

## **POLITICAL FACTORS' INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' RECORDS MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Students' records are critical in achieving university's goals and objectives. This study therefore examined the political factors that influence students' records management effectiveness in Nigerian universities. A survey design was employed for the study. The population consisted of 1,123 students' records officers and 470 university administrators from randomly selected three federal, three state and three private universities in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study consisting of 564 records officers and 237 administrators giving a sum of 801. A total of 531 copies of the questionnaire were validly completed and returned making it 66.3% successful. Data was collected with a self-structured questionnaire validated with overall Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient =0.81. Descriptive statistics and regression analyses were employed to analyze data processed from responses of the survey. The results revealed that at the 0.05 level of significance, the p-values of (0.0116, 0.3237 and 0.4038) indicated political factors had significant influence on students' records management effectiveness in the federal universities, but not in the state and private universities. Findings of this research will provide the university administrators and records officers with better understanding of political factors influencing effective management of students' records in the Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Administrators, Records Management Effectiveness, Records Officers, Political Factors.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role of records management in education institutions cannot be over-emphasized. It is difficult to attain development without records. The term records, as defined by Read and Ginn (2011:1), "are stored information, regard less of media or characteristics, made or received by an organisation that is evidence of its operations and has value requiring its retention for specific period of time". With this definition in mind, one may observe that records are created by all kinds of people and organization/institution as a result of the activities that take place in them. In the course of human interactions and service provisions that occur in organisations, records are created. For instance, in educational institutions such as a university, academic records refers to information or data relating to students both in paper and electronic formats that provides evidence of and information about the actions or events that happened. These events are created through the processes of admission, matriculation, examination and convocation to mention but a few. Further, a university might also receive information about its student(s) from other

organisations or institutions. Accordingly, records can either be generated internally or externally (Thomassen, 2002). Therefore, records are evidence of the processes of interactions that occur daily in any human society.

According to Popoola (2000), cited in Atulomah (2011), information and records management are foundational to business activity. The absence of information can cripple the planning and decision making process of management. This fact is very applicable to a university records management concerning its student records. From a broad perspective, the creation and maintenance of records relating to the students of an institution are essential to managing the relationship between the institution and the student; providing support and other services and facilities to the students; controlling the students' academic progress and measuring their achievement, both at the institution and subsequently; providing support to the students after they leave the institution (JISC IfoNet, 2007). Nakpodia (2011), summarized the value of educational records management as facilitation of continuity in the administration of a school, provision of information needed by ex-students for higher and other related institution and employers of labour, for admission or job placement, the provision of data for planning and decision making by school heads, ministries of education and other related education authorities. Further, Anho (2006), citing Anderson and Dyke (1992); Olagboye (2004), states that the significance of student records include:

- Ensuring that accurate and proper records of student's achievement and growth during his/her school days are kept and to report same to parents/guardians, employers, other institutions for students admission or job placement;
- Provision of data for planning and decision making by school heads, ministry of education and other related authorities;
- Facilitation of continuity in the administration of a school, research activities that will promote efficiency and effectiveness;
- Providing information needed by lecturers, staff, counselors in working with students.

Ifedili and Agbaire (2011) add that:

- Educational regulatory bodies rely on education records to evaluate the status of governance of an institution and academic quality of schools.
- School administrators rely on records to evaluate students' performance and reward same.
- Researchers in education also find relevance in educational records for their researches towards contributing to knowledge.

Also, writing on the importance it attaches to records in a university setting, the University of California opines that in order to sustain sound business practice and support its mission it creates, gathers and maintains operational and historical records of its activities (University of California, 2012). Similarly, the South Australia department of education argues that student records are essential to enhance students learning, health, welfare education planning and administration and report to their parents (Government of South Australia, 2012). Effective students' records management can ensure an advantage of one university over another, enable a seamless access and controlled access to students data simultaneously by different arms of a university and also protects a university from student's fraud.

