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**LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDENTS' MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE**

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***Abstract***

*The study was carried out to investigate legal framework of students' management as a predictor of effective management of higher education in Rivers State. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 1,666 academic staff in the six public tertiary education institutions in Rivers State. The distribution of population was: University of Port Harcourt 550, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education 350, Rivers State University 330, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic 208, Ken Benson Saro Wiwa Polytechnic Bori 120, and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny 108. The sample of the study was 330 academic staff in the six public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample is comprised of 220 male lecturers and 110 female lecturers representing 20% of the population. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size as follows: University of Port Harcourt 109, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education 70, Rivers State University 65, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic 42, Ken Benson Saro Wiwa Polytechnic Bori 24, and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny 20. The instruments used for data collection in this study were self-structured questionnaire titled: Legal Framework for Students Management Questionnaire (LFSMQ), and Effective Management of Higher Education Questionnaire (EMHEQ). These instruments were validated by two experts from the Department of Educational Management of Rivers State University. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability index of 0.78 and 0.66 for LFSMQ and EMHEQ respectively. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to answer the research questions, while Multiple Regression was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found out that that legal framework on students' admission procedures, and discipline predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. Each of these dimensions had significant relationship with and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. On account of these findings, it was recommended that providing a legal framework for management of students on admission procedures, and discipline will enhance effective management of higher education in Rivers State.*

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**Key Words:** Management, Legal framework, Higher education, Admission procedures, Discipline.

## Introduction

The legal framework governing student management may significantly impact the effectiveness of higher education administration. A robust legal structure, coupled with clear policies, may probably ensure that admission procedures are adhered to, disciplinary measures are fair, students are effectively assessed, and their overall fundamental rights are protected. Legal framework also helps in managing student affairs, personnel, and resources effectively, ultimately contributing to a positive academic experience/outcome. The legal framework governing student management is crucial for effective higher education in Rivers State. It protects student rights, guides personnel management, ensures proper resource allocation, promotes a positive learning environment, and provides a fair system for addressing disciplinary issues. By adhering to legal frameworks Antman (2024) noted that institutions can create a more efficient, equitable, and productive learning environment for all students.

The admission procedures of students into various departments through clear cut-off points will address required minimum entry qualifications. A legal framework on students' admission procedures is expected to address minimum entry qualifications, registration procedures, deferment processes, orientation and matriculation. According to Peretomode (2001), students in Nigerian universities commonly complain about the opaque and sometimes unfair admission procedures. Specific complaints include delays in the application process, lack of transparency in selection criteria, and issues related to cut-off marks and admission quotas. Additionally, some students express concerns about the use of "connection" or "sorting" (using personal influence) in gaining admission, which undermines merit-based systems.

Haleem (2022) stated that students' areas of common complains are: lack of transparency in admission procedures where they often feel that the admission criteria and selection process are not clearly communicated, leading to confusion and suspicion; delays and Inefficiencies where the application and admission processes can be lengthy and cumbersome, with delays in processing applications and releasing results; Cut-off Marks and Quotas where concerns are raised about the fairness of cut-off marks for different courses and institutions, as well as the implementation of quotas for certain groups; Influence and "Sorting" where some students allege that admissions are sometimes influenced by personal connections or financial transactions, rather than academic merit; inadequate infrastructure and resources where even after gaining admission, some students face challenges due to poor facilities and resources in Nigerian universities; and incomplete and missing documents where a significant number of students are denied admission due to incomplete application documents, highlighting the need for better guidance and support during the application process. The extent a legal framework in students' admission procedures can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State will be examined in this study.

