

Relationship Between Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes in Public Tertiary Institutions in Edo State Nigeria

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Abstract - This study examined the relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by growing concerns regarding the increasing influence of ethnic affiliation, religious bias, regionalism, nepotism, kinship loyalty, and political patronage on institutional administration and educational effectiveness within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Anchored on Ekeh's (1975) Two Publics Theory, the study investigated how primordial loyalties interact with civic responsibilities and institutional processes, thereby affecting meritocracy, organizational justice, transparency, and educational quality. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised academic and non-academic staff of public tertiary institutions in Edo State, from which a sample of 370 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling techniques. Data were collected using the researcher-developed Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes Questionnaire (PSEEQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.84 established through Cronbach's Alpha. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that primordial sentiments are highly prevalent within public tertiary institutions, with ethnic affiliation and favoritism ($\bar{x} = 3.41$) and religious bias and discrimination ($\bar{x} = 3.27$) emerging as the most dominant forms. Educational outcomes were found to be moderate (grand mean = 2.69). The study further revealed a significant negative relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes ($r = -0.63, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that primordial sentiments significantly undermine institutional effectiveness and educational quality. It recommended merit-based administration, ethical governance, organizational justice, and strengthened accountability mechanisms within tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Primordial Sentiments, Educational Outcomes, Ethnicity, Organizational Justice, Tertiary Institutions, Educational Administration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the most important instruments for national development, social transformation, technological advancement, and human capital formation. Tertiary institutions are established not merely as centres for the transmission of knowledge, but as intellectual communities responsible for producing skilled manpower, advancing research, promoting innovation, and fostering national integration and sustainable development. In fulfilling these responsibilities, public tertiary institutions are expected to operate on the principles of merit, fairness, objectivity, accountability, and professionalism. Such institutions are ideally structured to transcend ethnic, religious, political, and regional boundaries in order to sustain academic excellence and institutional credibility.

In Nigeria, however, public tertiary institutions operate within a highly pluralistic and socio-politically complex environment characterized by strong ethnic consciousness, religious diversity, regional loyalties, kinship networks, and political patronage systems. These social realities continue to shape institutional interactions, administrative behaviour, and decision-making processes within many public institutions, including tertiary institutions. Consequently, institutional practices that ought to be guided strictly by meritocratic and professional standards are sometimes influenced by primordial sentiments such as ethnic favoritism, religious bias, nepotism, regional considerations, and political affiliations.

Primordial sentiments refer to deep emotional attachments and loyalties individuals maintain toward their ethnic, religious, cultural, kinship, political, or regional identities. These loyalties often influence patterns of social interaction, access to

opportunities, allocation of resources, and institutional relationships. Within tertiary institutions, the influence of such sentiments may affect recruitment processes, promotion exercises, student admissions, leadership appointments, allocation of responsibilities, staff relationships, and administrative decisions. Where these sentiments dominate institutional operations, issues such as favoritism, discrimination, administrative inefficiency, poor staff morale, weakened accountability, and compromised academic standards may emerge.

Educational outcomes represent important indicators of institutional effectiveness and educational quality. They encompass measurable outcomes such as student academic achievement, staff productivity, research output, quality of teaching and learning, administrative efficiency, graduation rates, institutional reputation, and overall academic performance. The quality of educational outcomes within tertiary institutions therefore depends not only on infrastructure and funding but also on the ethical and administrative culture guiding institutional operations.

In recent years, Nigerian public tertiary institutions have increasingly faced concerns relating to declining educational quality, weak research productivity, administrative inefficiency, poor staff motivation, and governance challenges. While many of these problems have been attributed to inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, policy inconsistencies, and leadership challenges, growing evidence suggests that social and identity-based factors such as primordial sentiments may also significantly contribute to institutional inefficiency and declining educational outcomes.

Edo State provides an important context for examining this phenomenon because public tertiary institutions within the state attract staff and students from diverse ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds. Such diversity creates environments where multiple social identities intersect with formal institutional responsibilities, thereby increasing the possibility of primordial sentiments influencing institutional administration and educational outcomes.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The history of public institutions in many African societies reflects a continuing tension between formal institutional values and primordial loyalties rooted in ethnicity, religion, kinship, and communal identity. In Nigeria, this tension has remained particularly significant because of the country's pluralistic nature and complex socio-political structure. Since independence, issues relating to ethnicity, regionalism, nepotism, and political patronage have continued to shape governance, public administration, and institutional behaviour. These realities have not only affected political systems but have also influenced the administration and effectiveness of educational institutions.

