An interdisciplinary approach to reconstruct the politics of process underlying student unrest in African universities

BI Omodan

orcid.org/0000-0002-9093-3108

Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Doctor of Philosophy in Social Sciences with Governance and Political Transformation* at the North-West University

Promoter: Dr PW Heydenrych

Graduation: May 2026

COMMENT

The references and page numbers in this thesis adhere to the format prescribed by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 7th edition. This practice aligns with the Programme's policy, and the thesis is submitted in the format of research articles. The editorial styles, including referencing styles, specified by the following journals have been followed:

- Sage Open
- Cogent Social Sciences
- Arts and Humanities in Higher Education

DECLARATION

I, Bunmi Isaiah Omodan, declare that this thesis: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Reconstruct the Politics of Process Underlying Student Unrest in African Universities is my work that has not been submitted for assessment before any learning institution in South Africa and beyond. The thesis is being submitted to fulfil the North-West University's requirements for a Doctoral degree in Governance and Political Transformation. The sources used to compile this thesis were duly acknowledged using in-text referencing and a bibliography.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Almighty God, the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of faith.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to God for His guidance, strength, and blessings throughout the arduous process of completing my second PhD. His ever-present existence has served as a constant source of solace and inspiration. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my esteemed supervisor, Dr. Pieter W. Heydenrych, for his exceptional mentorship, insightful feedback, and unwavering support. His expertise and encouragement have played an invaluable role in shaping the trajectory of this research endeavour.

I am indebted to my beloved wife, Dr Taiwo Omodan, for her boundless love, unwavering patience, and relentless encouragement. Her unwavering support and empathetic understanding have fostered a nurturing environment within our household, enabling me to devote my undivided attention to my academic pursuits. To my two incredible children, Jethro and Jane Omodan, thank you for your unwavering love, boundless joy, and deep understanding throughout this challenging journey. Your presence has served as a wellspring of motivation and fortitude, ultimately making this remarkable accomplishment conceivable.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Pages
Figure 1 in Article 1: Politics and process management model	173
Figure 1 in Article 2: Crises Management Mechanisms	200
Figure 2 in Article 2: Pattern of Crises Management	203
Figure 3 in Article 2: Impact of Psychosocial Deficiencies	207
Figure 4 in Article 2: Spatial and Contextual Factors Influencing Crises Management	212
Figure 5 in Article 2: Psychosocial Challenges Caused by Students' Unrest	216
Figure 6 in Article 2: Support Mechanisms for Psychosocial Deficiencies	220
Figure 1 in Article 3: Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest	255
Figure 2 in Article 3: Responses on Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest	251
Figure 3 in Article 3: Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest	252
Figure 4 in Article 3: Responses on Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest	255

ABSTRACT

From time immemorial, universities in Africa have faced various social crises, particularly student unrest, which significantly obstruct the aims and objectives of these institutions. The politics of the process, involving policy formulation, management styles, and organisational culture, is often implicated in these crises, exacerbating the unrest. The focus of the study was to deconstruct the politics of the process allegedly responsible for student unrest in African universities. Three theories underpin this study: Decoloniality, which explores the social aspects of university unrest and the remnants of colonial and militaristic influences; Environmental Determinism, which examines the geographical and cultural factors affecting student activism and university responses; and Ubuntu, which addresses the psychological impacts of unrest and promotes a philosophy of unity, humanity, and mutual respect.

The study is situated within the transformative paradigm, employing a qualitative research approach and a participatory research design to effectively implement the investigation. The participants for the study were selected from one university in Nigeria and South Africa using a convenient sampling technique. The study involved 28 participants, including university authorities, conflict management committee members, student leaders, lecturers, security personnel, heads of counselling centres, and community leaders. Data collection was conducted through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and unstructured interviews. The data analysis was carried out using Socio-thematic Analysis (StA), which combines thematic analysis and conversational analysis to interpret the social interactions and power differentials among participants.

The study is presented in the form of articles; hence, the findings are based on the three articles. The first article found that adopting democratic and facilitative leadership styles enhances the resolution of student conflicts by involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process, fostering a sense of inclusion and respect. This approach addresses the root causes of unrest and promotes long-term stability and positive change on campus. The second article reveals that effective crisis management in universities involves a combination of administrative policies, conflict resolution

committees, and security measures, with a focus on strategic planning and collaboration to address underlying causes of unrest. However, the reliance on reactive security measures and lack of university-community collaboration often exacerbates tensions and misses opportunities for sustainable conflict resolution. The last article showed that inadequate funding, overcrowding, ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, academic pressures, and political interference significantly hinder the management of student unrest in universities. Improving communication, promoting university autonomy, effective resource allocation, conflict resolution training, curriculum revamping, increased funding, community engagement, and mental health support are essential solutions to these challenges.

In conclusion, the study successfully examined the politics of the process and its impact on university productivity, highlighting the importance of democratic and facilitative leadership in addressing student unrest. It found that management styles, decision-making processes, and organisational values are crucial for creating inclusive environments that mitigate unrest. The investigation into crisis management in South Africa and Nigeria revealed the need for proactive strategies, community engagement, and tailored approaches to address historical and geographical contexts. Recommendations include improving communication, resource allocation, mental health support, and conflict resolution training to foster a supportive and stable university environment.

Keywords: *Politics of process, student unrest, African universities, decoloniality, environmental determinism, Ubuntu*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMENT i

DECLARATION ii

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

LIST OF FIGURES v

ABSTRACT vi

CHAPTER ONE 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION 1

1. Introduction 1

1.1 Problem statement 4

1.2 General research questions 9

1.2.1 Specific research questions 9

1.3 Research objectives 9

1.4 Preliminary theoretical statement 10

1.4.1 Decoloniality as a lens to unravel social perspective 10

1.4.2 Environmental determinism as a lens to unravel geographical differentials 11

1.4.3 Ubuntu as a lens to unravel the psychological effect of unrest 12

1.5 Preliminary literature review 12

1.5.1 Politics of process and university productivity 13

1.5.2 Backgrounds of student unrest and its management in Nigeria and South Africa 14

1.5.3 Psychosocial implications of student unrest on stakeholders in the universities 16

1.5.4 Challenges responsible for students' unrest in the university system 18

1.5.5 Solutions to the existing challenges associated with student unrest in universities 19

1.6 Preliminary methodology 20

1.6.1 Research paradigm 21

1.6.2 Research approach 21

1.6.3 Research design 22

1.6.4 Method of data collection 23

1.6.5 Selection of research site and research participants 23
1.6.6 Positionality 24
1.6.7 Data analysis 24
1.6.8 Ethical considerations 25
1.7 Significance of the study 27
1.8 Chapter Layout 28
CHAPTER TWO 29
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW 29
2. Introduction 29
2.1 Theoretical Framework 29
2.1.1 Decoloniality as a Lens to Unravel Social Perspectives 30
2.1.1.1 Relevance of Decoloniality to University Governance 31
2.1.1.2 Decoloniality and Management Practices 33
2.1.1.3 Transformation Through Decolonial Practices 36
2.1.1.4 Link to Research Objectives 37
2.1.2 Environmental Determinism as a Lens to Unravel Geographical Differentials 38
2.1.2.1 Environmental Influences on Human Behaviour and Activism 39
2.1.2.2 Comparative Analysis of Crisis Management 40
2.1.2.3 Environmental Determinism and Policy Implementation 41
2.1.2.4 Relevance to Crisis Management Strategies 42
2.1.2.5 Link to Research Objectives 43
2.1.3 Ubuntu as a Lens to Unravel Psychological Effects of Unrest 43
2.1.3.1 Ubuntu and Psychosocial Implications of Student Unrest 45
2.1.3.1 Ubuntu in University Governance 46
2.1.3.2 Integrating Ubuntu into Institutional Practices 47
2.1.3.3 Ubuntu as a Transformative Tool 48
2.1.3.4 Link to Research Objectives 49
2.1.4. Rationale for the Integrated Theoretical Framework 49

2.2 Literature Review: An Introduction 52
2.2.1 Background and Context 53
2.2.2 General Context 55
2.2.3 Nigeria and South African Context 56
2.2.4 Specific Case Studies: Nigeria 58
2.2.5 Specific Case Studies: South Africa 60
2.3 The Politics of Process in University Governance 61
2.3.1 Definition and Key Concepts 63
2.4.1 Current Trends 66
2.4.2 Theoretical Review: Social Movement Theory 67
2.4.3 Theoretical Review: Institutional Theory 69
2.4.4 Transformative Paradigm Shift 71
2.4.5 Empirical Studies on Student Unrest 72
2.4.6 Psychosocial Impact of Student Unrest 74
2.4.6.1 Mental Health Implications 76
2.4.6.2. Social Consequences 77
2.4.6.3 Economic Impact 79
2.5 Comparative discussion of issues 80
2.5.1 Understanding the Politics of Process 80
2.5.2 Governance Structures 82
2.5.3 Decision-Making Processes 83
2.5.4 Transparency and Accountability 84
2.5.5 Bad Governance and University Productivity 86
2.5.6 Impact on Academic Performance 87
2.5.7 Operational Inefficiencies 89
2.5.8 Resource Allocation 90
2.6 Comparative Backgrounds of Nigeria and South Africa 92
2.6.1 Historical Contexts 93

2.6.2 Political Influences 95
2.6.3 Socio-Economic Factors 96
2.6.4 Psychosocial Deficiencies 98
2.6.5 Mental Health Challenges 99
2.6.6 Social Disruptions 101
2.6.7 Economic Hardships 102
2.6.8 Lack of Access to Education 104
2.6.9 Socio-Economic Inequalities 105
2.6.10 Institutional Failures 107
2.6.11 Communication Gaps 108
2.7 Proposed Solutions 110
2.7.1 Policy Recommendations 112
2.7.2 Institutional Reforms 113
2.7.3 Psychosocial Support Systems 116
2.7.4 Enhanced Communication Strategies 117
2.8. Summary of the Chapter 119
CHAPTER THREE 120
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 120
Introduction 120
3.1 Research Paradigm 120
3.1.1 Transformative Paradigm as the Adopted Paradigm 123
3.1.2 Assumptions of the Transformative Paradigm in Relation to the Study 124
3.1.3 Relevance of the Transformative Paradigm to the Study 126
3.2 Research Approach 128
3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach 130
3.2.2 Justification for Choosing the Qualitative Research Approach 132
3.2.3 Application of Qualitative Research in the Study 133
3.3. Research Design 134

3.3.1 Participatory Research (PR) as the Chosen Research Design 135
3.3.2 Rationale for Adopting Participatory Research Design 136
3.3.3 Application of Participatory Research in the Study 137
3.3.4 Strengths and Potential Challenges of PR Design in this Study 139
3.3.5 Relevance of the Research Design 140
3.4 Method of Data Collection 141
3.5 Selection of Research Site and Participants 143
3.5.1 Participant Composition and Sampling Strategy 145
3.5.2 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion 146
3.6 Positionality 148
3.7 Data Analysis 149
3.7.1 Overview of Socio-Thematic Analysis (StA) 150
3.7.2 Steps in Socio-Thematic Analysis 151
3.7.3 Rationale for Using Socio-Thematic Analysis in this Study 152
3.7.4 Ethical Management of Data During Analysis 153
3.8 Ethical Considerations 154
3.8.1 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation 155
3.8.2 Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Protection 156
3.8.3 Minimising Risk and Harm 157
3.9 Trustworthiness 158
3.9.1 Credibility 159
3.9.2 Transferability 159
3.9.3 Dependability 159
3.9.4 Confirmability 160
3.10 Summary of Chapter Three 160
CHAPTER FOUR 162
THE ARTICLE PLAN BASED ON THE OBJECTIVES 162
4.1 Article one: Conceptualising politics of process as an antidote to student unrest in universities 163

Abstract 163
Introduction 164
Research Objectives 167
Theoretical viewpoint 167
Methodology 169
Presentation of analysis 170
Politics of Process as a Concept 170
Politics of Process and management of student unrest 173
Management-leadership styles politics of process and management of student unrest 174
Decision-making processes politics of process and management of student unrest 175
Organisational culture politics of process and management of student unrest 176
Organisational values politics of process and management of student unrest 178
Conclusion and recommendations 179
References for Article Number One 179
4.2 Article Two: Psychosocial implications of student unrest in Africa: The South Africa and Nigeria Perspectives 187
Abstract 187
Introduction 188
Research questions 190
Theoretical frameworks 191
Environmental determinism as a lens to unravel geographical differentials 191
Ubuntu as a lens to unravel the psychological effect of unrest 192
Methodology 195
Research paradigm 195
Research approach 195
Research design 196
Selection of research site and research participants 197
Method of Data Collection 197
Data Analysis 198

Ethical Consideration 198
Presentation of data 199
Crises management mechanisms 199
Pattern of crisis management 203
Impact of psychosocial deficiencies 207
SPATIAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CRISIS MANAGEMENT 211
Psychosocial challenges caused by students' unrest 214
Support mechanisms for psychosocial deficiencies 218
Discussion of findings 222
Crises management mechanisms 223
Pattern of crisis management 223
Impact of psychosocial deficiencies 224
Spatial and contextual factors influencing crises management 225
Psychosocial challenges caused by students' unrest 225
Support mechanisms for psychosocial deficiencies 226
Conclusion and recommendations 227
References for article two 227
4.3 Article three: A comparative management response to student unrest in African universities: Challenges and solutions 234
Abstract 234
Introduction 235
Research questions 237
Theoretical framework 238
Methodology 241
Research paradigm 241
Research design 242
Participants and the selection methods 242
Method of data collection 243
Method of data analysis 244

Ethical consideration 244
Presentation of results 245
Challenges hindering management of students' unrest 245
Possible solutions to challenges hindering management of students' unrest 250
Figure 3: Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest 251
Discussion of findings 255
Challenges hindering management of students' unrest in the university system 255
Conclusion and recommendations 261
References for article three 262
FINAL REFLECTION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 268
5.1 Findings from the first article 269
5.2 Findings from the second article 270
5.3 Findings from the third article 272
5.3.1 Challenges hindering management of students' unrest in the university system 272
5.3.2 Possible solutions to challenges hindering management of students' unrest 274
5.4 Conclusion 277
5.4.1 Recommendations for practice 278
5.4.2 Recommendations for further studies 278
5.5 Contribution to knowledge 279
References 284
Appendix 1: Proposal Approval Letter 311
Appendix 3: Declaration by participant 314
Appendix 4: Declaration by person obtaining consent 315
Appendix 5: Declaration by researcher and participant 316
Appendix 6: Language Editing Certificate 317

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1. Introduction

Universities in Africa have long grappled with a variety of social crises. These crises manifest in conflicts among students, between students and university authorities, and even between staff unions and university authorities. Of particular concern is the issue of student unrest, which is the focal point of this study, specifically examining the experiences in Nigeria and South Africa. Both countries, situated in West and Southern Africa, respectively, have endured historical challenges such as apartheid in South Africa and military dictatorship in Nigeria. Consequently, the ability of universities in these nations to achieve their objectives, including their pedagogical pursuits, is persistently impeded by instances of student unrest (Aluede, 2000; Aluede, 2001; Akinyemi, 2002; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2018; Omodan, 2020a). In this study, student activism refers to movements initiated to advocate for their rights and privileges. However, student activism becomes unrest when it leads to violence or crisis, particularly when peaceful advocacy escalates into destructive actions that disrupt the academic and social order of the university. Due to this progression, the terms unrest, violence, and crisis are used interchangeably throughout the study to reflect the continuum from purposeful student advocacy to destabilising confrontations.

As a result, the university systems in Nigeria and South Africa are plagued by varying degrees of student unrest, which can be directly attributed to the complexities of the politics of the process. The term "politics of process," while not widely recognised, can be defined within the context of this study as the administrative and managerial processes involved in governing an organisation. This encompasses policy formulation and implementation, management styles, organisational culture and values, operational procedures, rules and regulations, and codes of conduct. This perspective aligns with Omodan's (2019) assertion that the social intricacies of governance qualify as the politics of process. Consequently, Coates (2012) concludes that politics and governance are inseparable, as the act of governance is inherently political. Hatane (2019) similarly refers to this as the internal mechanisms within governance.

However, the social crises within the university system have been associated with deficiencies in interpersonal interactions, which often result in discomfort and disagreement (Cheloti et al., 2014; Odebode, 2019). These deficiencies may be linked to ineffective and exclusive governance processes (Is'aloluwa, 2014; Akinyeye, 2019). Between 2018 and 2019, the Qwaqwa campus of the University of the Free State in South Africa experienced four separate instances of social unrest caused by strained relationships between students and the university authority. Each of these incidents disrupted academic activities for a minimum of one month. It is important to note that such social unrest is not confined to the University of the Free State. According to Engelbrecht (2015), almost all universities in South Africa have witnessed varying degrees of student unrest, largely attributable to management issues, commonly referred to as the politics of process. The University of Zululand, University of Fort Hare, University of Pretoria, North-West University, Tshwane University of Technology, and the University of Cape Town have all recently encountered similar unrest (Mutekwe, 2017; Mavunga, 2019).

In Nigeria, student violence has been ongoing since 1917. However, a significant case of unrest began with the 1978 student disturbances at the University of Lagos. Currently, there have been sporadic outbreaks of unrest, including the 1999 students' unrest at the University of Ibadan, and the incidents at the University of Ado Ekiti in 2001, 2006, and 2008, as well as social unrest between students and the authorities at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, in 2002 (Akinyemi, 2002). The University of Lagos experienced unrest in 2002 and 2004, while Ebonyi State University faced an outbreak in 2004. Additionally, there was a crisis at Ladoke Akintola University in 2019 (Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020).

According to the literature, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, these instances of unrest have been attributed to the absence of an internal mechanism for managing students within university governance structures. Likewise, leadership deficiencies within universities and the politics of policy formulation and implementation processes, including alleged policy misappropriation, are central to this study. Scholars such as Badat (2016) have argued that student protests in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly during the #FeesMustFall movement, represent not only resistance to economic exclusion but also a deeper critique of enduring structural and epistemological inequalities within the university system. Badat underlines how the

university remains a contested terrain where the aspirations of students for justice, access, and transformation collide with historically embedded governance practices. In a similar vein, Cross (2014) highlights that student activism has evolved from oppositional defiance into a form of advocacy challenging exclusionary governance cultures. His analysis reflects how governance failures, marked by authoritarianism, opacity, and poor communication, often create the conditions under which activism spirals into unrest. These insights support the present study's focus on student unrest as a reflection of the dysfunctional "politics of process" within university governance systems.

Moreover, Thierry Luescher-Mamashela (2013) emphasises that the structural exclusion of students from meaningful participation in institutional decision-making fuels frustration and disengagement, ultimately precipitating protest action. His work demonstrates how ineffective student representation and limited responsiveness from university authorities exacerbate perceptions of illegitimacy and mistrust. This study builds on these analyses by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to investigate how governance processes, when lacking adequate politics of process, transform legitimate student activism into disruptive crises. Thus, this study aligns with the call from Badat, Cross, and Luescher-Mamashela for nuanced, context-sensitive research that not only theorises unrest but also informs more inclusive and democratic practices in higher education. In order to address this lacuna, the study ultimately explores the social perspective, geographical variations, and psychological implications of these challenges to better understand the impact of the complexities of the politics of the process in the selected countries.

While social crises in universities manifest in various forms, including disputes between university staff and management, this study specifically focuses on student unrest due to its persistent, disruptive, and often violent nature, which directly impedes institutional stability and academic progress. Unlike staff-management conflicts, which are typically mediated through established labour structures and union negotiations, student unrest tends to be less structured and more spontaneous, frequently escalating into full-blown crises that force institutional closures, delay academic calendars, and inflict long-term psychosocial harm (Omodan, 2020a; Mavunga, 2019). Furthermore, student unrest has historically been under-researched regarding its deep-rooted socio-political dimensions, particularly within the African context. The

decision to prioritise student unrest is, therefore, deliberate and motivated by the urgency to develop sustainable solutions for a crisis that continues to destabilise higher education institutions, challenge administrative authority, and reflect unresolved legacies of colonial and militaristic governance (Heleta, 2016; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2018).

The selection of South Africa and Nigeria is grounded in both their symbolic and empirical significance. These countries represent distinct geopolitical zones, West and Southern Africa, and share complex histories of authoritarian governance, namely military dictatorship in Nigeria and apartheid in South Africa, both of which continue to shape university governance structures and conflict dynamics (Mbembe, 2016; Akinyemi, 2002). The spatial and psychological aftermath of these legacies not only fuels student resistance but also frames the confrontational relationship between students and university authorities as a microcosm of broader societal struggles. Thus, by exploring these dynamics comparatively, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how context-specific variables influence patterns of unrest and the effectiveness of institutional responses. The findings hold critical implications for policy reform, inclusive governance, and mental health interventions in African higher education, aiming to guide both countries, and others in similar post-colonial contexts, toward more democratic, empathetic, and decolonial frameworks for university governance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

1.1 Problem statement

The problem addressed in this study is situated within an interdisciplinary framework. Specifically, the problem is examined from social, geographical, and psychological perspectives.

Socio-political perspective: The motivation for this study stems from the persistent unrest and crises among students in various universities in Africa. It is believed that these ongoing disturbances result from the dysfunctional dynamics between university authorities, who bear the responsibility of governance, and the student population, who express their discontent through unrest. Akeusola, Viatonu, and Askhia (2012) have observed the increasing prevalence of student crises in universities. To validate this claim, Etadon (2013), Davies, Ekwere, and Uyanga (2015), as well as Omodan and Dube (2019), have confirmed that little or no action has been taken to address

this issue proactively. Furthermore, it is evident that the remnants of military dictatorship in Nigeria and the militarised forms of resistance during South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle have yet to be dismantled. This may be because the discourse surrounding the decolonisation of universities is still relatively new, particularly regarding unravelling the leadership and governance of the African university system. However, it is undeniable that when social unrest in the form of student protests occurs, universities tend to respond by shutting down. As a result, the culture of teaching and learning is disrupted, leading to delays in the production of graduates (Omodan, 2016). This constitutes part of the rationale for conducting this study.

Geopolitical perspective: The politics of the processes underlying the unrest within the university system (Omodan, 2020b) cannot be fully understood without considering the geographical context. The severity of the issue varies across different geographical locations. The patterns of human and physical factors, as well as their interconnectedness with this issue, differ from one location to another. The intensity, patterns, dimensions, and locations of student unrest are influenced by various factors, including differences in indigenous knowledge, methods, relationships, and people's behaviour. The ways individuals from different places respond to these issues may be connected to geographical factors intertwined with the origins of student unrest, such as the remnants of military rule in Nigeria and the history of anti-apartheid militarised resistance in South Africa. In my argument, this relates to environmental factors, people's behaviour, and other unique characteristics of these locations. To effectively address this problem, a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between spatial and geographical elements is necessary to identify both the differences and similarities in the political dynamics within different universities.

