

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: *A significant issue related to social justice in higher education is the lack of equitable access to quality education for all individuals regardless of their socio-economic background. This problem is rooted in issues such as rising tuition costs, limited financial aid options, disparities in resources and opportunities among different communities, and systematic barriers that prevent marginalized groups from pursuing higher education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social justice and the management of higher education. The research used a survey instrument and a quantitative research design. Statistical techniques including SPSS version 20.0, and SMART PLS software were used to analyze the received questionnaire and test the hypotheses. Social justice represented three distinct factors, i.e., affordable education, safe and inclusive environment, and language accessibility; management of higher education was indicated by three dimensions, governance structure, quality assurance as well and student service. The result also demonstrated the validity and reliability of each factor. The findings show a positive and strong relationship between affordable education, a safe and inclusive environment, language accessibility, and management of higher education. The study recommends that the government should make education more affordable, necessary, free, accessible, acceptable, and flexible enough to adjust to societal changes. Also, should provide a safe and inclusive environment as well as multilateral interaction to ensure language accessibility. The study's conclusions show that affordable education, a safe and inclusive environment, language accessibility, and management of higher education have a good and significant association.*

Key words: *affordable education; language accessibility; management; higher education.*

Introduction

The pursuit of social justice is a guiding principle in higher education administration that aims to create an inclusive and equitable learning

environment. To achieve social justice, one must be dedicated to dismantling institutional barriers and making sure that everyone has equal access to resources and educational opportunities, regardless of their varied backgrounds. The incorporation of social justice principles is crucial for higher education administrators to manage educational institutions effectively. This is because it addresses historical injustices, fosters diversity, and creates an environment where every student can succeed. The necessity to address enduring disparities within educational systems has led to the emergence of the intersection of social justice and higher education administration as a crucial field of study. Higher education institutions in Nigeria have historically struggled with issues of inclusion, access, low pay, lack of autonomy, and equal opportunities, all of which are reflections of larger societal disparities. The field of higher education management is becoming a center for revolutionary change as the pursuit of social justice gains traction in many domains.

An organized attempt to right historical wrongs is imperative, as the historical background exposes a legacy of discriminatory practices in higher education. The historical context establishes the framework for analyzing how administrators interact with and overcome systemic barriers, from biased admissions practices to unfair resource distribution. Additionally, contemporary issues, such as the widening wealth gap, shifting demographics, and evolving notions of diversity, further underscore the relevance and urgency of integrating social justice principles into the management of higher education.

There are still large differences in educational achievement based on high tuition fees, and racial, socioeconomic, and gender characteristics, even despite initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion. This unfairness reduces the chances of success in higher education for people from marginalized backgrounds and upholds structural barriers. To tackle this problem, proactive steps are needed to guarantee that all students have equitable access to high-quality education. These steps include focused financial assistance initiatives, recruitment and retention strategies, and inclusive curricula that reflect diverse perspectives. Through tackling these differences, we may strive towards a fairer system of higher education that enables every person to achieve success and make a positive contribution to society. Numerous research studies have been conducted on social justice from the perspective of higher institutions. Lo-Presti et al. (2023) conducted inclusion and social justice in sustaining higher education. Mapuya (2023) examined exploring social justice issues on higher education curricula. Watson et al. (2019) focused their treatise on integrating social justice-based conflict resolution in higher education settings. Abdullahi (2021) addressed social justice concerns in the management of student growth

and education. The study aims to determine the connection between students' growth and equitable learning opportunities, basic needs provision, and lesson planning by teachers. The researcher employed a quantitative technique to investigate the hypotheses through descriptive study. From a sample of public senior secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, participants were chosen using a proportionate sampling approach. Data were collected using a questionnaire and then analyzed using tools from quantitative statistics. The results indicated that there is no discernible difference between equitable access to education, meeting fundamental requirements, preparing teachers, and overseeing students' growth. However, it is worth noting that none of the authors cited in this study specifically addressed and emphasized the importance of affordable education, a safe and inclusive environment, and language accessibility as essential variables for assessing social justice. Significant differences in the regions and locales covered by the research that has already been done serve as another important gap that spurred this investigation. Thus, this research has established and attempted to close the gaps created by earlier researchers.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed and tested:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between affordable education and the management of higher education
- 2) There is no significant relationship between a safe and inclusive environment and the management of higher education
- 3) There is no significant relationship between language accessibility and management of higher education