Public tertiary institutions occupy a central position in national development because they are expected to promote intellectual growth, manpower development, research advancement, innovation, social mobility, and national integration. Ideally, such institutions are expected to function within frameworks of meritocracy, fairness, transparency, accountability, and professionalism. Universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education are traditionally conceived as universal communities of scholars where academic and administrative processes are guided by competence and objective institutional standards rather than personal or group loyalties.

However, in practice, institutional operations within many Nigerian public tertiary institutions are frequently influenced by primordial sentiments. Primordial sentiments refer to deep-rooted emotional attachments and loyalties individuals maintain toward ethnic, religious, regional, political, and kinship identities. These loyalties are socially inherited and reinforced through communal relationships, historical experiences, and cultural interactions. In highly diverse societies such as Nigeria, primordial sentiments often shape patterns of trust, cooperation, resource allocation, and institutional participation.

Geertz (1973) described primordial attachments as natural and socially inherited bonds arising from ethnicity, religion, kinship, language, and place of origin. Such attachments strongly influence individual perceptions, social behaviour, and group loyalty. Similarly, Ekeh (1975), in his *Two Publics Theory*, argued that post-colonial African societies operate through two overlapping public spheres: the

primordial public and the civic public. The primordial public is associated with strong moral obligations toward ethnic, religious, and communal groups, while the civic public represents formal institutions expected to function through impersonal and rule-based systems. Ekeh argued that individuals often demonstrate stronger loyalty to the primordial public than to civic institutions, thereby allowing primordial considerations to influence formal institutional processes.

The relevance of Ekeh's theoretical perspective to public tertiary institutions is profound because tertiary institutions belong to the civic public where decisions are expected to be guided by merit, fairness, objectivity, and institutional regulations. Nevertheless, these institutions exist within broader social environments characterized by ethnic consciousness, religious loyalties, kinship ties, and political affiliations. Consequently, institutional actors often transfer primordial loyalties into formal educational settings. This may influence staff recruitment, promotion exercises, and admissions, allocation of institutional resources, leadership appointments, and administrative decisions.

One of the most dominant manifestations of primordial sentiments within Nigerian institutions is ethnic affiliation and favoritism. Ethnicity has remained a major determinant of social relationships, political interactions, and access to opportunities in Nigeria. Nnoli (2008) argued that ethnic consciousness significantly shapes institutional behaviour and resource distribution within Nigerian public institutions. Within tertiary institutions, ethnic favoritism may manifest in recruitment practices, staff promotion, leadership appointments, admission considerations, and allocation of institutional responsibilities. Such practices often weaken meritocracy and create perceptions of exclusion, discrimination, and institutional injustice among staff and students.

Religious bias and discrimination also constitute important dimensions of primordial sentiments within public institutions. Religion occupies a central position in Nigerian society and often influences social interactions, trust, loyalty, and group identity. Okafor and Ugwuegbu (2015) observed that religious affiliation significantly affects workplace relationships and administrative interactions within Nigerian institutions. In tertiary institutions, religious

sentiments may shape staff relationships, informal alliances, leadership preferences, and patterns of inclusion or exclusion. Such tendencies may generate tension, weaken institutional harmony, and compromise administrative neutrality.

Another important dimension of primordial sentiments is regional and indigene–non-indigene bias. In Nigeria, indigeneity and regional identity continue to influence access to opportunities, political participation, and social inclusion. Within tertiary institutions, indigene–settler distinctions may affect recruitment decisions, student admissions, leadership positions, and distribution of institutional benefits. Individuals perceived as non-indigenes may experience subtle exclusion, marginalization, or reduced access to opportunities. Such practices weaken institutional cohesion and negatively affect organizational justice and inclusiveness.

Nepotism and kinship loyalty equally represent major manifestations of primordial sentiments within public institutions. Nepotism refers to preferential treatment granted to relatives, friends, or close associates irrespective of competence or merit. Adebayo (2010) argued that kinship networks and personalized relationships frequently influence recruitment, promotion, and administrative decisions within Nigerian public organizations. Within tertiary institutions, nepotism may compromise professionalism, reduce institutional credibility, weaken staff morale, and undermine accountability systems. When competence becomes secondary to personal loyalty, institutional productivity and educational quality are likely to decline.