Psychological **Perspective:** Crises give rise to a range of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive responses. The experience of crises and unrest in universities often leaves students and other members of the university community with heightened levels of anxiety, psychological distress, and imbalance. Student protests, such as the #FeesMustFall movements in South Africa, have illuminated the significant psychological distress experienced by students during clashes with authorities, including police interventions. Greeff et al. (2021) noted that first-year students encountered trauma and psychological harm during these protests, contributing to an overall decline in mental health alongside an escalation in anxiety and stress. Similarly,

Olivier (2017) discussed the broader implications of such unrest within the context of societal frustration, indicating that external factors, such as the neoliberal framework of higher education, exacerbate the psychological effects stemming from student protests. This unrest fosters a volatile environment that engenders feelings of helplessness and insecurity, which may lead to long-term mental health issues if not adequately addressed (Greeff et al., 2021; Olivier, 2017).

The psychological ramifications of unrest extend beyond immediate traumatic experiences, encompassing chronic issues such as anxiety, depression, and a decline in self-esteem. Research conducted by Kaya and Deniz (2020) demonstrates that university students often contend with low psychological well-being, particularly during their adaptation phase. This state can impede academic performance, as unresolved psychological difficulties may culminate in academic failure and psychosocial challenges if preventative mental health practices are not prioritised (Kaya et al., 2022). The necessity for proactive mental health strategies in contexts of unrest is underscored by research indicating that students experiencing heightened levels of anxiety and psychological distress require bespoke support systems (Polat & Ceylan, 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the act of protest itself can function as both a catalyst for psychological engagement and a source of stress. Research suggests that while student participation in protests may initially empower them and serve as a vehicle for social change, it concurrently exposes them to significant emotional turmoil. The portrayal of protests in the media often exacerbates feelings of vulnerability among students (Costandius et al., 2018; Roux, 2017). Moreover, physical activity, which has been demonstrated to reduce stress and enhance mental well-being, is frequently neglected during periods of intense unrest, further deteriorating mental health outcomes (Tanır & Özmaden, 2018; Ning & Shi, 2022).

However, researchers' observations indicate that after such crises or unrest, university stakeholders do not receive adequate support systems to address and mitigate the impact on the psychological well-being and mental health of the university community. The Education Bureau of Special Education Division and Educational Psychology Service (2016) confirms that the primary support required is to help individuals recover and reintegrate psycho-educational resources, counselling or psychotherapeutic

services, and the establishment of social support systems. The literature also notes that many students who have experienced unrest and crises may struggle with prolonged sleep difficulties, nightmares or flashbacks related to the crisis, and difficulties in academic performance, both personally and in terms of the economic development of their environment (Han, 2010).

Furthermore, when the psychological implications of social unrest are not addressed, it can hinder individual recovery and negatively impact individuals' economic and behavioural attitudes within the university system. Moreover, when students' well-being is compromised, it is inevitable that their academic performance will suffer, thereby jeopardising the pedagogical goals of the university. Therefore, engaging with the psychological perspective provides this study with a lens to better understand the problems at hand within a broader framework.

Despite the prevalence of student unrest across African universities, there remains a critical gap in the scholarly literature regarding the underlying socio-political perspectives, geographical factors, and psychosocial mechanisms that sustain such crises. While various studies have examined surface-level triggers, such as financial exclusion (Czerniewicz et al., 2019), infrastructural deficiencies (Anho, 2023), and leadership failures (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016), few have explored how internal governance processes, often referred to as the “politics of process,” contribute to recurring disruptions. Moreover, the governance structures and administrative responses frequently reflect colonial and militaristic legacies, a dimension that is underexplored in the empirical literature (Heleta, 2016; Mbembe, 2016). Scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Grosfoguel (2011) have critiqued Eurocentric epistemologies and the failure of African institutions to adopt decolonial governance models; however, limited research operationalises these critiques through contextually grounded, interdisciplinary investigations. Consequently, this study aims to address this gap by integrating decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu into a comprehensive framework that elucidates not only the occurrences of unrest but also the socio-historical forces that shape university governance.

The psychosocial implications of student unrest are inadequately addressed in the current literature. While evidence exists of the emotional and cognitive distress caused by unrest, including trauma, anxiety, and academic decline (Mbhele & Sibanyoni,

2022; Kaim et al., 2023), most studies treat these outcomes as byproducts rather than fundamental components of university crises. As a result, they neglect to examine the lack of systemic support mechanisms and the effects of psychological disempowerment on stakeholder behaviour. This study seeks to fill that void by applying Ubuntu as a theoretical lens that not only humanises stakeholder experiences but also advocates for empathetic and community-centred approaches to conflict resolution (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019; Tutu, 2004).

Furthermore, few comparative studies have investigated the role of geographical factors in shaping protest cultures and institutional responses across different African contexts. While Lewthwaite (1966) and Önal (2018) provide foundational insights into environmental determinism, their application to university governance remains largely theoretical and untested within African higher education systems. By comparing Nigeria and South Africa, this study pioneers a spatial-psychosocial framework that adds much-needed nuance to existing analyses.

Additionally, many existing studies (as indicated in Chapter Two) focus on episodic protests rather than investigating unrest as a symptom of deeper institutional and epistemological dysfunctions. For instance, protest movements like #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall have been discussed primarily in terms of their political visibility (Godsell & Chikane, 2016); however, little attention has been paid to how institutional culture, decision-making hierarchies, and colonial epistemes continue to provoke unrest (Mamdani, 2016; Luckett, 2019). Similarly, literature addressing university-student relationships often overlooks the embedded power asymmetries that alienate students and delegitimise their voices (Sithole, 2016; Motala et al., 2023). This study addresses these shortcomings by employing participatory research within a transformative paradigm, thus prioritising the voices of those historically marginalised in decision-making processes. In doing so, it not only extends the theoretical discourse on decoloniality and governance but also validates its findings through the lived experiences of university stakeholders. This dual focus on practical experience and empirical literature gaps ensures that the study contributes both to academic theory and actionable policy reform.

1.2 General research questions

In order to achieve the intention of the study, the following research question was formulated to pilot the study:

- How can university governance be improved to reduce unrest?

1.2.1 Specific research questions

The following specific questions were answered during the study:

- What is the politics of process, and how can it be used to redirect the management of student unrest in the selected universities?
- How has the comparative background of the selected countries regarding the crisis situation and its management affected the level of social unrest on campuses?
- What is the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities?
- What are the challenges hindering the management of student unrest in the universities selected in the two countries?
- What are the possible solutions to the existing challenges associated with the management of student unrest in universities?

1.3 Research objectives

The study examines solutions for enhancing university governance to mitigate unrest. Thus, the following objectives helped to achieve this study:

- Examine the understanding of the politics of process and the extent to which it has affected the management of student unrest;
- Investigate the comparative backgrounds of the selected countries regarding crisis situations and their management;
- Expose the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities;
- Examine the challenges responsible for students' unrest in the university system of the selected countries; and

- Propose solutions to the existing challenges associated with unrest, mostly between students and university authorities.

1.4 Preliminary theoretical statement

The study was conceptualised using three theoretical frameworks: decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu. The theory of decoloniality was employed to explore the social perspectives of the study, guided by objectives 1, 4, and 5. Environmental determinism was utilised to examine the geographical issues, concentrating on objective 2, while Ubuntu was applied to address the psychological implications, focusing on objective 3. The publication arrangement of this article is outlined under the chapters' layout.

1.4.1 Decoloniality as a lens to unravel social perspective

Decoloniality was adopted to understand the social dynamics of university unrest in Africa, focusing specifically on South Africa and Nigeria. In a general sense, decoloniality is a deep-rooted epistemological movement against the remnants of coloniality, also known as modernity within the realm of Africanism (Heydenrych, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Mignolo (2011) further explains that decoloniality is not simply a movement against old imperialism; it is also intricately tied to action, knowledge, and a new way of thinking. As a facet of critical theory, decoloniality, as theorised by Habermas (Dube, 2016), seeks to challenge Eurocentric ways of knowing and doing. Bhambra (2014) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) similarly argue that decoloniality, as a movement, aims to address and counter the political and cultural domination of the West. In Nigeria and South Africa, the remnants of military dictatorship and apartheid, respectively, are believed to have influenced the management and governance of universities, effectively perpetuating systematic coloniality.

While the researcher previously argued that students continue to employ protest strategies reminiscent of the confrontational tactics used during apartheid in South Africa and military dictatorship in Nigeria, it is necessary to clarify why these approaches are considered "outdated." These methods, such as forceful demonstrations, campus shutdowns, and the destruction of institutional property, reflect historically grounded resistance strategies that were effective in contexts of overt state oppression but may no longer yield constructive dialogue in contemporary

democratic settings. According to Luescher-Mamashela (2013), student protest in post-apartheid Africa has evolved into a complex phenomenon that combines both radical and strategic engagement, indicating that framing protest merely as "unrest" or "crisis" overlooks its multifaceted nature. As Badat (2016) notes, student activism today must be understood within the broader dynamics of democratic participation and institutional accountability, which often include negotiation, sit-ins, media campaigns, and engagement through student representative councils. Therefore, while some students may still resort to confrontational methods, particularly when peaceful channels fail, it is reductive to suggest that protest takes only this form.

It is also important to recognise that contemporary student movements across African universities, including those in Nigeria and South Africa, are increasingly utilising hybrid protest strategies. These include digital activism, legal advocacy, petition writing, symbolic protests, and academic disruptions that are non-violent but nonetheless impactful (Maringira & Gukurume, 2016; Landa et al., 2021). For instance, during the #FeesMustFall movement, students combined mass mobilisations with coordinated social media campaigns and institutional negotiations (Godsell & Chikane, 2016). In Nigeria, while traditional protests persist, students also engage through formal governance structures such as Students' Union Governments, stakeholder meetings, and digital petitions. These evolving forms of protest challenge simplistic categorizations and underscore the need to analyse student activism within shifting political, technological, and institutional landscapes. The persistence of hierarchical and sometimes authoritarian university management styles may explain why some students still view confrontation as a necessary tactic, but it is equally crucial to acknowledge their strategic adaptability in the face of these challenges.

1.4.2 Environmental determinism as a lens to unravel geographical differentials

Lethwaite (1966) conceptualised environmental determinism as a doctrine that posits human growth, activities, and development as contingent upon environmental factors. Alexander (1999) further argues that elements such as climate and culture exert influence on human actions and behaviours. Similarly, Önal (2018) asserts that the main assumption of this approach is rooted in the notion that the physical environment dictates human life. In other words, the laws of nature are fundamental to the actions, inactions, and behaviours of individuals. Consequently, this study examines the

variations in student activism and universities' responses in two selected locations, taking into account their environmental and cultural distinctiveness. Here, student activism refers to the extent, reasons, and modes of student agitation and unrest, which will be analysed based on their environmentalism. Similarly, the approaches, methods, and styles employed by university management in addressing student unrest will also be examined based on their unique characteristics. This proposition aligns with the determinists' argument that individuals adopt diverse spatial strategies to respond to environmental issues (Lewthwaite, 1966); hence, spatial peculiarities must be explored.

1.4.3 Ubuntu as a lens to unravel the psychological effect of unrest

Ubuntu, as a philosophy of love, unity, oneness, and humanity (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019), was utilised in this study to propose a solution to the psychological impact of student unrest in universities. Ubuntu originates from the IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, and IsiSwati languages and encompasses the ideas of humanity, humanness, unity, and diversity (Tutu, 2004; Omodan, 2020a). It also embodies the concept that "a person is a person through others" (Lefa, 2015; Variri & Variri, 2019), which Omodan (2019) refers to as Africanism. In essence, Ubuntu advocates for a philosophy of love and interconnectedness, where the university should regard itself as part of the students and the students should also perceive themselves as part of the university's authority. This sense of unity appears to be lacking in university governance, which may explain why the system has failed to address the psychological consequences and aftermath of unrest among its stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative to reaffirm the principles of Ubuntu in university governance.

1.5 Preliminary literature review

This section provides an initial literature review that is relevant to the study. The literature review was conducted to address the research question and objectives, which are divided into the following subheadings: 1) The politics of process and university productivity, 2) The backgrounds of student unrest and its management in Nigeria and South Africa, 3) The psychosocial implications of student unrest on stakeholders in universities, 4) The challenges responsible for student unrest in the university system, and 5) The solutions to the existing challenges associated with student unrest in universities.

1.5.1 Politics of process and university productivity

The intersection of politics and university productivity encompasses a multifaceted range of organisational dynamics, leadership styles, educational strategies, and the pervasive influence of political factors on various aspects of university operations. Extensive research has examined the impact of organisational politics on turnover rates within universities, yielding significant findings regarding how internal political climates can affect staff retention and institutional stability (Khushk et al., 2021). Additionally, scholars have emphasised the role of civic engagement in facilitating students' transition to active community members, underscoring the importance of integrating political awareness and participation into educational frameworks (Turner, 2014). Comparative studies on the implications of colonial origins on development patterns have further enriched the discourse, providing historical context for contemporary educational and organisational practices (Acemoğlu et al., 2000). Another crucial area of inquiry concerns the utilisation of big data in selecting ideological and political education resources, illustrating how technological advancements can augment educational strategies and resource allocation (Zhang, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of retired college student soldiers into ideological and political work has emerged as a strategic approach to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives within universities. This capitalises on their unique experiences and perspectives to cultivate a more robust ideological framework (Zhang, 2023). Conversely, the impact of teachers' participation in partisan politics on academic integrity and educational outcomes has garnered scrutiny, emphasising the importance of clearly delineating personal political activities from professional responsibilities (Mahmud, 2024).

It is crucial to emphasise the necessity of comprehensively designed and collaboratively implemented systems for ideological and political work within higher education institutions, highlighting the need for a cohesive approach to managing these initiatives (Shang, Ju & Mao, 2023). Research has identified various factors that influence political engagement among university students, shedding light on both motivations and barriers to student involvement in political activities (Ibrahim, 2023). Numerous studies have explored the use of politeness strategies in classroom

interactions, delving into their significant impact on communication effectiveness and the overall learning environment (Mahmud, 2019).

The influence of digital virtual technology on ideological and political education has also received considerable attention, demonstrating how innovative technological tools can enhance the delivery and reception of educational content (Song & Qiu, 2024). Practical implementations of ideological and political education at the university level have been examined, providing insights into the real-world application of theoretical frameworks and the challenges encountered in this process (Huang, 2024).

Evaluating the performance of ideological and political education in colleges is recognised as a complex and multifaceted undertaking. This necessitates extensive analysis and continuous improvement to ensure effectiveness and relevance (Xiu-yin, 2018). Moreover, extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between perceptions of organisational politics and employee attitudes, including the influence of organisational politics on creativity and job satisfaction. These studies underscore the nuanced ways in which internal politics can shape organisational culture and outcomes (Nisa et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2009).

Taken together, the synthesis of these diverse studies highlights the complex relationship between politics and university productivity. It underscores the crucial significance of skilfully managing organisational politics, nurturing innovative educational strategies, and gaining a profound understanding of the pervasive effects of political influences on different facets of university life. These valuable insights offer guidance for university administrators, educators, and policymakers striving to improve institutional productivity and establish a conducive environment for academic and organisational excellence.

1.5.2 Backgrounds of student unrest and its management in Nigeria and South Africa

Student unrest in Nigeria and South Africa poses a significant challenge for higher education institutions in both countries. In South Africa, protests by students from 2015 to 2017 highlighted issues of financial exclusion, epistemological biases, and cultural marginalisation (Czerniewicz et al., 2019). These protests often resulted in university closures, disrupting academic schedules and exacerbating systemic problems within the education sector (Landa et al., 2021). In contrast, student unrest in Nigeria is

characterised by disruptive behaviour that presents considerable difficulties for university administrations (Anho, 2023).

The causes of student unrest in South Africa can be attributed to several interconnected factors, including financial constraints that hinder access to education, disparities in knowledge systems that marginalise certain ways of knowing, and cultural issues that contribute to feelings of exclusion (Czerniewicz et al., 2019). In Nigeria, unrest is driven by administrative inefficiencies and the lack of effective mechanisms for addressing student grievances (Anho, 2023). Additionally, the absence of structured work placement programmes for disadvantaged students in South Africa further complicates efforts to manage student unrest, as it adds to a sense of hopelessness and frustration among students (Pitan & Muller, 2023).

To address these issues, South African universities have explored various institutional responses, such as adopting collegial leadership approaches to tackle the underlying causes of unrest and promote inclusivity in education (Omodan, 2023). These strategies aim to minimise the negative impact of unrest on the academic process and enhance student well-being (Naidoo, 2023). In Nigeria, addressing student unrest typically involves implementing administrative measures and fostering effective communication channels between students and university management to resolve grievances and prevent disruptive behaviour (Anho, 2023).

Therefore, student unrest presents distinct challenges in Nigeria and South Africa, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the root causes and effective management strategies. These approaches are crucial for creating a conducive learning environment and ensuring student well-being. By addressing financial, epistemological, and cultural issues in South Africa and improving administrative effectiveness and communication in Nigeria, higher education institutions can better navigate the complexities of student unrest and promote a more stable and productive academic environment.

1.5.2.1 Contextual Differentiation Between South Africa and Nigeria

Nigeria and South Africa exist within post-colonial African settings marked by recurrent student unrest. However, it is imperative to avoid oversimplification by considering them as entirely comparable entities. Their unique historical and socio-political trajectories must be acknowledged for a comprehensive analysis. South Africa's

higher education system bears the indelible marks of apartheid, a system that entrenched racial segregation, epistemic exclusion, and structural disparities. These legacies persist in shaping contemporary university governance and student activism (Badat, 2016; Heleta, 2016; Mbembe, 2016). Movements like #FeesMustFall signal resistance not only against financial exclusion but also a broader quest for epistemic justice and institutional metamorphosis rooted in decolonial aspirations (Czerniewicz et al., 2019; Godsell & Chikane, 2016). Accordingly, student unrest in South Africa is deeply intertwined with historically racialised inequalities, transforming universities into battlegrounds for rectifying systemic injustices and reshaping knowledge paradigms. This unique backdrop fosters an activism that blends political, epistemological, and socio-economic dimensions, often aimed at dismantling deep-seated colonial and apartheid influences within institutional frameworks.

In contrast, although Nigeria shares a colonial past and a history of prolonged military rule, student unrest dynamics are predominantly linked to administrative inefficacies, governance shortcomings, and infrastructural deficiencies within the university system (Akinyemi, 2002; Anho, 2023; Odebode, 2019). The legacy of military authoritarianism has fostered hierarchical and autocratic governance practices that influence both university management responses and student protest patterns (Omodan, 2020b). Unlike South Africa, where unrest is closely tied to issues of identity, epistemic transformation, and historical redress, student demonstrations in Nigeria are often fuelled by immediate institutional hurdles such as inadequate funding, erratic academic calendars, and ineffective student-management communication (Anho, 2023; Akeusola et al., 2012). Moreover, disparities in geopolitical and environmental factors, as underscored by environmental determinism, indicate that variations in cultural norms, governance standards, and socio-economic circumstances contribute to diverse forms and intensities of unrest in these two contexts (Lewthwaite, 1966; Önal, 2018). Therefore, while both nations grapple with student unrest, the underlying catalysts, historical underpinnings, and manifestations of such unrest exhibit notable distinctions, necessitating a nuanced and contextually sensitive analytical lens.

1.5.3 Psychosocial implications of student unrest on stakeholders in the universities

Student unrest in universities has significant psychosocial implications for various stakeholders, including students, university management, government authorities, and

the broader community. One key contributing factor to student protests is the lack of effective communication between university management and students (Omodan, 2023a). This breakdown in communication can create tensions and distrust among stakeholders, such as students, university management, and the government (Mavunga, 2019), further exacerbating the unrest and hindering efforts to address the underlying issues.

Studies have shown that student unrest can have detrimental effects on university administration, ranging from infrastructure damage to hindering effective teaching and learning (Anho, 2023). To address these challenges, administrative strategies should promote collective decision-making involving students, respect students' demands, ensure fairness in disciplinary matters, maintain transparent communication, and secure adequate government funding for universities (Anho, 2023). However, the implementation of these strategies requires effective collaboration, consensus-building, and organisational relationships to manage student unrest in universities (Omodan, 2023c). The psychosocial implications of student unrest extend beyond administrative challenges to impact the mental well-being of student leaders. Research has shown that student unrest can increase stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation among student leaders (Omodan, 2023d). Therefore, it is crucial to provide adequate support systems for student leaders to cope with the demands of leading during turbulent times.

Furthermore, student unrest affects both administrative and student leadership levels, as well as the broader university community. A case study on student hooligan behaviour during protest actions revealed that violence significantly impacts the community's sense of safety on campus and learning outcomes (Mbhele & Sibanyoni, 2022). The presence of law enforcement agencies using force to manage protests can further escalate tensions and contribute to a hostile campus environment. In addition to the immediate impacts of student unrest, concerns have been raised about the long-term consequences on stakeholders, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted psychosocial aspects and communication challenges among school stakeholders, including students (Kaim et al., 2023). The shift to distance learning has disrupted traditional modes of communication and interaction, leading to increased distress among stakeholders. These lingering effects

underscore the need for comprehensive support mechanisms to address the psychosocial well-being of all individuals involved in the university setting.

Overall, student unrest in universities presents complex challenges with far-reaching psychosocial implications for stakeholders. Addressing these implications requires a multifaceted approach that prioritises effective communication, collaboration, support systems for student leaders, and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts on the broader university community. By understanding and addressing the psychosocial dimensions of student unrest, universities can work towards fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and conducive learning environment for all stakeholders involved.

1.5.4 Challenges responsible for students' unrest in the university system

Student unrest in university systems is a multifaceted issue influenced by various factors that can lead to protests, strikes, and disruptions within academic institutions. One significant factor contributing to student unrest is the presence of inequalities within the university system. These inequalities often manifest as high tuition fees, inadequate funding for historically disadvantaged universities, insufficient accommodation, and subpar teaching and learning facilities (Omodan, 2023a). Such disparities can foster a sense of injustice among students, prompting protests and demonstrations aimed at addressing these systemic issues.

Administrative responses to student activism and diversity efforts also play a pivotal role in either exacerbating or mitigating student unrest. Rhoads (2016) asserts that administrative responses can, at times, undermine students' diversity efforts, suggesting that the manner in which institutions handle student concerns and demands can impact the level of unrest within the university. Furthermore, the relationship between university management and students is crucial in addressing and preventing student unrest. Anho (2023) emphasises the importance of sound governance practices within universities, such as involving students in collective decision-making, respecting their demands, maintaining transparent communication, and ensuring equitable disciplinary processes. When universities fail to include students in decision-making processes, ignore their demands, or lack transparency, it can escalate tensions and conflicts, ultimately contributing to unrest.

In addition to internal university dynamics, external factors such as government policies and funding significantly affect student unrest. Odebode (2019) identified unfavourable government policies, high tuition fees, and poor staff-student relationships as key factors contributing to student unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Insufficient government funding for universities can lead to resource constraints, impacting the quality of education and student services, thus fuelling discontent among the student population. The historical context and societal dynamics of a country can also influence student unrest within university systems. For instance, in South Africa, the legacy of apartheid and ongoing social inequalities have been linked to persistent student protests and unrest. The broader socio-political environment, including issues of social mobility, political control, and fiscal conservatism, can shape the landscape in which student activism and unrest unfold.