Related literature review

Social Justice

Social justice refers to how opportunities, resources, and privileges are distributed fairly and equally within a community to guarantee that everyone has equal access to fundamental rights and advantages (Paulette, 2023; Abdullahi, 2021). It entails addressing and resolving systemic injustices and inequalities that may be present due to traits like sexual orientation, disability, gender, race, or socioeconomic status, among others (Lo-Presti et al, 2023; Mapuya, 2023). The idea of social justice stems from the conviction that everyone should be treated with respect and decency and that society ought to be structured to encourage inclusivity and equality (The goal of social justice advocates is to establish a more just and equitable society by locating and eliminating discriminatory practices and institutions.

The concept of social justice in higher education involves applying the ideas of justice, equity, and inclusivity to different facets of academic institutions. This includes procedures, policies, and decision-making

frameworks to guarantee that everyone, from all backgrounds, has equitable access to resources and educational opportunities. To promote a more just and inclusive society, social justice is frequently sought through advocacy for policies, community organizing, education, and other initiatives (Watson et al, 2019; Demirbilek et al, 2021; Ochieng & Gyasi, 2021). It is a multifaceted and dynamic idea that entails continuous efforts to recognize and address injustices in a range of contexts. In the context of this study, social justice refers to affordable education, safe and inclusive school climate, and language accessibility. Affordable education refers to the delivery of instruction at a price that is acceptable and feasible for both individuals and families, thereby reducing the financial obstacles to enrollment and learning (Abdullahi, 2019). The idea acknowledges that the expense of education can be a major barrier for many individuals, possibly preventing them from pursuing further education or skill development. Ensuring that people have access to high-quality educational opportunities despite financial constraints is the goal of affordable education.

A safe and inclusive environment refers to the overall atmosphere and environment within a school that promotes a sense of physical and emotional safety, respect, acceptance, and belonging for all students, staff, and stakeholders. It goes beyond mere physical safety and encompasses the creation of an environment where individuals feel valued, supported, and free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying (Eluemuno et al, 2022; Timo, 2023)

Language accessibility refers to the design and provision of communication, information, and services in a way that ensures individuals with diverse language abilities, including those with limited proficiency in the primary language of communication, can access and comprehend the content (Darquennes et al, 2020; Lo-bianco, 2013; Linn, 2015). The goal is to make information and resources inclusive and understandable to people with various linguistic backgrounds, thereby reducing language barriers and promoting equal access to services.

Management of Higher Education

Management is the process of effectively and efficiently achieving organizational goals by planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources (financial, human, physical, and informational). It involves the coordination of human resources towards the accomplishment of particular goals and prudent resources to maximize output and attain desired results (Dastgir & Bakhsh, 2022; Mapuya, 2023). The management of higher education refers to the strategic planning, organization, and coordination of activities within institutions of higher learning. It involves a set of processes and practices aimed at efficiently and effectively achieving the mission and goals of the educational institution. Management in higher

education encompasses various aspects, including academic programs, faculty and staff, financial resources, student services, and overall institutional development.

Higher education describes the level of education that follows secondary or high school graduation is referred to as higher education. It includes all of the formal education offered by colleges, universities, institutes, and other establishments that provide professional and advanced academic programs. People who want to expand their knowledge, pick up specialized skills, and accomplish particular career goals usually pursue higher education (Lo-Presti et al., 2023). A higher education is a life-changing experience that enables people to follow their intellectual interests, accomplish their professional and personal objectives, and advance society and knowledge. It is essential in molding future thinkers, leaders, and professionals in a variety of fields. Management of higher education in this study refers to governance structure, quality assurance as well as student service.

Governance structure refers to the framework, mechanisms, and processes by which an organization is directed, controlled, and managed. It outlines the relationships, responsibilities, and decision-making procedures among the various stakeholders within the organization, including its leadership, management, shareholders, and other relevant parties (Austin, 2016). The governance structure provides the architecture for establishing accountability, transparency, and effective communication, ultimately guiding the organization toward its goals and ensuring its overall well-being (Abdullahi, 2019). Effective governance structures contribute to organizational stability, sustainability, and the achievement of its mission and objectives. It is a critical aspect of organizational management, ensuring that decision-making processes are robust, ethical, and aligned with the organization's purpose and values.

