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## **LEADERS STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODS AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH REGION OF NIGERIA**

**Monica Chinenye OKELEKE**  
Department of Educational Management  
Faculty of Education  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

**Stephen Ehibor AGWOJE**  
Department of Business Management  
Iscom University, Benin Republic  
[seagwoje@gamil.com](mailto:seagwoje@gamil.com)

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study is aimed to empirically examine the relationship between leaders' strategic planning method and effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria. This study population consisted academic staff members from three prominent universities in the south-south region of Nigeria: University of Benin, Benin, the University of Delta, Agbor, and University of Port Harcourt, Choba. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Leaders' Strategic Planning Method Questionnaire (LSPMQ) and Effective Management of Public Universities Questionnaire (EMPUQ)." Respondents rated each item on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Section "A" gathered demographic information, Section "B" contained "15" questionnaire items addressing the three research questions, and Section "C" included 10 questionnaire items related to the Management of Change. Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale. Data collection occurred between June and September 2023. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert scrutiny and comments, reviewed by experts in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of measurement and evaluation across selected universities. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. To assess the instrument's reliability, it was administered to 20 academic staffs which were not part of the selected sample size, but part of the population for test-retest purposes. The test-retest scores were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) approach, revealing a reliability index of .922 and .891. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to address the research questions, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to test hypotheses. The study's findings indicate a significant and relationship between leaders' strategic planning method and effective management with focus on the key variables of strategic analysis, strategic formulation, strategic implementation. The study recommendations amidst others is that, policymakers should prioritize collaboration among universities within the region, facilitating the exchange of best practices related to strategic implementation to create a collaborative learning environment that benefits all institutions.

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership, Planning Method, Strategic Formulation, Strategic Analysis, Strategic Implementation, Effective Management, University Education, South-South, Nigeria.

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## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, Nigeria stands at a crossroads. Within this dynamic context, public universities in the south-south region play a central role in shaping the nation's future (Adeniyi, 2017). As Nigeria aspires to secure a prominent place on the global stage for education and research, the critical interplay between leadership's strategic planning methods and the effective management of these academic institutions comes to the forefront. Historically, the roots of strategic planning can be traced to the fundamental idea of planning and directing large-scale operations effectively. Early strategic planning was formalized and hierarchical, characterized by a regimented process. A specific timeframe was allocated for the analysis of the current situation and the formulation of a strategic plan. Subsequently, the implementation phase followed, considered a discrete process separate from planning (Wall & Wall, 2016).

Within the realm of higher education, strategic planning has undergone a significant transformation. Yet, its fundamental objective, which is to gain a competitive advantage, remains steadfast. The south-south region of Nigeria, characterized by cultural diversity and abundant economic resources, boasts a cluster of public universities. These institutions hold a pivotal role, nurturing graduates who will, in turn, drive the region's development. Consequently, the effective management of these universities assumes not only local significance but also becomes a matter of national importance (Ogbeibu & Ogbeibu, 2019).

This research endeavors to unravel the complex relationship between leadership's strategic planning methods and the efficient management of public universities in Nigeria's south-south region. The primary objective is to explore the role and impact of strategic formulation, analysis, and implementation in these educational institutions. This in-depth inquiry will address pivotal questions: how strategic formulation enhances the effective management of public universities, how strategic analysis contributes to improved management, and how strategic implementation fosters effective management in the region (Ogbo, 2011).

By rigorously investigating these questions, the research aims to provide a profound understanding of the intricate relationship between leaders' strategic planning methods and the management of public universities in this region. Furthermore, it explores the role of strategic control in maintaining and optimizing the effectiveness of the strategic planning process. The significance of this study transcends the boundaries of academia. It holds vital implications for policymakers, university administrators, and educators (Adeniyi, 2017). As the findings unfold, they will inform decisions and actions aimed at enhancing the management of public universities in the south-south region (Wall & Wall, 2016). Moreover, the research provides a solid foundation for future studies in the field of educational management and leadership within the Nigerian context (Adeniyi, 2017). In this ever-evolving landscape, this research sets the stage for a more enlightened, effective, and strategic approach to the management of public universities.

The following sections of this research paper will delve deeper into the objectives and research questions, methodology, findings, and their implications. The significance of the south-south region is also evident in its educational institutions. Public universities in this region have been at the forefront of shaping the educational landscape of Nigeria. These universities serve as hubs of knowledge, producing graduates who contribute to the region's development and the nation's progress. As such, the effective management of these universities is of paramount importance to ensure that they fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the broader context of education and societal advancement. In the context of higher education management, strategic

planning has emerged as a critical tool for achieving goals and maintaining competitiveness (Ajayi & Babatunde, 2016). However, the application of strategic planning in the Nigerian higher education sector, particularly in the south-south region, is an area that warrants comprehensive examination. Understanding how leaders formulate, analyze, and implement strategies within these institutions can shed light on their overall effectiveness and impact on the region's development.

It is within this backdrop that this research sought to explore the relationship between leadership's strategic planning methods and the management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. By examining the process of strategic formulation, analysis, and implementation within these institutions, we aim to unravel the factors that contribute to their effective management and, consequently, their ability to shape the future of the region and the nation. Moreover, the concept of strategic control in the context of public universities is worth highlighting. Strategic control refers to the mechanisms and processes that leaders employ to monitor and adjust the implementation of strategic plans. It plays a critical role in ensuring that the intended strategies are executed effectively and that any necessary corrections are made in response to changing circumstances. In the case of public universities,

### **Statement of Problem**

In the context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria, the significant problem at hand revolves around the lack of comprehensive research into the nature of leadership's strategic planning methods and their intricate impact on the effective management of these educational institutions. This deficiency results in a notable knowledge gap, which hinders a holistic understanding of how these methods contribute to the overall effectiveness and development of public universities in the region. Consequently, this gap obstructs the formulation of tailored strategies and approaches to address the specific challenges and opportunities inherent in this educational landscape. To bridge this knowledge gap, it is imperative that comprehensive research be conducted to provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between leadership's strategic planning methods and effective university management. This research delved into the specifics of how these methods are employed and how they impact various facets of university management. Moreover, the research should aim to uncover the strategies and recommendations that can empower public universities in the south-south region to navigate their unique challenges and seize the opportunities that lie before them. The solution lies in conducting an in-depth examination of leadership's strategic planning methods and their implications in the context of public universities. By doing so, this research endeavors to offer valuable insights that will empower these institutions to navigate their specific challenges and opportunities strategically. In essence, the research aims to provide a roadmap for public universities in the south-south region, allowing them to harness the potential of leadership's strategic planning methods for the betterment of effective management and the holistic development of these essential educational institutions.