Furthermore, the role of student leaders and their ability to manage student affairs can influence the prevalence of unrest within universities. Murage et al. (2019) discuss the challenges faced by student leaders in managing student affairs in public universities in Kenya, highlighting the importance of innovative approaches that involve student leaders in the governance of higher education institutions. Effective student leadership and involvement in decision-making processes can contribute to a more inclusive and responsive university environment, potentially reducing instances of unrest. Therefore, by proactively addressing these challenges, universities can create a more conducive environment for learning and collaboration, ultimately reducing the likelihood of student unrest.

1.5.5 Solutions to the existing challenges associated with student unrest in universities

Student unrest in universities poses significant challenges for university administrations worldwide. This unrest manifests in various forms, including the destructive vandalism of infrastructure, which hampers effective teaching and learning (Anho, 2023). To address this issue, it is crucial for university management to adopt strategies such as collective decision-making involving students, respecting student demands, ensuring fairness in disciplinary matters, maintaining transparent communication, and securing adequate government funding (Anho, 2023). Additionally, implementing collegial leadership approaches can help tackle the

underlying causes of student unrest and foster transformative prospects within institutions (Omodan, 2023b).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to consider the challenges faced by medical students and provide them with the necessary support to safeguard their mental health and overall well-being (Chandratre, 2020). Furthermore, addressing the root causes of student unrest requires active participation from all stakeholders to reverse negative trends (Chemutai et al., 2020). Moreover, understanding the role of students in protests and activism is crucial. Placing students at the centre of empirical analyses can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of social movements. For instance, research on anti-corruption protests in Russian cities emphasises the importance of student participation and the influence of social media on protest activities (Nikolayenko, 2021; Enиколопов et al., 2020). Understanding how students engage in protests and activism can guide strategies to address their concerns and promote a more inclusive and just society.

Leadership plays a crucial role in managing student unrest, with transformational leadership approaches being highlighted as effective management processes in universities. Enhancing communication, involving students in decision-making, improving dialogues between students and management, and providing adequate infrastructure are recommended strategies to mitigate conflicts between students and university management (Akparep, 2019). Moreover, student councils can play a significant role in disciplining students and reducing the frequency of unrest in educational institutions (Tikoko & Kimame, 2022).

In summary, by implementing a combination of effective leadership strategies, involving stakeholders, establishing support structures, and addressing the root causes of unrest, universities can work towards creating a more conducive and harmonious environment that promotes learning and growth while mitigating the challenges associated with student unrest.

1.6 Preliminary methodology

This section presents a comprehensive examination of the methodological framework employed in the study. It encompasses various aspects, including the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data collection methods, selection of

the research site and participants, researcher positionality, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

This study is grounded in the Transformative Paradigm (TP), which seeks to facilitate significant changes in the conditions of subjects and their environmental contexts. The relevance of the Transformative Paradigm is underscored by its ontological stance, which centres on comprehending the nature of social and historical realities (Chilisa, 2012). This perspective supports the adoption of decoloniality as a theoretical framework aimed at challenging and reconstructing these historical realities. From an epistemological perspective, the Transformative Paradigm emphasises the significance of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, which should be based on trust (Mertens, 2010). This trust is essential for generating inclusive knowledge and understanding the diverse perspectives and power dynamics at play. Consequently, the study employs participatory research (PR) as its research design, ensuring the active involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders in the process of knowledge generation. This approach aligns with the paradigm's objective of addressing and transforming power imbalances, fostering a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation.

1.6.2 Research approach

The study utilises a qualitative research approach, which is well suited to examining the intricate and multifaceted nature of student unrest in African universities. This approach is particularly appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, qualitative research allows for a profound comprehension of the lived experiences, perspectives, and motivations of individuals engaged in student unrest (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This understanding is crucial for grasping the complex dynamics between students, university authorities, and other stakeholders. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research is invaluable when investigating social processes and interactions, as it offers detailed insights that quantitative methods might overlook.

Secondly, the qualitative approach aligns with the study's objective of adopting an interdisciplinary perspective. By employing methods such as focus groups and interviews, the research can gather diverse viewpoints and experiences, which are essential for addressing the social, geographical, and psychological dimensions of

student unrest. Creswell and Poth (2011) emphasise that qualitative research is effective in capturing the complexity of social phenomena, making it a suitable choice for this study.

Lastly, qualitative research supports the study's transformative paradigm, which aims to bring about change by involving participants in the research process. Participatory research design, a fundamental aspect of qualitative research, empowers stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and experiences, fostering a more inclusive and democratic research process. Mertens (2010) underscores that such an approach is crucial for research seeking to address issues of social justice and equity, as it ensures that the voices of marginalised groups are heard and considered in the development of solutions.

The qualitative research approach is highly applicable to this study, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of student unrest, supports the interdisciplinary and participatory nature of the research, and aligns with the transformative paradigm's goals of promoting social change and inclusivity.

1.6.3 Research design

Participatory Research (PR) was adopted as the research design for this study to investigate the internal practices, politics, and processes underlying the assumptions of social crises in Nigerian and South African universities. Participatory research is an approach that emphasises direct engagement with local priorities and perspectives (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). This approach contributes to the ongoing debate on research relevance and action research, challenging the traditional knowledge production in social science research (Clark et al., 2009). Participatory research involves collaborating directly with those affected by the issue being studied, with the aim of promoting change (May, 2024). This is appropriate because it ensures that the researcher(s) and the participants work together to propose practical solutions to the problem. Additionally, PR was chosen as one of the designs that can implement the transformational agenda of TP through collaboration between the researcher and the participants. This aligns with Ruffa and Harrison's (2020) recommendation that transformative research, conducted under participatory research, must ensure genuine involvement and participation of those involved in the process.

1.6.4 Method of data collection

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to collect data in response to objectives 1 to 5. The FGD is an appropriate method for addressing these objectives because it follows the principles of Participatory Research (PR) by identifying institutional problems and finding solutions through dialogue, strategic actions, and informed decisions (Escalada & Heong, 2014). The FGD session included members of the top management cadre, such as lecturers, student leaders, and security personnel, who shared their experiences and opinions on the crisis. The session also revealed the crisis management strategies implemented by the authorities. However, there may be concerns regarding the composition of the participants in the FGD session. The researcher acknowledges the potential power differentials among the participants but is interested in exploring how these differences can be managed and addressed. Other data collection methods, such as interviews, were employed for participants who were unwilling or unable to participate in the group session. In the event that participants indicated an inability to participate face-to-face, the researcher committed to switching to electronic data collection methods, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Blackboard Collaborate, telephones, and WhatsApp. The aim of this switch is to accommodate participants who could not be replaced. The discussion and interview segments were audio-recorded with the explicit consent of the participants. Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed to facilitate comprehensive data analysis.

1.6.5 Selection of research site and research participants

Each university was chosen from the participating countries. The selection of participants for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) comprised twenty-eight individuals: two members of university management, two members of conflict management/resolution committees, two student leaders, two lecturers, two security personnel, two members of counselling centres, and two community leaders from each of the selected universities. In total, fourteen participants were from Nigeria and fourteen were from South Africa, making a total of twenty-eight participants. The participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique, which was deemed appropriate due to its time efficiency and ease of access to the subjects. This technique assumes that the members of the target population are homogeneous and readily accessible (Etikan et al., 2016; Alvi, 2016). To gather data on spatial and

geographical aspects, the snowball sampling technique was employed to identify community elders with sufficient knowledge of the university locations, culture, background, and practices.

1.6.6 Positionality

In conducting this research within the Transformative Paradigm (TP) and applying Participatory Research (PR) as the chosen methodology, my positionality is rooted in a commitment to addressing the social and historical realities of African universities, specifically in Nigeria and South Africa. As a researcher, I recognise the importance of establishing trust-based relationships with participants, as emphasised by TP's ontological stance. This commitment aligns with the ongoing discourse on decolonisation within the university system. Thus, by embracing the principles of PR, my goal is to genuinely collaborate with participants, including top management, lecturers, student leaders, and security personnel, utilising the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method for data collection. I acknowledge the potential power imbalances among participants as an inherent aspect of the research design, with the intention of exploring and addressing these dynamics. Additionally, my ability to adapt to ongoing challenges demonstrates flexibility in data collection methods to ensure the safety and engagement of both the researcher and participants in the pursuit of a transformative research agenda.

1.6.7 Data analysis

Socio-thematic analysis (StA) was employed to analyse the data generated by the participants. Bunmi Omodan introduced this method of data analysis in 2019. According to Omodan (2019) and Omodan (2020a), StA combines thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), conversational analysis, as explained by Omodan (2019) and Nordquist (2019), and the concept of performing social actions through language, such as describing, agreeing, questioning, offering, and communicating, rather than assuming that language is understood when people engage in dialogue. Omodan argues that the use of socio-thematic analysis involves breaking down the transcribed data into relevant units or themes by familiarising oneself with the data, generating codes, identifying the themes, reviewing the themes, defining or naming the themes, and producing reports or analyses using *conversationality*. In other words, the statements under each theme are subjected to

a sociality test to enable the analyst to socially interpret the social dependencies or independence and social interactions resulting from the social differences among the participants (Omodan, 2019; Omodan, 2020b). In this study, socio-thematic analysis allows the researcher to examine the interplay of power differentials in the participants' mandatory integration into university society and the community they represent.

1.6.8 Ethical considerations

The approval to conduct this study was received from the relevant ethical committee of Northwest University, South Africa. All rules, trustworthiness, and ethics of research were carefully observed, as ethical consideration, according to Dube (2016), is crucial in any research study to protect researchers and co-researchers from potential harm during the data generation process. Meanwhile, letters of introduction seeking permission to conduct research were addressed to the selected universities for possible consideration. The researcher facilitated data collection to ensure organisation and adherence to the research focus and objectives. Gatekeepers from each university may be requested to assist in the recruitment process of participants, although this is not mandatory. All research participants were given pseudonyms to ensure a high level of confidentiality. In case of any inconvenience, participants were guaranteed the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The following process was followed:

- During the data analysis process, the data were coded, and pseudonyms were utilised by the researcher to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.
- Data storage: Data storage was carried out with the utmost security measures in order to prevent any potential breaches of confidentiality or invasions of privacy. Hard copies of the collected responses will be stored securely in a locked cupboard or filing cabinet at the researcher's place of residence, while electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer. These precautions will effectively mitigate the risk of unauthorised access. The intention is to retain the data for a period of five years for the purpose of future research or academic use. However, any future utilisation will be subject to further review and approval by the Research Ethics Committee. After the mandated five-year period, rigorous measures will be implemented to ensure

secure disposal of the data. Printed copies will be destroyed through incineration, while electronic copies will be permanently deleted, thereby guaranteeing irretrievability.

- Dissemination: The objective of disseminating the results and findings of this research study is to target an academic audience interested in university management and student relations. Publication in scholarly journals and presentation at conference proceedings will be pursued to achieve this aim. The findings may also be shared with education policymakers and university management to facilitate effective implementation of the solutions derived from the study. This will consequently ensure the accessibility of the findings to individuals involved in educational planning and policies related to student unrest and crises in universities. Moreover, the research outcomes can be summarised and made available through institutional repositories or other online platforms to reach a broader audience, including students and the general public.
- Risk of conflict: Potential risks associated with this study encompass conflicts arising from the nature of focus group interviews, as well as reputational risks faced by the universities involved. In order to mitigate the risk of conflict during focus group interviews, meticulous facilitation strategies were employed. These strategies foster a respectful and inclusive environment, thereby encouraging open dialogue among participants. Furthermore, proactive measures such as obtaining informed consent and anonymising data were employed to minimise reputational risks. These measures ensure that the research is conducted with due diligence and sensitivity.
- Risk of anonymity in a focus group: While acknowledging the challenge of ensuring complete anonymity in focus group interviews, this study undertook measures to mitigate this risk. Participants were explicitly briefed on the importance of confidentiality and discouraged from discussing specific details outside of the group setting. An effort was made during data analysis and reporting to anonymise information in order to protect individual identities. This involved the use of pseudonyms or identifiers. The aim is to minimise the risk of confidentiality breaches associated with the nature of focus group interviews

through a clear and transparent communication strategy and rigorous anonymisation protocols.

- Stigmatization of student leaders: Student leaders may be stigmatised after expressing their opinions to university authorities. To address this issue, the researcher prioritised confidentiality by using pseudonyms or identifiers in reporting to safeguard their identities. A debriefing session was offered to participants to express any concerns, and collaboration with university authorities aimed to foster an environment that values open expression. Collectively, these measures seek to ensure a supportive and confidential space for student leaders of the Student Representative Council (SRC) to voice their opinions without fear of stigmatization.
- Possible psychological effects: To mitigate the risk of psychological distress related to revisiting past student unrest trauma, participant well-being was prioritized by providing clear and comprehensive informed consent. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any penalties. The researcher approached discussions with sensitivity, carefully framing questions to minimise potential distress, and debriefing sessions were conducted to address any emotional concerns.
- Reimbursement: In order to alleviate any financial burden on participants, particularly community leaders who are not currently employed within the university, the researcher assumed responsibility for their travel expenses. This support may involve arranging personal transportation or covering the associated transport costs to facilitate their participation in the study. However, other participants who are expected to be within the university environment during the discussion do not require reimbursement.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing academic literature on student crisis management and social unrest within university systems. It aims to enhance understanding in this area by offering comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives and proposing effective solutions for managing student unrest. The findings of this study are particularly beneficial to educational planners, policymakers, and university management, as the recommended solutions can help guide the implementation of long-term curricula. Additionally, university students themselves stand to benefit from

the absence of social unrest, as it will enable them to focus on their studies and successfully complete their programmes within the intended timeframe.

1.8 Chapter Layout

Chapter One: Introduction and Orientation

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter Four: The article plan based on the objectives:

- **Objective 1** forms an article for publication with a potential title: Conceptualising the politics of process and its implications on university productivity.
- **Objectives 2 and 3** form an article for publication with a potential title: Comparative background of crisis and its psychological implications on university stakeholders.
- **Objectives 4 and 5** form an article for publication with a potential title on the challenges responsible for student unrest and the potential solutions to enhance university governance towards managing student unrest.

Chapter Five: Final reflection, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion encompassing both the theoretical frameworks and a critical review of existing literature, forming a robust foundation for understanding the multifaceted issue of student unrest in universities, specifically in the Nigerian and South African contexts. The theoretical framework adopted in this study integrates three significant theories, Decoloniality, Environmental Determinism, and Ubuntu philosophy, to offer a nuanced exploration of the social, geographical, and psychological dimensions underpinning university governance and student activism. Through decoloniality, the chapter critically examines historical legacies, institutional power relations, and governance structures inherited from colonial and authoritarian pasts. Environmental determinism provides additional insights into spatial and environmental factors, highlighting how geographical disparities influence university policy implementation, management responses, and student protest patterns. Complementing these perspectives, Ubuntu philosophy addresses the psychological dimensions of unrest, emphasising interconnectedness, empathy, and community solidarity as mechanisms for fostering psychosocial resilience and institutional harmony. Subsequently, the literature review critically synthesises previous scholarly contributions, contextualising the current research within broader academic discourses, identifying gaps, and offering a detailed comparative understanding of crisis management strategies. Collectively, these sections enable the study to rigorously address its research objectives and propose practical, sustainable governance solutions.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study integrates three interconnected theories, decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu, to critically examine and reconstruct the politics of process underlying student unrest in African universities. Student unrest, as a multifaceted phenomenon, encompasses social tensions, geographical complexities, and psychological implications within higher education institutions. Decoloniality is applied to interrogate historical power dynamics and lingering colonial influences on governance practices, while environmental

determinism provides insights into the spatial and cultural dimensions affecting crisis management strategies in Nigerian and South African universities. The philosophy of Ubuntu complements these perspectives by offering a humanistic approach focused on interconnectedness, empathy, and collective well-being, which are essential for addressing the psychosocial impacts among stakeholders. Collectively, these theoretical lenses facilitate a nuanced analysis and promote sustainable, transformative solutions to the persistent issue of student unrest.

2.1.1 Decoloniality as a Lens to Unravel Social Perspectives

Decoloniality emerges as a critical intellectual framework primarily concerned with disrupting the enduring structures and epistemologies of colonialism, which persist long after formal colonial rule has ended. Originating from Latin American scholarship in the late 20th century, decoloniality gained momentum through scholars such as Aníbal Quijano, who articulated the concept of the "coloniality of power" to describe the enduring patterns of domination established during European colonial expansion (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2007). According to Quijano (2000), coloniality permeates not only political and economic structures but also deeply influences knowledge production, social identity, and cultural expressions. This theoretical perspective positions coloniality as the invisible but tangible legacy of colonialism that continually shapes the lived realities of formerly colonised societies.

Central to the philosophical underpinning of decolonial thought is its sustained critique of Eurocentrism, which projects European epistemologies and cultural norms as universally valid benchmarks for modernity and development. Mignolo (2011) posits that decoloniality challenges Eurocentric hegemony by advocating a "delinking" from Western epistemological structures, thereby fostering alternative forms of knowing rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. This critical shift emphasises epistemic justice, demanding recognition and validation of non-Western knowledge as equally legitimate and necessary for achieving genuine global intercultural dialogue (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2007). Therefore, decoloniality extends beyond mere political sovereignty to encompass the liberation of knowledge and consciousness from deeply entrenched colonial patterns.

The theoretical distinction between coloniality and decoloniality constitutes a significant intellectual debate in contemporary scholarship. While coloniality refers to

persistent patterns of power and knowledge that sustain Western hegemony, decoloniality signifies active resistance and a conscious departure from these oppressive structures (Grosfoguel, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Scholars argue that coloniality remains embedded in social hierarchies, gender roles, educational systems, and institutional practices, necessitating a deliberate intellectual and practical project aimed at dismantling such entrenched forms of oppression (Bhambra, 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Hence, decoloniality offers a strategic framework for unmasking these colonial matrices and promoting sustainable transformations in the socio-political fabric of post-colonial societies.

The relevance of applying decolonial theory to analyse student unrest in African universities is underscored by historical realities such as the apartheid legacy in South Africa and military rule in Nigeria. Scholars highlight how institutional governance in these contexts remains heavily influenced by authoritarian practices and power dynamics inherited from colonial and militaristic regimes (Heleta, 2016; Mbembe, 2016). Thus, applying decoloniality in this study critically interrogates how colonial legacies perpetuate hierarchical and exclusionary governance structures within universities, thereby fostering persistent tensions and unrest. By advocating for inclusive, participatory governance frameworks informed by decolonial praxis, universities can begin dismantling the politics of process that currently fuel conflict and hinder transformative change (Heydenrych, 2016; Omodan, 2020).

2.1.1.1 Relevance of Decoloniality to University Governance

The application of decolonial theory to the understanding of university governance in African contexts, particularly Nigeria and South Africa, is crucial due to the lingering impacts of colonial and militaristic legacies on institutional practices. Despite decades of political independence, universities in these regions often exhibit governance models that reflect colonial administrative paradigms characterised by hierarchical power relations, authoritative decision-making, and limited stakeholder inclusivity (Heleta, 2016; Mbembe, 2016). Such practices perpetuate an environment reminiscent of the colonial era, characterised by authoritarian leadership and policies that reproduce social inequalities and systemic marginalisation within university spaces (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Consequently, scholars argue for the necessity of confronting and transforming these entrenched colonial legacies through deliberate decolonial praxis, advocating for institutional reforms that foreground democratic

governance principles, inclusivity, and mutual respect among university stakeholders (Heydenrych, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2011).

Decoloniality further highlights how residual militaristic governance structures continue to influence university management, especially in contexts such as Nigeria, where prolonged military rule has significantly impacted educational governance systems (Ake, 1996; Zeleza & Olukoshi, 2004). This militarisation is evidenced by top-down decision-making approaches and heavy-handed responses to dissent, mirroring military-era disciplinary strategies rather than democratic dialogue (Zeleza & Olukoshi, 2004). Similarly, South African universities grapple with apartheid-era governance practices, reflecting deep-rooted racialised hierarchies and power imbalances that have sustained tensions and unrest long after formal apartheid ended (Heleta, 2016). Thus, a decolonial critique emphasises the urgency of dismantling these militaristic and authoritarian frameworks by adopting collaborative and inclusive governance structures aligned with the aspirations of contemporary university communities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Mbembe, 2016).

The relevance of decoloniality to university governance significantly extends to perceptions of entrenched power imbalances between university authorities and students. Institutional governance influenced by colonial legacies often positions university management as the dominant decision-makers, with students perceived primarily as passive recipients rather than active participants in governance processes (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2011). This positional hierarchy fuels perceptions among students of authorities as "colonial masters," perpetuating a confrontational relationship characterised by resistance and unrest, which students often view as their only viable means of expression and negotiation (Gertzel, 2015; Omodan, 2020). This dynamic is particularly evident in cases where student demands for democratic governance practices, transparency, and accountability are consistently met with authoritarian responses rather than constructive dialogue (Mbembe, 2016).

In addressing these concerns, decolonial theory advocates for transformative governance practices that prioritise equality, justice, and democratic participation, thereby reshaping university governance to counteract perceptions of oppression and dominance. Such transformation necessitates a deliberate reconfiguration of governance structures to genuinely include student voices in decision-making,

promoting mutual understanding, trust, and dialogue between university management and students (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Bhambra, 2014). By integrating decolonial perspectives, universities can fundamentally realign institutional governance away from inherited colonial power dynamics toward participatory structures that promote stability, harmony, and sustainable educational outcomes (Heydenrych, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2007).

2.1.1.2 Decoloniality and Management Practices

The critique of Eurocentric models of university management through a decolonial lens underscores significant tensions inherent in conventional governance frameworks that persist within African universities. Such Eurocentric paradigms predominantly emphasise hierarchical structures, top-down managerial strategies, and bureaucratic forms of governance, prioritising efficiency and institutional control over collective dialogue and stakeholder participation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016). Grosfoguel (2013) maintains that these structures reflect an epistemological imposition where Western modes of administration are universalised, marginalising indigenous and contextually relevant approaches to university management. This critique aligns with Fanon et al.'s (1963) earlier argument, suggesting that the replication of colonial administrative patterns hinders authentic social transformation by maintaining power structures that reinforce dependency, inequality, and epistemic domination in formerly colonised societies.

These Eurocentric approaches to university governance not only limit institutional effectiveness but also have profound implications for democratic participation and equitable management practices within universities. Mamdani (2016) points out that African universities, historically modelled on European institutions, have reproduced colonial hierarchies, resulting in governance structures detached from local contexts, cultures, and aspirations. According to Dei et al. (2019), such structures undermine democratic values by privileging administrative control over collaborative governance, thus marginalising critical stakeholders, particularly students and lower-level academic staff. Consequently, this often creates conditions of conflict, resistance, and unrest, as universities struggle to reconcile imposed governance practices with local expectations for democratic participation, transparency, and accountability (Shay, 2016; Dei & McDermott, 2014).

Furthermore, decolonial scholars advocate for a fundamental rethinking of university management practices, emphasising inclusivity, communal decision-making, and collective governance processes that foreground local cultural values and epistemologies. According to Chilisa (2019), decolonising institutional governance involves actively dismantling entrenched colonial hierarchies and re-centering indigenous forms of knowledge and organisational structures that foster equitable participation among all university stakeholders. Scholars such as Wa Thiong'o (2009) and Dei and Kempf (2006) similarly argue for management approaches grounded in indigenous epistemological frameworks, highlighting that genuinely democratic governance within universities must integrate diverse knowledge systems, thereby empowering previously marginalised voices and perspectives.