Quality assurance (QA) refers to the organized procedures, practices, and actions carried out in an organization to guarantee that goods, services, or operations fulfill or surpass established requirements and standards. Preventing flaws, mistakes, or problems in the deliverables is the main objective of quality assurance, which makes sure that the finished products constantly satisfy the required standards of quality (Ko & Chung, 2014). Quality assurance is applicable across various industries and sectors, including manufacturing, services, healthcare, education, and software development. It is a proactive approach to quality management, emphasizing prevention rather than detection and correction of defects after they occur. Integrating quality assurance practices into the

educational setting, it enhances stakeholders' satisfaction, builds trust, and improves overall efficiency and competitiveness.

Student services encompass a variety of mechanisms and resources offered by educational establishments to cater to the varied requirements of students, improve their general welfare, and facilitate their scholastic achievements (Abdullahi, 2017). These programmes are intended to help students advance both academically and personally by providing support throughout their educational journey. While they can differ amongst schools, student services usually cover a wide range of options. Admissions and enrollment services, academic advising, career services, financial aid, and scholarships, housing services, student organizations and activities, accessibility services, counseling and mental health services, and library and learning resources are a few examples of common student services. Student services play a crucial role in creating a positive and supportive learning environment. They aim to address the holistic needs of students, fostering personal growth, academic success, and a sense of community within the educational institution. These services contribute to the overall student experience and help students navigate the challenges and opportunities of their academic journey.

Theoretical contribution

The theoretical background of this study was based on the Critical Theory by **Kant as cited in Krishnan (2021)**. Critical theory is a philosophical approach that entails scrutinizing and challenging the dominant societal perspectives. Essentially, it involves examining beliefs that may favor only privileged individuals and advocating for a complete transformation. A theory is deemed critical when it actively pursues the liberation of humanity from oppressive conditions, serves as a liberating force, and endeavors to establish a world that fulfills essential needs. Kant articulates this concept as the capacity to break away from self-imposed dependence. In essence, the motto of enlightenment is having the courage to employ one's reasoning, contributing to freedom through self-determination. This approach entails questioning any authority and dominance that lacks rational justification and advocating for autonomy in human development. Critical Theory, in this regard, can help diminish dependence and mitigate the influence of social injustice on the structure of education.

When applied to education, critical theory questions how the educational system can enhance learning for everyone, regardless of socio-economic background or other hindrances. It provides insight into and opportunities for understanding various critical viewpoints held by marginalized members of society. Consequently, it advocates the notion

that education serves as a crucial instrument for bringing about social transformation.

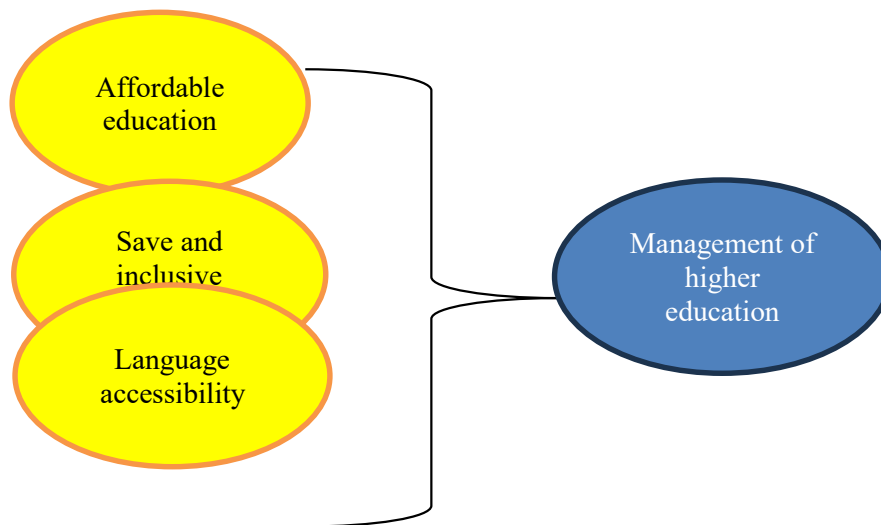


Figure 1: Author contribution

Critical theory, as applied to the management of higher education, involves examining and challenging the underlying power structures, social hierarchies, and systems of oppression within educational institutions. It aims to question traditional assumptions and practices to promote social justice, equity, and inclusivity. The relevance of critical theory in the management of higher education lies in its ability to foster a more socially just, inclusive, and equitable educational environment in terms of affordable education, safe and inclusive learning environment, and language accessibility. Thus, this study anchored on critical theory such that, it serves as a powerful framework for administrators in higher education, offering a lens through which to critically assess and transform institutional practices to promote social justice and equity. By incorporating critical perspectives into administration, institutions can work towards creating environments that prioritize inclusivity, diversity, and justice for all members of the academic community.