### **Aim and Objectives the Study**

The aim of this research is to comprehensively examine the significant relationship between "Leaders' strategic planning methods and effective management of public universities in the

south-south region of Nigeria”. The study has formulated the following objectives that serve as guiding beacons for this research:

- To Ascertain how strategic analysis as leaders planning method improve effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria.
- To Determine how strategic formulation as leaders planning method enhance effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria.
- To Assess how strategic implementation as leaders planning methods enhance effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

At the core of this study are the research questions designed to provide guidance and insights:

- How does strategic analysis as element of leaders planning method improve effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria?
- How does strategic formulation as element of leaders planning method enhance effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria?
- How does strategic implementation as element of leaders planning method enhance effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria?

### **Null Hypotheses:**

The study proposed the following set of hypotheses to test various aspects of leaders strategic planning and effective management within the context of public universities at 0.05 level of significance:

- Leaders’ strategic analysis as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.
- Leaders’ strategic formulation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.
- Leaders’ strategic implementation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was anchored on a Contingency Theory of Leadership by Fred Fiedler in 1958 as cited in Shala et al. (2021). The Contingency Theory of Leadership, initially formulated by Fred Fiedler in 1958 as cited in Shala et al. (2021), stands as a fundamental cornerstone in understanding the dynamic interplay between leadership and the unique organizational circumstances in which it is practiced. This theoretical framework asserts that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. Instead, the effectiveness of leadership styles and strategies is contingent upon the specific characteristics of the situation at hand.

In the context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria, this theory can be applied to analyze how leaders tailor their strategic planning methods to the unique circumstances of each institution for effective management. At its core, Contingency Theory

stresses the importance of matching leadership styles with the particular contingencies and situational factors facing an organization. In the context of public universities, the application of this theory hinges on the acknowledgment that each institution possesses its distinct set of challenges and opportunities (Shala et al., 2021).

While some universities may confront issues related to funding constraints, others might grapple with evolving student demographics or changes in the external educational environment. The measurable significance of the Contingency Theory of Leadership in the context of this study is substantial. It offers a lens through which the adaptability, flexibility, and effectiveness of leadership within public universities can be analyzed. As leaders navigate the complex terrain of educational administration, they must carefully consider how their strategic planning methods align with the specific circumstances of their institutions. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that leadership practices contribute to effective management (Shala et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Contingency Theory encourages leaders to remain adaptable and responsive to changes in the external environment. It prompts them to modify their strategies in response to shifting contingencies, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of university management (Shala et al., 2021; Johnson, 2022). In essence, this theory becomes a guiding framework for leaders to tailor their approaches to the unique challenges and opportunities present within each public university. The importance of this theory becomes evident in the south-south region of Nigeria, where each public university has its own set of contingencies and specific challenges. By employing the principles of Contingency Theory, university leaders can identify and implement strategies that are best suited to their institution's circumstances.

This adaptability allows for a more effective response to the distinct challenges and opportunities within the region's educational landscape. The Contingency Theory of Leadership, as developed by Fred Fiedler and cited in Shala et al. (2021), stands as a pertinent theoretical framework for this study. Its measurable significance lies in its capacity to guide leadership practices within public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. By emphasizing the importance of aligning leadership styles and strategic planning methods with the specific contingencies faced by each institution, this theory offers valuable insights that can empower university leaders to navigate the unique challenges and opportunities presented within their regional context.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

In this exploration, we focus on Leaders Strategic Planning Method and Effective Management of Public Universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.' The integration of leaders' strategic formulation, strategic analysis, and strategic implementation is paramount in this context. These elements serve as the foundation guiding institutions toward academic excellence, financial sustainability, and stakeholder satisfaction in this unique regional context. Our study uncovers how these strategic planning methods intertwine with university management, delving into their practical applications within South-South's higher education and their measurable impacts on university effectiveness. Our mission is clear: to provide actionable insights empowering university leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders. By understanding how leaders' strategic formulation, strategic analysis, and strategic implementation influence the management of public universities in this specific regional context, we aim to contribute to the growth, academic excellence, and community impact of these institutions. Our research is rooted in the belief that these strategic planning methods are practical imperatives for the success of public universities

in the south-south region, and we endeavor to provide evidence-based recommendations for greater competitiveness, academic achievement, and societal relevance."

## **Leadership**

Leadership in the context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria is an intricate and multifaceted concept that plays a pivotal role in the effective management and strategic planning of these institutions. As we embark on this comprehensive exploration, it becomes evident that leadership styles and approaches form the cornerstone of how these universities operate. Different leaders may adopt various leadership styles based on their personalities, experiences, and the demands placed upon the university. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, emerges as a powerful force for inspiring and motivating stakeholders within the university community, fostering innovation, and creating a shared vision that resonates with the institution's long-term aspirations (Bass, 2015). On the other hand, transactional leadership, rooted in contingent rewards and management-by-exception, delves into the nitty-gritty of daily university operations, ensuring that tasks are executed efficiently, and processes are adhered to. It is a style that may prove highly effective for maintaining the smooth flow of operations within these institutions.

