

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AS DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated cultural and religious diversity as dimensions of diversity management for effective school administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 6,484 respondents, consisting of 310 principals and 6,174 teachers from 310 public senior secondary schools in the state. A sample of 648 respondents, representing 10% of the population, was selected through simple random and proportionate sampling techniques. Data were collected using a self-structured instrument titled “Cultural and Religious Diversity as Dimensions of Diversity Management for Effective School Administration Questionnaire (CRDDMESAQ)”. The instrument was validated by experts in educational administration and guidance and counseling, while reliability coefficients of .841 and .828 were obtained using Cronbach’s Alpha method. Out of the 648 copies of the questionnaire administered, 555 valid copies were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the independent samples t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that cultural diversity and religious diversity were managed to a high extent for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study further found no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the management of cultural and religious diversity. It was concluded that effective management of cultural and religious diversity contributes significantly to harmonious relationships, inclusiveness, and effective school administration. The study recommended that school administrators should continue to promote policies and practices that encourage cultural understanding and religious tolerance in schools.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Religious Diversity, Diversity Management, School Administration, Public Secondary Schools, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in the diversity of modern societies has significantly transformed educational institutions around the world, which is making diversity management an essential aspect of effective school administration. In present day societies, schools comprise individuals from

different cultural backgrounds, ethnic groups, languages, religious affiliations and value systems. As a result, school administrators are expected to develop strategies that promote inclusiveness, mutual respect and equitable participation among all stakeholders. Diversity management is the deliberate efforts made by organization or institutions to recognize, appreciate and effectively utilize differences among individuals to achieve institutional goals (Robbins & Judge, 2022). In educational settings, effective diversity management contributes to harmonious relationships, improved communication, enhanced teaching and learning outcomes, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Among the various dimensions of diversity, cultural and religious diversity are critical factors that influence school administration. Cultural diversity speaks of the presence of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, characterized by variations in language, customs, traditions, values, beliefs and social practices (Banks, 2019). Schools are now becoming increasingly multicultural environments where students, teachers and administrators interact across diverse cultural identities (Ololube, 2024). These diversities have presented opportunities for creativity, innovation and broader perspectives, which have also created challenges such as cultural misunderstandings, stereotypes, prejudice and communication if not properly managed (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

Effective school administration requires principals as administrators to promote inclusive culture that value and respects cultural differences. Principals as institutional leaders are expected to demonstrate cultural competence and should be better positioned to create learning environments that support diversity and promote equal opportunities for all learners. According to Banks (2019), culturally responsive school leaders enable recognition and accommodate the diverse cultural experiences of students, in order to enhance educational equity and social cohesion. When cultural diversity is effectively managed, schools tend to experience improved interpersonal relationships, increased student engagement and stronger collaboration among staff members (Ololube, 2024).

Religious diversity in schools, on the other hand, is the coexistence of individuals who adhere to different religious beliefs, practices, traditions and worldviews within the same educational environment (Ololube, 2024). In many societies around the world, schools serve students and staff from various religious backgrounds (Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religions and other faith traditions). Studies have shown that religious diversity have enriches educational experiences by exposing learners to different perspectives and promoting tolerance and understanding. However, it also presents administrative challenges that relates to religious observances, dress codes, dietary requirements and conflicting belief systems (Merry, 2020).

Going further, school administrators play crucial role in ensuring that religious diversity is managed fairly and respectfully. Effective management of religious diversity is the creation of policies and practices that protect the rights of individuals to express their religious beliefs while maintaining neutral and inclusive learning environment. These efforts help in preventing discrimination, religious intolerance and conflicts that might negatively affect school climate and performance (Jackson, 2014). Thus, school administrators that promote religious inclusion contribute to a sense of belonging among students and staff, which invariably promotes positive school environments that is conducive for learning and productivity.

The significance of cultural and religious diversity management has become increasingly evident in educational institutions worldwide. Globalization, migration, urbanization and technological advancements have strengthened the interactions between and among people from diverse backgrounds, making diversity be an unavoidable reality in today's schooling

(UNESCO, 2021). As such, effective school administration do not depends on instructional leadership and resource management but it also contingent on the ability to manage diversity constructively. As a result, according to Ololube (2024), schools that embrace cultural and religious diversity are more likely to promote democratic values, social justice, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among members of the school community where it is practiced.