However, despite the crucial role played by records management as indicated above, there is consensus amongst researchers that many organizations pay little attention to the management of

records and handle recorded information carelessly without realising that records constitute a major resource compared to finance, people, money and equipment (Mnjama, 2004; Ngulube, 2004; Chinyemba & Ngulube, 2005; Egwunyenga, 2009 & Walala, 2010). Fabunmi & Isah (n.d) assert that it has become a recurrent issue for records to be irretrievable when required specially in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Similarly, Popoola and Oluwole (2007) opine that Nigeria administrators are often concerned about the alarming rate of misplacement or loss of vital records and the slow speed at which needed records are retrieved from their storage by records management personnel. In most cases, misplaced or lost records delay necessary actions on urgent matters, or lead to irrational decisions, which may translate to social crisis or embarrassment to the university system (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective management of students' records in the Nigerian university system with particular emphasis on managing information generated on students from admission, matriculation, registration, examination, graduation, among others seems to be problematic. Incidences of misplaced documents, as well as mutilated or incomplete students' files are common occurrences in most universities. The National Universities Commission (NUC) had once suspended the operating licences of seven private universities in Nigeria, one of which is in the South-South geo-political zone, for reasons ranging from non-compliance with its regulations, poor management of academic activities and mismanagement of students' examination records. This challenge of effectively managing students' records might have been occasioned by government/university policy and leadership influence and decision. Hence, this study investigated the influence political factors on effective students' records management in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Based on the above problems, the following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the responses of the records officers and Administrators on students' records management effectiveness in Federal, State and Private Universities?
2. What are the political factors that influences effectiveness of students' records management in the Federal, State and Private Universities?

This study was piloted by the following null research hypotheses:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** The views of records officers and administrators on students' records management effectiveness and political factors do not substantially correlate in the Federal, State and Private Universities.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** Political factors do not have significant influence on students' records management effectiveness in the Federal, State and Private Universities.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Students Records Management Effectiveness**

Students' Records Management Effectiveness in this study refers to students' records management processes which involve the accuracy of records capture, records classification for easy retrieval, appropriate records storage and preservation, enforcing records access and

security restrictions, providing continuity in event of disaster, carrying out records retention and disposal required for the purpose of quality service delivery.

### **Political Factors**

Political factors in this study refer to administrative decisions or policies either by the government or university administrators relating to students records officers' employment, career development and administrative support for consistency and continuity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are several factors, which may be classified as political that influence the effective management of a university system. This section briefly discusses some of them as they relate to effective students' records management.

### **Employment Based on Ethnicity**

Employment decisions are very significant factors in university governance. The quality of staff engaged does impact on productivity. In relation to records managers, Lyaruu's (2005) study, revealed the lack of professionalism in records management as the most fundamental problem plaguing registries in most institutions in Tanzania. Similarly, Manyambula (2009) pointed out that one of the factors, which contributed to the poor records management was that administrator staffed most registries with people who had received little or no records management training due to ethnic relationship with leadership. It could be that the poor quality of staff managing students' records in some universities is because such university administrators employ records officers based on ethnic tension and tribalism in order to fulfil state or community quota without considering if the individual is qualify or not.

### **Staff Training and Development**

Training and development of employees are also political issues that some organisations face. Training, according to Armstrong (2009), is a planned process that modifies attitude, knowledge and skills that add value to its resources and helps the organizations achieve its purpose. Employers may offer job-specific training to provide employees with the appropriate skills to enable them to perform their duties effectively. The immediate application of skills acquired through such training may boost employee confidence and productivity (Society of Human Resource Management, 2011). Muhenda and Lwanga (n.d) argue that training and development enhance staff's absorption capacity. Marrow (2001), in Muhenda and Lwanga, (n.d), established that employees who are highly trained and whose career development are effectively managed show high levels of commitment, are flexible, multi skilled and capable of making remarkable contribution to the services they render in organisations'. Sadly, however, some organisations are politically reluctant to train their staff for fear that upgrading the skills of the workforce, would expose them to competitors.

Although studies on Higher Institutions records management have reported positive significant relationship between training and performance (Bakkabulindi & Muhenda, 2008), training and