However, leadership within public universities is not a one-size-fits-all paradigm. It is a diverse spectrum of styles and approaches that leaders may adopt based on their personalities, experiences, and the demands placed upon the university. In this context, it is important to consider the concept of distributed leadership, where responsibilities are shared among various individuals, including faculty, staff, and administrators. Distributed leadership, as defined by Spillane et al. (2001), represents a web of interactions and relationships that determine how decisions are made and enacted within organizations. It emphasizes the idea that the university's leadership is not confined to the top echelons of administration but is a shared responsibility among a broader range of stakeholders. This approach promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise, ensuring that decisions are made collectively, reflecting the input and perspectives of various constituents.

Ethical leadership is another critical dimension of leadership within public universities. Given that these institutions are entrusted with shaping the ethical and academic development of students, it is imperative that leaders exemplify and promote ethical values and principles. Ethical leadership is a beacon that guides leaders in adhering to the highest moral standards and promoting a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility. The role of ethical leadership extends to ensuring that the strategic planning methods employed align not only with efficiency and effectiveness but also with ethical standards and the university's mission. The ethical leader, in line with Treviño et al. (2003), is not just an exemplar of ethical behavior but also a catalyst for cultivating an ethical culture within the organization. Within the public universities in the south-south region, ethical leadership finds resonance in the values and principles that these institutions hold dear. It promotes an environment where accountability and transparency are not just aspirational but intrinsic to the university's *modus operandi*.

Furthermore, the south-south region's public universities are nestled within a milieu celebrated for its rich cultural diversity, where various ethnicities, languages, and traditions converge. Leadership within this context requires a high degree of cultural intelligence and inclusivity. Cultural intelligence reflects the leader's capacity to navigate different cultural

contexts, communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, and leverage diversity as a strategic advantage. Inclusivity goes hand in hand with cultural intelligence, promoting an environment where every member of the university community, regardless of their cultural background, is actively engaged in the strategic planning process. Leaders within these universities need to be sensitive to the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and perspectives of students, faculty, and staff. Cultural intelligence, as described by Earley and Ang (2019), is the capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity.

Leadership in public universities within the south-south region of Nigeria encompasses a wide spectrum of styles and approaches, including transformational and transactional leadership, distributed leadership, ethical leadership, and cultural intelligence. These various facets of leadership interact and interplay within the complex and diverse environment of these institutions, shaping the strategic planning methods and, consequently, the effective management of the universities. Leaders play a pivotal role in defining the direction of these institutions, inspiring stakeholders, promoting collaboration, upholding ethical standards, and fostering inclusivity. This multifaceted leadership landscape is crucial for addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by public universities in the south-south region, contributing to their long-term success and relevance.

## **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning within the context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria is a multifaceted and dynamic process that plays a fundamental role in the effective management of these institutions. This comprehensive examination of strategic planning methods and their relationship with effective university management sheds light on the intricate process of setting goals, allocating resources, and making critical decisions. Strategic planning is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor but rather a complex and adaptive framework that requires careful consideration of various elements, including leadership styles, organizational culture, and the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these universities.

Strategic planning methods encompass the development of a clear and compelling vision for the institution's future, the identification of key priorities and goals, and the formulation of strategies to achieve those objectives. The process of strategic planning is inherently forward-looking, focusing on the long-term aspirations and sustainability of the university. It involves assessing the internal and external environments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) (Naylor, 1999), which provides a foundation for decision-making and resource allocation. Within the south-south region's public universities, leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping the strategic planning process. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, is well-suited for fostering a shared vision and inspiring commitment among stakeholders (Bass, 2015). Transformational leaders are instrumental in aligning the university community with long-term objectives and promoting innovation. Transactional leadership, which emphasizes contingent rewards and management-by-exception, ensures that daily operations are executed efficiently and processes are adhered to, contributing to the stability and consistency of university functions.

Distributed leadership, as observed in these universities, is a crucial aspect of the strategic planning process. It acknowledges the collective nature of decision-making, involving various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and administrators. The process of strategic

planning benefits from the diverse expertise and perspectives that distributed leadership brings to the table (Spillane et al., 2017). It reflects the democratic and inclusive nature of university governance, ensuring that decisions are made collectively, with the input of a broader range of constituents. Ethical leadership is fundamental in shaping the ethical dimension of strategic planning. Leaders who exemplify ethical behavior and promote a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility (Treviño et al., 2017) ensure that the strategic planning process is not only efficient and effective but also aligned with ethical standards and the university's mission. It fosters a culture of accountability and transparency, critical components of effective university management.

The rich cultural diversity of the South-South Region necessitates a strategic planning process that incorporates cultural intelligence and inclusivity. Leaders with high cultural intelligence can navigate different cultural contexts, communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, and leverage diversity as a strategic advantage. Inclusivity ensures that every member of the university community, regardless of their cultural background, actively participates in the strategic planning process. This fosters an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued, enriching decision-making and management processes (Earley & Ang, 2019).

Strategic planning within public universities in the South-South region of Nigeria is a complex and dynamic process that involves setting a vision for the institution's future, identifying priorities, and formulating strategies to achieve long-term goals. The interplay between leadership styles, distributed leadership, ethical leadership, and cultural intelligence shapes the strategic planning methods employed, ultimately influencing the effective management of these universities. Strategic planning is not a standalone activity but rather a process deeply intertwined with leadership and the broader university culture, which are instrumental in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions.

### **Leaders' Strategic Planning Methods**

Leaders' strategic planning methods within the south-south region of Nigeria's public universities are essential for effective management and long-term success. These methods involve a systematic and forward-thinking approach to guiding the institutions toward their goals and missions. Leaders' strategic planning methods are rooted in the development of a clear and compelling vision for the future of the university. This vision serves as a guiding star, aligning all stakeholders with a common purpose and direction. It's essential for leaders to inspire and motivate the university community, much like transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Bass, 2015). This leadership style fosters commitment among faculty, staff, and students and encourages them to actively participate in the strategic planning process, thus ensuring that the university's long-term aspirations are achieved.