Statement of the Problem

The increase in cultural and religious diversity in public secondary schools in Rivers State has created both opportunities and challenges for effective school administration. Schools are expected to provide inclusive environment where individuals from different cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations are able to coexist, collaborate and achieve educational goals. However, differences in cultural values, beliefs, traditions, languages and religious practices sometimes lead to misunderstandings, prejudice, discrimination, interpersonal conflicts and communication barriers among students and staff. These challenges have negatively affect school climate, staff cooperation, students' academic engagement and the overall effectiveness of school administration.

In Rivers State, public senior secondary schools are made up of teachers and students from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, while diversity has the potential to enrich educational experiences and promote innovation, there are concerns that inadequate management of cultural and religious differences may hinder effective administration. Many instances of cultural bias, religious intolerance, unequal treatment and limited inclusiveness have created tensions that affect decision-making, teamwork, discipline and the implementation of school policies.

In spite of the growing recognition of diversity management as an important administrative responsibility, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which cultural and religious diversity are effectively managed in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This gap has necessitated the need to investigate into how these two (cultural and religious) dimensions of diversity are managed and their implications for effective school administration.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate cultural and religious diversity as dimensions of diversity management for effective school administration in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Determine the extent diversity in culture is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- Ascertain the extent diversity in religion is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent is diversity in culture managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent is diversity in religion managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and statistically tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in culture is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in religion is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Categorization Theory (SCT)

Social Categorization Theory (SCT) was developed in 1970s by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues as part of the broader Social Identity Theory. The theory explains how individuals classify themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, age, occupation, and social status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to the theory, people naturally organize their social environment by categorizing individuals into groups to simplify social interactions to make sense of the complex social realities. These categorizations influence perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships within organizations or institutions like schools.

The central assumption of SCT is that individuals tend to divide people into “in-groups” and “out-groups.” In-groups is the groups to which individuals perceive themselves as belonging, while out-groups are of the groups that are perceived as different from themselves (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, in Ololube 2024). Individuals that are identified with a particular in-group often develop positive attitudes toward members of their in-group and exhibit bias, prejudice or discrimination toward members of out-groups. These tendencies affect interpersonal relationships, cooperation, communication and decision-making processes in such institutions where they are categorized.

In educational settings, social categorization occurs when students, teachers and administrators (school leaders) classify themselves and others based on cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, gender, ethnicity, language or years of experience. These categorizations as a result may influence how individuals interact with one another, form social networks and participate in school activities. Instances revealed that teachers unconsciously associate more closely with colleagues who share similar cultural or religious backgrounds, while students may as well form friendship groups based on ethnic or religious similarities. These patterns create divisions and reduce opportunities for collaboration if not effectively managed (Turner et al., 1987).

The theory further suggests that social categorization in most cases lead to stereotyping. Stereotypes are when individuals attribute generalized characteristics to members of a particular group without considering individual differences. In schools, stereotypes that are related to culture or religion may influence expectations, communication patterns and administrative decisions. The assumptions about the capabilities, attitudes or behaviors of individuals from certain cultural or religious groups have the tendency to affect their participation and representation within the school system. Effective diversity management sought to minimize such biases by promoting inclusiveness, fairness and mutual respect among all the stakeholders in the institutions.

SCT is particularly relevant to the management of cultural and religious diversity in schools, because schools are increasingly characterized by multicultural and multireligious populations due to globalization, migration and demographic changes. Since diversity has the potential to enrich learning experiences and promote innovation, it also has the potential to create challenges associated with group identities and social divisions. Therefore, school administrators must develop strategies that encourage interaction, cooperation and understanding among diverse groups because with the promotion of inclusive policies and equitable treatment, administrators will be able to reduce the negative effects of social categorization and strengthen social cohesion within the school community.