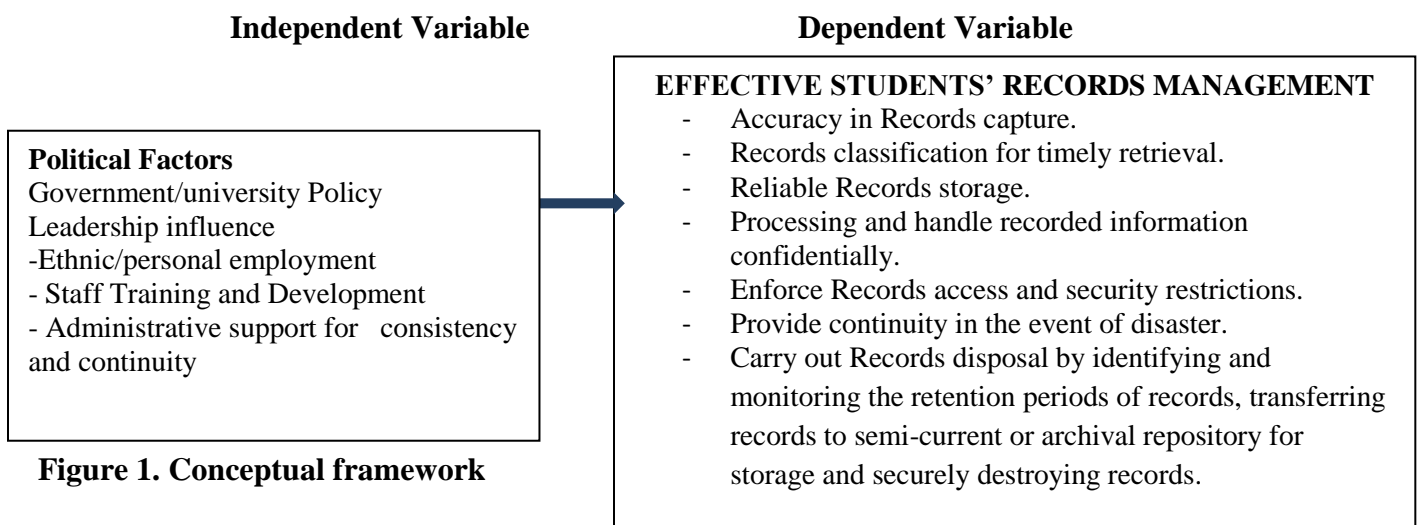
job satisfaction and or performance (Walala, 2010); however, according to Iwhiwhu (2005) there is dearth training in records management in Nigerian universities. Ifedili and Agbaire (2011) also make the same observations in their respective studies of educational records management in Nigeria. Decrying the lack of training of essential staff in Nigeria public administration, Adebayo (2000) asserts that the focus of training is largely on senior management staff while the lower cadre is neglected. As a result of this neglect in capacity building, the core staff work mostly by routine, apathy, and have a general lethargy to work. While this alarm was raised over a decade ago, it seems not much has changed in the capacity development of the lower cadre of staff who daily manage records in Nigerian universities since records management is traditionally been viewed as a low-level routine work, such that investment in training and development of records keepers is deemed not cost-effective.

In addition, the records management curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has a heavy leaning on information, library and archival studies rather than records management perspective. Ngulube (2001) emphasized that training of records managers should be governed by guidelines that identify the standards upon which education and training institutions develop curricula for their leaning programmes. Mazikana (2009) noted that very few archival records management schools prepared records managers for the front end of records management. He further stated that most curricula focused on the point at which records are being off loaded from the records creating institutions to the records centres of archival institution. The lack of training to update knowledge and skills of records management personnel would have negative implications in fostering accountability in universities.

**Administrative Support for Consistency and continuity**

A change in leadership can be a political factor that will enhance or negate students’ records management effectiveness. For instance, if the chief administrator is not ICT friendly, the policy of the university to manage students’ records electronically will definitely not be implemented. Compliance in the side of the records officers will also be a problem.

The researcher conceptualisation is presented in the figure below:



**Figure 1. Conceptual framework**

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design of correlational type to investigate the influence of political factors on students' records management effectiveness in South-South Nigerian universities.

The target population for this study were all personnel handling students' records at the universities registries, academic departments/units/divisions and the universities administrators such as Heads of academic departments/units, Deans of faculties, Bursars/their Deputies, Registrars/ their Deputies, Director, Human Resources, Director, ICT department in South-South Nigeria. These were chosen as the population for this study for two major reasons. First, the records officers in the universities registries, academic departments/units/divisions are responsible for handling students' academic records. Second, the administrators have major role to play in making decisions especially in the area of personnel recruitment and selection, and training that will either support or negate the effective management of students' records.