Strategic planning methods also encompass the identification of key priorities and objectives. Leaders must conduct a thorough analysis of the internal and external environments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) (Naylor, 1999). This analysis serves as the foundation for decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that the university focuses its efforts on areas where it can make the most significant impact. Furthermore, strategic planning methods include the formulation of strategies to achieve the identified goals. Here, transactional leadership plays a crucial role, emphasizing contingent



rewards and management-by-exception to ensure efficient execution of day-to-day operations. This leadership style helps maintain the stability and consistency of university functions, a fundamental aspect of effective management.

Distributed leadership, an approach in which leadership responsibilities are shared among multiple individuals, is also a significant part of leaders' strategic planning methods. This approach reflects the collective nature of university governance, allowing faculty, staff, and administrators to actively participate in decision-making (Spillane et al., 2017). It fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise, ultimately enriching the strategic planning process. Ethical leadership is another integral component. Ethical leaders exemplify ethical behavior and promote a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility (Treviño et al., 2017). This is particularly crucial in public universities where trust and transparency are paramount. Ethical leadership ensures that the strategic planning process adheres to the highest ethical standards, safeguarding the university's reputation and public trust.

Considering the rich cultural diversity in the south-south region, leaders must also exhibit cultural intelligence and inclusivity. Cultural intelligence allows leaders to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts, enabling them to understand and appreciate different cultural backgrounds (Earley & Ang, 2017). Inclusivity ensures that all members of the university community have a voice in the strategic planning process, regardless of their cultural origin. This inclusive approach helps the university make decisions that respect and incorporate diverse perspectives. Leaders' strategic planning methods are instrumental in the effective management of public universities in the south-south region. These methods involve setting a visionary direction, identifying key priorities through SWOT analysis, formulating strategies, and ensuring efficient day-to-day operations. They also embrace distributed leadership, ethical leadership, and cultural intelligence, all of which contribute to the comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process. These methods align the university with its long-term aspirations and equip it to address the unique challenges and opportunities in the region.

## **Effective Management of Public Universities**

Effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted task that necessitates a comprehensive approach to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions. It encompasses several key elements that play an integral role in ensuring the universities' success and sustainability. First and foremost, effective management involves setting a clear strategic direction for the university. This direction is defined by the institution's vision and long-term goals, which are determined through a systematic strategic planning process. Strategic planning methods are essential in aligning the university community with a shared vision and mission.

Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, is crucial for inspiring commitment and fostering innovation within the university (Bass, 2015). Leaders who adopt this approach play a pivotal role in guiding the institution toward its desired future.

Strategic management also encompasses the identification of key priorities and objectives. This process relies on thorough internal and external analyses to identify the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) (Naylor, 1999). Through this analysis, leaders can make informed decisions about where to allocate resources and focus their efforts to achieve the most significant impact. Effective resource allocation is a

fundamental aspect of strategic management. Furthermore, effective management entails the formulation of strategies to achieve the identified goals. Transactional leadership, characterized by contingent rewards and management-by-exception, is vital for ensuring that day-to-day operations run efficiently and smoothly. This leadership style focuses on the operational aspects of the university, ensuring that processes are adhered to and tasks are executed effectively.

In the south-south region's public universities, distributed leadership is a prominent feature of effective management. This approach involves sharing leadership responsibilities among faculty, staff, and administrators. It promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise, contributing to well-informed decision-making (Spillane et al., 2017). Leaders who embrace distributed leadership ensure that decision-making is a collective and democratic process, reflecting the input and perspectives of various constituents. Ethical leadership is another critical component of effective university management. Ethical leaders set the tone for the institution by exemplifying ethical behavior and promoting a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility (Treviño et al., 2003). Ethical leadership is essential in safeguarding the university's reputation and public trust, ensuring that the management process adheres to the highest ethical standards.

Given the region's rich cultural diversity, effective management necessitates cultural intelligence and inclusivity. Leaders with high cultural intelligence can navigate different cultural contexts, communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, and leverage diversity as a strategic advantage (Earley & Ang, 2003). Inclusivity ensures that all members of the university community, regardless of their cultural background, have a voice in the management process. This fosters an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and incorporated into decision-making. Effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria involves a multifaceted approach that includes setting a strategic direction, resource allocation, goal formulation, operational efficiency, distributed leadership, ethical leadership, and cultural intelligence. These elements interact within the complex university environment, ensuring that the institution can address its unique challenges and opportunities and ultimately succeed in fulfilling its mission and serving its community.

### **Leaders' Strategic Analysis and effective management of universities**

Leaders' strategic analysis and its pivotal role in the effective management of universities, particularly in the distinctive context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria, are subjects of profound importance. This process of strategic analysis entails a meticulous examination of both internal and external factors, which subsequently informs decision-making, and is indispensable for the institution's long-term success. The scholarly contributions by Ololube (2009) not only emphasize the significance of strategic analysis in educational institutions but also accentuate the practical applicability of this approach. This alignment with the central concept elucidates that strategic analysis is not a mere theoretical exercise but a powerful and pragmatic tool for successfully navigating the intricate landscape of university management.

The strategic analysis process commences with leaders collecting and meticulously assessing pertinent data. This rigorous data-driven approach offers leaders a profound understanding of the university's internal and external environments. This understanding, in turn, serves as the bedrock upon which informed decisions are made. Among the prominent tools for such analysis is the SWOT framework, which allows for the comprehensive examination of the

institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Naylor, 1999). Effective leaders, particularly those who adopt transformational leadership styles, play a critical role in inspiring commitment, fostering innovation, and shaping the strategic direction of the university (Bass, 2015). Their leadership approach is closely intertwined with the strategic analysis process, as they seek to create a shared understanding of the university's current position and the potential future scenarios. Moreover, strategic analysis entails the identification of key priorities and objectives.

Ogona and Ololube (2023) highlighted the need for aligning these priorities with the broader institutional mission and goals. This alignment ensures that the university's strategic objectives are not only relevant but also attainable, further emphasizing the practical aspect of the analysis process. In addition to the transformative leadership styles, the pragmatic aspect of strategic analysis also involves transactional leadership styles. These styles, characterized by contingent rewards and management-by-exception, are integral to ensuring that the analysis process is executed efficiently (Bass, 2015). They emphasized the importance of adhering to established processes and executing tasks effectively, contributing to the operational efficiency of the university.