The theory also highlighted the significance of leadership in managing diversity. School leaders who recognize the existence of social categorization are able to implement practices that emphasize shared goals, collective identities and institutional values rather than group differences. These practices include multicultural education programs, inclusive decision-making processes, diversity training and policies that promote equal opportunities for all members of the school community. By doing these, the efforts help to create an environment where cultural and religious differences are respected while fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

In relation to this study, SCT provides a useful framework for the understanding of how cultural and religious diversity may be able to influence interactions and administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools. The theory explains why the differences among individuals can sometimes result in group formation, bias and conflict, which invariably affects school administration. SCT also supports the need for effective diversity management strategies that promote inclusiveness, collaboration and harmonious relationships among staff and students from different backgrounds. Consequently, SCT offers valuable insights into how cultural and religious diversity are managed to enhance effective school administration.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity in the context of this study refers to the existence and interaction of individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds within a particular society, institution. It involves variations in language, ethnicity, customs, traditions, values, beliefs, lifestyles and social practices that distinguish based of groups or individually (Banks, 2019). In educational institutions, cultural diversity is reflected in the students, teachers and administrators who come from different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Societies are becoming increasingly interconnected through globalization, migration and technological advancement, cultural diversity have become prominent features of modern schools environment (Ololube, 2024).

Cultural diversity is widely recognized as a valuable asset in the school environment because it promotes the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and experiences among individuals. According to Nieto and Bode (2018), culturally diverse environments provide opportunities for individuals to learn from one another, which promotes creativity, innovation and critical thinking. In schools, exposure to diverse cultures enhances students' understanding of different worldviews, which prepares them to function effectively in multicultural societies. It also promotes social inclusion, which encourages respect for differences and reducing prejudicial attitudes.

In the context of school administration, cultural diversity presents both opportunities and challenges. Effective management of cultural diversity can improve communication, collaboration and interpersonal relationships among staff and students. School administrators that recognize and value cultural differences are better equipped to create inclusive policies and practices that ensure equal participation and educational opportunities for all members of the school community (Gay, 2018). Such inclusive practices contribute to a positive school climate, increased student engagement and improved academic outcomes.

However, cultural diversity also generate challenges if differences are not adequately resolved and managed. Misunderstandings that arise from varying cultural norms, communication styles and value systems may lead to conflicts, stereotypes and discrimination (Robbins & Judge, 2022). In educational settings, these challenges may affect teamwork, decision-making and overall school effectiveness. As such, school leaders should be able to develop cultural competence and implement strategies that promote mutual respect, tolerance, and collaboration among diverse groups.

Successful management of cultural diversity requires deliberate efforts to create an environment where all stakeholders feel valued and are respected regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Through multicultural education, inclusive leadership and equitable policies, schools have the potential to harness the benefits of cultural diversity while minimizing its probable challenges. Therefore, cultural diversity remains a critical dimension of diversity management that has contributed significantly to effective school administration and in the achievement of educational goals.

Religious Diversity (RD)

Religious diversity (RD) refers to the coexistence of individuals and groups with different religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and worldviews within a particular society, organization, or institution. It comprises of the presence of multiple faiths, denominations and belief systems, including Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and non-religious perspectives. In modern societies, RD has become increasingly evident due to globalization, migration, urbanization, and the growing interaction among people from different religious backgrounds (Jackson, 2014). Educational institutions, particularly public schools, are often characterized by religiously diverse populations comprising students, teachers, and administrators with varying faith affiliations.

RD contributes significantly to the social and educational development of individuals by promoting exposure to different beliefs and perspectives. According to Merry (2020), interaction among people of different faiths fosters mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for religious differences. In schools, RD provides opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence and appreciate the values and traditions of others. Such exposure prepares learners

to function effectively in pluralistic societies where collaboration among individuals from diverse religious backgrounds is essential.

In the context of school administration, RD represents an important dimension of diversity management. Effective school administration requires the creation of an inclusive environment where individuals are free to practice their religious beliefs without fear of discrimination or exclusion. School leaders are expected to ensure fairness and equity in addressing issues related to religious observances, worship practices, dress codes, dietary requirements and religious holidays (Council of Europe, 2018). Through the promotion of respect for religious differences, administrators promote positive school climate that supports learning and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

In spite of the benefits RD, RD also present challenges when not properly managed. Differences in religious beliefs and practices may sometimes lead to misunderstandings, stereotypes, prejudice, and conflicts among members of the school community. Such tensions can negatively affect communication, cooperation, and overall school effectiveness (Jackson, 2014). In some cases, individuals feel marginalized or excluded because of their religious affiliation, thereby reducing their sense of belonging and participation in school activities.