Political affiliation and patronage also constitute critical dimensions of primordial sentiments within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Ibrahim (2013) observed that political patronage and external political interference significantly weaken institutional autonomy and administrative objectivity within Nigerian public institutions. Political influence may affect leadership appointments, allocation of resources, employment opportunities, and policy implementation within tertiary institutions. Such interference often compromises institutional independence and weakens the capacity of institutions to function according to established academic and administrative standards.

The influence of these primordial sentiments has important implications for educational outcomes within tertiary institutions. Educational outcomes refer to measurable indicators of institutional effectiveness and educational quality such as student academic achievement, staff productivity and morale, research output, quality of teaching and learning, administrative efficiency and transparency, graduation rates, institutional reputation, and overall academic performance.

Student academic achievement remains one of the most important indicators of educational outcomes because it reflects the extent to which students successfully attain educational goals and learning objectives. Academic achievement may be affected by the quality of teaching, fairness in academic processes, institutional climate, and availability of learning opportunities. Where primordial sentiments influence student assessment, admissions, or access to academic support, students may perceive institutional processes as unfair, thereby affecting motivation, engagement, and performance.

Staff productivity and morale also constitute important indicators of institutional effectiveness. Staff morale refers to the level of motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, and psychological attachment employees demonstrate toward institutional goals. Organizational Justice Theory suggests that employees are more productive and committed when institutional processes are perceived as fair, transparent, and merit-based. However, where staff perceive favoritism, ethnic bias, nepotism, or political interference within institutional administration, morale and productivity are likely to decline. Reduced staff morale may negatively affect teaching effectiveness, research commitment, and institutional service delivery.

Institutional research output represents another important measure of educational quality and academic productivity. Research constitutes one of the fundamental mandates of tertiary institutions because it contributes to knowledge generation, innovation, policy development, and societal advancement. However, research productivity may be affected by weak institutional support systems, poor staff motivation, administrative inefficiency, and non-meritocratic practices. Institutions characterized by favoritism and poor organizational

justice may experience weak collaboration, reduced academic motivation, and declining research culture.

Quality of teaching and learning equally remains central to educational outcomes within tertiary institutions. Effective teaching and learning require competent staff, adequate motivation, supportive institutional environments, and objective academic processes. Where primordial sentiments influence recruitment, promotion, or allocation of academic responsibilities, the quality of teaching may become compromised. Similarly, discriminatory practices and unhealthy institutional climates may weaken students' learning experiences and reduce educational effectiveness.

Administrative efficiency and transparency are also critical indicators of institutional effectiveness. Effective administration ensures accountability, fairness, policy implementation, proper coordination, and efficient management of institutional resources. Okojie (2013) maintained that weak governance structures and lack of transparency remain major obstacles to educational quality within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Administrative inefficiency often manifests through delayed decision-making, poor accountability, favoritism, and weak enforcement of institutional regulations. Such conditions may weaken institutional trust, reduce organizational effectiveness, and negatively affect educational outcomes.

Concerns regarding declining educational standards, weak research productivity, poor institutional governance, staff dissatisfaction, and reduced institutional competitiveness within Nigerian tertiary institutions have generated increased scholarly attention. Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010) argued that educational quality in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been constrained by inadequate funding, administrative inefficiencies, weak staff motivation, and institutional instability. Similarly, Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner (2003) observed that many African universities continue to operate below their academic and research potential because of governance challenges, weak accountability structures, and poor research support systems.

Recent empirical studies have increasingly linked social identity and primordial loyalties to institutional behaviour within Nigerian tertiary institutions. Badejo, Fashina, and Adebisi (2018) found that

ethnic identity influenced academic experiences and performance patterns among students within Nigerian institutions. Akporuarho, Ogheneakoke, and Osakwe (2020) equally reported that social identity significantly affected academic performance among students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. Omenka (2013) further revealed that ethnic composition within institutional management structures influenced organizational practices and institutional effectiveness.