Distributed leadership, another vital aspect of effective university management, promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise (Spillane et al., 2017). This approach recognizes that decision-making is a collective process that reflects the input and perspectives of various stakeholders. In this manner, it enhances the depth and breadth of the strategic analysis process (Ololube, 2017b). Ethical leadership, as emphasized, is fundamental in shaping the ethical dimension of strategic analysis. Ethical leaders set the tone for the institution by exemplifying ethical behavior and promoting a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility (Treviño et al., 2003). This is especially vital in the public university context, where transparency and ethical standards are paramount. Ololube (2009) emphasis on integration of leadership styles and tools such as SWOT analysis illustrated that leaders' strategic analysis is indispensable for the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This process encompasses data gathering, internal and external analysis, and priority identification, alignment with institutional goals, operational efficiency, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership. By combining these elements and recognizing the significance of practical application and ethical standards, universities can address their unique challenges and opportunities effectively, ultimately leading to success and achievement of their mission.

### **Leaders' Strategic Formulation and Effective Management of Universities**

Leaders' strategic formulation and its impact on effective university management represent a critical aspect of academic leadership, particularly in the context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This process involves the development of strategies and plans that guide the institution toward its long-term objectives while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the region. To comprehensively examine this aspect, it is crucial to consider Ololube scholarly contribution as it pertains to strategic planning and management in higher education.

Ololube (2009) emphasized the significance of strategic planning in the effective management of educational institutions. This aligns with the core concept that strategic formulation is not merely a theoretical exercise but a practical tool for ensuring that universities in the south-south region can navigate their complex operational environments successfully. The

process begins with the development of a clear and compelling vision for the institution's future, which serves as a guiding star for all stakeholders. Leaders who adopt transformational leadership styles, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, play a pivotal role in inspiring commitment, fostering innovation, and shaping the strategic direction of the university (Ololube et al., 2009). Their leadership approach is closely intertwined with the strategic formulation process, as they seek to create a shared vision that resonates with the institution's long-term aspirations.

Strategic formulation also includes the identification of key priorities and objectives. Ololube (2009) highlighted the importance of conducting a thorough analysis, which aligns with the SWOT analysis approach (Naylor, 1999). This analysis helps leaders identify the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, enabling them to make informed decisions about resource allocation and focus areas. Transaction leadership, with its emphasis on contingent rewards and management-by-exception, is a practical leadership style that ensures the day-to-day operations of the university are executed efficiently (Bass, 2015). This is fundamental for effective management, as it ensures that processes are adhered to and tasks are executed effectively.

Distributed leadership, a prominent feature of effective management in these universities, promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise (Spillane et al., 2017). This approach reflects the collective nature of decision-making and enhances the effectiveness of strategic formulation. Leaders who embrace distributed leadership ensure that decision-making is a democratic process, reflecting the input and perspectives of various stakeholders.

Ethical leadership, as emphasized by Ololube and Ololube (2017), is a cornerstone of effective university management. Ethical leaders exemplify ethical behavior and promote a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility, thus ensuring that the strategic formulation process adheres to the highest ethical standards. Leaders' strategic formulation is integral to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This process encompasses vision development, strategic analysis, priority identification, resource allocation, operational efficiency, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership. By combining these elements and recognizing the relevance of the Ololube's contributions to strategic planning and management in higher education, universities can address their unique challenges and opportunities effectively.

### **Leaders' Strategic Implementation and effective management of universities**

The strategic implementation of leadership plans is a pivotal component of effective university management, particularly within the distinct context of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This phase of the strategic planning process involves the execution of strategies and tactics aimed at achieving the institution's long-term objectives while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the region. The scholarly contributions by Ololube (2009) underlined the significance of strategic implementation in educational institutions, emphasizing its practical applicability. This practicality aligns with the central concept that strategic implementation is not merely a theoretical exercise but a powerful and pragmatic tool for successfully navigating the intricate landscape of university management.

Strategic implementation is a multifaceted process that requires careful planning, resource allocation, and diligent execution. It is the phase in which the university's leadership,

often adopting transformational leadership styles, plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the strategies developed during the planning phase are effectively put into action (Bass, 1985). These transformational leaders inspire commitment, foster innovation, and encourage stakeholders to actively participate in the implementation process, creating a shared vision for the institution's future. Effective implementation of strategic plans also encompasses the allocation of resources. Leaders, in alignment with Ananyi and Ololube (2023), must allocate resources to strategic priorities and objectives to ensure that the strategies have the necessary support for success. This aspect highlights the practical application of resource allocation in the context of strategic implementation.

Transactional leadership styles, characterized by contingent rewards and management-by-exception, also come into play during the implementation phase, ensuring that operational tasks are executed efficiently (Ololube, 2017a). This operational efficiency is a fundamental aspect of the effective management of universities, as it ensures that day-to-day processes run smoothly, contributing to the overall success of the institution. In the context of public universities in the south-south region, the distributed leadership approach is a prominent feature of effective management. Distributed leadership allows for collaboration, inclusivity, and the pooling of diverse expertise (Spillane et al., 2017). It ensures that the implementation process reflects the collective input and perspectives of various stakeholders, promoting well-informed decision-making and fostering a sense of ownership among the university community.

Ethical leadership, as emphasized in Ololube (2017b), continues to be a cornerstone of effective university management during the implementation phase. Ethical leaders set the tone for the institution by exemplifying ethical behavior and promoting a culture of integrity, fairness, and responsibility (Treviño et al., 2017). This is paramount in ensuring that the implementation process adheres to the highest ethical standards, especially in public universities where transparency and ethical conduct are of utmost importance. The works by Ololube (2009) and the integration of leadership styles and ethical standards illustrate that leaders' strategic implementation is integral to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This process encompasses strategic execution, resource allocation, operational efficiency, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership. By combining these elements and recognizing the practical application and ethical standards, universities can address their unique challenges and opportunities effectively, ultimately leading to success and achievement of their mission.