Methodology

Research Design

Because of the nature of this study and the primary study objectives, which were to assess the relationship between affordable education, a safe and inclusive environment, and language accessibility with management of higher education, the quantitative approach will be deemed most appropriate. This study also used a descriptive and correlational research design to try to find out how the identified variables (social justice factors and MHE) are related statistically.

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Population and Sampling Procedure

The study included all of the academic personnel in Nigeria's public universities. The target group for this study was 400 Nigerian university lecturers, who were the intended focus of this investigation. The researcher purposefully selected a sample of 400 academics to increase the robustness of the study. The lecturers at the public institutions completed 340 questionnaires in total. A few surveys were thrown out during data cleansing because they were deemed inappropriate. In the end, this study used 334 questions. There were twenty-five questions on the questionnaire for this research. Consequently, 334 correctly completed questionnaires were used to advance the study, resulting in an 83.5% response rate for the study's final evaluation of its hypotheses.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire approach was employed in this study. It may be thought of as a research tool that consists of a series of questions and additional incentives intended to collect the necessary data from the intended respondents. The Likert scale, which has four points, 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree will be employed in this data-gathering approach (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

Following data collection, the information is entered into the statistical software (SPSS) and utilized to apply the PLS-SEM technique using the SmartPLS 3.2.9 programme. This study therefore used PLS-SEM with the SmartPLS 3.29 programme to accomplish the first objective, which is to do data analysis and obtain the necessary results. SmartPLS 3.2.9 was selected as an appropriate method to test the hypotheses based on the objectives of the current study. The goal of the reflective measurement model evaluation is to validate the validity and reliability of construct measures, hence providing evidence that the inclusion of these measures in the path model is suitable. Convergent validity, composite reliability, indicator reliability, and discriminant validity are the four primary requirements of the reflective measurement model. PLS-SEM studies can be applied to reflective constructs if all of these requirements are satisfied (Hair et al, 2017). Furthermore, the structural model is evaluated using the following metrics: effect size (f^2), path coefficients, and coefficient of determination (R^2). As a result, Table 3 below can be used to describe the stages involved in structural modeling. It also provides indications and suggested thresholds for measurement and structure modeling tests.

Data Analysis

The data gathered for this investigation were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.2.9. The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion, bootstrap-based

significance testing, PLS prediction, goodness of fit, and other features is among the many facilities and subroutines for reflective and formative assessments and structural models that are included in SmartPLS (Ringle et al, 2015). Making a measuring model was the first step. Testing is done for discriminant, convergent, construct, and reliability validity. The hypothesis is tested using the second structural model (Hair et al., 2020).

Findings

Measurement Model Assessment

A measurement model's validity and accuracy are often assessed (Hair et al., 2013). The composite reliability measure, which is used to evaluate the construct's reliability, must be more than 0.7. In a similar vein, a score higher than 0.70 and the determination of the outer loadings measure are necessary to confirm the item's reliability. More than 0.5 is required for the AVE. AVE The results are displayed in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to determine construct reliability. Table 1 displays the convergent validity and construct reliability for each construct. For every construct, the Cronbach alpha values and CR exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.700 for the entire sample. Convergent validity is supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the constructs being greater than 0.500 for the entire sample (Diamantopoulos et al, 2012).