The significance of these studies lies in their demonstration that primordial sentiments do not merely affect interpersonal relationships; they also influence institutional productivity, educational quality, administrative efficiency, and organizational justice. Nevertheless, despite growing scholarly attention to issues of ethnicity, governance, and institutional administration, there remains limited empirical evidence specifically examining the relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

This study therefore becomes necessary because Edo State represents a socio-culturally diverse environment where public tertiary institutions attract students and staff from different ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds. In such settings, primordial sentiments may significantly influence interpersonal relationships, institutional governance, administrative practices, and educational outcomes. Understanding the nature and extent of this relationship is essential for strengthening institutional effectiveness, promoting organizational justice, improving educational quality, and enhancing the overall performance of public tertiary institutions in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

It is against this background that this study investigates the relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria, with a view to determining the prevalence of primordial sentiments, assessing educational outcomes, and establishing the extent to which primordial sentiments influence institutional effectiveness and educational quality.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

Three (3) research questions with one hypothesis guided this study.

1. What are the prevalent primordial sentiments in public tertiary institutions in Edo State Nigeria?
2. What is the level of educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State Nigeria?
3. Are there relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State Nigeria?

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a correlational survey design to explore how primordial sentiments relate to educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions. This approach allowed the researcher to gather quantitative data without altering any variables, thus preserving objectivity and reliability. The target population included academic staff and non-teaching staff from the State own College of Education, polytechnics, and university in Edo State, Nigeria, totaling 9,714 staff members. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, a sample of 370 participants was calculated, and stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across the different institution types.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire called the Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes Questionnaire (PSEEQ). It contained two sections: Section A captured demographic details such as gender, designation, and institution, while Section B measured perceptions of ethnicity, religion, favoritism, regionalism, and their effects on academic performance, institutional efficiency, staff productivity, and research output. Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert scale (4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). The instrument was reviewed for face and content validity, and a pilot test involving 30 respondents from an unrelated institution produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, confirming internal consistency.

Administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher and trained assistants, with assurances of confidentiality and immediate retrieval to boost the response rate. Descriptive statistics; mean and standard deviation summarized the data, while Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) tested the hypothesis at a 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis was rejected if $p < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant relationship

between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes.

V. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the prevalent primordial sentiments in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria?

Table 1
 Mean Ratings of Prevalent Primordial Sentiments in Public Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Primordial Sentiments	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (SD)	Rank
1	Ethnic affiliation and favoritism	3.41	0.74	1 st
2	Religious bias and discrimination	3.27	0.82	2 nd
3	Regional and non-indigene bias	3.11	0.79	3 rd
4	Nepotism and kinship loyalty	2.94	0.88	4 th
5	Political affiliation and patronage	2.71	0.91	5 th

N=370, Decision benchmark = 2.50. Mean ≥ 2.50 indicates high prevalence of sentiment.

Data in Table 1 reveals that ethnic affiliation and favoritism ($\bar{x} = 3.41$) and religious bias and discrimination ($\bar{x} = 3.27$) are the most prevalent forms of primordial sentiments in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, followed by regional and non-indigenes bias ($\bar{x} = 3.11$). With a grand mean of

3.09, these results indicate that primordial sentiments are prevalent across the institutions surveyed.

Research Question 2

What is the level of educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria?

Table 2
 Mean Ratings of Educational Outcome Indicators

S/N	Educational Outcome Indicators	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Remark
1	Student academic achievement	2.84	0.77	Moderate
2	Staff productivity and morale	2.69	0.81	Moderate
3	Institutional research output	2.61	0.89	Moderate
4	Quality of teaching and learning	2.73	0.84	Moderate
5	Administrative efficiency and transparency	2.58	0.80	Moderate
Grand Mean		2.69	0.82	Moderate Level

N=370, Decision rule: 1.00–2.49 = Low; 2.50–3.49 = Moderate; 3.50–4.00 = High.

Table 2 shows that the grand mean of 2.69 places the overall level of educational outcomes at a moderate level in line with the decision rule. Though students' academic achievement mean score (2.84) was the highest followed by quality teaching and learning mean score (2.73). However, administrative efficiency and transparency mean score (2.58) was

the least followed by institutional research output with a mean score of 2.61.