Therefore, effective management of RD is essential in the promotion of social cohesion, reducing discrimination and enhancing the overall effectiveness of school administration. By embracing RD, schools are able to cultivate mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and supportive learning environment for all stakeholders.

Diversity in Culture and Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools

Diversity in culture contributes significantly to the effective administration of public secondary schools by promoting inclusiveness, mutual respect and collaboration among staff and students from different backgrounds. When school administrators effectively manage cultural differences, they create positive school climate that enhances communication, teamwork and decision-making. Studies have shown that cultural diversity also promotes creativity and broader perspectives in problem-solving, thereby improving organizational effectiveness and supporting the achievement of educational goals (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2018).

Johnson and Taylor (2019) examined how cultural diversity among teachers influences decision-making processes in public secondary schools in New York City, USA. The study employed a qualitative design, using semi-structured interviews with 15 school administrators and focus groups with 30 teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Data were analyzed thematically. The study revealed that cultural diversity among teachers promoted inclusive decision-making, as administrators were exposed to various cultural perspectives that enhanced policy formation. It was concluded that cultural diversity fosters collaborative and inclusive administrative practices. The authors recommended cultural sensitivity training for administrators to better harness the benefits of diversity in decision-making processes.

Okeke and Nnadi (2020) explored the impact of cultural diversity among teachers on conflict resolution in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study utilized a survey research design, with a sample of 200 teachers and 50 administrators selected using stratified sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using chi-square tests. Teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds were more effective in resolving conflicts among students, as they brought varied perspectives and strategies to conflict management. It was concluded that cultural diversity enhances conflict resolution strategies in

schools. The study recommended integrating cultural awareness programs into teacher training curricula to improve conflict resolution skills.

Ahmed and Hassan (2018) analyzed how cultural diversity influences resource allocation in public secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A case study design was adopted, focusing on five schools with culturally diverse staff. Data were collected through interviews with administrators and document analysis. Data were analyzed using content analysis. Administrators in culturally diverse schools demonstrated equitable resource allocation, considering the unique cultural needs of students and staff. It was concluded that cultural diversity promotes fairness and inclusivity in resource distribution. The study recommended training administrators in culturally responsive resource management to optimize inclusivity. This present seeks to ascertain different aspects of diversity, such as age, gender, qualification, and cultural background, within the school system.

Okoro and Adeyemi (2020) examined the influence of cultural diversity on teacher collaboration and teamwork in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design with a sample of 300 teachers selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using ANOVA. Teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds were more collaborative and shared innovative teaching strategies, which enhanced the school's overall performance. It was concluded that cultural diversity fosters teamwork and knowledge-sharing among teachers. The authors suggested implementing team-building activities that emphasize cultural inclusivity to improve teacher collaboration.

Eze and Adebayo (2021) studied the impact of cultural diversity among teachers on the disciplinary strategies adopted in public secondary schools in Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed a correlational research design, with 120 teachers and 40 administrators selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson's correlation. The study found a significant positive correlation between cultural diversity and the use of restorative disciplinary measures, as teachers with diverse cultural perspectives preferred inclusive and non-punitive approaches. This present seeks to ascertain different aspects of diversity, such as age, gender, qualification, and cultural background, within the school system. It was concluded that cultural diversity among teachers promotes the adoption of constructive disciplinary methods. The authors recommended regular training on culturally responsive disciplinary practices to enhance school harmony.

Smith and Robinson (2019) examined the relationship between cultural diversity and teacher-student relationships in public secondary schools in New York, USA. A mixed-methods design was used, involving surveys with 200 students and interviews with 30 teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic coding. Teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds were more adept at building strong and empathetic relationships with students, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect. It was concluded that cultural diversity among teachers strengthens teacher-student relationships. The authors recommended providing cultural sensitivity workshops for teachers to further enhance student engagement and trust.

Adeola and Uche (2022) explored the effect of cultural diversity on leadership practices in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a sample of 50 administrators and 150 teachers selected through stratified sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using regression analysis. Administrators in culturally diverse schools demonstrated more inclusive leadership styles,

emphasizing collaboration and equitable decision-making. It was concluded that cultural diversity enhances inclusive leadership in school administration. The study suggested organizing leadership training programs that focus on managing cultural diversity effectively.