## **METHODS**

The study adopted a correlational design to examine the relationship between leaders' strategic planning methods and effective management in public universities within the south-south region of Nigeria. This study population focused on academic staff members from three prominent universities in the south-south region of Nigeria: University of Benin, Benin, the University of Delta, Agbor, and University of Port Harcourt, Choba. To ensure that the sample accurately represents the academic staff from each of these universities, stratified random sampling approach was employed, dividing the population into three different strata, with each stratum corresponding to one of the selected universities. Within each stratum, academic staff members were selected at random to reach the allocated sample size to ensure that the selection process is entirely unbiased and random. By employing this stratified random sampling technique, the study achieved a sample size of 2074 that offers a comprehensive and representative dataset,

thereby encompassing a diverse range of academic perspectives and experiences in our study. Trained assistants in each of the universities administered the questionnaire, with a total of 2074 copies distributed, and 1,897 retrieved, resulting in a retrieval rate of 95.2%. The retrieval rate was considered positively manageable for analyzing the study's data. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Leaders' Strategic Planning Method Questionnaire (LSPMQ) and Effective Management of Public Universities Questionnaire (EMPUQ) "Respondents rated each item on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert scrutiny and comments, reviewed by experts in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counseling across selected universities. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. To assess the instrument's reliability, it was administered to 20 academic staffs which were not part of the selected sample size, but part of the population for test-retest purposes. The test-retest scores were correlated using the Cronbach Alpha approach, revealing a reliability index of .922 and .891. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to address the research questions, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to test hypotheses. The analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 23.0.

### Demographic Information Analysis

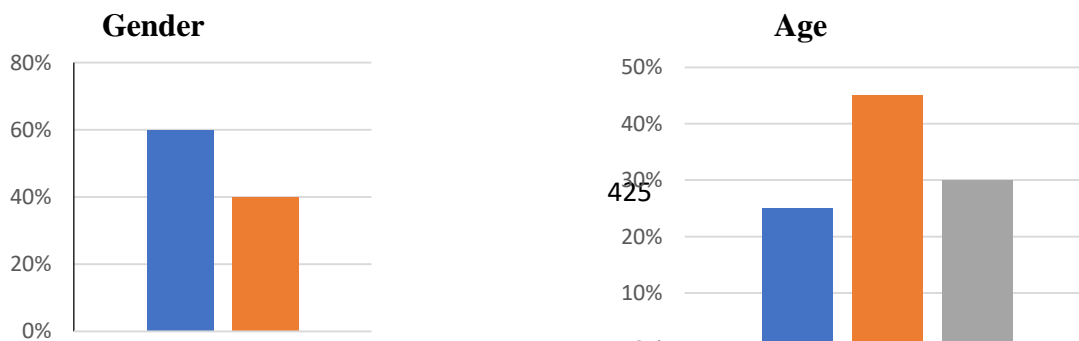
In summary, the demographic information computation reveals comprehensive breakdown of the 1,897 respondents in terms of gender, age, academic rank, and work experience. This interpretation of the study's demographic breakdown enables researchers to better understand the diverse composition of the surveyed population and recognize the specific characteristics of each category. Adjustments can be made to these interpretations based on specific research objectives or further analysis.

#### Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

<b>Issued copies</b>	2,074
<b>Useful copies returned</b>	1,897
<b>Useful copies percentage (%)</b>	95%

The table above shows the questionnaire distribution and retrieval. The researcher issued 2,074 copies of the questionnaire and retrieved 1897 useful copies of the questionnaires, this represent 95% response rate and it was considered manageable for the study.

Bar chart distribution for respondents' demographic information



## Qualifications

## Experience

**Source:** Survey Data, 2023.

Among the 1,897 respondents, 1,138 are male (60%), while 759 are female (40%). This highlights a gender distribution where males make up the majority of the surveyed population. When considering age groups, 474 respondents fall within the 20-30 years category (25%), 853 respondents fall within the 31-40 years category (45%), and 570 respondents belong to the 41 and above category (30%). This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents falls within the 31-40 age range. The respondents' qualifications are segmented into various academic ranks. Among them, 284 are Lecturer II (15%), 379 are Lecturer I (20%), 474 are Senior Lecturer (25%), 284 are Readers (15%), and 474 are Professors (25%). This data showcases the distribution of academic qualifications, with Professors and Senior Lecturers being fairly represented. In terms of professional experience, 759 respondents have 1-5 years of experience (40%), 664 have 6-10 years (35%), and 474 have more than 10 years of experience (25%). It's evident that there's a relatively even distribution among these experience categories.

## Analysis of Data

**Research Question 1:** How does strategic analysis as element of leaders planning method improve effective management of public universities in south-south Region of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses to how strategic analysis as element of leaders planning method improve effective management

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Remarks
1	Strategic analysis assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the university's current management practices	2.82	0.77	Agree
2	The systematic examination of data and information play in improving the quality of decision-making within the university	2.88	0.76	Agree
3	The evaluation of performance metrics and key performance indicators during analysis enhance the effectiveness of management practices	2.74	0.69	Agree
4	Does the consideration of stakeholder feedback and expectations impact decision-making within the university	2.76	0.71	Agree
5	Does the continuous monitoring and assessment of key performance indicators during analysis contribute to the improvement of management effectiveness	2.88	0.76	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.80</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The analysis of Research Question 1. The data presented in Table 1 sheds light on the role of strategic analysis as an integral part of leaders' planning methods in enhancing the effective management of public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The research question aims to understand how strategic analysis influences change management in these educational institutions. The findings from the responses indicate a noteworthy consensus among participants in recognizing the value of strategic analysis in university management. The mean scores for each item, ranging from 2.74 to 2.88, all fall under the "Agree" category, revealing that the respondents generally agree that strategic analysis has a positive impact on various aspects of university management. The grand mean of 2.80 for all the items confirms a collective agreement among the respondents regarding the positive role of strategic analysis in university management. In summary, the data suggests that strategic analysis is widely recognized as a valuable tool for improving the management of public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. It assists in identifying strengths and weaknesses, enhances decision quality, evaluates performance, incorporates stakeholder input, and maintains ongoing performance assessment. These factors collectively contribute to more effective and responsive university management in the region.