A stratified random sampling procedure was used to select the universities that participated in the study. From the fifteen universities (five Federal, five State, and five Private) owned Universities, nine participating universities (three each from the Federal, State, and Private) were selected for the study representing (60%) of the fifteen universities. From the population of 1,123 officers managing students records and 470 university administrators of the nine universities selected, 564 (50%) of the students records officers and 237 (50%) of the administrators were randomly selected, making a total sample size of 801 for the study.

An investigator-structured questionnaire titled, "*Students' Records Management Effectiveness Questionnaire*" (SRMEQ) with the Likert four point scale in order of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 was used to collect data from the respondents. Section A of the questionnaire focused on respondents' demographic data designation, educational qualification, name of university, department, unit/section, and years of work experience. Section B contained 12 questions which elicited information on respondents' perceived effective students' records management while Section C contained 11 questions on political factors surrounding students records management effectiveness.

Experts in the field of Information and Records Management as well as Education Administration and Planning validated the instrument. To determine the reliability, the instrument was subjected to the Cronbach's Alpha test with overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient obtained at 0.81. After this, necessary amendments were made in order to ensure that the contents of the instrument measure all that was needed in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The data collected were analysed using mean scores to find the answer to the research questions, correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Research Question One

What are the responses of the records officers and Administrators on students' record management effectiveness in Federal, State and Private Universities?

Table 1 presents the responses of the records officers and administrators with regard to the students' record management effectiveness in Federal, State and Private Universities.

The table shows the respective mean scores for the 12 items of records officers and administrators with regard to the students' records management effectiveness which range from 2.44 to 3.18 for the federal universities, 2.69 to 3.34 for the state universities and 2.93 to 3.75 for the private universities. Except for item nine and ten as shown on Table 1 for the Federal Universities records officers and administrators which mean scores are below the agreement level of 2.50, the items considered high were mean rating between 2.98 to 2.51 and very high in the respondents' level of acceptance were those with mean rating between 3.75 to 3.02. This means that there is an agreement level between the records officers and administrators with regard to the students' record management effectiveness in Federal, State and Private Universities. Though, the Private universities have the highest mean score rating, followed by the State universities and lastly, the Federal Universities. This result is an indication that the acceptance level of the records officers and administrators with regard to the students' record management effectiveness in the Private universities is higher than that of both the Federal and State universities. This indicates that respondents did not reject any of the listed items that relate to students' record management effectiveness. In other words, students' record management effectiveness is present in all the Private universities sampled for the study.

### **Research Question Two**

What are the political factors that will influence the effectiveness of students' records management in the Federal, State and Private Universities?

Table 2 shows political factors which records officers and administrators opined will influence the effectiveness of students' records management. The table shows that majority of respondents agreed that the political factors listed influenced students' records management effectiveness as indicated by their overall mean scores that are greater than the acceptance level of 2.5

**Table 1: Mean comparison between records officers and administrator’s responses on students’ record management effectiveness in Federal, State and Private Universities**

S/N	Statement	Federal Universities				State Universities				Private Universities			
		Record Officers		Administrators		Record Officers		Administrators		Record Officers		Administrators	
		Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D
1	Accurate capturing of Students’ details at first point of contact	2.81	0.88	2.88	0.63	3.34	0.71	2.89	0.91	2.93	0.77	3.46	0.72
2	Assignment of classification code number for easy retrieval	2.96	0.82	2.93	0.55	3.23	0.72	2.69	0.82	3.14	0.76	3.29	0.69
3	Availability of students record storage and security	2.68	0.86	2.55	0.73	3.22	0.68	2.77	0.8	3.33	0.66	3.38	0.49
4	Confidential handling and processing of students records	2.93	0.76	3.07	0.65	3.16	0.65	3.15	0.74	3.49	0.67	3.42	0.58
5	Existing preservation plan to protect long-term usability of students record	2.76	0.78	2.76	0.85	3.12	0.56	2.89	0.58	3.43	0.68	3.38	0.65
6	Restriction of students records from unauthorized users	3.18	0.87	3.02	0.64	3.09	0.75	3.13	0.73	3.46	0.65	3.29	0.86
7	Maintenance of audit trails for easy tracking of students records	2.73	0.99	2.51	0.67	3.08	0.76	2.8	0.64	3.36	0.72	3.58	0.88
8	Adherence to best practices in the disposition of students records	2.76	0.95	2.65	0.65	3.08	0.72	2.87	0.65	3.32	0.82	3.67	1.09
9	Adequate plan exists for disasters control and management of students records	2.6	0.76	2.46	0.7	3.05	0.82	2.86	0.52	3.48	0.87	3.25	1.36
10	Prompt and timely submission of students data to stakeholders	2.44	0.91	2.46	0.7	2.94	0.9	2.79	0.69	3.43	0.89	3.54	1.44
11	There is a clearly stated policy on the retention of students records	2.93	0.87	2.76	0.67	3.03	0.81	2.98	0.69	3.49	1.02	3.67	1.63
12	Policies guiding management of students records are in place	2.97	0.81	2.91	0.56	3.27	0.65	2.92	0.65	3.51	1.11	3.75	1.82