Disciplinary issues of students is another area where a legal framework is needed for effective management of higher education. A legal framework on students' discipline will provide a structured approach to addressing disciplinary issues, ensuring fairness and due process for all students. Lecturers in Nigerian universities frequently express concerns about

student discipline, citing issues like disrespect, examination malpractices, cultism, and academic dishonesty. These issues negatively impact the learning environment and the quality of graduates. Kalagbor (2006) stated that specific disciplinary issues like disrespect and defiance where lecturers often report a lack of respect from students towards them and university authorities, including insubordination and defiance of rules; examination malpractices where concerns are raised with instances of cheating, plagiarism, and impersonation during exams; Cultism where school management complain of cult-related activities, including violence and intimidation, disrupt academic life and create a hostile environment; academic dishonesty where beyond exams, students are also accused of engaging in various forms of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism in research papers and project submissions; general indiscipline where other issues like truancy, absenteeism, fighting, and substance abuse impact on students indiscipline; erosion of academic standards where indiscipline undermines the integrity of academic processes and can lead to the production of graduates with questionable knowledge and skills; negative learning environment were disruptive behavior, including noise and violence, creates an unconducive environment for teaching and learning; strain on resources where dealing with disciplinary cases diverts resources from teaching and research; and reputational damage were instances of indiscipline can damage the reputation of the university and Nigeria as a whole. A clear procedure for handling misconduct, academic dishonesty, and other disciplinary matters may help maintain order and promote a culture of accountability. This approach will help to prevent arbitrary decisions and ensures that students are aware of the consequences of their actions as well as how they are treated. How the legal framework in students' discipline can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State will be examined in this study.

The interaction of issues of law and schooling are becoming more pronounced by the day as our society continues to witness significant and rapid socio-political and economic changes (Erion, 2023). In an age that is globally infused with the concern for individual rights, there is of recent an emergence of local court cases as a confrontation of school authority and relative abuse of rights and privileges. In Nigeria, the issue of legal frameworks in the effective management of higher education is presumably a contemporary phenomenon and discussion on the same in the academic literature is scanty. It is against this background that this study aims to investigate legal framework of students' management as a predictor of effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian educational system is built on specific legislations yet there is public outcry on relative policy summersault in terms of admission procedures, disciplinary problems, assessment procedures, infringement of fundamental rights and other associated issues in school management. Laws regulate operational decisions, admission of candidates, appointment and promotion of staff, academic discipline and determination of career and even practically every detail of school administration. Sweeping powers are often delegated or conferred on management to enact, implement and review the rules under which the schools operate and by which they may be called upon to give an account. Most universities have prescribed code of conduct for their students who are required to swear

the oath of obedience and compliance along with their matriculation and these regulations are accompanied with sanctions. Public universities are set up as centres of academic excellence, for learning and to promote teaching and research. The curriculum of studies, the staffing, management policies and administrative procedures adopted are designed primarily to meet the needs of the society and to inculcate in the generation of students the cherished societal values. Law regulates operational decisions, admission of candidates, appointment and promotion of staff, academic discipline and determination of career.

Law regulates operational decisions, admission of candidates, appointment and promotion of staff academic discipline and determination of career. In many higher institutions across the world, indecent dressing among the youth has become the emblem of the modernity in general and the university campuses in particular. It is clearly one of the effects of globalization. Whereas modesty, decency, virtue, chastity, wholesomeness, piety, sincerity, etc. are terms which parents have employed in child-training and nurturing since many centuries and in many countries; but today, modernity seems to have swept all these away. While the public seem not satisfied with operational effects of some higher education stemmed from inadequate regulatory procedures, perhaps an investigation into how legal framework on students' management related to admission procedures, and discipline will predict effective management of higher education will suffice. This study aims to fill the gap.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to investigate how the legal framework in students' management can predict effective management of Higher Education in Rivers State. Specifically, the study attempts to achieve the following.