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
AE	0.759	0.838	0.504
SIE	0.753	0.759	0.504
LA	0.786	0.853	0.538
MHE	0.854	0.835	0.538

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity, (p<0.01)

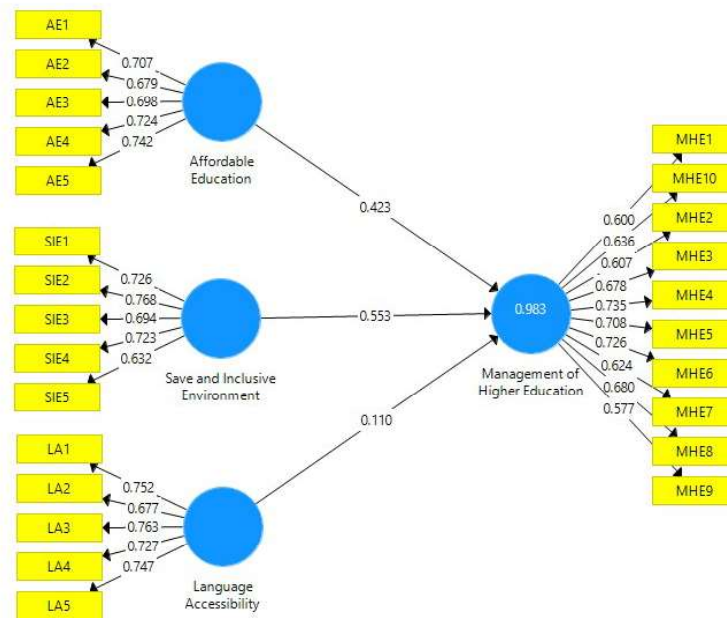


Figure 2: Measurement Model of the Constructs

Additionally, the Fornell and Lacker criteria were used to assess the discriminant validity of the construct. the HTMT was also evaluated to evaluate in-depth discriminant validity. The values in the diagonals should lie under the associated values in this technique, and they should be higher than them. The diagonals show the AVEs' square root, which ought to be greater than the correlation between their variables. The diagonal values in Table 3 are greater than their corresponding values, which satisfies the Forner and Locker criterion and upholds discriminant validity (Ab Hamid et al 2017).

	Affordable Education	Language Accessibility	Management of Higher Education	Save and Inclusive Environment
Affordable Education	0.710			
Language Accessibility	0.667	0.734		
Management of Higher Education	0.654	0.665	0.734	
Save and Inclusive Environment	0.656	0.675	0.537	0.710

Table 2: Fornell and Lacker criterion

Note(s): AVE's square root is the diagonal, and the correlations between latent variables are represented by the off-diagonal values.

Assessment of the Structural Model

The Structural model is depicted visually. Figure 4 depicts the graph, and the arrows linking the study’s constructs were decided by the direction of the hypotheses presented in the framework. The single-headed arrows are used to confirm the significance of the study concept. Figure 3 illustrates the factor loadings for each item.

Hypothesis Analysis

The results for the hypothesis have been given in Table 3, figure 3, and Figure 4. It shows that affordable education has an effect of 0.420 on the management of higher education with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and a T-value greater than 1.96 which means there is a relationship between AE and MHE. Also, A relationship between SIE and MHE is evident as SIE has an effect of 0.570 on MHE with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and a T-value of larger than 1.96. Additionally, there is a link between LA and MHE of 0.094, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and the T-value of greater than 1.96. According to the results, the hypothesis has been accepted, as the β is having value more than the cut-off values (0.10), which means that all the constructs have significant contributions and impact on the management of higher education. In the same way, the t-statistics for the constructs have greater value than the recommended one i.e. (1.96), which indicates the logical dependence of the dependent variable on the independent variables. In summary, the result proclaims that the assertiveness of the hypotheses was supported by the results.

Hypotheses	Original sample (0)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Value	Decision
Affordable Education	0.420	0.421	0.022	19.179	0.000	Support
Save and Inclusive Environment	0.570	0.570	0.023	24.838	0.000	Support
Language Accessibility	0.094	0.092	0.013	7.483	0.000	Support