Hypothesis Testing

There is no significant relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 3
 Relationship between Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes

Variables	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Primordial Sentiments	3.09	0.83	-0.63	0.001	Significant
Educational Outcomes	2.69	0.82			

N=370, $p < 0.05$

The result in Table 3 shows a significant negative correlation between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes ($r = -0.63$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) stating that “there is no significant relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes” is rejected. The negative correlation indicates that as primordial sentiments increase, educational outcomes decline.

To determine the interactive relationship of each type of primordial sentiment on educational outcomes, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted using the mean scores of the five identified sentiments from Research Question 1. Educational outcomes were measured using the grand mean of student academic achievement, staff productivity, research output, teaching and learning quality, and administrative efficiency. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
 Correlation between Individual Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes

Primordial Sentiment	r-cal	p-value	Interpretation
Ethnic affiliation and favoritism	-0.68	0.001	Strong negative correlation
Religious bias and discrimination	-0.61	0.001	Strong negative correlation
Regional/indigene–non-indigene bias	-0.54	0.002	Moderate negative correlation
Nepotism and kinship loyalty	-0.49	0.003	Moderate negative correlation
Political affiliation and patronage	-0.42	0.005	Moderate negative correlation

N=370, Decision Rule: $r < 0$, $p < 0.05$ = Significant negative relationship

The results in Table 4 show that all five forms of primordial sentiments negatively correlate with educational outcomes, indicating that higher prevalence of these sentiments is associated with lower institutional performance. Ethnic affiliation and favoritism had the strongest negative impact ($r = -0.68$), suggesting that ethnicity-driven practices most strongly compromise fairness, student performance, staff morale, and research productivity. Religious bias also significantly reduced educational outcomes ($r = -0.61$), highlighting the impact of favoritism based on religious affiliation. Regional bias, nepotism, and political patronage showed moderate negative effects, indicating that while influential, they are less detrimental than ethnic or religious favoritism. This analysis demonstrates that different primordial sentiments do not equally relate to educational outcomes.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Prevalence of Primordial Sentiments in Public Tertiary Institutions

The finding of this study with respect to prevalence of primordial sentiments in public tertiary institutions

revealed that primordial sentiments are highly prevalent in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria, with ethnic affiliation and favoritism emerging as the most dominant form, followed by religious bias and discrimination, regional or indigene–non-indigene bias, nepotism, and political patronage. This finding underscores the enduring influence of identity-based loyalties within institutional structures that are expected to operate on the principles of meritocracy, rationality, and organizational justice. Philosophically, tertiary institutions are traditionally conceived as universal communities of scholars where competence, objectivity, and intellectual integrity transcend ethnic, religious, and political identities. The persistence of primordial sentiments therefore represents a contradiction between the normative ideals of higher education and the socio-political realities of the Nigerian state.

The finding agrees with the work of Nnoli (2008), who argued that ethnicity remains one of the strongest determinants of social and institutional relationships in Nigeria. Nnoli maintained that ethnic

consciousness significantly shapes access to opportunities, distribution of resources, and administrative behaviour within public institutions. Similarly, Adebayo (2010) observed that ethnic favoritism and kinship networks frequently influence recruitment, promotion, and leadership appointments within Nigerian public organizations, thereby weakening meritocratic principles and institutional efficiency. The present finding validates these earlier positions by demonstrating that ethnic affiliation remains the most prevalent primordial sentiment within public tertiary institutions in Edo State.

The result also supports the submission of Okafor and Ugwuegbu (2015), who found that religious affiliation significantly affects organizational relationships and workplace interactions in Nigerian public institutions. According to the authors, religious sentiments often influence trust, cooperation, and decision-making processes, especially within culturally plural environments. The current finding aligns with this perspective, as religious bias and discrimination emerged as the second most prevalent primordial sentiment affecting tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, the finding corroborates the work of Ekeh (1975) in his theory of the “two publics,” where he argued that individuals in post-colonial African societies often demonstrate stronger loyalty to primordial publics such as ethnic and kinship groups than to civic institutions. The implication is that institutional actors may prioritize ethnic, religious, and regional loyalties above institutional ethics and professional obligations. This philosophical orientation partly explains the persistence of nepotism, indigene bias, and political patronage within tertiary institutions.