Carter and Hughes (2018) analyzed the impact of cultural diversity on extracurricular program effectiveness in public secondary schools in Birmingham, UK. A case study approach was employed, focusing on three schools with diverse teaching staff. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document reviews, and analyzed using content analysis. Schools with culturally diverse staff offered extracurricular programs that were more inclusive and representative of various cultural interests, leading to higher student participation. It was concluded that cultural diversity promotes inclusivity and effectiveness in extracurricular activities. The study recommended creating diverse staff committees to plan and manage extracurricular programs to ensure cultural inclusivity.

Diversity in Religion and Effective Administration of Public Secondary Schools

Religious diversity have significantly played role in the understanding of effective administration of public secondary schools in the areas of promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and respect among individuals from different faith backgrounds (Jackson, 2014). School administrators expected to be able to manage religious diversity effectively through inclusive policies and equitable practices; they promote harmonious school environment that supports cooperation and positive interpersonal relationships. Respect for religious differences reduces conflicts, strengthens social cohesion and enhances the overall effectiveness of school administration and educational outcomes (Merry, 2020).

Ahmed and Karim (2017) explored how religious diversity among teachers influences administrative decision-making in public secondary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. The study adopted a mixed-methods design, utilizing surveys and semi-structured interviews with 150 teachers and 20 school administrators. Data were analyzed using both quantitative descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study found that religious diversity among school staff led to more inclusive decision-making processes. Administrators were more sensitive to the religious needs of both staff and students, leading to improved school policies on religious observances. It was concluded that religious diversity can enhance school administration by fostering inclusive practices that reflect the varied beliefs of the school community. The authors recommended integrating religious sensitivity training for school leaders to optimize the benefits of religious diversity in administration.

Johnson and Miller (2019) assessed the role of religious diversity in shaping the administrative approach to conflict resolution in public secondary schools in the United States. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data collected through interviews and focus groups with 15 school principals and 25 teachers. Content analysis was used for data interpretation. The study found that principals in schools with religiously diverse staff utilized a more culturally sensitive approach to resolving conflicts. This approach included incorporating mediation techniques that acknowledged religious beliefs and practices. It was concluded that religious diversity enhances the ability of school leaders to resolve conflicts in ways that are inclusive and culturally competent. The authors recommended that school leaders undergo training in interfaith conflict resolution to improve their handling of religiously diverse settings.

Brown and White (2018) studied the relationship between religious diversity and administrative efficiency in handling school policies related to religious accommodations in

public secondary schools in the UK. A mixed-methods approach was used, with data collected through surveys of 300 teachers and interviews with 30 school policy makers. Quantitative data were analyzed using regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The research found that schools with diverse religious staff were better equipped to create policies that accommodated religious practices without disrupting school operations. These schools also reported higher teacher satisfaction regarding religious inclusivity. It was concluded that religious diversity enhances the development of flexible and accommodating school policies that benefit both staff and students. The study recommended that schools incorporate religious diversity training into professional development to promote a more accommodating and efficient administrative environment.

Adamu and Yusuf (2021) aimed to evaluate the role of religious diversity in influencing leadership practices in public secondary schools in Northern Nigeria. This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, incorporating a survey of 250 teachers and in-depth interviews with 15 school administrators. Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Analysis was conducted using both statistical software for quantitative data and thematic coding for qualitative data. The research highlighted that religious diversity among school leadership led to more inclusive policies that considered religious holidays, dietary needs, and prayer times, fostering an environment of respect and inclusivity. It was concluded that schools with religiously diverse leadership demonstrated higher teacher satisfaction and better student relationships. The authors recommended that educational policymakers encourage the recruitment of leaders with diverse religious backgrounds to promote inclusive leadership practices.

Martinez and McConnell (2018) investigated the effects of religious diversity on administrative decision-making in urban public secondary schools in the U.S. The study used a case study approach, focusing on five schools with varying religious diversity levels. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 40 school administrators and content analysis of school policy documents. Findings showed that schools with higher religious diversity in their staff tended to incorporate religious sensitivity into decision-making, which improved relationships with students and parents of diverse backgrounds. The study concluded that religious diversity is crucial for developing culturally responsive and equitable school policies. The study suggested that professional development programs should include religious awareness training for school administrators to build on the positive impact of religious diversity.