Table 3: Summary of Path Coefficients

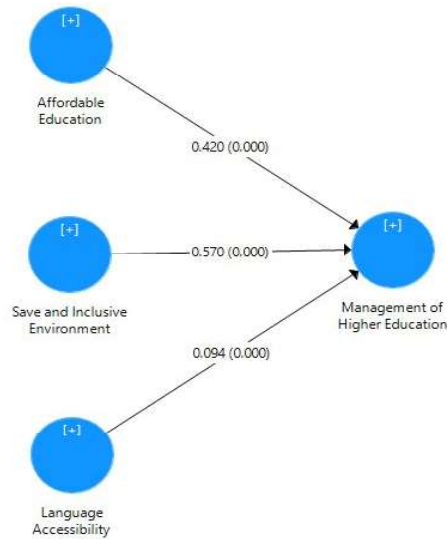


Figure 3: Structural Model of the Study

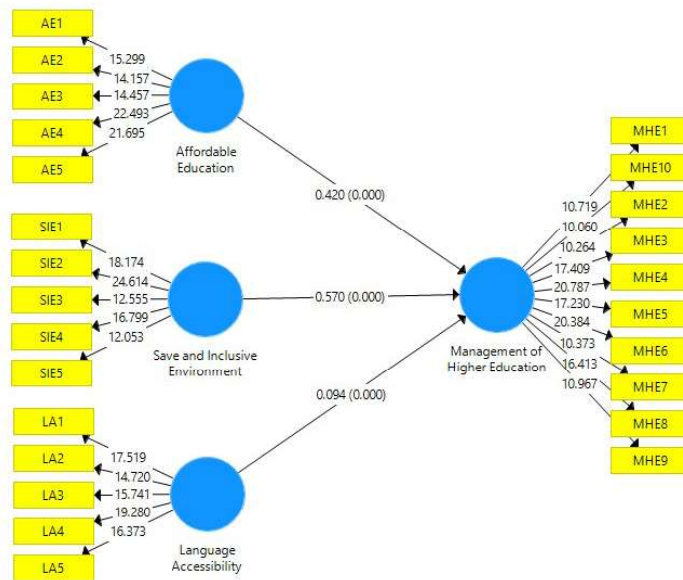


Figure 4: Structural Model of the Study

Discussion

The motive of this research was to investigate the relationship between the management of higher education in Nigeria, and social justice a positive impact on the management of higher education. It is likely said that if social justice is effective, it can positively enhance and improve the management of higher education. In line with the research findings

of Abdullahi (2019) social justice in education fosters moral dialogue that allows for good academic achievement by upholding connections with students from diverse origins and upholding a value orientation towards their growth. In the context of education, social justice refers to the procedures, tenets, and regulations that the state or educational institutions have implemented to guarantee that the welfare of students receives the highest priority to maximize their growth. As per the findings of this study, school administrators can focus more on the effective use of digital teaching platforms such as Affordable education (AE), safe and inclusive environment, and language accessibility.

This study demonstrates that AE seems to influence MHE and contribute to the reduction of high levels of student debt and making education more financially sustainable, creating a diverse and skilled workforce, leading to higher graduation rates and a more educated population, reducing disparities segments of society as well as enable more people to enjoy the benefit of improved quality of life. The findings of this study reveal that there is a strong relationship between AE and MHE. The result of the current hypothesis is consistent with previous study's findings such as Abdullahi, 2019; Guerra et al, 2013; Dover, 2015; and Takwate, 2018 that to be responsive to the growth of students' knowledge, education should be necessary, free, accessible, acceptable, and flexible enough to adjust to societal changes and the child's best interests. In a democratic system, all students should have equal access to education regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, culture, or religion to provide them the best chance to meet the highest standards. The second hypothesis was supported. Following the result of this study, previous studies have demonstrated that SIE positively correlates with MHE such as Timo, 2013; Abdullahi, 2022; Eluemuno et al, 2022 that safe and inclusive environment is the sure means of attaining optimum integral development and management of higher education. In addition, the third hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between LA and MHE, the findings are validated by previous studies by Darquennes et al, (2020); Karen, (2013); Lo-Bianco (2013), and Linn (2015) that language accessibility is the key to enhance effective management of higher education to improve information exchange, networks, multilateral interaction, as well as growing of students.

Limitations and implications of the study

The findings show that social justice has a big influence on how higher education is run. To ensure that higher education is managed effectively, the government should provide affordable tuition and create a safe and welcoming environment. On the other hand, the results of this study offer fresh insights to the government about how to lower the cost of education and supply the required resources for efficient management of

higher education in Nigeria. There are several limitations to this study, so it's important to discuss these as well. This research has to be enhanced and merged to obtain more detailed findings. It is best to combine this quantitative cross-sectional survey with other methods to improve knowledge of social justice and how higher education is managed. As a result, qualitative research is also suggested as a development to obtain more thorough details regarding the rationale behind the conclusions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, a conceptual understanding of the relationship between the independent variables; affordable education, a safe and welcoming atmosphere, and language accessibility has been established in this study. These factors have the potential to improve how well higher education is managed.

Conflict of interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest to report.

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