1. Determine how legal framework in students' admission procedures predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.
2. Examine how legal framework in students' discipline predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were posed to guide the study

1. How does the legal framework in students' admission procedures can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.
2. How does the legal framework in students' discipline can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

### **HYPOTHESES**

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

1. The legal framework in students' admission procedures do not significantly predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.
2. The legal framework in students' discipline do not significantly predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

### **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This study is anchor on three theories related to the topic. They are social system by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1937)

**The Social System Theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1937):** The social system theory tries to analyze organization through different lenses. This in sociology is the pattern of network of relationship constituting a coherent whole that exist between individuals, groups and institutions. It is a formal structure of roles and status that can form in a small, stable group (Wikipedia, 2010). The school is also seen as a system because it has a defined structure and set of roles which other systems have. The application of the social system theory to this study is vital because the school consists of various components with individuals with different roles and responsibilities that are arranged in hierarchical order. It also shows the channel of accountability in the school. However, these responsibilities and authorities are within the specifications of the relevant educational guidelines (Kalagbor, 2006). The Nigerian students in all school rely on the guide line and laws for protection from infringement especially within the school premises. As such, there is need for school administrators and teachers to be knowledgeable of the provision of the education and other extant laws while performing their duties by ensuring that they carry out their duties within the ambit of the educational guidelines. Thus, the Social System Theory views Nigerian higher institutions as interconnected systems where laws/policies (legal framework) are crucial for regulating student behavior and ensuring institutional goals (order, learning, development), aligning with societal norms and national objectives; laws provide the formal structure for managing rights, discipline, and administration, treating students as parts of a larger whole whose actions affect the entire system, promoting fair processes like due process in disciplinary actions, and linking internal management with external societal expectations for social order and development.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Management**

Literatures abound on the concept and usage of the term “management” There are people who see management as a process demanding the performance of a specific function. To them, management is seen as a profession. To some others, management is seen as a group or team of persons in an organization. Students of business management, industrial management, hospital management, educational management etc; see management as discipline (Ogbonnaya, 2004).

Whatever conceptual meanings given by them ends in getting things done through others. Put differently, management is the coordination of all the resources of an organization in order to achieve organizational objectives. Olum(2004) defined management as the art or science of achieving goals through people. Olum asserts that since managers also supervise, management can be interpreted to mean “looking over” That is, making sure that people do what they are expected to do.

Earlier, Akubue(1991) had defined management as a method where group of people at the highest level of an organization plan, organize, communicate, coordinate, control and direct the actions and activities of the people who work for the organization, towards the achievement of organizational objectives. Wehrich and Koontz (2004) described management as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working in

groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims. Similarly, Wali and Ololube (2016) see management as the process undertaken by one or more individuals to coordinate the activities of others in order to achieve results that are not achievable by one individual acting alone.

Mgbodile(2004) conceptualized management as leadership which aimed at influencing group activity towards goal achievement. To Peretomode(2003), management is a social process involving a sequence of coordinated events, that is, planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling or leading in order to use available resources to achieve a desired outcome in the fastest and most efficient way. Sherleker in Ejionueme(2013) sees management as the guidance, leadership and control of the efforts of the people towards common objectives.

From the above conceptions of management, this study enjoins Ogbonnaya (2004) to deduce that: management is a social process which involves planning, organizing, staffing, leadership, directing, controlling and coordinating of goals for the purpose of guidance or direction of people towards the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. In this regard, to achieve the higher education goals, legal framework governing higher education institutions (HEIs) is crucial for shaping educational landscapes and ensuring program quality and effectiveness.

### **Higher Education**

Higher educations are third level education after secondary schools. It takes place at universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and various professional schools that prepare students for manpower empowerment. Higher education includes undergraduate and postgraduate programs of study which gives students the chance to study a subject of interest for a career and earning potential. Higher Education has served as a key pillar of society for decades. It contributes to the development of a successful society and boosts economic growth, competition and knowledge. Universities can foster individual benefits as well. They provide individuals with the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and learn from experts in their field. University degrees can also help students gain a deeper understanding of the world and foster a sense of belonging. This can contribute to a desire to make a positive impact on society. Despite the rising costs and the emergence of more affordable alternatives, the benefits of higher education remain significant. The numerous advantages of obtaining a university degree makeS it a valuable investment for young people to contribute meaningfully for sustainable development of the economy.