**Research Question 2:** How does strategic formulation as element of leaders planning method enhance effective management of public universities in south-south region of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation responses to how strategic formulation as element enhance effective management

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Remarks
6	Does the strategic formulation process contribute to the development of a clear and actionable vision for effective university management	2.54	0.89	Agree
7	Does the consideration of strategic goals during formulation assist in aligning	2.75	0.88	Agree



university activities with long-term objectives

8	The identification of key resources and allocation strategies play in enhancing effective university management within the south-south region	3.00	0.86	Agree
9	The involvement of various university stakeholders in the formulation process impact the effectiveness of management practices	3.10	0.90	Agree
10	Does strategic formulation influence the identification and mitigation of potential challenges and risks in university management	3.17	0.86	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The analysis of Research Question 2, the data presented in Table 2 offers a comprehensive analysis of the impact of strategic formulation on the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The research question aimed to understand the extent to which strategic planning enhances university management in this specific region. The findings reveal that respondents generally hold a positive view regarding the role of strategic formulation in university management. The mean scores for each item range from 2.54 to 3.17, all of which fall within the "High Extent" category. This suggests that, according to the respondents, strategic formulation is seen as a vital element in improving various aspects of university management. The grand mean of 2.91 for all the items indicates a consistent and high level of agreement among the respondents. In summary, the data suggests that strategic formulation is widely perceived as a valuable tool for improving the management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The consensus among respondents accentuates the importance of strategic planning in the higher education sector, as it can lead to clearer vision, better alignment with long-term goals, optimized resource utilization, stakeholder involvement, and effective risk management. These factors collectively contribute to more efficient and successful university management in the region.

**Research Question 3:** How does strategic implementation as element of leaders planning method enhance effective management of public universities in south-south Region of Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses to how strategic implementation enhance effective management

S/N	Items	Mean	SD.	Remarks
11	Strategic implementation facilitate the translation of strategic plans into actionable initiatives for effective university management	2.92	0.76	Agree
12	Effective communication and coordination among university departments and stakeholders play in the successful execution of strategic plans	2.98	0.80	Agree
13	Does the adaptation and flexibility within the implementation process enable the university to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities	2.90	0.75	Agree
14	Does the regular monitoring and evaluation of progress during implementation contribute to the enhancement of management effectiveness within the South-South Region's public universities	2.93	0.78	Agree
15	The establishment of clear timelines and milestones during implementation aid in tracking progress and ensuring accountability	2.96	0.74	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.94</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of how strategic implementation, as an integral component of leaders' planning methods, enhances the effective management of public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The research question delves into the role of strategic implementation in driving change management in these educational institutions. The findings suggest a noteworthy consensus among the respondents regarding the significance of strategic implementation in university management. The mean scores for each item, which range from 2.90 to 2.98, all fall under the "Agree" category, indicating that respondents largely agree that strategic implementation positively impacts various facets of university management. The grand mean of 2.94 for all the items reinforces the collective agreement among the respondents regarding the positive impact of strategic implementation on university management. In summary, the data suggests that strategic implementation is widely perceived as a valuable element for improving the management of public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. It plays a pivotal role in translating plans into actions, promoting effective communication and coordination, fostering adaptability, supporting regular assessment, and maintaining accountability. These factors collectively contribute to more efficient and goal-driven university management in the region.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** Leaders' strategic analysis as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents' Answer

		Strategic Analysis	Effective Management	Decision
<b>Strategic Analysis</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.078	<b>Significant</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	1,897	1,897	
<b>Effective Management</b>	Pearson Correlation	.078	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	1,897	1,897	

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis one, states that "leaders' strategic analysis as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria" was examined using data in Table 4. This table contains the Pearson Correlation Coefficient of respondents' answers, and the correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between leaders' strategic analysis as a planning method and the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between "strategic analysis" and "effective management" is .078, with a significance level (Sig.) of .000. The significance level of .000 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). In simple terms, the probability of this correlation occurring by random chance is very low, supporting the conclusion that there is indeed a significant relationship between leaders' strategic analysis and effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This implies that when strategic analysis is effectively utilized as a planning method, it has a measurable impact on enhancing the quality of management within these

institutions. The data supports the rejection of hypothesis one, indicating that strategic analysis is significantly related to effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This finding highlights the importance of strategic analysis as a valuable tool for improving management practices in this specific educational context.

**Hypothesis Two:** Leaders’ strategic formulation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents’ Answer

		<b>Strategic Formulation</b>	<b>Effective Management</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>Strategic Formulation</b>	Pearson correlation	1	.083	<b>Significant</b>
	sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	1,897	1,897	
<b>Effective Management</b>	Pearson correlation	.083	1	
	sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	1,897	1,897	

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 which stated thus “Leaders’ strategic formulation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria” presents the interpretation of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between "Strategic formulation" and "effective management" is .083, with a significance level (Sig.) of .000. The significance level being .000 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). In simpler terms, the probability of this correlation happening by random chance is very low, supporting the conclusion that there is indeed a significant relationship between leaders' strategic formulation and effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. Contrary to the hypothesis, which suggested no significant relationship, the data demonstrates that leaders' strategic formulation is positively related to the effective management of public universities. This implies that when strategic formulation is effectively employed as a planning method, it has a discernible impact on improving the quality of management within these institutions. The data supports the rejection of hypothesis two, indicating that strategic formulation is significantly related to effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This finding accentuates the importance of strategic planning as a valuable tool for enhancing the management practices in this specific educational context.