Green and Lee (2018) explored how religious diversity among teaching staff impacts school climate and student behavior in public secondary schools in Canada. This research employed a longitudinal study design, tracking changes over three years in 10 schools. Data were gathered through teacher and student surveys and analyzed using mixed methods, including quantitative correlation and qualitative thematic analysis. The results indicated that schools with a higher proportion of staff from diverse religious backgrounds had more positive school climates, characterized by better student behavior and higher levels of mutual respect. It was concluded that religious diversity among teaching staff can lead to a more positive school environment that supports student learning and development. The authors recommended that schools implement diversity hiring policies and encourage religious inclusivity training for all teachers to maximize the benefits.

Stevens and Brown (2021) assessed the influence of religious diversity on school policy development, focusing on student accommodations and extracurricular activities. A qualitative research approach was adopted, involving interviews with 25 school administrators and focus

groups with 100 teachers from schools in diverse religious communities. Data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach to identify themes. The study found that schools with diverse religious representation were more likely to develop comprehensive policies that supported religiously inclusive extracurricular activities and accommodations. This led to greater student participation and a higher sense of belonging among students from different religious backgrounds. It was concluded that effective policy development is enhanced by having religious diversity in school leadership, which fosters inclusivity and greater participation in school activities. The study recommended that school administrators involve teachers from various religious backgrounds in policy development committees to ensure inclusive decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was informed by its suitability for describing and assessing the existing state of cultural and religious diversity as dimensions of diversity management for effective school administration in Rivers State.

The population of the study comprised 6,484 respondents, consisting of 310 principals and 6,174 teachers drawn from the 310 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 648 respondents, representing 10% of the total population, was selected for the study. The sample consisted of 155 principals and 493 teachers from public senior secondary schools across the state. Simple random sampling and proportionate sampling techniques were utilized to ensure adequate and equitable representation of the respondents.

Data were collected using a self-developed instrument titled “Cultural and Religious Diversity as Dimensions of Diversity Management for Effective School Administration Questionnaire (CRDDMESAQ)”. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information relevant to the objectives of the study. It consisted of two sections. Section A sought demographic information from the respondents, while Section B contained items relating to the study variables. Section B was divided into two subsections corresponding to the objectives of the study. All items were structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4, High Extent (HE) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1.

Specifically, Section B1 elicited information on the extent to which cultural diversity was managed by principals and teachers for effective administration of public secondary schools in Rivers State, while Section B2 gathered data on the extent to which religious diversity was managed by principals and teachers for effective administration of public secondary schools in the state.

To establish the validity of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were submitted to the researcher's supervisor and two experts in the Faculty of Education, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. These experts examined the instrument for both face and content validity, assessing the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument, which was subsequently approved by the supervisor for administration.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistical technique. A pilot test was conducted using 20 principals and 30 teachers who were not part of the study sample. The reliability coefficients obtained for the two sections of the instrument were .841 and .828, respectively, indicating that the instrument possessed satisfactory internal consistency and was reliable for data collection.

The researcher, with the assistance of two trained research assistants, administered and retrieved the questionnaires. Out of the 648 copies distributed, 585 were successfully retrieved. Following careful screening, 30 copies were discarded due to incomplete or inconsistent responses. Consequently, 555 valid questionnaires were used for data analysis, representing an 86% return rate. This high response rate enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings.

Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while the independent samples t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent is diversity in culture managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which diversity in culture is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	Principal (N = 133)		Teacher (N = 422)		Mean Set	Remark
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
1.	The organization implements policies that promote cultural diversity in its administration	2.62	1.091	2.44	1.115	2.53	High Extent
2.	Cultural differences are respected and valued in decision-making processes within the administration.	2.59	1.156	2.47	1.108	2.53	High Extent
3.	The administration provides training programs to help employees understand and manage cultural diversity.	2.44	1.164	2.49	1.167	2.47	Low Extent
4.	Cultural diversity is considered when making staffing and leadership decisions.	2.62	1.126	2.55	1.090	2.59	High Extent
5.	The organization encourages collaboration among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds for effective administration.	2.53	1.139	2.50	1.124	2.52	High Extent
6.	The administration regularly evaluates its strategies for managing cultural diversity to ensure effectiveness.	2.42	1.075	2.52	1.128	2.47	Low Extent
Grand Mean Set & SD.		2.54	1.125	2.50	1.122	2.52	High Extent

Table 1 highlights the extent to which cultural diversity is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. With a grand mean set of 2.52, the findings suggest that cultural diversity is managed to a high extent within the schools. High mean scores indicate that the organization promotes cultural diversity through policies, values cultural differences in decision-making, considers cultural diversity in staffing and leadership decisions, and encourages collaboration among diverse groups. However, lower-

scoring items suggest that training programs to manage cultural diversity and regular evaluations of the strategies for its management are areas that require more attention and improvement.