However, the finding contradicts the position of modernization theorists who argued that modernization, urbanization, and formal education would gradually weaken primordial identities and strengthen civic consciousness and institutional objectivity. Contrary to this expectation, the current study demonstrates that higher educational institutions themselves are not immune from the influence of primordial loyalties despite increased formalization and bureaucratic structures.

The prevalence of political patronage and nepotism further supports the finding of Ibrahim (2013), who

argued that political interference and personalized networks continue to undermine administrative objectivity within Nigerian institutions. The author maintained that political patronage weakens institutional autonomy and often leads to the appointment of individuals based on loyalty rather than competence. The current finding substantiates this claim by showing that political affiliation and kinship loyalty remain influential within tertiary institutions.

Overall, the finding indicates that primordial sentiments remain deeply entrenched within the governance and social interactions of public tertiary institutions in Edo State. This suggests that institutional reforms aimed solely at infrastructural development may produce limited results unless accompanied by deliberate ethical and administrative restructuring capable of strengthening meritocracy, transparency, and institutional neutrality.

Level of Educational Outcomes in Public Tertiary Institutions

The findings of the study further revealed that the level of educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State is moderate. Student academic achievement recorded the highest mean score, while administrative efficiency and transparency recorded the lowest. This finding implies that although the institutions continue to function and produce measurable educational outputs, their overall effectiveness remains below optimal expectations.

The finding agrees with the position of Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010), who argued that the quality of educational outcomes in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been constrained by administrative inefficiencies, inadequate funding, poor staff motivation, and institutional instability. According to the authors, many tertiary institutions struggle to attain high levels of performance because systemic and organizational challenges continue to weaken institutional productivity. The present study aligns with this position by revealing a moderate level of educational outcomes across key indicators such as staff productivity, research output, quality teaching, and administrative transparency.

Similarly, the finding support the work of Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner (2003), who observed that many African universities operate below their

academic and research potential due to governance-related challenges, weak institutional accountability, and limited research support systems. The moderate rating of institutional research output in the present study reflects these concerns and suggests that tertiary institutions in Edo State may still face limitations in research productivity and academic innovation.

The finding relating to administrative efficiency and transparency also agrees with the submission of Okojie (2013), who noted that ineffective governance structures and lack of transparency remain major obstacles to educational quality in Nigerian tertiary institutions. According to the author, institutional effectiveness is directly linked to the quality of leadership, accountability mechanisms, and fairness in administrative processes. The low rating of administrative efficiency recorded in the present study therefore reinforces the argument that governance weaknesses continue to undermine institutional performance.

However, the finding differs from studies conducted in some advanced educational systems where educational outcomes are reported at higher levels due to stronger institutional frameworks, improved funding mechanisms, merit-based administration, and effective quality assurance systems. The disparity suggests that educational quality is strongly influenced by broader institutional and socio-political conditions.

Philosophically, the moderate level of educational outcomes observed in this study reflects what may be described as “institutional survival without institutional excellence.” The institutions continue to function despite structural and administrative pressures, yet they remain unable to fully attain their transformative potential as centres of innovation, research, and intellectual development. This reinforces the argument that educational quality is not determined solely by curriculum implementation or student enrolment, but also by the ethical and administrative culture governing institutional operations.

Relationship between Primordial Sentiments and Educational Outcomes

The findings of the study revealed a significant negative relationship between primordial sentiments and educational outcomes in public tertiary

institutions in Edo State. This implies that an increase in primordial sentiments leads to a corresponding decline in institutional performance, staff productivity, administrative efficiency, research output, and quality teaching and learning. The finding establishes primordial sentiments as a major institutional challenge affecting educational effectiveness and organizational productivity.

The finding strongly agrees with the work of Coleman (1990), who argued that institutional effectiveness depends largely on the existence of social trust, fairness, and cooperative norms within organizations. According to Coleman, institutions characterized by discrimination, favoritism, and social fragmentation often experience weakened organizational commitment and reduced productivity. The current study supports this assertion by demonstrating that higher levels of primordial sentiments significantly reduce educational outcomes.