Recognising these critical perspectives, adopting decolonial management practices implies profound institutional transformations capable of rectifying historical injustices embedded in colonial governance legacies. Such transformations necessitate moving beyond tokenistic diversity initiatives towards comprehensive reconfigurations of decision-making processes, university policies, and leadership styles that prioritise inclusivity, transparency, and collective responsibility (Le Grange, 2019; Chilisa, Major & Khudu-Petersen, 2017). By confronting the epistemic violence perpetuated through Eurocentric governance structures, universities can foster genuine democratic spaces that value plurality, equity, and social justice, ultimately providing sustainable solutions to persistent issues such as student unrest and institutional conflict (Nyamnjoh, 2020; Dei, 2008).

African universities remain influenced by authoritarian legacies, particularly evident in the governance patterns inherited from the military dictatorship in Nigeria and apartheid-era administration in South Africa. These historical governance structures contribute significantly to student protest strategies, as methods of resistance often replicate approaches historically adopted against colonial and oppressive regimes (Jansen, 2019). According to Ogunrotifa (2013), Nigeria's prolonged exposure to military regimes has cultivated an institutional culture characterised by rigid authority, strict hierarchies, and limited democratic discourse within educational institutions. These governance practices established a precedent where dialogue has been systematically undermined, pushing students towards militant activism,

demonstrations, and confrontation as primary means of expressing grievances (Iwilade, 2013).

Similarly, South African universities grapple with the remnants of apartheid governance systems, where institutional authority often mirrors historically oppressive state mechanisms. The continuation of racialised and authoritarian administrative practices after formal apartheid influences students' resistance strategies, which frequently draw from historical liberation movements (Davids & Waghid, 2016). Protest movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall reflect strategies deeply rooted in historical memory, leveraging direct-action approaches initially forged during the anti-apartheid struggle to challenge entrenched power dynamics within contemporary university governance (Godsell & Chikane, 2016; Godsell et al., 2016). Consequently, these governance legacies continually reinforce cycles of conflict and resistance, as institutional practices replicate colonial patterns of authority and exclusion (Pillay, 2016).

Students often perceive university authorities as extensions of colonial oppressors, a perception intensified by sustained institutional adherence to hierarchical governance and coercive disciplinary practices reminiscent of colonial administration (Corr, 2021). According to Sithole (2016), this perception of colonial continuity within university management exacerbates student grievances and solidifies adversarial relationships between students and authorities. Consequently, students adopt protest identities that reflect anti-colonial rhetoric, framing institutional management as illegitimate custodians of power who replicate historical injustices rather than enabling equitable participation and democratic governance (Motala et al., 2023).

To mitigate these entrenched adversarial relationships, scholars advocate for the integration of decolonial governance practices, promoting dialogue, mutual recognition, and inclusive decision-making processes (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015). According to Luckett (2019), genuine transformation requires dismantling hierarchical management structures and creating participatory governance frameworks that prioritise democratic engagement and collective problem-solving. Moving toward such structures can effectively address historical grievances and disrupt cycles of protest by transforming institutional authority from a perceived colonial oppressor into a facilitator of equitable, democratic engagement within the university community.

2.1.1.3 Transformation Through Decolonial Practices

Decolonial transformation within university contexts necessitates reorienting governance structures towards peaceful dialogue as a primary mechanism for resolving conflicts. Such practices emphasise dialogue founded on mutual respect, recognition of diversity, and shared humanity, challenging traditional authoritarian structures entrenched in African universities. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016), establishing peaceful means for resolving conflicts in educational contexts is pivotal to dismantling inherited colonial hierarchies, allowing universities to embrace collaborative rather than confrontational approaches. Additionally, fostering dialogue grounded in African cultural traditions of collective deliberation and consensus-building provides a sustainable alternative to reactive administrative responses, creating pathways for inclusive engagement between students and university management (Waghid, 2013; Ramose, 2016).

Furthermore, inclusive governance frameworks constitute a central component of decolonial transformation, facilitating the dismantling of colonial power relations still prevalent within university structures. Inclusive governance emphasises participatory democracy, recognising the legitimacy of diverse voices previously marginalised by hierarchical decision-making practices (Cornwall, 2003). In South African and Nigerian contexts, establishing such governance structures requires critically confronting entrenched institutional cultures that privilege administrative authority over inclusive deliberation. Consequently, universities adopting participatory governance encourage transparency, accountability, and equitable participation, thus fostering environments conducive to sustainable peace and progressive educational outcomes (Cloete & Maassen, 2015).

Institutions undergoing decolonial transformation must also commit to systemic reforms addressing the epistemic injustices embedded within governance and curriculum structures. According to Leibowitz (2017), transformative change extends beyond administrative adjustments, requiring epistemological shifts that validate and integrate indigenous knowledge systems and local epistemic traditions within university governance and pedagogy. Decolonial frameworks, therefore, challenge institutional practices that perpetuate colonial biases, advocating for holistic reforms rooted in epistemic plurality and intercultural dialogue. By integrating local knowledge systems and promoting equitable engagement across all institutional stakeholders,

universities can effectively transition from exclusionary colonial legacies towards inclusive, democratic governance frameworks capable of fostering meaningful social transformation (Ramose, 1999; Waghid, 2013).

2.1.1.4 Link to Research Objectives

The theoretical underpinning of decoloniality directly aligns with the first objective of this study, which seeks to examine the politics of process within university governance and assess their implications for institutional productivity. Decolonial thinking highlights how inherited colonial and authoritarian practices often impede effective governance, undermining democratic participation and perpetuating power imbalances. In particular, this perspective clarifies the persistent dominance of hierarchical, exclusionary leadership models, revealing how colonial legacies limit productive dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, thus negatively affecting institutional performance.

In addressing Objective 4, examining the challenges responsible for student unrest, decoloniality further provides an essential analytical framework. It explains how historical authoritarianism, embedded in university governance systems, fosters adversarial relationships between students and institutional authorities. Students frequently perceive university management as perpetuating oppressive colonial structures, prompting them to engage in confrontational protest methods historically employed against oppressive regimes. Thus, decolonial theory clearly highlights how unresolved colonial and authoritarian legacies continue to shape protest strategies, framing student activism as a direct response to these entrenched power dynamics.

Finally, regarding Objective 5, which involves proposing solutions to unrest and institutional conflicts, a decolonial approach advocates the establishment of governance frameworks grounded in inclusivity, dialogue, and participatory democracy. By emphasising collaborative and equitable governance practices, institutions can dismantle lingering colonial attitudes, fostering environments conducive to sustainable peace and effective conflict resolution. This approach encourages university administrators and students to engage collectively in democratic decision-making processes, thus redefining institutional relationships from hierarchical dominance towards mutual respect, shared responsibility, and genuine transformation.

2.1.2 Environmental Determinism as a Lens to Unravel Geographical Differentials

Environmental determinism is a theoretical approach premised on the notion that physical geography significantly shapes human behaviour, social development, and cultural practices. Originating prominently in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the concept was notably advanced by scholars such as Friedrich Ratzel and Ellen Churchill Semple, who argued that climatic conditions, natural resources, and topographical features fundamentally determine societal progress and characteristics (Peet, 1985; Judkins, Smith & Keys, 2008). Semple (1911), a pivotal advocate, emphasised that geographic environments directly influence human activities, mental attitudes, and socio-cultural institutions, thereby framing societies' capabilities and limitations within distinct spatial contexts.

Historically, environmental determinism gained considerable traction during colonial periods, being utilised to rationalise imperialist expansions and justify hierarchical power relations. This theoretical stance often legitimised racial hierarchies by attributing developmental disparities among societies to geographical factors rather than recognising the social, political, and economic exploitations associated with colonialism (Frenkel, 1992; Bassin, 2003). However, by the mid-twentieth century, the deterministic perspective faced increasing criticism, predominantly due to its reductionist and overly simplistic interpretations of complex social phenomena. Critics argued that environmental determinism failed to account sufficiently for human agency, technological advancements, and the dynamic interactions between humans and their environments (Lewthwaite, 1966; Livingstone, 2011).

Key propositions underpinning environmental determinism maintain that the natural environment is not merely a backdrop for human activities but actively dictates human development pathways and cultural dispositions. This deterministic outlook highlights the influence of climatic variability, resource distribution, and geographical isolation or connectivity on societal structures, economic behaviours, and political interactions (Frenkel, 1992; Judkins et al., 2008). Yet, the theory has been extensively critiqued for its geographic essentialism, as critics contend that attributing societal outcomes purely to environmental constraints ignores historical, political, and cultural complexities. Contemporary scholars advocate instead for nuanced interpretations that recognise the reciprocal interplay between environment and society, emphasising that

geographic factors provide contexts and possibilities rather than rigid determinants (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts & Whatmore, 2009).

Despite significant critiques, environmental determinism offers insightful analytical value when utilised cautiously and contextually, particularly in comparative studies of societies facing similar environmental challenges but displaying distinct responses. It highlights how geographical contexts may contribute, albeit indirectly and conditionally, to shaping governance practices, institutional behaviours, and societal reactions to crises. Thus, employing environmental determinism in examining geographical differentials of student unrest and university governance between Nigeria and South Africa facilitates a comparative exploration of spatial influences. It enables an understanding of how diverse geographical contexts and related socio-environmental factors uniquely inform institutional responses and activism strategies, while carefully avoiding oversimplified causal explanations.

2.1.2.1 Environmental Influences on Human Behaviour and Activism

Geographical and climatic conditions significantly shape human behaviour, influencing patterns of activism and institutional responses within university contexts. Scholars argue that environmental factors such as climate variability, geographical accessibility, resource availability, and spatial configurations affect collective human behaviour, potentially influencing protest activities and community mobilisation. For example, climatic extremes, including intense heat or prolonged rainy seasons, can either hinder or facilitate public gatherings and demonstrations, impacting the timing, location, and intensity of student activism (Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009; Adeyemi & Uko-Aviomoh, 2004; Madu, 2012). Additionally, universities located in urban or accessible regions are more likely to experience frequent activism compared to isolated or rural campuses, reflecting the impact of spatial accessibility on student engagement and mobilisation strategies (Balogun, 2009).

Cultural-environmental interactions further shape governance practices within universities, as administrative styles often reflect adaptations to local environmental and cultural contexts. University authorities operating within geographically challenging or resource-scarce contexts may adopt stricter, top-down administrative approaches intended to maintain control and stability amid perceived environmental

pressures (Ajibade, McBean, & Bezner-Kerr, 2013). Conversely, institutions within resource-rich or environmentally stable regions may be more inclined towards flexible governance structures, promoting inclusive dialogue and collective decision-making processes. Thus, environmental conditions intersecting with local cultural norms inform the development of distinct governance styles, affecting how universities respond to crises, manage conflicts, and engage stakeholders (Ikejiofor, 2014; Adger, Barnett, Brown, Marshall, & O'Brien, 2013).

2.1.2.2 Comparative Analysis of Crisis Management

Spatial differences between Nigerian and South African universities significantly impact their approaches to crisis management, reflecting the distinct geographical contexts and environmental conditions within which these institutions operate. Nigerian universities, frequently situated in densely populated urban areas or sprawling semi-urban communities, often confront unique challenges such as overcrowded campuses, infrastructural inadequacies, and constrained spatial resources. These spatial factors can heighten tensions, fuelling student grievances and intensifying protests due to perceived institutional neglect (Onuoha, 2012). Conversely, many South African universities possess relatively better-developed infrastructural resources, although they are historically burdened by socio-spatial segregation stemming from apartheid-era planning, which continues to affect student activism and governance responses. Such legacies create distinct spatial dynamics, as protest activities often target physical symbols of historical inequities and exclusion, thus shaping institutional crisis management strategies differently from their Nigerian counterparts (Walker-Janzen, 2019).

Environmental conditions further shape institutional responses and patterns of student activism differently in Nigeria and South Africa. Nigerian universities situated in challenging climatic and ecological environments, such as flood-prone or resource-scarce regions, may adopt crisis management approaches that emphasise control, containment, and rapid resolution of protests, reflecting their need to maintain immediate stability amid environmental stressors (Adelabu & Akinwumi, 2008). On the other hand, South African universities, frequently operating within relatively stable and resource-abundant environments, often face crises rooted in socio-political and cultural dimensions rather than immediate ecological pressures. As such, these institutions are more inclined towards dialogue-driven crisis management, engaging

with student activists through negotiations and policy reforms aimed at addressing historical grievances (Mutekwe, 2017).

The comparative analysis underscores the critical role that environmental and spatial differences play in influencing both crisis response mechanisms and patterns of student activism in these contexts. Institutional responses in Nigerian universities tend towards immediate containment and authoritative interventions shaped by spatial constraints and environmental vulnerabilities, whereas South African institutions, despite historical socio-spatial divisions, frequently engage in inclusive, participatory approaches due to different environmental pressures and governance cultures (Walker-Janzen, 2019; Mutekwe, 2017). Understanding these distinctions is essential in formulating context-sensitive governance and crisis management policies capable of effectively addressing student unrest, thus contributing to sustainable institutional stability and harmony in both national contexts.

2.1.2.3 Environmental Determinism and Policy Implementation

The spatial adaptability of university policies and regulations is central to understanding institutional effectiveness, particularly given the diverse geographical contexts within which Nigerian and South African universities operate. University policies often require sensitivity to local environmental contexts, including infrastructural limitations, geographical isolation, climatic factors, and natural resource distribution. Spatial adaptability thus implies the necessity for institutions to align their governance practices, operational guidelines, and crisis management approaches with geographic realities to ensure both administrative responsiveness and effective service delivery (Termeer et al., 2011; Ingwe et al., 2011). In Nigerian contexts, characterised by considerable infrastructural constraints and environmental unpredictability, policies must explicitly address these spatial limitations through flexible frameworks, enabling institutions to promptly adapt to localised challenges (Anugwom, 2019).

Given that spatial conditions critically influence institutional effectiveness, adopting geographically contextual management strategies becomes imperative for sustainable institutional stability. Such strategies recognise and integrate spatial factors like physical accessibility, regional climate, infrastructure availability, and natural resource constraints into governance practices and policy development (Farinloye et al., 2020).

In South Africa, historically influenced by spatial segregation and differential resource allocation resulting from apartheid-era planning, universities need policies that explicitly address and remediate these spatial inequalities. Failure to recognise geographic contexts in policy formulation risks perpetuating historical imbalances and may exacerbate institutional conflicts, making spatially informed governance essential for promoting equity, inclusion, and social cohesion (Strauss, 2019).

Ultimately, integrating environmental determinism into university policy formulation necessitates institutions to view geographical context not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active factor influencing governance efficacy. Policies constructed without considering environmental determinants may fail to achieve their intended outcomes or inadvertently exacerbate existing tensions, highlighting the necessity of contextually appropriate, spatially sensitive approaches (Mapuva & Muyengwa, 2009). Universities that proactively embed geographical and environmental considerations into their policies can more effectively manage crises, reduce student unrest, and foster harmonious institutional relationships. Thus, geographically contextual management strategies are not simply advantageous, they are fundamental to realising institutional sustainability and social justice in both Nigerian and South African higher education landscapes.

2.1.2.4 Relevance to Crisis Management Strategies

Understanding geographical contexts significantly enhances crisis management strategies within universities, offering administrators practical frameworks to tailor institutional policies to local environmental and spatial realities. Universities located in geographically challenging areas, such as flood-prone or infrastructurally limited regions, should adopt proactive policies that incorporate environmental considerations into routine governance decisions, thus preventing or mitigating potential unrest. Geographically sensitive governance strategies involve recognising specific local conditions, facilitating timely interventions, and promoting resilience in the face of crises. These approaches encourage institutional leaders to engage stakeholders regularly through dialogue and participatory decision-making processes, fostering environments that are less susceptible to unrest or disruptions.

Furthermore, adopting geographically contextualised management strategies allows universities to shift from reactive to proactive crisis management. Institutions that

acknowledge and anticipate spatial and environmental factors can proactively identify and address underlying causes of student grievances before they escalate into active protests or institutional disruptions. Rather than responding only after conflicts occur, proactive governance emphasises preventive measures such as improved resource allocation, consistent stakeholder communication, and adaptive infrastructure planning that aligns with spatial realities. This proactive stance strengthens institutional stability, promotes long-term trust between students and authorities, and ultimately fosters peaceful coexistence within university communities (Termeer et al., 2011).

2.1.2.5 Link to Research Objectives

Environmental determinism provides a clear analytical perspective directly aligned with Objective 2 of this research, which seeks to investigate the comparative backgrounds of Nigeria and South Africa in relation to crisis situations and their management. By adopting this framework, the study highlights how geographic, environmental, and spatial factors shape university governance strategies and student activism differently in the selected countries. Through this lens, the study critically examines how spatial constraints and climatic conditions influence institutional capacities and responses, revealing the distinct patterns and approaches adopted in crisis management. Ultimately, environmental determinism facilitates a deeper comparative understanding of how geography significantly informs variations in policy formulation, proactive governance strategies, and student protest behaviours within the higher education contexts of Nigeria and South Africa.

2.1.3 Ubuntu as a Lens to Unravel Psychological Effects of Unrest

The philosophical concept of Ubuntu originates from the Southern African cultural worldview and reflects a deeply embedded set of principles emphasising communal relationships and human interconnectedness. Historically rooted in Nguni languages such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, and isiSwati, Ubuntu encapsulates cultural values transmitted orally across generations, guiding social conduct and moral orientation within African communities (Letseka, 2012; Kamwangamalu, 2013). This philosophy gained prominence through its expression as a form of moral consciousness and societal healing during South Africa's post-apartheid era, especially through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where it was instrumental in advocating forgiveness

and collective reconciliation (Murithi, 2009; Metz, 2011). The concept, therefore, is not only historically significant but also culturally resonant, profoundly shaping attitudes toward conflict, harmony, and societal restoration in contemporary African contexts.

Ubuntu philosophy fundamentally centres on three core principles: humanity, interconnectedness, and solidarity. At its essence, Ubuntu promotes a collective identity where individual well-being is inseparably linked to the welfare of others, encapsulated in the widely known expression, "I am because we are" (Mboti, 2015; Ramose, 2015). Humanity, in the Ubuntu sense, emphasises empathy, compassion, respect, and a profound recognition of shared human dignity. Interconnectedness conveys the idea that individuals exist within a relational network, implying that actions affecting one person inevitably impact the broader community, thus fostering a strong sense of communal responsibility and interdependence (Chasi & Rodny-Gumede, 2021; Battle, 2009).

Solidarity, another pivotal principle within Ubuntu, promotes a spirit of collective unity and mutual support, encouraging communities to act cohesively in addressing collective challenges and crises. This notion underscores social cooperation and a willingness to share burdens collectively, thereby nurturing resilience during social tensions and unrest (Swanson, 2007; Broodryk, 2002). In this manner, Ubuntu positions communities to prioritise dialogue, collective healing, and restorative justice as preferred responses to conflicts or crises. Such culturally embedded practices have substantial implications for managing the psychological impacts associated with university unrest, offering alternative frameworks to adversarial or punitive approaches that often exacerbate psychological distress among affected stakeholders (Hailey, 2008).

In applying Ubuntu philosophy to understand the psychological consequences of unrest within universities, this study recognises that social conflicts significantly affect stakeholders' emotional well-being, relationships, and overall mental health. Through Ubuntu, psychological effects such as anxiety, isolation, trauma, and alienation resulting from unrest can be addressed by emphasising restorative and inclusive practices grounded in collective healing, communal support, and reconciliation processes (Mangena, 2016; Nussbaum, 2003). Ubuntu’s relational ethics encourage universities to foster supportive environments and institutional cultures characterised

by empathy, solidarity, and mutual care, thereby providing essential psychosocial frameworks for effectively managing and mitigating the detrimental psychological outcomes associated with student unrest.

2.1.3.1 Ubuntu and Psychosocial Implications of Student Unrest

The psychological consequences of university unrest extend significantly beyond immediate disruptions, deeply affecting students, staff, and surrounding communities. Students exposed to persistent unrest frequently experience heightened anxiety, stress, and academic uncertainty, negatively impacting their mental health and overall academic performance. Staff members, including academic and non-academic personnel, similarly encounter emotional exhaustion, heightened job dissatisfaction, and strained interpersonal relationships as a result of prolonged institutional instability (Nkondo, 2007). Moreover, unrest disrupts surrounding communities by fostering mistrust, fear, and social fragmentation, compromising relationships that previously contributed to communal stability and mutual trust (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003; Kaminer & Eagle, 2010).

In addressing these psychosocial consequences, the philosophy of Ubuntu offers culturally grounded pathways for fostering psychological resilience and community cohesion during and after episodes of unrest. By emphasising mutual empathy, interconnectedness, and collective support, Ubuntu provides an alternative narrative that strengthens interpersonal bonds among students, staff, and community members facing psychological distress. According to scholars such as Sartorius (2022) and Ratele (2017), Ubuntu principles promote restorative practices that emphasise collective healing, reconciliation, and supportive community interactions, thus mitigating trauma and facilitating communal recovery from psychological stressors linked to institutional conflicts.

Ubuntu further serves as an instrumental cultural resource in building resilience by reinforcing collective identity and solidarity, thereby strengthening institutional capacities to manage future crises. The philosophy advocates relational ethics and mutual care, fostering supportive environments capable of absorbing shocks from disruptive events like student protests. Universities applying Ubuntu-centred strategies encourage cooperative problem-solving, shared accountability, and inclusive dialogue, enabling stakeholders to actively engage in processes of emotional

recovery and institutional reconciliation. Thus, integrating Ubuntu into university governance frameworks positions higher education institutions to effectively manage the psychosocial effects associated with unrest, ultimately promoting stable, inclusive, and psychologically supportive learning environments (Edwards, Makunga, Thwala & Nzima, 2004; Mkhize, 2008; Washington, 2010).

2.1.3.1 Ubuntu in University Governance

The integration of Ubuntu into university governance emphasises fundamental human values such as empathy, inclusivity, and mutual respect, which are essential for establishing harmonious and effective management within higher education institutions. Empathy, as articulated within the Ubuntu philosophy, encourages administrators and stakeholders to deeply understand and compassionately address the needs and concerns of students and staff, thereby creating a supportive institutional environment. By fostering empathetic interactions, universities can significantly reduce tensions, proactively addressing grievances before they escalate into disruptive unrest. Inclusivity, another vital component, ensures that all stakeholders, including marginalised groups, actively participate in governance processes, strengthening the sense of belonging and collective responsibility within the institutional community (Himonga, Taylor & Pope, 2013; Bennett, 2011).

Furthermore, mutual respect, deeply rooted in the Ubuntu philosophy, encourages reciprocal recognition of dignity among university community members. University governance structured around mutual respect acknowledges diverse perspectives and validates the experiences of all stakeholders, facilitating open dialogue and consensus-based decision-making. Governance that prioritises mutual respect directly enhances the psychological well-being of students and staff by promoting trust and equitable treatment, which are essential for a supportive academic atmosphere. Universities adopting this approach experience improved relationships among stakeholders, reduced conflicts, and greater institutional cohesion, contributing to a healthier academic climate (Khoza, 2012; Gade, 2012).

