the influence of institutional ethics and value education re-engineering in Rivers State owned universities and for drawing valid conclusions from the findings of the study.

Research Question 1: How do ethical leadership and governance practices influence staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on extent does to which ethical leadership and governance practices influence staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities

S/No.	Item	RSU (n = 149)			IAUE (n = 117)		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	University leaders demonstrate integrity and fairness in decision-making, which positively influences staff and students' conduct.	2.85	1.22	High Extent	3.61	0.79	High Extent
2.	Transparent governance practices in my university encourage staff and students to behave honestly and responsibly.	2.83	1.25	High Extent	3.33	1.08	High Extent
3.	When university management enforces ethical rules consistently, staff and students are more likely to comply with institutional regulations.	3.06	1.03	High Extent	3.44	1.02	High Extent
4.	Ethical leadership by principal officers (Vice-Chancellor, Deans, Heads of Department) promotes respect, discipline, and accountability among staff and students.	3.53	0.91	High Extent	3.49	1.01	High Extent
5.	Clear ethical policies and codes of conduct in the university reduce cases of misconduct such as examination malpractice and administrative corruption.	2.91	1.16	High Extent	3.49	1.01	High Extent
	Grand $\bar{X}$	3.04	1.11	High Extent	3.47	0.98	High Extent

Source: Field Data, 2025.

The result Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the extent to which ethical leadership and governance practices influence staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities. The findings indicate that ethical leadership and governance practices influence behaviour to a high extent in both Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), as reflected in their respective grand mean scores of 3.04 (SD = 1.11) and 3.47 (SD = 0.98). At RSU, ethical leadership by principal officers such as Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Department recorded the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.53, SD = 0.91), suggesting that leadership at strategic levels plays a significant role in promoting respect, discipline and accountability among staff and students, although relatively higher standard deviations in items relating to integrity and transparency indicate some variability in respondents' experiences. In IAUE, all items recorded consistently high mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 3.61, with integrity and fairness in leadership decision-making recording the highest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.61, SD = 0.79), indicating a strong and shared perception among respondents that ethical leadership positively shapes behaviour.

Research Question 2: To what extent do institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement influence ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement influence ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities

S/No.	Item	RSU (n = 149)			IAUE (n = 117)		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
6.	The existence of clearly defined institutional codes of conduct influences staff and students to comply with ethical standards.	3.02	0.77	High Extent	3.57	0.91	High Extent
7.	Effective enforcement of university policies reduces unethical behaviours among staff and students.	3.36	0.70	High Extent	3.47	1.01	High Extent
8.	Consistent application of disciplinary measures encourages adherence to ethical rules in the university.	3.15	0.83	High Extent	3.47	1.02	High Extent
9.	Awareness of institutional rules and regulations promotes ethical compliance among staff and students.	3.13	0.97	High Extent	3.54	0.88	High Extent
10.	Sanctions for violations of the code of conduct serve as a deterrent to unethical practices within the university.	3.38	0.77	High Extent	3.35	1.16	High Extent
Grand $\bar{X}$		3.21	0.81	High Extent	3.48	1.00	High Extent

Source: Field Data, 2025.

The result in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on the extent to which institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement influence ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities. The findings reveal that respondents from both Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) perceived institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement as influencing ethical compliance to a high extent, as indicated by the grand mean scores of 3.21 (SD = 0.81) for RSU and 3.48 (SD = 1.00) for IAUE. At RSU, the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.38, SD = 0.77) was recorded for the item indicating that sanctions for violations of the code of conduct serve as a deterrent to unethical practices, suggesting that punitive measures play a significant role in promoting compliance, while the relatively lower mean score for the existence of codes of conduct ($\bar{X}$ = 3.02, SD = 0.77) indicates that enforcement may be perceived as more influential than mere policy presence. In IAUE, all items recorded consistently high mean scores ranging from 3.35 to 3.57, with clearly defined institutional codes of conduct recording the highest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.57, SD = 0.91), reflecting strong agreement among respondents that well-articulated and enforced policies enhance ethical compliance.

Research Question 3: How do institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms influence the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms influence the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities

S/No.	Item	RSU (n = 149)			IAUE (n = 117)		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
11.	Regular monitoring and supervision by university authorities help sustain ethical behaviour among staff and students.	3.23	1.03	High Extent	3.44	0.89	High Extent
12.	Clear accountability structures in the university promote long-term adherence to ethical standards.	3.21	0.81	High Extent	3.31	1.10	High Extent
13.	Internal audit and compliance units effectively detect and prevent unethical practices in the university.	2.70	0.78	High Extent	3.41	1.02	High Extent
14.	Timely investigation and reporting of unethical behaviour strengthen ethical standards within the institution.	3.40	0.92	High Extent	3.36	1.00	High Extent
15.	The presence of transparent accountability mechanisms encourages staff and students to act ethically.	3.40	0.68	High Extent	3.49	1.01	High Extent
Grand $\bar{X}$		3.19	0.84	High Extent	3.40	1.00	High Extent

Source: Field Data, 2025

The result in Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation on the extent to which institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms influence the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities. The findings indicate that respondents from both Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) perceived accountability and monitoring mechanisms as influencing the sustainability of ethical standards to a high extent, as reflected in the grand mean scores of 3.19 (SD = 0.84) for RSU and 3.40 (SD = 1.00) for IAUE. At RSU, the highest mean scores ($\bar{X}$ = 3.40, SD = 0.92 and SD = 0.68 respectively) were recorded for timely investigation and reporting of unethical behaviour and the presence of transparent accountability mechanisms, suggesting that prompt response and openness are critical to sustaining ethical standards, although the relatively lower mean score for the effectiveness of internal audit and compliance units ($\bar{X}$ = 2.70, SD = 0.78) indicates perceived weaknesses in preventive monitoring structures. In IAUE, all items recorded consistently high mean scores ranging from 3.31 to 3.49, with the presence of transparent accountability mechanisms recording the

highest mean ($\bar{X}$ = 3.49, SD = 1.01), reflecting broad agreement among respondents on the importance of accountability systems in sustaining ethical behaviour.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership and governance practices have no significant influence on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on influence of ethical leadership and governance practices on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	A	Remark
RSU Lecturers	149	3.04	1.11	264	-2.32	1.97	0.05	Accepted
IAUE Lecturers	117	3.47	0.98					

Source: Field Data, 2025.