Higher education is a gateway to enhanced employability and greater life satisfaction for individuals, while also serving as a catalyst for economic development and pioneering research that benefits society at large. It is imperative for educational institutions to continue highlighting these advantages, ensuring that students fully appreciate the profound impact and the lasting importance of higher education. Higher education institutions occupy a special place in the global educational system. The efficiency of the global economy and, consequently, the level of social development depends on the vector and effectiveness of their activities (Haleem 2022). The constitutional foundation for higher education is expressed in several legal statue documents. The right to higher education is part of the fundamental right to education, which is protected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The right to higher education incorporates both access (who can participate in higher education,

how access can be equitable and so on) as well as success – the support provided to students so that they can fully participate in and benefit in higher education. Contemporary globalized economies are driven by new knowledge and technologies. The world is becoming increasingly competitive, which is changing the nature of the attitude to human labor, and with the requirements for professional training. New knowledge is created every day, new information messages are disseminated, and it is impossible to master all knowledge and keep track of all important information. Under such conditions, future specialists must be able to search for, process the necessary knowledge and information in a specific practical situation, and formulate ready-made solutions. That is why the role of higher education is not only growing rapidly but also changing, as sustainable skills and abilities to work with new knowledge and information are formed during studying at higher educational institutions (Heilporn, Lakhal & Bélisle, 2021).

Legal framework in higher educational institutions are imperatives to ensure quality assurance that universities produce high quality and competent graduates who can compete globally in their respective disciplines. Antman (2024) noted that the Nigerian higher education system is not lacking in this all-important respect as higher education frameworks set out the laws and regulations that govern the operations of universities, including their administration, curriculum, and student conduct. Its main purpose is to ensure that universities function in a fair and just manner, providing a safe and conducive environment for learning. University law plays a crucial role in shaping our society and ensuring that justice is served. It serves as the foundation for maintaining order, resolving conflicts, and protecting the rights of individuals and communities. Without a strong legal system, society would be chaotic and vulnerable to abuse and injustice. One of the main reasons why university law is important for individuals and communities is that it provides a framework for resolving disputes and upholding the rule of law. This allows for fair and just outcomes, ensuring that everyone is held accountable for their actions.

In turn, this promotes trust and confidence in the legal system, which is essential for a stable and harmonious society. Furthermore, university law also plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights and freedoms of individuals and communities. It ensures that everyone is treated equally under the law, regardless of their social status or background. This helps to prevent discrimination and promote inclusivity, creating a more just and equitable society. Another reason why university law is important for individuals and communities is that it serves as a deterrent against crime. The existence of laws and consequences for breaking them helps to discourage individuals from engaging in criminal activities. Joanna (2022) reiterated that this not only protects individuals but also maintains the safety and well-being of the community as a whole. In addition, university law also serves as a tool for social change and progress. It allows for the creation of new laws and policies that address current societal issues and promote positive change. This helps to improve the lives of individuals and communities, making society a better place for everyone. In conclusion, the impact of university law on society cannot be overstated. It plays a critical role in maintaining order, protecting rights, promoting fairness, and driving social progress.

As individuals and members of a community, it is important to understand the significance of university law and its role in shaping the world we live in. In conclusion,

university law is a crucial aspect of society that helps maintain order and ensure justice for all. With its complex and diverse nature, understanding university law is essential for individuals living in different regions around the world. By exploring its significance, we can gain a deeper understanding of the legal systems that govern our lives and how they impact society as a whole.

Understanding university law is crucial for individuals as well as society as a whole according to Egbe and Eze (2012), is for individuals to have knowledge of university law to help protect their rights and ensure that they are treated fairly within the university setting. It also allows individuals to make informed decisions about their education and career paths. On a larger scale, understanding university law is essential for maintaining a just and equitable society. An understanding of the legal framework of students' management as a predictor of effective management of higher education in Rivers State is the will be filled in this study.