Practically implementing Ubuntu as a governance strategy involves creating structures and policies explicitly grounded in relational ethics and collective responsibility, thereby systematically embedding psychological well-being into institutional operations. Governance practices informed by Ubuntu include inclusive decision-

making forums, restorative justice mechanisms, and regular community-building activities that foster interconnectedness and collective ownership of institutional objectives. This relational framework ensures that university governance consistently attends to psychological and social dimensions, thereby cultivating resilience among stakeholders. Consequently, the integration of Ubuntu principles transforms university governance from hierarchical, authority-centric systems into inclusive, collaborative environments prioritising communal well-being and sustainable institutional peace (Friesen, 2022).

2.1.3.2 Integrating Ubuntu into Institutional Practices

Embedding Ubuntu into institutional practices involves establishing comprehensive support mechanisms informed by communal values such as compassion, solidarity, and collective responsibility. Universities adopting such an approach would implement student counselling and psychosocial support services structured around Ubuntu's relational ethos. These support mechanisms prioritise the well-being of students and staff by recognising that individual psychological health is deeply connected to collective wellness. This approach facilitates early detection of psychosocial distress and timely interventions, ensuring that emotional and mental health issues triggered by campus unrest or conflict situations are managed compassionately and collaboratively, thereby enhancing overall institutional resilience and harmony (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Shutte, 2001).

Creating an inclusive academic environment anchored in Ubuntu requires institutions to transform their governance structures, curricula, and campus culture to ensure they embody mutual respect, empathy, and inclusivity. Inclusivity is fostered by actively encouraging diverse stakeholders, regardless of cultural, social, or economic backgrounds, to participate meaningfully in institutional governance and decision-making processes. Such an inclusive framework allows universities to transcend traditional hierarchical structures and embrace collaborative dialogue, fostering a genuine sense of belonging among students, academic staff, and broader university communities. By doing so, institutions proactively promote psychosocial health, reduce feelings of alienation, and encourage positive interpersonal relationships essential to student and staff satisfaction (Mabovula, 2011; Venter, 2004).

Additionally, integrating Ubuntu into institutional practices necessitates an ongoing commitment to capacity-building initiatives that equip university administrators, faculty, and students with the skills required to practice empathetic leadership and collaborative problem-solving effectively. Regular training and workshops grounded in Ubuntu philosophy can help institutional actors develop conflict-resolution skills and emotional intelligence, significantly enhancing their ability to address psychosocial issues within university contexts. Such initiatives encourage a cultural shift towards communal care, where each stakeholder acknowledges shared responsibilities for each other's emotional and psychological welfare. Ultimately, institutionalising Ubuntu through targeted support mechanisms and inclusive policies not only mitigates psychological distress during crises but also sustainably nurtures a harmonious and supportive educational environment (Van den Heuvel, Mangaliso, & Van de Bunt, 2006).

2.1.3.3 Ubuntu as a Transformative Tool

The Ubuntu philosophy serves as a transformative mechanism particularly suited to rebuilding trust and promoting reconciliation following episodes of unrest within university contexts. Restoring trust is vital in repairing damaged relationships between university stakeholders, including students, staff, and administration. Thus, by emphasising relational ethics grounded in mutual respect and collective empathy, Ubuntu offers practical strategies for facilitating honest dialogue and forgiveness, enabling reconciliation after conflict. In such contexts, Ubuntu-oriented initiatives like restorative justice forums or community healing circles can play crucial roles in fostering open communication, addressing underlying grievances, and encouraging mutual accountability. These initiatives help stakeholders collaboratively navigate complex emotional landscapes, rebuild fractured relationships, and restore harmony within university environments (Lutz, 2009; Murithi, 2006).

Moreover, Ubuntu significantly enhances stakeholder cohesion by reinforcing shared identity and collective responsibility among all members of the university community. This philosophy stresses the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals, emphasising that each person's well-being is intrinsically tied to the health of the broader community. Universities embracing Ubuntu principles prioritise inclusive governance and communal decision-making, thus strengthening bonds of solidarity among diverse stakeholders. Such cohesion fosters a collective sense of ownership

over institutional outcomes, promoting proactive engagement in crisis prevention, conflict management, and the development of responsive policies that benefit all university members equally (Prinsloo, 2000; Nkulu-N'Sengha, 2009).

Practically implementing Ubuntu as a transformative governance strategy positions universities to move beyond reactionary crisis management towards sustainable community-building frameworks. Ubuntu-based leadership practices encourage administrators and students alike to internalise communal values, promoting collective responsibility for institutional harmony. As stakeholders begin to see their identities as inherently relational rather than individualistic, they become more committed to cooperative actions that benefit the collective. By consistently embedding Ubuntu into governance policies, academic institutions can not only effectively navigate through post-crisis recovery but also proactively create resilient educational environments grounded in mutual respect, shared trust, and a commitment to collective flourishing.

2.1.3.4 Link to Research Objectives

The Ubuntu philosophy clearly addresses Objective 3 of this study, which seeks to expose the psychosocial deficiencies experienced by stakeholders in university settings amid unrest. By emphasising collective responsibility, mutual care, and interconnectedness, Ubuntu provides a culturally relevant perspective for understanding and addressing the psychological impacts of conflicts and protests. This approach acknowledges the interdependent nature of institutional relationships and highlights how disruptions affect not only individual stakeholders but also the broader university community. Consequently, applying Ubuntu principles facilitates a deeper recognition of emotional distress, encourages empathetic institutional responses, and promotes inclusive, restorative practices, thereby effectively mitigating psychosocial challenges and fostering long-term psychological resilience within university environments.

2.1.4. Rationale for the Integrated Theoretical Framework

The decision to employ an integrated theoretical framework consisting of Decoloniality, Environmental Determinism, and Ubuntu philosophy is fundamentally informed by the study's intention to offer a comprehensive and interdisciplinary exploration of student unrest in universities. Each of these theories distinctly addresses specific dimensions crucial to understanding institutional conflicts. Decoloniality illuminates the deep-

rooted social and political dynamics embedded within university systems, highlighting power imbalances, governance practices, and historical legacies that shape current interactions. Environmental Determinism provides valuable insights into geographical differences, enabling an understanding of how spatial and environmental conditions uniquely influence institutional responses to student activism and protest strategies. Meanwhile, Ubuntu philosophy addresses the often-overlooked psychological implications of unrest, advocating empathetic, collective, and humane approaches to conflict resolution and stakeholder reconciliation. Together, these theories offer a nuanced, multi-dimensional analysis, integrating social, geographical, and psychological perspectives.

The complementarity among these theories is instrumental in creating a holistic understanding of university unrest. While Decoloniality critically assesses the historical and structural foundations of institutional conflicts, Environmental Determinism identifies spatial conditions shaping the intensity and nature of protests across different geographic contexts. Ubuntu further enriches this synergy by emphasising relational ethics and collective psychological health, thus addressing the human dimensions of unrest that structural and geographical analyses alone cannot fully explain. Individually, each theory possesses certain analytical limitations: Decoloniality alone might overlook environmental factors, Environmental Determinism risks oversimplifying complex human motivations, and Ubuntu, while emphasising psychosocial well-being, may neglect broader structural and historical determinants. Thus, integrating these theories compensates for their individual shortcomings, creating a robust analytical lens through which the complexity of university unrest can be effectively understood and addressed.

Mapping each theoretical framework explicitly to the research objectives demonstrates the adequacy and appropriateness of their combined application. Decoloniality aligns effectively with objectives focused on investigating power relations and governance practices, revealing the sociopolitical contexts underlying university conflicts. Environmental Determinism corresponds explicitly to objectives centred on comparative spatial analysis, highlighting geographical variations influencing protest behaviours and institutional responses in Nigeria and South Africa. Meanwhile, Ubuntu addresses objectives related to understanding and responding to the psychosocial implications faced by stakeholders experiencing unrest. Employing theoretical

triangulation through these lenses not only strengthens analytical rigor but also enables comprehensive recommendations tailored to social, spatial, and psychological dimensions, thereby significantly enriching the study's conclusions and contributions.

Finally, the integrated theoretical approach bears significant implications for policy development and practical governance within universities. The combined analytical insights derived from Decoloniality, Environmental Determinism, and Ubuntu provide a compelling foundation for formulating interdisciplinary governance models capable of addressing the complex, intersecting factors leading to student unrest. By emphasising inclusive governance structures that actively dismantle colonial legacies, acknowledge spatial conditions, and prioritise psychosocial well-being, institutions can develop more effective, proactive, and sustainable conflict management strategies. This integrated perspective is not merely theoretical but holds considerable practical value, equipping universities with comprehensive tools for long-term stability, harmony, and collective flourishing, ultimately transforming institutional practices and enriching higher education environments across diverse contexts.

2.1.4.1 Justification of the Integrated Theoretical Framework

The amalgamation of decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu in this study is methodologically deliberate and theoretically rooted in the intricate nature of student unrest as a multifaceted phenomenon. Rather than depending on a singular theoretical perspective, which might offer a limited or oversimplified explanation, this study embraces a complementary framework wherein each theory tackles a distinct yet interconnected aspect of the issue. Decoloniality is employed to scrutinise the historical and socio-political frameworks that influence university governance and perpetuate disparities within African higher education systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mignolo, 2011). Environmental determinism offers a contextual and spatial viewpoint, facilitating the study in accommodating variations in protest trends, institutional responses, and behavioural inclinations across diverse geographical and cultural contexts (Lewthwaite, 1966; Önal, 2018). Conversely, Ubuntu provides a normative and relational outlook that emphasises human interconnectedness, ethical involvement, and collective obligation within institutional settings (Tutu, 2004; Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019). The integration of these theories demonstrates an interdisciplinary strategy that aligns with the transformative paradigm underpinning the study,

guaranteeing that the analysis captures structural, contextual, and relational dynamics without favouring one aspect to the detriment of others.

Crucially, the utilisation of multiple theories in this study does not signify conceptual overlap or theoretical ambiguity, but rather a systematic analytical alignment wherein each framework is employed within clearly delineated parameters. Decoloniality operates at the macro level by examining systemic power dynamics and epistemic imbalances; environmental determinism operates at the meso level by accommodating contextual and spatial influences; while Ubuntu is applied at the micro-relational level to address human interactions and institutional ethos. This stratified approach ensures that the theories are not confused but are implemented in a complementary fashion that enriches analytical clarity and explanatory depth. Such an approach addresses the limitations of mono-theoretical analyses in higher education research, particularly in African settings where social phenomena are frequently influenced by intersecting historical, political, and cultural factors. By upholding conceptual distinctions while enabling theoretical synergy, the study establishes a coherent and robust framework for comprehending and reconstructing the underlying procedural politics of student unrest in African universities.

2.2 Literature Review: An Introduction

The politics of process underlying student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is a multifaceted issue that has significant implications for university productivity. Bad governance is a central factor contributing to these disturbances, as it often leads to undemocratic practices and policies that alienate students and other stakeholders. The "Ali-Must-Go" crisis in Nigeria, for instance, exemplifies how undemocratic approaches by university administrations can spark significant unrest among students (Omodan, 2020). This crisis, which was the first documented conflict between university management and students, continues to resonate due to ongoing governance issues.

In South Africa, student movements and activists face similar challenges, as they must navigate the complexities of institutional transformations while advocating for their rights and interests (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008a, 2008b). These movements are often driven by a desire to address systemic issues within the higher education system, including inadequate representation and participation in decision-making processes.

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during these crises are profound. Students, in particular, experience a range of negative emotions and stressors that can impact their academic performance and overall well-being. The lack of effective communication and engagement between university authorities and students exacerbates these issues, leading to a breakdown in trust and cooperation (Omodan et al., 2019). This situation is further compounded by the compromised standards and defective environments within universities, which contribute to a demotivated workforce and a decline in the quality of education (Aina, 2010).

Moreover, the role of universities in equipping individuals with professional abilities and skills is crucial for national and international development. Universities are charged with the responsibility of fostering innovation and contributing to the socio-economic and political advancement of society (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021). However, the absence of internal capacities to think responsibly and act independently often undermines these efforts, highlighting the need for improved governance and management practices (Aina, 2010). Therefore, addressing the root causes of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities requires a comprehensive approach that includes better governance to mitigate the impact of these crises and create a more conducive environment for learning and development.

2.2.1 Background and Context

Student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities has a long and complex history, deeply rooted in the socio-political and economic landscapes of these countries. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has significantly impacted the higher education system. Many universities, originally established to serve the white minority, have struggled to transform into institutions that adequately represent the black majority. This transformation has often been met with resistance and has led to numerous student protests against symbols of colonialism, such as statues and monuments (Omodan et al., 2020). The management of these protests has proven challenging, as universities must navigate the delicate balance between maintaining order and addressing the legitimate grievances of students.

In Nigeria, the situation is somewhat different yet equally complex. The Nigerian higher education system has been plagued by issues such as moral decay, indiscipline, and

secret cult activities. These problems have contributed to frequent unrest among both staff and students, leading to an unstable academic calendar (Obasi, 2007). The high level of public disenchantment with the state of public universities has further fuelled student protests, as students demand better conditions and more accountability from university authorities.

The establishment of universities has been shown to increase overall protest activity, as higher education institutions become centres for challenging authorities, especially when governments fail to meet expectations (Dahlum & Wig, 2021). This phenomenon is not unique to Nigeria and South Africa but is observed globally. However, the specific historical and socio-political contexts of these countries have shaped the nature and frequency of student unrest.

The reform process in African public universities has not always been positive. Declining revenue for teaching and research, increasing and uncontrolled enrolments, and pressure on staff and facilities have created conditions ripe for conflict (Aina, 2010). These issues have been well documented and have contributed to the frequent clashes between university authorities and students, as well as between staff unions and university authorities (Omodan, 2022b). According to Omodan (2022b) and Aina (2010), the lack of effective management and the presence of unpleasant politics have further exacerbated these conflicts.

Student activism in South Africa has taken various forms, influenced by changes at political and socio-economic levels. The nature of student organisations at different universities is shaped by students' attitudes towards authority, both inside and outside the university, and the broader national and international socio-economic order (Sikwebu, 2008). It is important to note that student activism is not limited to political organisations or protests around student grievances but encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at challenging the status quo and advocating for change.

The impact of student protests on university productivity cannot be overstated. Protests often lead to disruptions in the academic calendar, vandalism, and a general atmosphere of fear and instability within the institution (Boboyi & Kang’ethe, 2024). These disruptions not only affect the immediate academic environment but also have long-term implications for the reputation and effectiveness of the university.

In response to these challenges, some universities have found success in managing student unrest by involving students in decision-making processes and encouraging dialogue between students and staff (Omodan, 2023a). This approach helps to address students' concerns and reduces the likelihood of disruptive behaviour. Additionally, regular meetings between government representatives, students, and staff can help to address the needs of the university environment and prevent incessant strikes, rioting, and protests (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b).

The historical overview of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities highlights the complex interplay of socio-political, economic, and institutional factors that contribute to these conflicts. Understanding this history is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage and mitigate student unrest, improve relations between students and university authorities, and ultimately enhance the productivity and stability of higher education institutions in these countries.

2.2.2 General Context

In many parts of the developing world, including Africa, student protests have historically been driven by the struggle for independence from colonial rule, the impacts of structural adjustment programmes, and resistance to authoritarian and military regimes. More recently, the forces of globalisation have intensified these protests (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018). The institutional-analytical method, which includes textual analysis, contextual analysis, historical narratives, and rational reconstructions, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the underlying causes of student unrest. This method allows for a nuanced interpretation of the intent behind protests, considering the socio-political context of the time and re-analysing historical texts to make sense of contemporary issues (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018).

Universities across the world face internal and external pressures that influence their operations and can trigger reforms. Internal forces include the actions of lecturers, students, and administrators, while external forces encompass national government policies and global market dynamics. Developments in information and communication technology (ICT) and the demands of a global knowledge economy also play significant roles in shaping university functions and responses to student unrest (Okebukola, 2006).

The instrumentalist perspective views the state as a tool for the ruling class to achieve their interests, while the independent perspective sees the state as a neutral arbiter in social class conflicts. The institutionalist perspective, on the other hand, posits that the state is intangible but can be felt through its various organs, such as the legislature, executive, judiciary, armed forces, and educational institutions. These perspectives help in understanding the role of the state in managing student protests and the broader socio-political environment in which these protests occur (Asogwa et al., 2021).

The national trauma experienced by South Africa, characterised by economic and political crises, ecological disasters, wars, conflicts, and epidemics, has parallels in other African countries. This shared history of devastation necessitates major transformations in key public institutions, including the university system. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the historical and contemporary crises faced by the continent (Aina, 2010).

Psychosocial studies emphasise the interconnections between individual and group identities, particularly in the context of student leadership. These studies explore the historical and contemporary social and political formations of student leadership, providing insights into the psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during crises. Qualitative research, such as case studies involving social dream drawing sessions with student leaders, offers valuable perspectives on the challenges and potential solutions for improving relations between students and university authorities (Pule, 2022).

2.2.3 Nigeria and South African Context

The African context of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities cannot be fully comprehended through generic postcolonial explanations alone; rather, it necessitates a nuanced engagement with the distinct historical, political, and socio-structural trajectories that shape each context. While both countries share colonial legacies and contemporary governance challenges, prevalent explanations of student unrest reveal different underlying drivers and patterns of contestation. In Nigeria, student unrest is primarily rooted in a postcolonial governance crisis characterised by state fragility, economic instability, and institutional inefficiencies. The breakdown of nationalist coalitions and the establishment of authoritarian political cultures have led

to what Aina (2010) describes as a "postcolonial nightmare," where governance failures directly manifest as underfunded, poorly managed, and unstable university systems. In this context, student unrest typically arises as a reaction to immediate material and administrative shortcomings, such as inadequate infrastructure, irregular academic calendars, and limited access to educational resources. Consequently, Nigerian student activism is predominantly reactive and instrumental, fuelled by frustrations with governance deficiencies and the state's failure to meet its higher education obligations.

In contrast, student unrest in South Africa is deeply entrenched in historically ingrained inequalities and epistemic struggles that surpass material conditions. The apartheid regime institutionalised racial segregation and systemic exclusion within higher education, creating enduring disparities that persist in shaping university governance and student experiences (McKay, 2021). Hence, prevalent explanations of unrest in South Africa highlight not only socio-economic inequalities but also the contestation of knowledge systems, institutional culture, and identity. Although the post-apartheid transition was politically transformative, it has not completely dismantled these structural inequities, resulting in a higher education system that remains a battleground for ongoing struggles. Consequently, student protests reflect both material grievances and broader calls for decolonisation and transformation, setting them apart from the more governance-centric unrest witnessed in Nigeria.

Beyond national distinctions, broader structural influences, particularly neoliberal reforms in African higher education, have further exacerbated student unrest in both contexts. The World Bank's advocacy for privatisation, cost-sharing, and market-oriented reforms has contributed to increased inequalities and heightened competition within universities (Zeilig, 2009). These reforms have disproportionately shifted the financial burden of higher education onto students, escalating tensions and fostering discontent. Nonetheless, their impacts are manifested differently: in Nigeria, they exacerbate existing governance and funding crises, while in South Africa, they intersect with historically embedded inequalities, amplifying calls for systemic transformation. Moreover, shared socio-economic pressures like unemployment, rising living costs, poor infrastructure, and corruption continue to serve as overarching drivers of student protests across the continent (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018).

Despite the longstanding recognition of the pivotal role of higher education in economic development, social cohesion, and knowledge generation (Adesina, 2006), the persistent failure to translate these ideals into effective policy and institutional practice has sustained conditions conducive to unrest. The advocacy for sustainable and locally grounded university systems remains crucial (Aina, 2010); however, its actualisation necessitates contextually sensitive approaches that surpass homogenised analyses. Thus, while student unrest in both Nigeria and South Africa is influenced by overlapping historical and socio-economic factors, the nature, intensity, and underlying rationale of such unrest vary significantly. An analytical approach that differentiates between governance crises in Nigeria and structural-epistemic inequalities in South Africa is essential for formulating effective and contextually pertinent responses to student unrest.

2.2.4 Specific Case Studies: Nigeria

The Nigerian case of student unrest is most effectively analysed within a governance-centred explanatory framework. This framework highlights institutional fragility, administrative inefficiencies, and systemic corruption as the primary factors driving persistent instability in universities. In contrast to contexts where unrest is mainly associated with identity or epistemic struggles, prevailing analyses in Nigeria underscore structural governance deficiencies that hinder the effective functioning of higher education institutions. Inadequate funding, poor policy implementation, and entrenched corruption have led to a system characterised by decay in infrastructure, inconsistency in academic calendars, and a decline in academic standards. These issues directly contribute to student dissatisfaction and protests (Aina, 2010; Ngonso, 2022). In this context, access to education remains unequal, limiting participation and hindering the development of key academic areas such as Environmental Education (EE). The limited scope of EE programmes reflects broader systemic weaknesses, including gaps in the legal framework, inadequate financial investment, and a curriculum that does not respond adequately to contemporary societal needs (Babalola & Olawuyi, 2021). Therefore, student unrest in Nigeria is not merely sporadic but deeply entrenched within a governance system struggling to uphold the delivery of quality education.

Historically, initiatives aimed at reshaping Nigerian higher education, such as those associated with platforms like *The African Science* Monitor, have sought to challenge prevailing epistemic hierarchies and redefine Africa's intellectual contributions (Aina, 2010). However, these intellectual efforts have not resulted in sustained institutional transformation. Instead, universities continue to function under precarious conditions, with higher education described as being in a "battle for survival," contrary to external narratives depicting African universities as inefficient or excessively expanded (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008a, 2008b). This disparity underscores a critical aspect of student unrest in Nigeria: the conflict between external perceptions and internal realities of institutional crisis. Moreover, the broader political landscape significantly influences university instability. Since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, persistent security challenges, including militancy and insurrection, have weakened state capacity and disrupted educational continuity (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). These challenges extend to university settings, where instability is evident through frequent closures, disrupted academic programmes, and increased uncertainty among students.

In addition to structural and political factors, ethical and administrative shortcomings play a crucial role in fuelling student unrest in Nigeria. Practices such as irregular admissions, favouritism, drug abuse, social vices on campus, and prolonged strikes due to unpaid salaries reflect deep-seated institutional decay and erode trust between students and university authorities (Ngonso, 2022). These issues reinforce a cycle of reactive student activism, where protests arise as immediate responses to perceived injustices and institutional failures. While national policy frameworks demonstrate a commitment to educational development, including alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the persistent lack of funding and technological infrastructure, especially EDUTECH facilities, hampers effective implementation (Babalola & Olawuyi, 2021). Consequently, the Nigerian situation exemplifies a type of student unrest primarily driven by governance breakdown, material deprivation, and institutional inefficiency. Addressing these challenges necessitates not only increased investment but also systemic reforms focused on enhancing accountability, improving policy implementation, and restoring institutional integrity within the higher education sector.