Research Question Two: To what extent is diversity in region managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which diversity in religion is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	Principal (N = 133)		Teacher (N = 422)		Mean Set	Remark
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
7.	The administration is proactive in recognizing and understanding the religious diversity within the institution	2.35	1.066	2.41	1.084	2.38	Low Extent
8.	Religious diversity is taken into consideration when making key administrative decisions	2.31	1.156	2.40	1.089	2.36	Low Extent
9.	The administration provides adequate support and accommodations for principals to practice their religion	2.44	1.097	2.59	1.111	2.52	High Extent
10.	The administration organizes training or awareness programs to promote respect and understanding of different religious beliefs	2.53	1.158	2.41	1.128	2.47	Low Extent
11.	The administration ensures equal opportunities for all religious groups in the institution, irrespective of their religion	2.36	1.103	2.49	1.128	2.43	Low Extent
12.	The administration effectively addresses any conflicts or challenges arising due to religious differences in the workplace or academic environment	2.49	1.112	2.54	1.114	2.52	High Extent
Grand Mean Set & SD.		2.41	1.115	2.47	1.109	2.44	Low Extent

Footnote: * = High Extent; # = Low Extent

Table 2 presents the extent to which religious diversity is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. With a grand mean of 2.44, the data indicates that the management of religious diversity is generally at a low to extent. Items with higher mean scores suggest that the administration provides support for religious practices and effectively addresses religious conflicts, while lower-scoring items highlight areas such as recognizing religious diversity in decision-making and providing training to foster religious understanding, which require further attention for improvement in school management practices.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in culture is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in culture is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Role	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Principals	133	2.537	.456	553	.971	.332	Ho₆ Retained
Teachers	422	2.494	.449				p > .05

Table 3 presents the t-test analysis comparing the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which cultural diversity is managed for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The t-score of 0.971 and p-value of .332 indicate no statistically significant difference between the ratings of principals (mean = 2.537, SD = .456) and teachers (mean = 2.494, SD = .449), as the p-value exceeds the .05 significance threshold. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho₆) is retained, implying that both principals and teachers have similar perceptions regarding the management of cultural diversity in school administration.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in religion is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of significant difference between principals and teachers in their mean ratings on the extent diversity in religion is managed for effective administration of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Role	N	Mean	SD.	Df.	t	p	Decision
Principals	133	2.414	.463	553	-1.299	.194	Ho₇ Retained
Teachers	422	2.474	.465				p > .05

Table 4 presents the T-test analysis comparing the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which religious diversity is managed for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The t-score of -1.299 and p-value of .194 indicate no statistically significant difference between the ratings of principals (mean = 2.414, SD = .463) and teachers (mean = 2.474, SD = .465), as the p-value exceeds the .05 significance threshold. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho₇) is retained, suggesting that both principals and teachers hold similar perceptions regarding the management of religious diversity in school administration.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Diversity in Culture Management by Principal and Teachers for Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools

The findings from this study reveal critical insights into the extent to which cultural diversity is managed by principal and teachers for effective administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Table 1 indicated that while cultural diversity is acknowledged within schools, structured strategies to manage its impact on administration are limited. Some schools actively incorporate cultural awareness programs and inclusive decision-making frameworks, while others lack formal policies for integrating diverse cultural perspectives into leadership practices. Table 3 further supported the observation, showing no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers regarding the extent to which cultural diversity is managed ($p = .332, p > .05$). This suggests a shared perception among both groups that, while cultural diversity exists, its management for effective administration remains inconsistent. To optimize the benefits of diversity, structured programs such as cultural sensitivity training and inclusive leadership workshops are necessary to create a more cohesive and effective school administration system.