### **Legal Framework**

A legal framework for higher education administration refers to the set of laws, regulations, and policies that govern the operations and decision-making processes within a higher education institution. According to Haleem (2022), higher education laws are set of rules and regulations that govern the operations of universities and their relationships with students, faculty, and staff. It covers a wide range of legal issues, including but not limited to admissions, academic policies, financial aid, campus safety, and employment practices. *So why does university law matter?* For starters, it ensures that universities operate in an ethical and fair manner. It provides the structure for how a university is run, ensuring accountability, fairness, and compliance with legal standards. What is typically included in a university's legal framework according to Heilporn, Lakhail and Bélisle (2021) are: constitutional and statutory framework, governance and administration, compliance and accountability, and external relations.

Constitutional and statutory framework include: constitutional provisions which are the foundational principles of the country's constitution that relate to education, such as the right to education and the autonomy of educational institutions; education Statutes like specific laws enacted by the legislature that govern the establishment, operation, and oversight of universities. These laws often outline the powers and responsibilities of the university governing body, faculty, and students; University Acts which are legal documents that establish the university, define its purpose, and grant it certain powers and privileges; Regulations and Bye-laws which are rules and procedures created by the university itself or by government agencies to implement the broader laws and policies related to education.

Governance and Administration include: University governance structure as the legal framework according to Ciwar (2005) defines the structure and composition of the university's governing body (e.g., Board of Trustees, Senate) and its relationship with the administration; Academic Freedom and Tenure which are laws and policies that protect academic freedom and ensure the security of faculty appointments; Students Rights and Responsibilities which are regulations outlining the rights and responsibilities of students, including admissions, academic performance, disciplinary procedures, and access to support services; Employment Law which are application of labor laws to university staff, including faculty, administrative personnel, and support staff; Financial Management and Accounting as

regulations governing the university's financial operations, including budgeting, fundraising, and reporting requirements; Intellectual Property Rights as policies related to the ownership and management of intellectual property generated by university researchers and students. Compliance and Accountability include: Data Protection and Privacy as regulations related to the collection, use, and protection of personal data of students, staff, and other stakeholders; Equality and Diversity as laws and policies prohibiting discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of university life; Health and Safety which are regulations ensuring a safe and healthy environment for students and staff; Accessibility as compliance with laws and regulations related to accessibility for individuals with disabilities; Research Ethics as regulations and guidelines governing research practices, including ethical considerations and research integrity; Dispute Resolution as mechanisms for resolving disputes between the university and its stakeholders, including students, faculty, and staff; External Relations as Contract Law for regulations governing contracts between the university and other entities, such as suppliers, service providers, and research partners, and having International Agreements which regulates related international collaborations, student exchange programs, and other international activities as well as regulatory Oversight which provides the roles of government agencies in overseeing and regulating the university's operations.

Understanding the legal framework governing university administration is crucial for ensuring the smooth and lawful operation of the institution, protecting the rights and interests of all stakeholders, and maintaining the integrity of the educational process. In this study, the legal framework for students' admission procedures, students discipline, student assessment, and students' fundamental rights are discussed.

A legal framework for university admissions is crucial to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in the process. According to Ikwuegbu and Nwanari (2015), a legal framework for university admissions protects students' rights, promotes equal access, and helps universities maintain academic standards. Such a framework will prevent discrimination by adopting non discriminating practices based on factors like race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic background, ensuring that all eligible candidates have a fair chance; Protects individual rights where it safeguards students' rights to education and due process, ensuring they are not unfairly denied admission or subjected to arbitrary decisions; Promotes Equity by mandating specific measures to address historical disadvantages and ensure that marginalized groups have equal access to higher education; ensuring transparency and accountability by adopting clear admission criteria which requires universities to clearly define their admission criteria, making the process more transparent and predictable for applicants; Review and Appeals Process by establishing mechanisms for reviewing admission decisions and provide avenues for students to appeal if they believe their rights have been violated; by ensuring public accountability where universities can be held accountable for their admission practices, ensuring they adhere to established standards and regulations; Maintaining academic standards by providing Minimum Entry Requirements that set minimum academic standards for university entrance, ensuring that students admitted are adequately prepared for higher education; ensuring quality assurance with quality assurance mechanisms, such as program accreditation, to ensure that universities maintain high academic standards; as well

as assesses the overall quality of the university's operations, including teaching, research, and student support; Addressing societal needs like national policies which align university admissions with national policies, such as the "federal character" principle in Nigeria, which aims to ensure representation from different regions and ethnic groups, and socioeconomic considerations where universities can incorporate measures to address socioeconomic disparities and promote access to education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and meeting labor market demands to help universities adapt their admission policies to meet the evolving needs of the labor market and ensure that graduates have the skills and knowledge required. A legal framework for university admissions is essential for creating a fair, transparent, and accountable system that promotes equal access to higher education while maintaining academic standards and addressing broader societal needs.