**Mean Legend:** { Acceptance Level } Std.D=Standard Deviation  
 3.00 – 4.00 = Very High  
 2.50 – 2.99 = High  
 2.00 – 2.49 = Low  
 1.00 – 1.99 = Very Low { Rejection Level }



**Table 2: Mean Comparison between Records Officers and Administrators Responses on Political Factors Influencing Students' Record Management Effectiveness in Federal.**

Political Factors		FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES				STATE UNIVERSITIES				PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES			
		Records Officers		Administrators		Records Officers		Administrators		Records Officers		Administrators	
S/N	Survey Statement	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D	Mean	Std.D
1	There are government/university policies regulating the implementation of records management in my university	2.9	1.04	3.14	0.9	3.38	0.72	2.43	0.89	3.09	0.91	3.39	0.79
2	A change in university leadership will positively affect the present operation of students records management	2.41	0.9	2.55	0.96	2.98	0.76	2.11	0.78	2.92	0.82	2.89	0.74
3	Records management is viewed by administrators as low-level routine work	2.2	0.98	2.4	0.96	2.59	0.83	1.98	0.91	2.89	0.79	3.0	0.54
4	A change from manual records management to electronic records management will enhance effectiveness	3.59	0.6	3.4	0.77	3.34	0.74	3.36	0.76	3.45	0.68	2.86	0.65
5	The university invests on staff development	2.4	0.7	2.57	0.77	2.92	0.82	2.92	0.78	3.37	0.70	3.36	0.62
6	Records officers are employed based on their qualifications, skill and competence	2.68	0.98	2.7	0.9	3.16	4.01	2.96	0.78	3.27	0.68	3.07	0.77
7	Staff are employed based on ethnic or personal considerations.	2.6	0.9	2.6	0.73	2.81	0.87	2.92	0.70	2.9	0.8	2.89	0.79
8	Students records management processes is not disturbed by strikes and or by labor union actions	2.08	1.05	2.33	0.71	2.81	0.66	2.64	1.00	3.15	0.63	3.12	0.57
9	My university encourages professional development of records management officers	2.7	0.8	2.9	0.63	3.08	0.79	3.02	0.87	3.29	0.67	3.25	0.59
10	Relationship between records officers and your supervisors affect students records management positively	2.9	0.89	2.24	0.86	2.88	0.76	2.53	0.82	3.09	0.69	3.14	0.65
11	Students records management in my university is funded because of the administrator presently heading the department	1.9	0.87	2.75	1.12	2.52	0.75	2.26	0.84	3.04	0.72	3.07	0.81
<b>Overall Mean Score</b>		<b>2.58</b>		<b>2.69</b>		<b>2.95</b>		<b>2.65</b>		<b>3.13</b>		<b>3.10</b>	

**Mean Legend:**

3.00 – 4.00 = Very High {Acceptance Level}

2.50 – 2.99 = High

2.00 – 2.49 = Low

1.00 – 1.99 = Very Low {Rejection Level}

**Hypothesis 1:** The views of records officers and administrators on students' records management effectiveness and political factors do not substantially correlate in the Federal, State and Private universities.

**Table 3: Cross correlation coefficients of records officers and administrators responses for study variables**

Study Variables	Federal Universities	State Universities	Private Universities
	Record Officers & Administrators	Record Officers & Administrators	Record Officers & Administrators
Students Records Management Effectiveness	-0.015	0.070	0.047
Political Factors	0.038	-0.006	0.289

Table 3 shows that for the federal universities, while the records officers and administrators views diverge on students' records management effectiveness as indicated by correlation coefficients of (-0.015), their views correlate positively on political factors as indicated by the correlation coefficients of (0.038). Though the low values of the coefficients suggest weak agreement or disagreement between their views, the coefficients provide evidence that administrators and records officers have different views about students' record management effectiveness and its determinants in the federal universities.