2.2.5 Specific Case Studies: South Africa

The phenomenon of student unrest in South Africa is most effectively analysed through a structural-historical and political-epistemic framework, within which student activism is intricately linked to the overarching pursuit of social justice, transformation, and redress in the post-apartheid era. In contrast to governance-centric unrest witnessed in other contexts like Nigeria, prevailing interpretations of student protests in South Africa underscore the enduring repercussions of apartheid, which entrenched racial inequality, economic marginalisation, and epistemic exclusion within the realm of higher education. The watershed event of the Marikana Massacre in 2012 stands out as a pivotal moment in this narrative, symbolising the shortcomings of post-apartheid democracy and reinforcing perceptions of persistent structural injustices (Ntombana et al., 2023). This tragic episode sparked a renewed wave of political consciousness among students, who increasingly contextualised their grievances within a wider national dialogue on inequality, labour exploitation, and governmental accountability. Consequently, the unrest among students in South Africa transcends mere institutional grievances, demanding to be understood as a component of a broader socio-political movement challenging systemic disparity.

Moreover, the evolving political economy of higher education has significantly redefined the landscape of student activism in South Africa. Over the past two decades, the impacts of neoliberal reforms, massification, and shifting funding mechanisms have transformed both the educational environment for students and the strategies they employ for mobilisation (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008a, 2008b). These changes have necessitated a reimagining of student activism, moving beyond conventional forms of protest towards more sophisticated, strategic engagements that link campus-based struggles with national and global discourses. As Zeilig and Dawson (2008b) contend, student movements in South Africa have had to continually adapt to these evolving circumstances, reflecting a dynamic interplay between institutional pressures and broader socio-economic realities. This distinctive characteristic distinguishes South African student activism as historically aware, politically aligned, and strategically adaptive, rather than merely reactionary.

In addition to the structural and political dimensions, cultural and philosophical frameworks wield a significant influence on responses to student unrest in South Africa.

The integration of Ubuntu pedagogy represents an endeavour to reimagine higher education through principles of interconnectedness, empathy, and collective welfare (Omodan, 2022b). This approach underscores the importance of addressing not only material inequalities but also the relational and psychosocial aspects of university life. Empirical findings from research involving student activists further underscore the necessity of context-specific analyses, as experiences of unrest exhibit variations across institutions and regions (Deutschmann, 2023). Cultural entities within universities also contribute to identity formation and social cohesion, empowering students to navigate intricate socio-cultural milieus and potentially alleviate tensions (Sikwebu, 2008). Nonetheless, these integrative mechanisms operate within a broader national context characterised by a robust protest culture. As Alexander (2010) observes, protest action has become a defining characteristic of South Africa's political terrain, particularly during the Mbeki era, influencing the nature, intensity, and objectives of student movements.

Consequently, student unrest in South Africa epitomises a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by the convergence of historical injustices, political mobilisation, economic reconfigurations, and cultural identities. Unlike scenarios where unrest predominantly stems from institutional inefficiencies, the South African scenario illustrates how universities serve as pivotal arenas for societal struggles, where overarching national concerns are debated and negotiated. This underscores the imperative of analytically differentiating South Africa's protest tradition as deeply entrenched within structures, politically aligned, and driven by epistemic considerations, thereby emphasising the necessity of context-specific interpretations in comprehending student unrest across African higher education systems.

2.3 The Politics of Process in University Governance

The politics of process in university governance significantly influence the dynamics of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. Governance structures within these institutions often reflect broader political and socio-economic conditions, which, in turn, shape the nature and frequency of student protests.

In Nigeria, student protests have historically been driven by issues such as tuition fees, accommodation, and general living conditions on campus. These protests are often met with severe crackdowns by government security forces, leading to injuries and even

deaths (Omodan, 2023b). The governance processes in Nigerian universities are frequently characterised by a lack of effective communication and weak structural responses to student grievances. This communication gap is a major factor contributing to student unrest, as it prevents the timely and effective resolution of issues.

Similarly, in South Africa, student protests have been a common occurrence, particularly around issues of academic and financial exclusions. Between 2002 and 2004, there were approximately 69 student protests focused on these issues, which were met with violent police responses and negative media coverage (Cele, 2008). The governance processes in South African universities also suffer from structural and communication deficiencies, which exacerbate the tensions between students and university authorities. The political elements in both countries have failed to address important issues of transitional justice, such as truth and reconciliation, economic crimes, and crimes against humanity. This failure has affected the public university sector in various ways, leading to a culture of impunity and a lack of accountability (Aina, 2010). These macrostructural problems have had a negative impact on the governance of universities, making it difficult to manage student unrest effectively.

In addition to these governance issues, the psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during student protests further complicate the situation. Students are often seen as contradictory social actors, prone to political manipulation and division. This makes it challenging to address their grievances in a constructive manner. The broader political forces involved in the democratic transition also play a role in shaping the nature of student protests, as seen in the case of Cameroon (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008a, 2008b). The presence of universities in certain locations can also increase the likelihood of protests, particularly in areas with strong grounds for anti-regime political discontent. Universities are often seen as drivers of political reform and regime change, which can lead to increased protests against autocratic governments (Dahlum & Wig, 2021). This highlights the complex interplay between university governance and broader political dynamics.

To address these challenges, it is essential to decolonise the student-management dichotomies and ensure effective communication and structural responses to student grievances. This involves exploring the major challenges of managing student unrest and investigating possible solutions to improve relations between students and

university authorities (Omodan et al., 2019, 2020). By addressing these issues, it is possible to create a more peaceful and productive university environment in both Nigeria and South Africa.

2.3.1 Definition and Key Concepts

The concept of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is multifaceted, encompassing various political, social, and psychological dimensions. To understand the underlying causes and impacts of student unrest, it is essential to define key concepts and explore their interrelations.

Student unrest refers to the collective actions taken by students, often in the form of protests or strikes, to express dissatisfaction with university policies, governance, or broader socio-political issues. This phenomenon is not merely a reaction to immediate grievances but is deeply rooted in historical and structural factors. For instance, the discourse structure of coloniality has historically been used to suppress student voices, framing their protests as unruly or radical (Omodan, 2024).

Governance in the context of universities involves the policies, rules, and administrative practices that guide the functioning of these institutions. Poor governance, characterised by a lack of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, often exacerbates student unrest. The dominant class, typically the university administration, enforces policies that may dehumanise students, leading to feelings of marginalisation and discontent. This dehumanisation can manifest in various forms, including authoritarianism and the creation of environments that foster violence and insecurity (Wasonga & Makahamadze, 2020). The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders, particularly students, during periods of unrest are significant. These deficiencies include identity crises, feelings of unappreciation, and the struggle for recognition. Leadership identity plays a crucial role in this context, as student leaders often grapple with their sense of belonging and the need for recognition within the university system (Pule, 2022). This identity crisis can lead to conflicts and further fuel unrest.

The learning community theory, introduced by Bielaczyc and Collins, provides a framework for understanding how universities can foster a culture of collective learning and knowledge advancement. According to this theory, an institution promotes a culture of learning among its members, aiming to advance both individual and collective

knowledge (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). This approach can potentially mitigate student unrest by creating an inclusive environment where students feel valued and heard.

The transformation of higher education in Africa, often driven by IMF and World Bank-led reforms, has also impacted student activism. These reforms have sometimes marginalised students, reducing their status from a privileged post-colonial elite to a more integrated part of the urban population (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008b). This shift has influenced the nature and intensity of student protests, as students now see themselves as part of a broader struggle for social justice and equity. Research methodologies used to study student unrest include interviews, observations, and analysis of memoranda. These methods provide immediate insights into the motivations and experiences of protest participants, allowing researchers to intervene in public debates and propose informed solutions (Alexander, 2010). Workshops and discussions with protest activists further enrich this analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play.

In summary, the key concepts of student unrest, governance, psychosocial deficiencies, and learning community theory are interlinked in complex ways. Understanding these concepts and their interactions is crucial for addressing the challenges causing student unrest and improving relations between students and university authorities in Nigerian and South African universities. Therefore, by fostering inclusive governance, addressing psychosocial needs, and promoting collective learning, universities can create environments that support both academic and social development.

2.4 Historical Evolution of student unrest in Nigerian and South African

The historical evolution of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is deeply intertwined with the broader socio-political landscapes of these nations. In Nigeria, the post-colonial period saw significant changes in the educational system; however, these changes often failed to address the underlying needs of students. The focus was primarily on structural adjustments, such as the shift from the 7-4-2-4 to the 8-4-4 system, curriculum modifications, and teacher preparation. Nevertheless, there was a notable lack of attention to student needs, power dynamics, technological advancements, and economic changes (Wasonga & Makahamadze, 2020). This neglect contributed to a growing sense of disenfranchisement among students, leading to increased awareness of their rights and, at times, manifesting in protests and violence.

In South Africa, the apartheid era significantly shaped the educational landscape. The National Party (NP) government implemented racist segregation policies aimed at excluding Black students from "open" universities. These policies were often justified using discredited Social Darwinist notions of racial hierarchy and hygiene, although they were sometimes presented under the guise of developmental and ethnic considerations. The failure of campaigns against university apartheid, coupled with events such as the Sharpeville massacre and the subsequent establishment of a police state, further entrenched these discriminatory practices (McKay, 2021).

The convergence of forces between previously privileged, now proletarianised students and the urban poor in South Africa highlights the complex socio-economic dynamics at play. This convergence has been a critical factor in the evolution of student activism, transforming it into a pan-African movement (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008a, 2008b). The neoliberal policies of the 1980s, particularly those advocated by the World Bank, played a crucial role in shaping the higher education landscape. These policies argued that investment in higher education was not sustainable given the available resources, leading to a crisis in higher education funding and a subsequent decline in the quality of knowledge production and the suitability of universities for their intended purposes (Adesina, 2006).

Since 1994, South Africa has seen various institutional transformation projects aimed at redefining the goals and purposes of higher education. These projects have included extensive policy research, the adoption and implementation of new governance structures, funding mechanisms, academic programmes, and quality assurance measures. Additionally, new laws and regulations have been enacted, and significant restructuring and reconfiguration of the higher education institutional landscape have taken place (Boboyi & Kang'ethe, 2024). Despite these efforts, the legacy of apartheid and the challenges of neoliberal policies continue to impact the higher education system.

Even in Ghana, the historical analysis of protests reveals a lack of detailed understanding of the underlying processes and socio-economic and political implications. The Western misconception in protest studies has limited a better appreciation of the dynamics within the continent, necessitating a more nuanced approach to understanding student unrest (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018). The

relationship between the university system and the pursuit of the public good has been significantly influenced by changing conceptions and understandings since the 1980s, further complicating the landscape of student activism (Ibrahim, 2022).

2.4.1 Current Trends

Current trends in student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities reveal a complex interplay of socio-political and economic factors. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the nature and objectives of student protests. Unlike the protests of the 1970s and 1980s, which often aimed at overthrowing governments, contemporary student movements are more focused on transforming governance structures from within. These movements seek to influence political and economic decisions and to be recognised as critical agents in urban planning and policy-making (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018).

In both Nigeria and South Africa, the rise of online activism has significantly impacted student protests. This form of activism has provided a platform for students to voice their grievances and mobilise support more efficiently. However, it also presents challenges, particularly for students with visual impairments, who face economic, social, and operational barriers in accessing and navigating the virtual world (Omodan et al., 2019). The digital divide thus exacerbates existing inequalities, limiting the participation of all students in online activism. The higher education landscape in these countries has also been influenced by global trends in education reform. There is a growing emphasis on vocational training and the development of business skills that are deemed necessary for the competitive global market. This shift has led to the rise of online universities, which are often seen as a threat to traditional brick-and-mortar institutions. Consequently, universities are under pressure to reconfigure themselves to remain competitive (Adesina, 2006). This pressure can contribute to student unrest, as students may feel that their educational needs and aspirations are not being adequately addressed.

Student activism today is also driven by a sense of elitism and a perceived proximity to a European world of technology, development, and globalisation. This perception fuels a desire among students to challenge existing power structures and advocate for more inclusive and equitable educational policies (Zeilig, 2009). The sense of privilege associated with this proximity can create tensions between students and university

authorities, further contributing to unrest. The politics underlying student unrest is not well developed in the study or thinking about higher education in Africa. The dominant reform perspective often fails to address the politics of change or challenge cultures of dependency (Aina, 2010). This gap in the literature highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political dynamics at play in student protests.

Current trends in student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities are shaped by a combination of historical, socio-political, and economic factors. The shift towards online activism, the emphasis on vocational training, and the sense of elitism among students all contribute to the complexity of these movements. Addressing the challenges causing student unrest requires a comprehensive approach that considers the diverse needs and aspirations of students, as well as the broader socio-political context in which these protests occur.

2.4.2 Theoretical Review: Social Movement Theory

Social Movement Theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics and mechanisms underlying collective actions, such as student protests, within universities. This theory is essential for analysing the political and social processes that drive student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. The emergence of student movements in these regions can be attributed to various socio-economic and political factors. For instance, the critique of issues related to social and economic justice and the right to a living wage has been a significant driver of student activism. Students have increasingly framed their demands around the right to livelihood, reflecting broader socio-economic grievances. This convergence of forces highlights the decline of corporatism and the increasing informalisation of the urban economy, leading to the reformulation of political identities within a context of fiscal austerity and speculation (Zeilig, 2009).

In South Africa, the relocation of Rhodes' statue, supported by the Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Blade Nzimande, underscores the symbolic nature of student protests. However, it is crucial to recognise that transformation extends beyond such symbolic measures. The scholarly literature emphasises the role of social media as a tool for communication and mobilisation, marking a shift from traditional organising methods to what Castells termed internet-age networked movements. This shift has facilitated the

rapid dissemination of information and coordination among students, amplifying their collective voice and impact.

The economic challenges faced by students, such as the affordability of education, also play a critical role in fuelling student protests. The growing disparity in opportunities and support for students from different socio-economic backgrounds contributes to social unrest on campuses (Omodan, 2023b). When students are concerned about their financial stability and future prospects, they are more likely to engage in protests and demand systemic changes.

Ethically based student organisations in South African universities represent a broader search for post-apartheid collective identities. These organisations reflect a move away from equating student activism solely with protest, recognising that activism encompasses a wide range of activities beyond overt political involvement (Sikwebu, 2008). This broader understanding of student activism is essential for comprehending the diverse forms of engagement and expression within student movements.

In Zimbabwe, student activism is predominantly visible at tertiary institutions where organised student councils exist. Scholars like Mlambo, Zeilig, and Makunike have extensively documented the common challenges, nature, and opportunities of student activism in Zimbabwe, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of student movements in the region (Omodan et al., 2019). These insights are crucial for drawing parallels and contrasts with the experiences of student activists in Nigeria and South Africa.

The notion of reform, often inspired by a new modernisation perspective, tends to focus on bureaucratic changes rather than progress driven by social movements. This top-down, hierarchical approach, led by managers and technical specialists, is frequently supported by external aid agencies (Aina, 2010). Such an approach may limit the potential for genuine transformation and fail to address the underlying causes of student unrest. Student activism is fundamentally about political engagement through public action. It involves the public expression of new ideas aimed at shaping public debate, typically achieved through publications, public speaking, campaigns, mass media, and demonstrations (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Student movements serve as a typical form of

mobilising collective political action, distinct from student organisations, and play a crucial role in advocating for change and challenging the status quo.

The Black Consciousness Movement, particularly in the context of South Africa, provides a historical backdrop for understanding contemporary student activism. The movement's structure and philosophy, as well as significant events like the Soweto Uprising of 1976, have shaped the trajectory of student protests and the broader struggle for social justice (Heffernan, 2015). These historical contexts are essential for understanding the motivations and strategies of current student movements. Therefore, Social Movement Theory offers a comprehensive lens for analysing the political and social processes underlying student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. Thus, by examining the socio-economic drivers, symbolic actions, economic challenges, ethical organisations, historical contexts, and the broader notion of reform, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and dynamics of student activism in these regions.

2.4.3 Theoretical Review: Institutional Theory

Institutional theory provides a framework for understanding the structures and processes that shape the behaviour of organizations, including universities. This theory posits that institutions are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts, which influence their operations and interactions with stakeholders. In the context of Nigerian and South African universities, institutional theory can be used to analyse how governance practices impact student unrest and overall university productivity. In Nigerian universities, the inadequacy and decay of infrastructural facilities are well documented.

Classrooms are often insufficient for the student population, and staff offices are poorly equipped, which hampers effective teaching and learning (Samaila et al., 2018). This lack of adequate facilities can be seen as a failure of institutional governance, where the necessary resources and support systems are not provided to maintain a conducive learning environment. The deterioration of educational facilities, including dormitories, libraries, and laboratories, further exacerbates the situation, leading to a weakened educational foundation and intellectually weak graduates (Ofor-Douglas, 2023).

The governance issues in Nigerian universities are not limited to infrastructure. There is also a need for consistent training and retraining of university staff to keep them updated with modern teaching methods and personal development. Adequate funding, maintenance, and innovation are crucial to raising the quality of education (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b). Without these measures, institutions struggle to meet the needs of their students and staff, leading to dissatisfaction and unrest. In South Africa, the historical context of student participation in institutional governance has evolved significantly. Before the 1997 White Paper, student involvement in governance at black institutions was limited. However, the White Paper facilitated greater convergence between student participation at historically black and white institutions, allowing for more extensive involvement in institutional committees (Cele, 2008). This shift highlights the importance of inclusive governance practices in addressing student concerns and promoting a positive campus environment.

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during crises, such as student unrest, are also critical to understanding the impact of governance on university productivity. The sense of community among students, as characterised by Lipset, is influenced by their economic and social status, which can lead to anti-establishment tendencies (David, 2023). Ensuring adequate access to quality educational resources, promoting equal opportunities, and providing support services like tutoring and mentoring can help alleviate disparities and reduce tensions among students (Omodan, 2023b).

Furthermore, the perpetuation of oppression and psychological injury in educational institutions can lead to unrest and protest. The transformation of detention camps into boarding schools in post-colonial Kenya is an example of how institutional practices can have long-lasting effects on student behaviour and attitudes (Wasonga & Makahamadze, 2020). Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving communication, inclusivity in decision-making, and fostering a culture of discipline and excellence (Ngonso, 2022). Institutional theory provides valuable insights into the governance challenges faced by Nigerian and South African universities. By examining the social, cultural, and political contexts in which these institutions operate, we can better understand the factors contributing to student unrest

and identify potential solutions to improve university productivity and stakeholder relations.

2.4.4 Transformative Paradigm Shift

The transformative shift in the context of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is a critical framework for understanding and addressing the underlying issues of governance and psychosocial deficiencies. This paradigm emphasises the need for a fundamental shift in the management of universities and in the handling of student protests, aiming to foster a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. Within the transformative paradigm, the concept of decoloniality plays a significant role. Decoloniality involves challenging and dismantling the colonial structures and mindsets that persist in higher education institutions. Students' involvement in decision-making processes and the adoption of democratic and facilitative leadership styles are essential dimensions of decoloniality. These approaches promote peace and social stability within the university system by ensuring that students have a voice in the governance of their institutions.

The principles of Ubuntu, which emphasise oneness, love, and unity in diversity, are also integral to the transformative paradigm. Implementing Ubuntu as a transformational agenda can lead to internal and external reconciliation among university stakeholders, thereby preventing social unrest (Omodan, 2020). This approach aligns with the broader goals of the transformative paradigm, which seeks to create a more harmonious and just academic environment.

The history of higher education in Africa can be divided into distinct periods: the colonial, nationalist, and neoliberal periods. Each period has been characterised by specific missions and mandates for universities. The neoliberal period, in particular, has been marked by economic and political crises that have significantly impacted higher education. These crises have often led to reforms that carry ethnocentric and teleological biases, privileging certain institutional and knowledge forms over others (Aina, 2010). The transformative paradigm calls for a critical examination of these reforms and their implications for university governance and student activism.

Student activism has played a crucial role in the democratic transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, as detailed by Zeilig (2009). The involvement of students in popular protests

and the convergence of forces during these transitions highlight the importance of student agency in shaping the political and economic landscape of higher education. The transformative paradigm recognises the need to support and empower student activists as key stakeholders in the governance of universities. The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during crises of student unrest are another important aspect of the transformative paradigm. According to Omodan (2023b), understanding the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of students and other stakeholders is essential for addressing the factors that contribute to social unrest. This involves a rigorous and systematic analysis of the underlying issues and the implementation of effective institutional responses. Furthermore, the relationship between violence and power, as discussed by Kabir and Greenwood (2017), is a critical consideration in the transformative paradigm. The covert and overt forms of violence that maintain power structures in universities must be addressed to create a more equitable and just academic environment. This involves challenging the existing power dynamics and promoting a culture of non-violence and mutual respect.

In a sense, the transformative perspective offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the politics of the processes underlying student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. By emphasising decoloniality, Ubuntu, student activism, and the psychosocial well-being of stakeholders, this paradigm seeks to create a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. Through the implementation of these principles, universities can improve relations between students and authorities, ultimately fostering a more stable and productive higher education system.

2.4.5 Empirical Studies on Student Unrest

Empirical studies on student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities reveal a complex interplay of factors contributing to the phenomenon. The prevalence of student crises in Nigeria has been a significant concern, necessitating a deeper understanding of the underlying causes and management strategies. This understanding is crucial for formulating realistic crisis management strategies that can help achieve peace in tertiary institutions and contribute to the goals of tertiary education as specified in the National Policy on Education (David, 2023).

In less democratic states, the relationship between universities and protests is more pronounced. This suggests that the structural conditions of the state play a crucial role

in the occurrence of university-related protests. However, it is essential to differentiate between protests occurring in university areas and those in other locations to understand the unique characteristics of university-related protests. The analysis of individual protest events can provide insights into how protests in areas with more universities differ from other protests, highlighting the specific dynamics at play in university settings (Dahlum & Wig, 2021).

The level of student participation in university governance and the organisational effectiveness of universities are critical factors in understanding student unrest. Research has shown that there is no significant difference in students' participation in governance or the organisational effectiveness of universities, indicating that these factors alone may not be sufficient to explain the occurrence of student unrest (Adeola & Bukola, 2014). However, the need for decoloniality in addressing social unrest in Nigerian universities has been emphasised. Decoloniality of the mind is seen as a necessary characteristic for transforming the university system and addressing the root causes of student unrest linked to modernity.

The transformation of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, often influenced by reforms led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, has significantly impacted the political agency of students. These macro processes have created a context in which students become political actors, negotiating the changing circumstances of higher education over the past 25 years (Zeilig, 2009). This transformation has implications for the ability of students to exercise effective and meaningful political agency, contributing to the occurrence of student unrest.

The emergence of ethically based student organisations in South African universities is part of a broader search for post-apartheid collective identities. This shift calls for a move away from equating student activism solely with protest, recognising that student activism encompasses a broader range of activities beyond overt political involvement (Sikwebu, 2008). The productivity of universities can only be achieved when there is peace and relative tranquillity within the system. The failure of university organisations to maintain this peace has led to numerous instances of unrest, as reflected in both literature and conversations with stakeholders (Omodan, 2020).