Another legal framework in Nigerian universities is that of students' discipline. It is a multi-layered area combining the universities' internal regulations with broader constitutional and statutory provisions. Universities, as established by law, possess the power to discipline students, but this power is not absolute and must be exercised within the bounds of the law. Some of these statutes include: University statutes where each university in Nigeria is established by a law or an Act of the relevant legislature (Federal or State).

These statutes outline the university's powers, including the authority to discipline students. Again, the National Universities Commission (NUC) statute established by law, sets minimum standards for Nigerian universities and their programs. Daku & Shinga (2019) noted that while NUC does not directly handle disciplinary matters, it plays a role in ensuring the quality and standards of education, which indirectly impacts disciplinary practices. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended 2011) is another statute that provides disciplinary measures for school administration. The constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including the right to a fair hearing (Section 36) and freedom from torture and inhuman treatment (Section 34).

These rights are crucial in ensuring that disciplinary actions taken by universities are fair and just. The next statute is the Child Rights Act 2003 which provides further protection for students, particularly those who are minors, and prohibits practices like corporal punishment and public humiliation. Furthermore, other relevant legislation depending on the nature of the offense, other laws like the Penal Code or Criminal Code may also be relevant in cases of serious misconduct or crimes committed within the university. Key considerations in this regard are: fair hearing where universities must ensure that students facing disciplinary action are given a fair hearing, including the right to be informed of the charges, present a defense, and be heard by an impartial panel.

Followed by proportionality where disciplinary actions taken must be proportionate to the offense committed. Again, due process where universities must follow established procedures when investigating and adjudicating disciplinary matters is important. The curriculum of studies, the staffing, management policies and administrative procedures adopted are designed primarily to meet the needs of the society and to inculcate in the generation of students the cherished societal values. In essence, the legal framework for student discipline in Nigerian universities aims to balance the need for maintaining order and standards with the protection of students' fundamental rights and fair treatment.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted correlational survey research design. The population of the study consists of 1,666 academic staff in the six public tertiary education institutions in Rivers State. The population of academic staff include: University of Port Harcourt 550, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education 350, Rivers State University 330, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic 208, Ken Benson Saro Wiwa Polytechnic Bori 120, and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny 108. The sample of the study was 330 academic staff in the six public tertiary institutions in Rivers State comprised of 220 male lecturers and 110 female lectures staff representing 20% of the population. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample size as follows: University of Port Harcourt 109, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education 70, Rivers State University 65, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic 42, Ken Benson Saro Wiwa Polytechnic Bori 24, and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny 20.

The instruments used for data collection in this study were self-structured questionnaire titled: Legal Framework for Students Management Questionnaire (LFSMQ), and Effective Management of Higher Education Questionnaire (EMHEQ). These questionnaire consists of two sections each. Section A dealt with items on demographic data of the respondents, while section B dealt with the questions items in clusters of the independent variable and dependent variable. The response pattern in each of the instrument was a 4 point Likert type of scale of Very High Extent (VHE =4), High Extent (HE = 3), Low Extent (LE = 2), and Very Low Extent (VLE=1). The instruments were validated by two experts from the Department of Educational Management of Rivers State University. A test re-test method was carried out on 20 management staff of higher educational institutions who were outside the sample population to give a reliability index of 0.78 and 0.66 for LFSMQ and EMHEQ. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to answer the research questions, while Multiply Regression was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.