At the level of state universities, Table 3 reveals that views of the records officers and administrators were in weak agreement for students' records management effectiveness as indicated by the correlation coefficient of (0.070). For political factors, the record officers and administrators differ in the views as shown by the correlation coefficients of students' records management effectiveness (-0.006). Like in the federal universities, the strength of agreement or disagreement between the views is very weak. Therefore, it can be deduced that, as in the federal universities, administrators and records officers in the state universities differ in their views on students' records management effectiveness and its determinant.

For the private universities, Table 3 also reveals that the private universities administrators and record officers were in agreement in their responses to political factors and students' records management effectiveness as evidenced by the positive correlation coefficients of (0.047 and 0.289). Therefore, respondents from the private universities are more in agreement that political factors are considered to have influence on students' records management effectiveness. Thus, hypothesis one is hereby upheld for the federal and state universities, but rejected for the private universities.

**Research Hypothesis 2:** Political factors do not have significant influence on students' records management effectiveness in the federal, state and private universities.

**Table 4: Coefficients/Effects, t-Statistic and Prob(t-Statistic)**

<b>FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES</b>				
<b>Coefficient (<math>\alpha_i</math>)</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>t-Statistic</b>	<b>Prob.</b>	<b>Greater or Less than 0.05</b>
$\alpha_4$	0.2260	2.5443	0.0116	Less
<b>STATE UNIVERSITIES</b>				
<b>Coefficient (<math>\beta_i</math>)</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>t-Statistic</b>	<b>Prob.</b>	<b>Greater or Less than 0.05</b>
$\beta_4$	0.1543	0.9909	0.3237	Greater
<b>PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES</b>				
<b>Coefficient (<math>\theta_i</math>)</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>t-Statistic</b>	<b>Prob.</b>	<b>Greater or Less than 0.05</b>
$\theta_4$	0.0624	0.8382	0.4038	Greater

Source: Regression Analysis Results

The effects ( $\alpha_4 = 0.2260$ ,  $\beta_4 = 0.1543$  and  $\theta_4 = 0.0624$ ), t-statistics ( $t\alpha_4 = 2.5443$ ,  $t\beta_4 = 0.9909$  and  $t\theta_4 = 0.8382$ ) and associated p-values ( $\text{prob}(t\alpha_4) = 0.0116$ ),  $\text{prob}(t\beta_4) = 0.3237$ ) and  $\text{prob}(t\theta_4) = 0.4038$ ) as reported in Table 4 indicate that political factors have significant positive effect on students' records management effectiveness in the federal universities where the p-value is less than the specified 0.05, but insignificant positive effects in state and private universities with p-values greater than the 0.05 significance level. On this basis, it can be concluded that political factors significantly influenced the effectiveness of students' records management in the federal universities, but do not in the state and private universities. Therefore, research hypothesis  $H_{02}$  is rejected for the federal universities, but accepted for the state and private universities.

This findings for the Nigerian Federal universities is in line with the comments of Muhenda and Lwanga (n.d) that administrators who make good decisions concerning their employees indirectly favour the organization as these multi skilled staff show high levels of commitment, flexible and capable of making remarkable contribution to the services they render in organisation. But this is rather different in the State and Private universities.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have led the researcher to conclude that political factors influencing effective management of students' records in the Nigerian universities significantly or insignificantly differed from one university to another. Also, the findings of this research have provided the researcher with better understanding that there exist to a certain level effective students' records management in Nigerian universities especially in the private owned universities. This is contrary to some previous studies that concluded that Nigeria does not have a developed records management culture in the educational system. Universities are citadels of intellectualism, it is expected that their activities at least should be near perfection. Hence, this study offers the following recommendations:

The management of students' records cannot effectively be taken through its lifecycle without records management policies guarding it. Consequently, university administrators should formulate or modify policies that will guide the management of students' records in their universities. This should be translated to a handbook called "Student Records Management Handbook." The Federal University Administrators should consider recruiting students' records management personnel based on merit. Employment of wrong staff based

on family ties, ethnicity, and tribalism should be avoided. The Government of Nigeria should encourage curricular review that will include records management at secondary and tertiary levels of our education since we all deal with records either at individual or corporate levels.

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