From the results in Table 4, it can be observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and 264 degrees of freedom, the t-calculated value is -2.32 while the t-critical value is 1.97. Since the t-calculated value of -2.32 is less than the t-critical value of 1.97, the null hypothesis that ethical leadership and governance practices have no significant influence on staff and student behaviour in Rivers State owned universities is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement have no significant influence on ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities.

Table 5: Summary of t-test Analysis on the influence of institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement on ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	A	Remark
RSU Lecturers	149	2.69	0.82	264	- 1.80	1.97	0.05	Accepted
IAUE Lecturers	117	2.65	0.75					

Source: Field Data, 2025.

From the results in Table 5, it can be observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and 264 degrees of freedom, the t-calculated value is -1.80 while the t-critical value is 1.97. Since the t-calculated value of -1.80 is less than the t-critical value of 1.97, the null hypothesis that institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement have no significant influence on ethical compliance in Rivers State owned universities is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 3: Institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms have no significant influence on the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities.

Table 6: Summary of t-test Analysis on the influence of institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms on the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	α	Remark
RSU Lecturers	149	2.69	0.82	264	- 1.37	1.97	0.05	Accepted
IAUE Lecturers	117	2.65	0.75					

Source: Field Data, 2025.

From the results in Table 6, it can be observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and 264 degrees of freedom, the t-calculated value is -1.37 while the t-critical value is 1.97 . Since the t-calculated value of -1.37 is less than the t-critical value of 1.97 , the null hypothesis that institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms have no significant influence on the sustainability of ethical standards in Rivers State owned universities is therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The findings related to Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1 indicate that ethical leadership and governance practices are perceived by academic staff to influence staff and student behaviour to a high extent in Rivers State owned universities. However, the t-test analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in perceptions between Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). This suggests that while ethical leadership is widely acknowledged as important in shaping conduct, the extent of its influence is relatively consistent across the two institutions. These results align with recent studies emphasizing the critical role of ethical leadership in fostering positive organizational culture and behavioural compliance in higher education (Brown & Treviño, 2023; Adeyemi et al., 2024). According to Brown et al. (2023), ethical leaders who demonstrate transparency, fairness, and accountability create environments conducive to ethical behaviour among staff and students. The lack of significant difference between institutions may reflect similar leadership challenges and governance frameworks within Rivers State owned universities, reinforcing the need for continuous leadership development and integrity enhancement initiatives.

Regarding Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 2, the study found that institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement are perceived to have a high influence on ethical compliance. However, the t-test analysis showed no significant difference in the influence of these factors between RSU and IAUE. This indicates that the presence and enforcement of ethical policies are similarly perceived as important across both universities. These findings are consistent with the work of Nwosu and Eze (2024), who argued that clearly articulated codes of conduct, coupled with effective enforcement mechanisms, are essential in reducing unethical practices such as examination malpractice and staff misconduct in Nigerian universities. Nonetheless, as highlighted by Oladipo et al. (2025), policy existence alone is insufficient without consistent application and monitoring, a point underscored by the moderate variability observed in respondents' perceptions. The similarity in perceptions between the two institutions suggests comparable challenges and opportunities in policy enforcement that warrant targeted interventions.

For Research Question 3 and Hypothesis 3, the results demonstrate that institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms are perceived as significantly influencing the sustainability of ethical standards, yet the t-test again indicated no significant difference between RSU and IAUE. The high mean scores reflect recognition among

academic staff of the importance of regular monitoring, clear accountability structures, and timely reporting of unethical behaviour. These findings resonate with recent studies by Okeke and Udo (2025), which emphasized that sustainable ethical standards in universities depend heavily on robust internal audit systems and transparent accountability processes. However, the lower mean for the effectiveness of internal audit units at RSU points to potential weaknesses in institutional capacity to enforce ethical standards fully. The consistency in perceptions across the two universities further highlights a common need for strengthening accountability frameworks and investing in capacity-building to ensure long-term ethical sustainability.

Conclusion

this study has shown that ethical leadership and governance practices, institutional codes of conduct and policy enforcement, as well as accountability and monitoring mechanisms, are all perceived to significantly influence ethical behaviour and compliance in Rivers State owned universities. Although these factors are widely acknowledged as critical to fostering and sustaining ethical standards among staff and students, the analysis revealed no significant differences in perceptions between Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, suggesting similar challenges and strengths across these institutions. The findings highlight the importance of not only establishing ethical frameworks and value education initiatives but also ensuring their consistent implementation, effective enforcement, and continuous monitoring to achieve meaningful and sustainable improvements in institutional ethics. Therefore, to enhance ethical conduct and value re-engineering in Rivers State universities, concerted efforts must be made to strengthen leadership integrity, reinforce policy enforcement, and build robust accountability systems that promote transparency and responsibility at all levels of university administration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. Rivers State owned universities should enhance ethical leadership through continuous training to ensure leaders consistently model integrity and accountability.
2. Institutions must strengthen enforcement of codes of conduct and increase awareness among staff and students through regular workshops and clear disciplinary procedures.
3. Universities need to improve accountability by investing in robust monitoring systems, timely investigations, and transparent reporting mechanisms to sustain ethical standards.

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