## **Results**

**Research Question 1:** How does the legal framework in students' admission procedures can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Table 1:** Analysis of variance on legal framework in students' admission procedures can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 2707.858       | 1   | 2707.858    | 873.727 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 613.642        | 198 | 3.099       |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 3321.500       | 199 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Effective Management Of Higher Education

b. Predictors: (Constant), Legal Framework On Students Admission Procedures

Table 1 above showed that F-value of 873.727 was significant at 0.000. It showed that the legal framework in students' admission procedures was significantly related to and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Hypotheses 1:** The legal framework in students' admission procedures do not significantly predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Table 2:** Model Summary for legal framework on students' admission procedures

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .903 <sup>a</sup> | .815     | .814              | 1.76046                    |

a. Predictors: (Constant), legal framework on students admission procedures

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.903. This indicates that 90.3% of the variance in effective management of higher education in Rivers State is caused by variations in the predictor variables. Therefore, 90.3% of the variance in effective management of higher education in Rivers State is predicted by legal framework on students' admission procedures.

**Table 3:** t-Values of legal framework on students' admission procedures and effective management of higher education

| Model | Coefficients <sup>a</sup>                         |            |                           |       |        |
|-------|---|------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|
|       | Unstandardized Coefficients                       |            | Standardized Coefficients |       |        |
|       | B   | Std. Error | Beta                      | t     | Sig.   |
| 1     | (Constant)  | 11.765     | 1.284                     | 9.161 | .000   |
|       | Legal Frame Work On Students Admission Procedures | 1.626      | .055                      | .903  | 29.559 |

A. Dependent variable: Effective management of higher education(\*\* Sig. at  $P < 0.05$ ; \* Sig. at  $P < 0.1$ )

The t-values of legal framework on students' admission procedures and effective management of higher education is presented in table 3. The t-value was (9.161,  $P < 0.000$ ) legal framework on students' admission procedures had significant relationship ( $P < 0.05$ ) with and predicted effective management of higher educations in Rivers State. Higher education that had legal frameworks on students' admission procedures were effectively managed in Rivers State than those that do not have.

**Research Question 2:** How does the legal framework in students' discipline can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Table 4:** Analysis of variance on legal framework in students' discipline can predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |                |    |             |   |      |
|--------------------|----------------|----|-------------|---|------|
| Model              | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |

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|   |            |          |     |          |         |                   |
|---|------------|----------|-----|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 2440.236 | 1   | 2440.236 | 548.265 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|   | Residual   | 881.264  | 198 |          | 4.451   |                   |
|   | Total      | 3321.500 | 199 |          |         |                   |

A. Dependent variable: effective management of higher education

B. Predictors: (constant), legal frame work on students discipline

Table 4 above showed that F-value of 548.265 was significant at 0.000. It showed that the legal framework in students' discipline was significantly related to and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Hypotheses 2:** The legal framework in students' discipline do not significantly predict effective management of higher education in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** Model Summary for legal framework on students' discipline

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .857 <sup>a</sup> | .735     | .733              | 2.10970                    |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Legal frame work on students discipline

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.857. This indicates that 85.7% of the variance in effective management of higher education in Rivers State is caused by variations in the predictor variables. Therefore, 85.7% of the variance in effective management of higher education in Rivers State is predicted by legal framework on students' discipline.

**Table 6:** t-Values of legal framework on students' discipline and effective management of higher education.

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |   |            |       |                            |        |      |
|---------------------------|---|------------|-------|----------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     | Unstandardized Coefficients             |            |       | Standardize d Coefficients |        |      |
|                           | B                                       | Std. Error | Beta  | t                          | Sig.   |      |
| 1                         | (Constant)                              | 14.650     | 1.498 |                            | 9.780  | .000 |
|                           | Legal frame work on students discipline | 2.124      | .091  | .857                       | 23.415 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Effective management of higher education

The t-values of legal framework on students' discipline and effective management of higher education is presented in table 6. The t-value was (9.780,  $P < 0.000$ ) legal framework on students' discipline had significant relationship ( $P < 0.05$ ) with and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. Higher educations that had legal frameworks on students' discipline were effectively managed in Rivers State than those that do not have.