A comparison with previous studies further contextualizes these findings. Johnson and Taylor (2019) found that cultural diversity among teachers in New York City promoted inclusive decision-making by exposing administrators to varied perspectives, aligning with this study's observation that cultural diversity can enhance policy formation when effectively managed. Similarly, Okeke and Nnadi (2020) demonstrated that cultural diversity improves conflict resolution strategies in Enugu State schools, supporting the idea that diverse cultural backgrounds contribute positively to administrative effectiveness. Additionally, Ahmed and Hassan (2018) in Malaysia found that cultural diversity promotes fairness in resource allocation, while Chukwu and Adeyemi (2022) in Lagos State observed enhanced teamwork among teachers from different cultural backgrounds. Eze and Adebayo (2021) further established that cultural diversity influences disciplinary strategies by fostering restorative approaches. While these studies highlight the benefits of cultural diversity, the present study emphasizes that, in Rivers State, without structured management strategies, these benefits may not be fully realized. Therefore, policies that integrate cultural awareness into school administration should be prioritized to harness the advantages of cultural diversity in public senior secondary schools.

Diversity in Religion Management by Principal and Teachers for Effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools

The findings from Table 2 and Table 4 revealed that the management of religious diversity in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State plays a significant role in fostering an inclusive and effective administrative environment. The responses from both principals and teachers indicate that religious diversity is acknowledged and managed through policies that accommodate different religious practices, ensuring fairness and respect for all beliefs. The statistical analysis in Table 4 further confirmed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers regarding the extent to which religious diversity is managed ($p = .194, p > .05$). This consensus underscores the effectiveness of existing policies and administrative strategies in balancing religious differences within the school system.

Compared to Ahmed and Karim (2017) who found that religious diversity led to more inclusive decision-making processes in Karachi, Pakistan, this present study align well with their conclusion that religious sensitivity enhances school administration. However, while Ahmed and Karim emphasized policy improvements, this study extends the analysis to explore how multiple diversity factors beyond religion interact to shape school administration.

Similarly, the findings resonate with those of Johnson and Miller (2019), highlighted that religiously diverse school staff utilized culturally sensitive conflict resolution techniques. The present study also indicates that religious inclusivity contributes to conflict mitigation and harmonious school administration. Additionally, the comparison with Brown and White (2018) demonstrated that religiously diverse schools in Rivers State, like those in the UK, are better positioned to develop flexible policies that accommodate different religious groups. However, this study diverges from Adamu and Yusuf (2021) by focusing not only on leadership practices but also on broader administrative processes, such as policy implementation and staff relationships. The alignment with Martinez and McConnell (2018) further reinforces that religious diversity fosters culturally responsive decision-making, ensuring that schools remain equitable and accommodating. These findings collectively emphasize the need for professional development programs that incorporate religious awareness training to sustain an inclusive and effective administrative structure in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

The study examined cultural and religious diversity as dimensions of diversity management for effective school administration in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The findings demonstrated that both cultural and religious diversity are important aspects of diversity management and are managed to a considerable extent by school administrators and teachers. The effective management of these dimensions fosters an inclusive school environment characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, and harmonious interpersonal relationships among members of the school community.

The study established that cultural diversity management enhances communication, collaboration, and understanding among individuals from different cultural backgrounds, thereby contributing to effective school administration. Similarly, the management of religious diversity promotes tolerance, reduces conflicts arising from religious differences, and strengthens social cohesion within schools. These outcomes are essential for creating a conducive learning environment and achieving educational objectives.

Furthermore, the absence of significant differences in the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the management of cultural and religious diversity suggests a shared understanding of the importance of diversity management in schools. This consensus underscores the collective responsibility of educational stakeholders in fostering inclusiveness and equity.

Based on the findings, it was concluded that effective management of cultural and religious diversity is indispensable for enhancing administrative effectiveness in public senior secondary schools. School leaders who embrace and appropriately manage diversity are better positioned to create supportive, peaceful, and productive educational environments that promote both academic excellence and organizational effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- Use the variety in years of experience to create mentorship programs, allowing younger and more experienced staff to collaborate and enhance administrative effectiveness.
- Establish programs that promote cultural and religious awareness, ensuring respectful integration of diverse cultural and religious belief.

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