Therefore, empirical studies on student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities reveal significant yet disjointed insights into the phenomenon. While current literature delves into crucial discussions surrounding governance failures, political agency, decolonial transformation, and the wider political economy of higher education, these studies often analyse these factors independently rather than as interconnected processes influencing institutional realities. Consequently, there is a lack of a clearly defined, inclusive framework that elucidates how these dynamics interact within university governance systems to either foster or alleviate unrest. Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid to how internal institutional processes mediate these broader structural influences. This study aims to bridge this gap by situating student unrest within a process-oriented analytical framework, thereby providing a more cohesive and contextually sensitive comprehension of how governance practices, as opposed to isolated variables, mould the emergence and handling of unrest in African universities.

2.4.6 Psychosocial Impact of Student Unrest

The psychosocial impact of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is multifaceted, affecting various stakeholders, including students, university authorities, and the broader academic community. Student unrest often arises from a misalignment of priorities between students and university authorities, leading to significant psychosocial stress among students. This misalignment is frequently exacerbated by unilateral decision-making from university authorities, which students perceive as a disregard for their rights and privileges.

In Nigeria, for instance, the crises at the University of Ado Ekiti in 2009, 2011, and 2014 highlight the severe consequences of such power differentials. These events not only disrupted academic activities but also created an environment of mistrust and hostility between students and university authorities (Omodan, 2020). The psychosocial stress experienced by students during these periods of unrest can lead to anxiety, depression, and a sense of disenfranchisement, adversely affecting their academic performance and overall well-being. Similarly, in South Africa, student unrest is often linked to broader social, political, and economic movements. The transformative paradigm within which these movements operate aims to address social unrest by fostering social restructuring and unifying university stakeholders through collaborative efforts. However, the anticipated leadership vacuum in these

new forms of social movements can create additional stress for students, who may feel uncertain about the direction and effectiveness of their activism (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017).

The psychosocial impact of student unrest is further compounded by the ethnic divisions and conflicts that are prevalent in some universities. In Ethiopia, for example, university students are more likely to be divided along ethnic lines than to engage in discussions on important national political and social issues (Adamu & Balsvik, 2017). This division can lead to a fragmented student body, where collective action is hindered by internal conflicts, thereby exacerbating the stress and anxiety experienced by students.

Moreover, the lack of inclusive decision-making and effective communication within universities can contribute to the psychosocial stress experienced by students. The recommendation for universities to create forums for dialogue among stakeholders is crucial in mitigating this stress. Such forums can facilitate mutual appreciation and recognition through collaborative efforts, thereby fostering a more supportive and inclusive academic environment. Omodan (2024) indicates that universities must strive to balance divergent interests and work towards outcomes where students develop a nuanced understanding of their causes. Engaging with student activism and creating spaces for discussion and dialogue can help universities facilitate knowledge reclamation and foster new forms of knowledge. This approach can mitigate the psychosocial impact of student unrest by providing students with a sense of agency and involvement in the decision-making processes that affect their academic and social lives.

Furthermore, the study by Omodan et al. (2019, 2020) highlights the ambivalence of student activism in the 21st century, particularly in Africa, where it is often marked by thuggery, arson, and criminality. This environment of violence and instability can create a sense of fear and insecurity among students, academics, and other stakeholders, further exacerbating the psychosocial stress associated with student unrest. Therefore, addressing the psychosocial impact of student unrest requires a multifaceted approach that includes inclusive decision-making, effective communication, and the creation of supportive forums for dialogue. By fostering a collaborative and inclusive academic environment, universities can mitigate the stress

and anxiety experienced by students and improve relations between students and university authorities. This approach not only enhances the well-being of students but also contributes to the overall productivity and stability of the university system.

Additionally, existing studies offer valuable insights into the psychosocial implications of student unrest. However, these studies often focus on outcomes like stress, anxiety, and distrust towards institutions, neglecting to thoroughly examine the institutional mechanisms that give rise to or exacerbate these consequences. This highlights a gap in the literature concerning the role of governance practices, communication patterns, and decision-making structures in shaping psychosocial experiences within university settings. Notably, there has been limited exploration into how inclusive or exclusionary processes impact students' feelings of belonging, agency, and well-being. Bridging this gap necessitates a shift from perceiving psychosocial effects as isolated outcomes to recognising them as intertwined with broader institutional dynamics. This study contributes to ongoing discussions by situating psychosocial outcomes within a process-oriented framework, underscoring how the management of relationships, participation, and communication in universities directly impacts the psychosocial circumstances that can either escalate or alleviate student unrest.

2.4.6.1 Mental Health Implications

Mental health implications of student unrest in universities are profound and multifaceted. The hierarchical nature of academia often exacerbates these issues, leading to a power imbalance that fosters environments where grievances are not adequately addressed (O'Connor et al., 2021). This imbalance can contribute to feelings of helplessness and frustration among students, which may manifest as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

In Nigerian universities, governance reforms have had mixed outcomes, with some improvements in institutional governance but also significant setbacks that have impacted the mental well-being of students. The lack of effective conflict management strategies between academic and non-academic staff further complicates the situation, leading to an environment where students may feel unsupported and marginalised (Omodan, 2022b). This can result in heightened stress levels and a sense of alienation, which are detrimental to mental health. The experiences of

LGBTIQ+ individuals in South African higher education institutions highlight the additional layer of psychosocial stress faced by marginalised groups. Discrimination and violence on campus can lead to severe mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety-related conditions (Omodan et al., 2020). Involvement in student activism, while empowering for some, can also be a source of significant stress and mental health strain, particularly when activism is met with resistance or hostility from university authorities.

Furthermore, the erosion of educational values and the undermining of academic success methods contribute to a sense of instability and uncertainty among students (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b). This environment can exacerbate mental health issues, as students struggle to find meaning and purpose in their academic pursuits. The constant threat of unrest and the potential for violent clashes with authorities add to the psychological burden, creating a pervasive atmosphere of fear and anxiety.

The intervention funds aimed at addressing various academic needs, including staff training and development, are crucial in mitigating some of these mental health challenges (Ngonso, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these interventions is often limited by the broader issues of governance and institutional support. Without a comprehensive approach that addresses both the systemic and individual factors contributing to student unrest, the mental health implications will continue to be a significant concern. Hence, the mental health implications of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities are deeply intertwined with issues of governance, discrimination, and institutional support. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes effective conflict management, support for marginalised groups, and a commitment to upholding the values of education.

2.4.6.2. Social Consequences

The social consequences of student unrest in universities are multifaceted, impacting various stakeholders within the academic community. One significant consequence is the erosion of trust between students and university authorities. This mistrust often stems from perceived injustices and inadequate responses to student grievances, which can exacerbate tensions and lead to further unrest (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). The lack of effective communication and compromise between university management and students contributes to this breakdown in relations, resulting in low morale and

diminished productivity among both students and staff. In addition to the immediate disruptions caused by protests, there are long-term psychosocial impacts on students. Cyberbullying, which has become more prevalent with the rise of virtual protests, can lead to severe emotional and psychological distress. This distress affects not only students' academic performance but also their overall well-being, creating a hostile and unsafe learning environment. Chukwuere et al. (2021) indicate that addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes both preventive measures and support systems for affected students.

The economic consequences of student unrest are also significant. The reduction in funding for essential academic activities, such as field trips, laboratory practicals, and research grants, hampers the quality of education and research output. This financial strain is often a result of broader economic policies and governance issues that affect the allocation of resources to higher education institutions. Ofor-Douglas (2023) outlines that these financial constraints lead to a decline in the quality of education, further fuelling student dissatisfaction and unrest.

Furthermore, the social fabric of the university community is strained by the frequent confrontations between students and authorities. The atmosphere of marginalisation and exclusion, as reported in various studies, can lead to anti-social behaviour and a decline in campus cohesion. This environment affects not only students but also staff, who may experience low morale and reduced commitment to their roles (Samaila et al., 2018). Zeilig (2009) states that addressing these social consequences requires a holistic approach that includes improving governance, fostering inclusive policies, and enhancing communication channels between all stakeholders.

Therefore, the social consequences of student unrest in universities are profound and multifaceted. They include the erosion of trust, psychosocial distress, economic challenges, and a strained social fabric within the academic community. Addressing these issues necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves improving governance, fostering inclusive policies, and enhancing communication and support systems for all stakeholders involved.

2.4.6.3 Economic Impact

The economic impact of student unrest in universities is multifaceted, affecting both the immediate financial stability of the institutions and the broader economic landscape of the respective countries. The disruptions caused by student protests often lead to significant financial losses for universities. These losses stem from the destruction of property, the interruption of academic activities, and the subsequent need for repairs and security enhancements. For instance, the high cost of living and inadequate infrastructure in Ghana, as discussed by Asante and Helbrecht, can be paralleled with similar conditions in Nigeria and South Africa, where economic strains exacerbate student unrest (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018).

In Nigeria, the economic implications of student protests are profound. The frequent strikes and disruptions not only delay academic calendars but also increase the operational costs for universities. These institutions often have to allocate substantial funds to repair damaged facilities and enhance security measures to prevent future unrest. This diversion of funds from academic and developmental projects hampers the overall growth and productivity of the universities. Moreover, the economic instability caused by these disruptions can deter potential investors and donors, further straining the financial resources of the institutions (Ofor-Douglas, 202bc).

The situation in South Africa mirrors that of Nigeria, with student protests leading to significant economic repercussions. The marketisation and commodification of higher education, as highlighted by O'Connor et al. (2021), have intensified the financial pressures on universities. The focus on research output and global league tables has led to an environment where financial resources are heavily tied to performance metrics. Consequently, disruptions caused by student unrest can severely impact the financial standing of these institutions, as they struggle to meet the demands of a competitive global education market (O'Connor et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the broader economic impact of student unrest extends beyond the universities themselves. The instability in the higher education sector can have a ripple effect on the national economy. For instance, the balance of payments crisis in Nigeria during the mid-1970s, as discussed by Adesina, underscores the importance of a stable and productive higher education sector for economic development. The inability to produce and consume locally generated knowledge and innovations can

chain countries to a state of underdevelopment, perpetuating economic challenges (Adesina, 2006).

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during such crises also contribute to the economic impact. The stress and uncertainty experienced by students, faculty, and administrative staff can lead to decreased productivity and morale. This, in turn, affects the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the universities, further exacerbating the economic challenges. A conducive environment for graduates, as suggested by Ajadi, is crucial for fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth. By enacting tax-friendly policies and providing access to financial resources, governments can help mitigate the economic impact of student unrest and promote a more stable and productive higher education sector (Ajadi, 2023).

In summary, the economic impact of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is significant and multifaceted. It affects not only the financial stability of the institutions but also the broader economic landscape of the countries. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving governance, enhancing infrastructure, and providing financial support to foster a conducive environment for academic and economic growth.

2.5 Comparative discussion of issues

2.5.1 Understanding the Politics of Process

Understanding the politics of process in the context of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities requires a multifaceted approach. This involves examining the interplay between governance, institutional structures, and the psychosocial dynamics that influence student behaviour and institutional responses.

The concept of the politics of process is deeply embedded in the governance structures of universities. According to Ofor-Douglas (2023), politics is integral to the functioning of educational institutions, as it shapes the allocation of resources and the implementation of policies. This political influence extends to how universities manage student unrest, with governance practices often reflecting broader political dynamics within the country. For instance, the involvement of government and university

administrators in driving educational reforms is crucial for addressing the root causes of student unrest (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a).

In both Nigeria and South Africa, the historical and socio-political contexts play a significant role in shaping the politics of process. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid has left a lasting impact on the governance structures of universities, influencing how they handle conflicts and manage student protests. Empirical research suggests that changing the discourse around colonialism can aid in the deradicalisation of student unrest by fostering a more inclusive and dialogical approach to addressing student grievances (Omodan, 2024). This shift from oppressive narratives to more participatory and inclusive governance models can lead to more peaceful forms of sociopolitical mobilisation.

The principles of Ubuntu, which emphasise communal values and conflict resolution, are particularly relevant in the South African context. Universities that embrace these principles are more likely to attract individuals who are committed to working towards conflict resolution and improving institutional productivity (Omodan, 2022b). This approach underscores the importance of understanding conflict as a natural part of life and relationships, which can be managed constructively rather than exacerbated.

However, the neoliberal policies that have been implemented in many African countries have also had a significant impact on the politics of process within universities. The shift towards managerialism and marketisation has reduced the political space for participatory democracy, leading to a more technocratic and expertise-led decision-making process (Cele, 2008). This has often resulted in the marginalisation of student voices and the weakening of democratic structures within universities.

The psychosocial dynamics of student leadership and unrest are also critical to understanding the politics of process. The system psychodynamics of student leadership, as analysed through models such as CIBART, provide insights into the underlying psychological and social factors that drive student behaviour and institutional responses (Pule, 2022). These dynamics include issues of identity, power, and group dynamics, which can influence how students perceive and respond to governance practices.

In conclusion, understanding the politics of process in the context of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities requires a comprehensive analysis of governance structures, historical and socio-political contexts, and psychosocial dynamics. By addressing these factors, it is possible to develop more effective strategies for managing student unrest and improving relations between students and university authorities.

2.5.2 Governance Structures

Governance structures in Nigerian and South African universities play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of student unrest and overall university productivity. In many institutions, student leaders are often overburdened with responsibilities, serving on multiple committees while also managing their academic commitments. This overextension can lead to poor attendance at meetings and a lack of effective participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, the consultative structures in which these student leaders operate often lack real decision-making power, rendering their efforts less impactful and contributing to frustration and unrest among the student body (Cele, 2008).

The governance crisis in African universities is further exacerbated by the broader issues of poor leadership and governance at the national level. Since the end of the Cold War, African nations have faced numerous challenges, including insecurity, poverty, and underdevelopment, despite the adoption of democratic governance processes (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). These national issues trickle down to the university level, where the lack of effective governance structures hampers the ability of institutions to function optimally and address the needs of their stakeholders.

In Nigeria, the dependence of the government on external funding sources has led to a reluctance to provide adequate resources for universities, further straining the governance structures within these institutions (Ibrahim, 2022). This lack of funding results in infrastructural collapse, poor remuneration for staff, and a general decline in the quality of education and student welfare. The erosion of institutional autonomy and the prevalence of authoritarian governance styles also contribute to the challenges faced by universities in managing student unrest and maintaining productivity (David, 2023).

Corruption and brain drain are additional factors that undermine the effectiveness of governance structures in Nigerian and South African universities. Corruption has infiltrated various aspects of university life, leading to a loss of trust and credibility in the institutions. The migration of skilled academics and professionals to other countries in search of better opportunities further depletes the human resources available to these universities, making it difficult to implement effective governance and management practices (Aina, 2010).

The concept of good university governance emphasises the need for higher education institutions to adopt principles of good governance tailored to their unique values and contexts. This approach recognises that universities cannot be managed in the same way as corporations or government entities and that they require governance structures that support their academic and social missions (Muhsin et al., 2020). Institutional reforms aimed at enhancing the output and influence of universities are essential for improving governance and addressing the challenges that lead to student unrest (Ofor-Douglas, 2022c).

Thus, the governance structures in Nigerian and South African universities are deeply intertwined with the broader socio-political and economic contexts of their respective countries. Addressing the issues of overburdened student leaders, lack of decision-making power, poor funding, corruption, and brain drain is essential for improving university governance and productivity. By adopting principles of good university governance and implementing institutional reforms, these universities can better manage student unrest and foster a more conducive environment for academic and social development.

2.5.3 Decision-Making Processes

Decision-making processes within universities play a crucial role in shaping the campus environment and mitigating student unrest. Effective communication and open engagement are essential components of these processes. By proactively identifying potential issues and involving students in decision-making, universities can create a positive campus environment that reduces the likelihood of social unrest. This approach aligns with institutional theory, which posits that institutions can shape their behaviour by adopting certain practices (Omodan, 2023b).

The concept of organisational effectiveness is also relevant in this context. An effective organisation is one that achieves its intended outcomes and meets its obligations to all stakeholders, both in the present and in the future (Adeola & Bukola, 2014). This effectiveness can be enhanced through strategic leadership and communication management, which are critical in managing virtual unrest, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. University authorities must understand the core values of the Diffusion of Innovations (DoI) theory and leverage its strengths to ensure that the behaviours and capabilities of organisational members are harnessed towards managing unrest (Omodan, 2022a).

The persistent increase in tuition fees is another factor contributing to student unrest. This financial burden exacerbates the challenges faced by students, making it difficult for them to meet their educational needs (Omodan et al., 2019; Omodan, 2022a). Inclusive decision-making and communication are essential in addressing these challenges. By involving students in the decision-making process, universities can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among students, which can help in preventing crises on campus (Omodan et al., 2019; Omodan, 2020b).

Conflict management strategies within the university setting also play a significant role in decision-making processes. Utilising mediation and dialogue, as well as implementing conflict resolution strategies, can facilitate collaboration between stakeholders. This collaborative approach allows stakeholders to work together towards meaningful solutions that address underlying issues while mitigating the negative effects of conflict on individuals and the organisation as a whole. The principles of Ubuntu, which emphasise solidarity, sharing, care, and compassion, can also be integrated into conflict management practices to enhance their effectiveness (Omodan, 2022b). Therefore, decision-making processes in universities must be inclusive, proactive, and strategic to effectively manage student unrest and improve relations between students and university authorities. By adopting these practices, universities can create a more positive and productive campus environment.

2.5.4 Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are critical components in addressing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. The lack of these elements often exacerbates governance issues, leading to inefficiencies and dissatisfaction among

students and staff. In Nigerian universities, the absence of transparency and accountability has been linked to various governance challenges. High-profile corruption and dishonesty in leadership have resulted in a lack of basic amenities such as housing, education, water, electricity, and transportation (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a). This situation not only affects the quality of life for students but also undermines their trust in university authorities. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance highlights that poor performance in participation, rights, inclusion, security, and the rule of law contributes to the fragility of statehood in many African countries, including Nigeria (Lalude, 2021). These governance deficiencies create an environment where student grievances are often ignored or inadequately addressed, leading to increased unrest.

In South African universities, similar issues are observed. The misalignment of administrative portfolios with emerging responsibilities and the difficulty in making constitutional changes due to apathy further complicate governance (Cele, 2008). Student Representative Councils (SRCs) often struggle with inherited organisational features that inhibit their ability to respond effectively to student issues. This lack of clarity in responsibility and action results in haphazard responses or inaction, which frustrates students and fuels unrest (Cele, 2008). Additionally, SRCs' limited knowledge of legislative frameworks and policy processes hampers their ability to engage meaningfully in governance, further diminishing transparency and accountability.

The impact of these governance issues is profound. For instance, the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria has been promoting more efficient management by institutionalising strategic planning and holding regular workshops for top university managers (Okebukola, 2006). However, the effectiveness of these measures is often undermined by the lack of transparency and accountability at various levels of university administration. Without these elements, efforts to improve governance and management practices are likely to be superficial and short-lived.

To address these challenges, it is essential to invest in ICT infrastructure and provide the requisite support and training to all members of the university community. This can promote effective student activism and productive engagement in social networks, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Furthermore, the management of tertiary institutions should put more effort into supervising staff to manage organisational politics, which can directly increase

employee performance, effective communication, and employee output (Samaila et al., 2018). Ensuring that only qualified personnel handle management roles and inviting unbiased councils to monitor university management can also help improve governance (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b).

Hence, while current studies emphasise the significance of transparency and accountability in enhancing university governance and reducing student unrest, they often consider these aspects as normative ideals rather than analytically grounded processes. A significant portion of the literature focuses on institutional shortcomings and suggested reforms without thoroughly examining how transparency and accountability are put into practice, negotiated, or limited within the everyday operations of universities. This leads to a gap in comprehending how governance processes influence student perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and involvement. Consequently, there is limited conceptual clarity on how these principles operate in reality to either alleviate or escalate unrest. This study aims to address this gap by repositioning transparency and accountability within a process-oriented framework, illustrating how their practical implementation, or absence, shapes the dynamics of engagement, conflict, and resolution within Nigerian and South African universities.

2.5.5 Bad Governance and University Productivity

Bad governance significantly impacts university productivity, particularly in the context of Nigerian and South African universities. The inefficiencies and corruption within the administrative frameworks of these institutions have led to a decline in academic standards and overall institutional performance. In Nigerian universities, the politicisation of education has been a major issue. The Federal and State Governments have often failed to prioritise funding for higher education, which has resulted in inadequate resources and facilities for both students and staff (Ofor-Douglas, 2023). This lack of investment has been compounded by the mismanagement of the limited funds that are available, leading to further deterioration in the quality of education provided. The study by Bakare highlights the need for improved ethics, practices, and corporate governance to address these issues (Bakare, 2019).

Moreover, the compulsory sale of handouts to students by lecturers and the sexual harassment of female students have become pervasive problems, contributing to a toxic academic environment. These practices not only undermine the integrity of the

educational system but also demoralise students and staff, further reducing productivity. The promotion of university professors based on self-publication rather than peer review has also been a significant issue, leading to a lack of genuine academic contributions and a decline in research quality (Ibrahim, 2022).

In South Africa, student activism has played a crucial role in highlighting governance issues within universities. The constructive engagement of student leaders in decision-making processes has provided them with a better understanding of institutional functions, yet it has also revealed the limitations of current governance structures. The narrow student perspective, which often contests management and encourages direct forms of protest, underscores the need for more inclusive and transparent governance practices (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008).

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during these crises are also noteworthy. The stress and frustration experienced by students, staff, and administrators during periods of unrest can lead to a breakdown in communication and trust, further exacerbating the problems at hand. The research by Cele emphasises the importance of understanding the chronology of events leading up to and following student protests to better address these issues (Cele, 2008).

Additionally, the presence of cult activities in Nigerian universities has created an environment of fear and intimidation, where lecturers are coerced into awarding undeserved marks to students. This not only compromises academic standards but also endangers the lives of both students and staff, as cult-related violence often results in fatalities (Joseph Efe et al., 2023). Addressing these security concerns is crucial for restoring a safe and conducive learning environment. To improve university productivity, it is essential to address the root causes of bad governance. This includes ensuring adequate funding for higher education, implementing transparent and accountable administrative practices, and fostering a culture of ethical behaviour among staff and students.

2.5.6 Impact on Academic Performance

The impact of student unrest on academic performance in Nigerian and South African universities is profound and multifaceted. The frequent disruptions caused by protests and social unrest significantly hinder the academic progress of students. These

disruptions often lead to the suspension of academic activities, which in turn delays the completion of academic programmes and extends the duration of study for many students (Ofor-Douglas, 2023; Omodan, 2023b).

In Nigerian universities, the politics of funding plays a crucial role in exacerbating these issues. The reliance on external sources of finance has led to a loss of independence and increased administrative duties, which detract from the core activities of research and instruction. This situation has resulted in a decline in the variety of research and instruction, further impacting the quality of education. The competitive environment among universities, driven by funding politics, has also reduced cooperation and harmonisation, which are essential for a robust academic ecosystem (Ofor-Douglas, 2023).

In South African universities, the lack of access to quality educational resources and the inequalities among students create an environment conducive to social unrest. These inequalities are often rooted in socio-economic disparities, manifesting in the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among students. The resultant social unrest disrupts academic activities, leading to a decline in academic performance. The power dynamics and inequality issues prevalent in South African universities further complicate the situation, as they contribute to the tensions that lead to unrest (Omodan, 2023b).