The finding also aligns with the work of Blau and Scott (1962), who maintained that organizational performance declines when administrative decisions are influenced by personal loyalties rather than professional competence and institutional goals. In the context of the present study, ethnic favoritism, nepotism, political patronage, and religious discrimination weaken objectivity and compromise institutional standards, thereby negatively affecting educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the strong negative relationship between ethnic affiliation and educational outcomes corroborates the findings of Mustapha (2007), who argued that ethnicity remains one of the greatest obstacles to institutional cohesion and national development in Nigeria. According to the author, ethnic favoritism often creates divisions, mistrust, and competition within organizations, thereby weakening productivity and institutional effectiveness. The present study validates this position by revealing that ethnicity exerts the strongest negative effect on educational outcomes among all identified primordial sentiments.

The findings equally support Organizational Justice Theory, which emphasizes that perceptions of fairness and equity significantly influence employee morale, commitment, and productivity. Where institutional actors perceive favoritism and

discriminatory practices, organizational trust declines, resulting in lower productivity and reduced institutional effectiveness. This explains why institutions characterized by primordial sentiments may experience weak staff morale, reduced cooperation, and declining research productivity.

However, the finding contradicts perspectives suggesting that primordial identities may sometimes strengthen social solidarity and institutional cohesion within plural societies. While primordial affiliations may promote group loyalty and social support, the present study demonstrates that within formal educational institutions, excessive primordial consciousness tends to undermine professionalism, fairness, and institutional performance.

The correlation analysis further revealed that ethnic affiliation and favoritism had the strongest negative impact on educational outcomes, followed by religious bias and discrimination. This finding suggests that ethnicity and religion remain the most influential identity markers shaping institutional relationships in Nigeria. Regional bias, nepotism, and political patronage also demonstrated moderate negative relationships with educational outcomes, indicating that although their effects are comparatively lower, they still significantly weaken institutional efficiency and educational quality.

The practical implication of these findings is that educational reforms focused solely on infrastructure, funding, and curriculum development may yield limited success if institutional governance continues to be undermined by primordial sentiments. Sustainable educational transformation requires deliberate efforts toward strengthening meritocracy, institutional ethics, accountability, fairness, and inclusive governance structures.

Ultimately, the findings reinforce the philosophical position that higher education institutions can only achieve genuine excellence where competence supersedes identity, justice overrides favoritism, and institutional loyalty transcends primordial allegiance.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study therefore concludes that meaningful and sustainable improvement in educational outcomes within Nigerian tertiary institutions requires far more than periodic policy adjustments, infrastructural

expansion, or increased financial allocation. Rather, it demands a deliberate institutional reorientation capable of transforming the ethical, administrative, and governance foundations upon which tertiary institutions operate. The findings of the study have demonstrated that primordial sentiments such as ethnic favoritism, religious bias, regional loyalties, nepotism, and political patronage significantly undermine educational effectiveness by weakening meritocracy, compromising institutional objectivity, reducing organizational trust, and eroding administrative transparency and accountability.

Consequently, sustainable educational advancement within tertiary institutions can only be achieved through comprehensive institutional reforms aimed at strengthening transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, merit-based administration, and organizational justice. Such reforms must consciously address both the structural and cultural dimensions of institutional governance by ensuring that administrative and academic processes are guided by competence, fairness, professionalism, and ethical responsibility rather than identity-based loyalties or sectional interests. Institutional governance structures must therefore be sufficiently insulated from primordial influences through the establishment and enforcement of transparent policies, credible quality assurance mechanisms, equitable recruitment and promotion systems, and impartial administrative procedures capable of protecting institutional integrity.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, three key recommendations are proposed to enhance educational outcomes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. These recommendations are directly aligned with the study's findings on the prevalence of primordial sentiments, moderate educational outcomes, and the negative relationship between these sentiments and institutional performance.

1. Institutional management should establish and strictly enforce merit-based administrative policies in staff recruitment, promotion, leadership appointments, and student admissions in order to reduce ethnic favoritism, religious bias, nepotism, and

- political patronage within tertiary institutions.
2. Government and institutional management should improve educational quality through enhanced staff welfare, adequate research support, regular staff training, provision of instructional facilities, and strengthening of quality assurance mechanisms to improve teaching effectiveness, research productivity, administrative efficiency, and student academic performance.
 3. Tertiary institutions should strengthen institutional ethics, transparency, accountability, and organizational justice through regular ethical leadership training, anti-discrimination policies, and effective monitoring systems capable of ensuring fairness and professionalism in all academic and administrative processes.

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