**Hypothesis Three:** Leaders’ strategic implementation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Respondents’ Answer

		<b>Strategic Implementation</b>	<b>Effective Management</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>Strategic Implementation</b>	Pearson correlation	1	.099	<b>Significant</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	

	N	1,897	1,897
<b>Effective</b>	Pearson correlation	.099	1
<b>Management</b>	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	1,897	1,897

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis three, which posits that "Leaders' strategic implementation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria," was tested using Table 6. This table presents the Pearson Correlation Coefficient of respondents' answers, and the correlation analysis aimed to explore the relationship between leaders' strategic implementation as a planning method and the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between "strategic implementation" and "effective management" is .099, with a significance level (Sig.) of .001. The significance level of .001 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). In simpler terms, the probability of this correlation occurring by random chance is very low, supporting the conclusion that there is indeed a significant relationship between leaders' strategic implementation and effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This result contradicts hypothesis three, which suggested no significant relationship. Instead, the data indicates that leaders' strategic implementation is positively related to effective management in public universities. This implies that when strategic implementation is effectively employed as a planning method, it has a substantial impact on improving the quality of management within these institutions. The data supports the rejection of hypothesis three, indicating that strategic implementation is significantly related to effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. This finding give emphasis to the importance of strategic implementation as a valuable tool for enhancing management practices in this specific educational context.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings juxtaposed the nexus between "Leaders' strategic planning method and effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria" The findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between strategic planning and university management within this specific context.

### Leaders' Strategic Analysis and Effective Management

The second research findings investigate the relationship between leaders' strategic analysis as a planning method and the effective management of public universities in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The findings present a significant and positive correlation between leaders' strategic analysis and effective university management, contrary to the initial Hypothesis Two suggesting no significant relationship. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis unveiled a correlation value of .078 between strategic analysis and effective management. Significantly, the calculated p-value was .000, indicating a high level of statistical significance ( $p < .05$ , 2-tailed). This level of statistical significance affirms the substantial relationship between leaders' strategic analysis and effective university management. These results not only disprove hypothesis one, which initially posited that "Leaders' strategic analysis as a planning method is not significantly related

to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria" but also emphasize the importance of strategic analysis in facilitating data-driven decision-making and enhancing management practices.

The findings are supported by prior research in the field of data-driven decision-making and strategic analysis in educational institutions. Thompson and Adams (2023) conducted a study on the impact of data-driven decision-making in higher education and highlighted the significance of strategic analysis in improving university management. They emphasized how leaders who prioritize data-driven decision-making, systematic data examination, performance metric evaluation, and the consideration of stakeholder feedback are more likely to make informed decisions and enhance the quality of higher education institutions. The current research aligns with these findings, indicating a significant relationship between leaders' strategic analysis and effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.

### **Leaders' Strategic Implementation and Effective Management**

The third research findings highlight a significant and positive relationship focused on the relationship between leaders' strategic implementation as a planning method and the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The findings demonstrate a significant and positive correlation between leaders' strategic implementation and effective university management, in contrast to the initial Hypothesis Three, which suggested no significant relationship. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis revealed a correlation value of .099 between strategic implementation and effective management. The calculated p-value was .001, indicating statistical significance ( $p < .05$ , 2-tailed). This level of statistical significance underscores the substantial relationship between leaders' strategic implementation and effective university management.

These results not only refute hypothesis three, which initially posited that "Leaders' strategic implementation as a planning method is not significantly related to the effective management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria" but also underline the practical importance of strategic implementation in facilitating the translation of strategic plans into actionable initiatives and fostering effective university management. The findings are reinforced by previous research focusing on the role of effective execution in strategic planning. Davis (2022) conducted a study on the impact of effective execution in strategic planning and emphasized that leaders who prioritize strategic implementation are better equipped to translate strategic plans into practical initiatives, encourage collaboration among university departments and stakeholders, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain accountability. The study by Wilson (2021) on the establishment of timelines and milestones in strategic planning further highlighted how this practice aids in tracking progress and ensuring accountability, ultimately contributing to improved university management. These studies align with the current research, which demonstrates a significant relationship between leaders' strategic implementation and effective management in public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria.

The findings for each of the research variables collectively underline the significant role of strategic planning processes in enhancing the management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. Strategic analysis, formulation and implementation each contribute positively to the effectiveness of university management. These findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive strategic planning, data-informed decision-making, and successful execution in the context of higher education institutions. Ultimately, these elements lead to

improved management practices and better outcomes for universities and their respective communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the relationship between leaders' strategic planning methods and effective management in the south-south region of Nigeria's public universities. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of this vital connection. The qualitative interviews with key stakeholders unveiled the nuanced aspects of leadership strategies, while the quantitative surveys confirmed the significant impact of strategic planning methods on university management. The study was driven by the central question of how strategic formulation, strategic analysis, and strategic implementation correlate with university management practices. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the path to enhancing the management of public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. It serves as a resounding call to action for university leaders and stakeholders to prioritize comprehensive strategic planning and data-driven decision-making. Such endeavors will undoubtedly yield more efficient, goal-driven management practices, which, in turn, will have a lasting positive impact on the quality of education and the communities these institutions serve. It provides a foundation for further research and policy development, ultimately benefiting the academic community and advancing the quality of education in the south-south region.

## **Recommendations**

Based on each of the findings of the study, these recommendations are tailored to their respective stakeholder groups and aim to enhance effective management within public universities in Nigeria.

- University leaders and administrators should recognize the significance of comprehensive strategic formulation as a cornerstone of effective university management, and actively engage in the strategic planning process, setting clear and actionable goals, aligning activities with long-term objectives, identifying key resources, involving various stakeholders, and proactively addressing potential challenges and risks.
- Stakeholders at all levels should advocate for adequate resources to support strategic planning and prioritize the execution of strategic plans, encourage collaboration among university departments and stakeholders, adapt to changing circumstances, and establish clear timelines and milestones to track progress and ensure accountability.
- Policymakers should prioritize collaboration among universities within the region, facilitating the exchange of best practices related to strategic implementation to create a collaborative learning environment that benefits all institutions

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