### Discussion of Findings

#### Legal framework in students' admission procedures and effective management of higher education in Rivers State

The findings in this research question revealed that legal framework on students' admission procedures predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. The test of

hypothesis in this direction showed that legal framework on students' admission procedures had significant relationship (9.161,  $P < 0.000$ ) with and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. These findings corroborates with that of Ikwuegbu and Nwanari (2015) who stated that a legal framework for university admissions procedures protects students' rights, promotes equal access, and helps universities maintain academic standards. Such a framework will prevent discrimination by adopting non discriminating practices based on factors like race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic background, ensuring that all eligible candidates have a fair chance. Antman (2024) also noted that a legal framework for Nigerian university admissions enhances management by standardizing fairness (Federal Character, quotas), ensuring quality through NUC oversight, defining due process for transparency, promoting equity for underrepresented groups, and streamlining operations via centralized bodies like JAMB, ultimately balancing merit with national inclusion goals for effective governance and quality assurance. In essence, the legal framework on students' admission procedures provides the necessary structure, rules, and enforcement mechanisms to manage Nigeria's large, diverse university system efficiently, ensuring quality while striving for national objectives like access and equity.

#### **Legal framework on students' discipline and effective management of higher education in Rivers State**

The findings in this research question revealed that legal framework on students' discipline predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. The test of hypothesis in this direction showed that legal framework on students' discipline had significant relationship (9.841,  $P < 0.000$ ) with and predicted effective management of higher education in Rivers State. These findings corroborates with the assertion of Daku & Shinga (2019) who noted that the essence of a legal framework for student discipline in Nigerian universities is to balance the need for maintaining order and standards with the protection of students' fundamental rights and fair treatment. Kalagbor (2006) also noted that a legal framework for discipline in Nigerian higher education provides clear rules, protects rights (like fair hearing), ensures consistent application of standards, and empowers management to enforce codes of conduct, thereby reducing anarchy, fostering accountability, creating a positive learning environment, and ensuring institutions meet their objectives, all while safeguarding against abuse by adhering to due process for students and staff.

The laws on students discipline according to Erion (2023), establishes clear rules & expectations where laws and statutes define acceptable conduct for students, lecturers, and administrators, setting standards for academic integrity, behaviour, and daily operations, preventing chaos; protects rights & ensures fairness that guarantees fundamental rights, such as the right to fair hearing, preventing arbitrary punishments and ensuring due process, which builds trust and legitimacy; empowers & guides administrators that provides administrators (like Vice-Chancellors) with the authority and procedures to enforce rules and manage disciplinary issues effectively, supporting the institution's goals; fosters accountability & deterrence by outlining penalties for infractions (like plagiarism, misconduct), it makes individuals accountable and deters negative behaviour, promoting a culture of responsibility; ensures consistency & reduces bias where standardized procedures and legal backing ensure

that disciplinary actions are applied consistently, reducing favoritism, nepotism, and subjective decision-making; supports institutional stability for a strong legal foundation for good governance and strategic direction, allowing universities to function as stable democratic communities despite changing circumstances; promotes positive learning atmosphere by managing misconduct and fostering self-discipline, it creates a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning, aligning with the institution's core mission. In essence, the law moves discipline from arbitrary rule-enforcement to a structured, rights-respecting system, essential for effective governance and achieving educational goals in Nigerian universities.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that providing a legal framework for students' management in Nigerian higher education will foster a stable, democratic, and effective educational environment where both students' rights and academic goals are achieved. Such a framework leads to orderly management and reduced tension where a clear awareness of the law help reduce unnecessary tension, violence, and disruptive behavior, fostering a calm environment conducive to teaching, research, and community service.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. Higher educations in Rivers State should development and enforcement of legal frame work on student admission procedures to effectively manage their students.
2. Higher educations in Rivers State should development and enforcement of legal frame work on students' discipline to effectively manage their students.

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