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during these crises are also significant. The stress and anxiety caused by the uncertainty and instability of the academic environment can adversely affect the mental health of students, faculty, and staff. This, in turn, impacts their ability to perform academically and professionally. The loss of bearings among individuals within educational institutions, as a result of these disruptions, catalyses further protests and aggressive behaviours, creating a vicious cycle that is detrimental to academic performance (Boboyi & Kang'ethe, 2024).

Moreover, the broader context of higher education transformation in Africa, as discussed by Tade Akin Aina, highlights the similarities in the development processes across the continent. The changes in the higher education terrain over the past three decades have been marked by significant challenges, including those related to governance and the politics of knowledge (Aina, 2010). These challenges are

reflected in the academic performance of students, as the instability and inefficiencies within the system hinder their academic progress.

The liberalisation of higher education and the rapid societal reforms supported externally have also played a role in shaping the current state of student activism and academic performance. These global processes have had deleterious effects on the university environment, forcing students to adapt to rapidly changing and often unfavourable conditions (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008b). The impact of digital technologies, while offering new possibilities, has also introduced new challenges that need to be addressed to improve academic performance (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Hence, the impact of student unrest on academic performance in Nigerian and South African universities is significant and multifaceted. The disruptions caused by protests, the politics of funding, inequalities, and psychosocial deficiencies all contribute to a challenging academic environment. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving governance, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering a stable and supportive academic environment.

2.5.7 Operational Inefficiencies

Operational inefficiencies in universities significantly contribute to student unrest and hinder university productivity. These inefficiencies manifest in various forms, including inadequate communication channels, poor management of resources, and a lack of effective governance structures.

One of the primary issues is the lack of effective communication and open engagement between students and university management. This deficiency exacerbates feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction among students, leading to social unrest. Ineffective communication is a major factor contributing to student unrest in South African universities (Omodan, 2023b). This communication gap prevents the timely resolution of issues and fosters a sense of neglect among the student body.

Furthermore, the absence of established structures to address student problems, particularly financial support, is another significant operational inefficiency. The lack of plans to manage student debt and the disconnect between students and their departments make it difficult to address issues at an early stage. This gap often results

in the escalation of problems that could have been resolved at the departmental level, thereby contributing to student unrest.

In addition to communication and structural issues, the mismanagement of resources also plays a crucial role in operational inefficiencies. For instance, the announcement of palliatives in Nigeria was marred by lopsidedness and deliberate mismanagement, which shortchanged the most vulnerable populations (Asogwa et al., 2021). Such mismanagement not only affects students directly but also undermines trust in university administration, further fuelling unrest.

The decline in the quality of education due to economic crises and budget cutbacks has also deprived educational institutions of the necessary resources. This decline has made it challenging to find qualified staff and maintain educational standards, thereby impacting university productivity (Zeilig, 2009). The economic constraints faced by these institutions hinder their ability to provide quality education and support services, leading to dissatisfaction among students. Moreover, the haphazard release of student funding is a significant challenge in South African universities. Government funding issues make it difficult to manage student unrest effectively. The inconsistent and delayed release of funds creates financial instability for students, contributing to their grievances and unrest.

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during such crises further complicate the situation. The impatience within the system and the gap between students and their departments lead to strikes and other forms of protest (Omodan et al., 2020). These deficiencies highlight the need for better management practices and more robust support systems to address student concerns promptly. Hence, addressing these operational inefficiencies requires a multifaceted approach. Improving communication channels, establishing effective governance structures, and ensuring the proper management of resources are essential steps. By addressing these issues, universities can create a more stable and productive environment, reducing the likelihood of student unrest and enhancing overall university productivity.

2.5.8 Resource Allocation

Resource allocation in universities is a critical factor influencing the productivity and stability of higher education institutions. In the context of Nigerian and South African

universities, the allocation of resources has significant implications for the management of student unrest and the overall governance of these institutions.

In Nigerian universities, the quantity of funds released to federal universities has seen a notable increase over the past few years. For instance, the average actual recurrent grant per student rose from 45,323 Nairas in the 1999/2000 session to 137,457 Nairas in the 2001/2002 session (Okebukola, 2006). Despite this increase, there remains a debate over the real value of these funds and their effective utilisation. The systemic and institutional approaches to fund allocation have not always translated into tangible improvements in university infrastructure or academic resources, leading to persistent challenges in the educational environment. Similarly, in South African universities, the issue of resource allocation is compounded by the historical context of social unrest and the need for effective management strategies. The use of purposive sampling techniques to select universities with a significant history of social unrest highlights the importance of targeted resource allocation to address specific institutional needs (Omodan, 2023b).

The broader result of these funding challenges is that structures established to support student leaders and improve their knowledge of student service issues are often bypassed by both students and management. This bypassing indicates a disconnect between the intended purpose of resource allocation and its actual impact on university governance (Cele, 2008). The capacity challenges faced by student representative councils (SRCs) and other student leaders remain largely unchanged, further exacerbating the issues of student unrest.

Moreover, the lack of funding has also halted the development of academic staff, who require university funding to advance their research and professional growth. Research is essential for universities to contribute to knowledge production and sustainable development; yet inadequate funding hampers these efforts (Ofor-Douglas, 2023). This situation underscores the need for a more strategic and effective allocation of resources to support both academic and administrative functions within universities. The findings from various studies indicate that boldness and imagination in devising academic programmes, reviewing curricula, and introducing innovative pedagogies are not encouraged due to market pressures, limited imagination among regulatory authorities, and the scarcity of resources and capacities (Aina, 2010). Universities in Africa must

significantly change their current mode of organising knowledge production and the nature and content of knowledge to remain relevant both nationally and globally.

Furthermore, historical reports such as the Berg Report have advocated for a dramatic reduction in higher education expenditure in Africa, leading to policy reforms that have reconfigured university education. These reforms have often been met with considerable and mostly hostile discussion, highlighting the contentious nature of resource allocation in higher education (Zeilig & Dawson, 2008). Therefore, the effective allocation of resources is crucial for addressing the challenges of student unrest and improving university governance in Nigerian and South African universities. By ensuring that funds are utilised efficiently and strategically, universities can enhance their academic and administrative capacities, ultimately leading to a more stable and productive educational environment.

2.6 Comparative Backgrounds of Nigeria and South Africa

The comparative backgrounds of Nigeria and South Africa in the context of student unrest reveal significant insights into the underlying politics of process and the impact of governance on university productivity. Both countries have experienced substantial student protests, but the nature and management of these protests differ due to their unique historical, socio-economic, and political contexts. In Nigeria, the university system has been plagued by a series of crises, often exacerbated by poor governance and inadequate infrastructure. The academic staff and students have faced restrictions on organising to defend their interests, with student representatives often being appointed by the administration rather than elected by their peers (Konings, 2009). This lack of democratic representation has contributed to a sense of disenfranchisement among students, fuelling unrest and strikes. The governance issues in Nigerian universities are further compounded by broader socio-economic challenges such as high unemployment rates, corruption, and inadequate public services, which create a fertile ground for student protests (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018).

South Africa, on the other hand, has a different historical backdrop that shapes its student activism. The legacy of apartheid and the subsequent transition to a democratic society have left deep-seated inequalities within the higher education system. The emergence of ethnic-based student organisations in post-apartheid South Africa reflects the ongoing contest over space and place within universities and

the broader society (Sikwebu, 2008). These organisations often arise in response to perceived exclusion and marginalisation, leading to protests that are not only about immediate grievances but also about broader issues of social justice and equity. The management of student protests in South Africa has also been influenced by the country's commitment to promoting equity and inclusivity within universities. Efforts to address social unrest have included initiatives to improve communication and engagement between university authorities and students (Omodan, 2023b). These measures aim to create a more inclusive environment where students feel heard and valued, potentially reducing the frequency and intensity of protests.

Both Nigeria and South Africa face psychosocial deficiencies among stakeholders during crises. In Nigeria, the lack of effective communication channels and the authoritarian approach to student representation exacerbate feelings of alienation and frustration among students. In South Africa, while there are efforts to promote inclusivity, the deep-rooted inequalities and historical injustices continue to pose significant challenges to achieving genuine equity within the higher education system. The socio-economic and political implications of student protests in both countries are profound. In Nigeria, the protests highlight the urgent need for governance reforms and improved public services to address the underlying causes of unrest. In South Africa, the protests underscore the importance of addressing historical inequalities and promoting social justice within the higher education system.

Therefore, the comparative backgrounds of Nigeria and South Africa reveal that while both countries face significant challenges in managing student unrest, the nature of these challenges and the responses to them are shaped by their unique historical and socio-political contexts. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes governance reforms, improved communication and engagement, and efforts to promote equity and social justice within universities. Below are some of the identified challenges according to the literature.

2.6.1 Historical Contexts

The historical contexts of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities are deeply rooted in the political and social landscapes of these countries. In Nigeria, the sources of student crises have been linked to broader national issues. Scholars have identified five interrelated factors contributing to these crises, which reflect the wider

Nigerian socio-political environment (David, 2023). These factors include economic instability, political corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and social inequalities, all of which exacerbate tensions within the university system.

In South Africa, the historical context of student unrest is similarly complex. The establishment of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1969 marked a significant moment in the history of student activism. This period was characterised by heightened political activity and the emergence of new forms of student resistance against the apartheid regime. The dramatic events of the late 1960s and early 1970s were not isolated incidents but were preceded by a decade of political significance at the University of the North (UCON), which laid the groundwork for later movements (McKay, 2021).

The practices of democratic and facilitative leadership styles in Nigerian universities have been identified as crucial for the effective decolonisation of student unrest. These leadership practices are seen as essential for addressing the underlying issues of coloniality and modernity that continue to affect the university system. The persistence of colonial legacies in the form of modernity has been a driving force behind student unrest, leading to unproductivity and hindering the achievement of the universities' aims and objectives (Omodan, 2020). In South Africa, the analysis of student movements has revealed a nuanced understanding of intersectionality and its impact on student experiences. The differences in class and institutional backgrounds between students from historically white institutions and those from historically black institutions have shaped the dynamics of student activism (Ndelu et al., 2017). These differences highlight the varied experiences and challenges faced by students in their struggle for social and political change.

The comparative descriptive approach adopted in studies of student politics since 1994 has provided valuable insights into the changes in student governance and participation across South African universities and technikons. This approach has examined the responses of students to institutional efforts to minimise academic and financial exclusions, as well as the differences in student participation in governance structures (Cele, 2008). These studies have highlighted the evolving nature of student politics and the ongoing challenges faced by students in their quest for representation and inclusion.

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during student crises have also been a focus of research. The use of a system psychodynamic CIBART lens to interpret data gathered from student leaders at a historically white university (HWU) has provided a deeper understanding of the underlying issues affecting student leadership and governance (Pule, 2022). This approach has revealed the complex interplay of psychological and social factors that contribute to student unrest and the challenges faced by student leaders in navigating these crises. Therefore, one can argue that a combination of political, social, and economic factors shapes the historical contexts of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. The legacy of colonialism, the dynamics of intersectionality, and the evolving nature of student governance all play significant roles in understanding the causes and consequences of student activism.

2.6.2 Political Influences

Political influences play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. The political landscape in these countries often impacts the governance structures within universities, which in turn affects student activism and protests. In Nigeria, the political environment has historically been characterised by instability and authoritarian governance, which has influenced the nature of student protests. Universities in Nigeria have often been sites of political struggle, where students express their dissatisfaction with broader political issues through protests. The political status quo, including the curriculum offered to students and the economic conditions of the day, significantly shapes student politics (Omodan et al., 2020). This environment creates a backdrop where students are not only fighting for their rights within the university but also challenging the broader political system.

Similarly, in South Africa, the political context has a profound impact on student activism. The shift in national power relations and the emergence of cooperative governance have influenced how student protests are managed and perceived (Cele, 2008). The political history of South Africa, marked by apartheid and the subsequent transition to democracy, has left a legacy of activism that continues to influence student movements. Universities in South Africa have been both incubators of political awareness and sites where the regime promotes obedience and loyalty. This dual role

of universities creates a complex environment for student activism. The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during student unrest are also influenced by political factors. The perpetual state of nervousness and dissatisfaction associated with poor living conditions, inadequate learning environments, and authoritarian governance can exacerbate the psychological impacts on students and other stakeholders (Wasonga & Makahamadze, 2020). These conditions are often a reflection of the broader political and economic challenges faced by the country.

Furthermore, the use of digital technologies has transformed political participation and civic engagement in the twenty-first century. Digital infrastructure such as e-democracy, e-governance, and online politics has been employed to boost citizen involvement in democratic processes (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). This shift has also influenced student activism, as students increasingly use social media and other digital platforms to organise and mobilise protests. The initial ignorance and misunderstanding of the use of social media have given way to a more sophisticated understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, allowing students to develop new methods to counter dissent (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017).

The relationship between universities and protests is particularly strong in dictatorships, where protests at university locations are more often associated with calls for democracy and human rights (Dahlum & Wig, 2021). This indicates that the political context of a country can significantly influence the nature and frequency of student protests. In both Nigeria and South Africa, the political influences on student unrest are evident in the way protests are organised, the issues that are raised, and the responses from university authorities and the government.

The issue here is that the political influences on student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with the broader political and economic context of each country. Understanding these influences is crucial for proposing solutions to the challenges causing student unrest and improving relations between students and university authorities.

2.6.3 Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic factors play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. The economic landscape of these

countries directly impacts the quality of life and opportunities available to students, which in turn influences their propensity to engage in protests. In many African settings, the high cost of living is characterised by rising prices of goods and services without a corresponding increase in income. This economic strain makes it difficult for families to afford basic household responsibilities, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and unrest (Asante & Helbrecht, 2018). The inability to meet basic needs often translates into frustration among students, who may feel that their educational institutions are not adequately addressing their financial hardships. The decline of key industries, such as mining in South Africa, has led to rising unemployment rates, particularly among the youth. This economic downturn has exacerbated the challenges faced by students, who see limited job prospects upon graduation. The frustration is further compounded when students perceive that jobs are being allocated to non-locals, as was the case in Port Elizabeth, where protests erupted due to the belief that employment opportunities were being given to people from Lesotho rather than local residents.

The socio-economic challenges are not limited to external economic conditions but are also influenced by the internal governance of universities. Poor management and lack of service delivery within universities can lead to significant dissatisfaction among students. For instance, the failure of specific councillors to address student concerns has been highlighted as a critical factor in the escalation of protests (Alexander, 2010). This lack of responsiveness from university authorities can create a sense of neglect and marginalisation among students, prompting them to take to the streets to voice their grievances. Furthermore, the economic development of a nation is closely tied to the quality of its education system. A well-functioning education system is essential for training the next generation of leaders and preparing graduates to contribute effectively to society. However, in many post-colonial contexts, access to higher education for the poor remains a contentious issue. The disparity in access to quality education can lead to a cycle of poverty and unrest as students from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to overcome the socio-economic barriers that hinder their academic and professional success (Ntombana et al., 2023).

The role of universities in fostering economic growth cannot be overstated. Good quality education is crucial for producing a class of citizens that are hardworking,

innovative, and capable of driving economic development. The socio-political and economic development of a nation is, in many ways, determined by the quality and level of educational attainment of its population (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a, 2022b). Therefore, addressing the socio-economic factors that contribute to student unrest is essential for improving university productivity and fostering a more stable and prosperous society.

Hence, the socio-economic factors influencing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with broader economic and governance issues. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving economic conditions, enhancing the responsiveness of university authorities, and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students. By tackling these underlying issues, it is possible to mitigate the factors that lead to student unrest and create a more conducive environment for academic and personal growth.

2.6.4 Psychosocial Deficiencies

Psychosocial deficiencies play a significant role in the dynamics of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These deficiencies manifest in various forms, impacting both the students and the broader university community. One of the primary psychosocial issues is the anxiety fuelled by diversity and diversity dynamics within student leadership organisations. This anxiety acts as both a restraining and driving force, creating a complex energy system within these organisations. The anxiety stems from identity issues, where student leaders struggle with their dual identities as both leaders and students, leading to an "us-and-them" split that exacerbates tensions.

Another critical aspect is the lack of trained personnel to assist students with visual impairments, which contributes to their high illiteracy rates and exclusion from the digital community. This exclusion prevents them from participating in collective online actions and on-campus demonstrations, further isolating them from the student body and exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and frustration. The absence of digital literacy and assistive technology support highlights a significant gap in addressing the needs of these students, leading to their withdrawal from active participation in student politics (Omodan et al., 2020).

Environmental factors within the school community also contribute to psychosocial deficiencies. Issues such as segregation along religious, tribal, and sectarian lines, as well as bullying, overcrowding, and poor ventilation, create a hostile environment that affects students' psychological well-being (Joseph Efe et al., 2023). These conditions not only hinder academic performance but also contribute to a sense of alienation and disenfranchisement among students, fuelling unrest and dissatisfaction with university authorities.

The CIBART model, which stands for Conflict, Identity, Boundary, Authority, Role, and Task, provides a structured method for understanding the complexity of student leadership and the psychosocial dynamics at play. This model helps to contain and explain the interpersonal and intergroup dynamics that contribute to student unrest. By framing the study within the psychosocial paradigm, it becomes possible to identify and address the underlying issues that lead to conflicts and disruptions in the university setting (Pule, 2022).

Furthermore, the social consequences of poor governance and lack of transparency in leadership exacerbate these psychosocial deficiencies. High levels of youth unemployment and deprivation of education lead to increased human vices and insecurity, creating a volatile environment that is prone to unrest. The lack of good governance and transparency not only affects the students' immediate environment but also has broader implications for societal stability and peace (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a, 2022b). Therefore, addressing psychosocial deficiencies requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving the school environment, providing adequate support for students with disabilities, and fostering a sense of inclusion and identity among student leaders.

2.6.5 Mental Health Challenges

Mental health challenges among students in Nigerian and South African universities are a significant concern, particularly in the context of student unrest and poor governance. The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during crises are multifaceted and deeply impact the well-being and academic performance of students.

Cyberbullying on social media is one of the critical factors affecting students' mental health. A study indicates that a significant proportion of students have experienced

cyberbullying, which has adversely impacted their academic performance. Despite this, many students have shown resilience and have not considered quitting school entirely (Chukwuere et al., 2021). This resilience, however, does not negate the negative effects on their mental health, which can include anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation.

Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in higher education institutions (HEIs) also contribute to mental health challenges. The hierarchical and male-dominated structures of HEIs often exacerbate these issues, making it difficult for victims to report incidents or seek help. Initiating discussions and actions at the organisational level to address GBVH as a power-related phenomenon is crucial. This includes challenging the dominant neo-liberal ethos and increasing the gender competence of those in positions of power. The under-reporting of GBVH further complicates the issue, as many victims may not recognise their experiences as harassment or may be unwilling to report them due to fear of retaliation or disbelief (O'Connor et al., 2021).

The conflict dynamics within the student leadership system also play a role in mental health challenges. High levels of conflict and blurred boundaries in student leadership can lead to reduced confidence and clarity among student leaders. This environment can create additional stress and anxiety for those involved, impacting their ability to effectively lead and support their peers (Pule, 2022). Childhood poverty is another factor that can have long-lasting effects on mental health. Students from impoverished backgrounds may face additional pressures to succeed academically while also dealing with financial stress. This dual burden can lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, further hindering their academic performance and overall well-being (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b).

To address these mental health challenges, it is essential to foster a more inclusive and supportive campus environment. Regular town hall meetings and open forums where students can engage with management and voice their opinions can contribute to a more harmonious campus atmosphere. Providing a platform for open dialogue is essential in addressing social unrest and ensuring that student concerns are heard and addressed promptly (Omodan, 2023b). Additionally, proactive measures such as monitoring campus climate, gathering student feedback, and conducting regular

assessments of policies and practices can help identify and address potential issues before they escalate (Omodan, 2023b).

Therefore, addressing the mental health challenges faced by students in Nigerian and South African universities requires a multifaceted approach. This includes tackling cyberbullying, GBVH, conflict dynamics within student leadership, and the effects of childhood poverty. By creating a more inclusive and responsive campus environment, universities can better support the mental health and well-being of their students, ultimately improving their academic performance and overall quality of life.

2.6.6 Social Disruptions

Social disruptions in Nigerian and South African universities are multifaceted and stem from various institutional and management shortcomings. These disruptions often manifest as student protests, which are frequently driven by a lack of effective communication between students and university management. When students feel ignored or unheard, they are more likely to engage in protests to demand change (Omodan, 2023b). This lack of communication is a significant factor contributing to social unrest on campuses.

In both Nigeria and South Africa, the prevalence of inherited outdated and inequitable colonial governance systems exacerbates the situation. These systems often lack accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness, leading to frequent demonstrations and crises that disrupt the academic calendar (Aina, 2010). The expansion of internal negative cultural practices, such as the growth of violent secret societies, sexism, academic and bureaucratic corruption, and the interference of political parties and ethnic associations in university life, further aggravates the situation (Aina, 2010).

The psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during these crises are also notable. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more portable digital gadgets with assistive technology to improve the participation of visually impaired students in social and political activities. The lack of such infrastructure limits their ability to engage fully in university life, thereby contributing to social disruptions (Omodan et al., 2020).

Moreover, the role of social media in student activism cannot be overlooked. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and X have become crucial tools for students to organise and mobilise protests. However, the use of social media also brings challenges, such as cyberbullying, which discourages students from using online educational resources to support their studies (Chukwuere et al., 2021). This dual role of social media as both a tool for activism and a source of psychosocial stress adds another layer of complexity to the issue of social disruptions in universities. The literature indicates that these deleterious behaviours stem from multifaceted factors, including institutional and management shortcomings, students' distorted perception of their rights overshadowing their responsibilities, a prevalence of disengaged students on campuses, and external pressures to enhance inclusivity in education for disadvantaged students (Boboyi & Kang'ethe, 2024). These factors collectively contribute to the social disruptions observed in universities.

Furthermore, the lack of effective communication and inclusive decision-making processes is a primary factor contributing to social unrest. Transparent communication and involving students in discussions that directly affect their academic experience are crucial for maintaining a harmonious environment on campus (Omodan, 2023b). The new trend of student protests orchestrated via social media requires an up-to-date management style that understands the sophistication of 21st-century university operations (Omodan, 2022a).

Therefore, addressing the root causes of social disruptions in Nigerian and South African universities requires a multifaceted approach. Improving communication between students and university management, updating governance systems to be more inclusive and transparent, and addressing the psychosocial deficiencies faced by students are essential steps. Additionally, leveraging social media responsibly and providing the necessary digital infrastructure can help mitigate the impact of these disruptions and improve relations between students and university authorities.

2.6.7 Economic Hardships

Economic hardships significantly impact the productivity and stability of universities in Nigeria and South Africa. These hardships manifest in various forms, including inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, and the financial struggles of students and staff. In Nigerian universities, the financial situation is dire. Despite the Federal

Government providing approximately 90% of the funding, the universities still struggle due to broader social, political, and economic downturns. This inadequate funding leads to a lack of essential resources, such as lecture rooms, libraries, and laboratories, which are often poorly equipped and insufficient to meet the needs of the student population. The economic crisis further exacerbates these issues, with delayed and irregular payment of student bursaries and staff salaries contributing to a low execution rate of university budgets.

The economic challenges are not limited to infrastructure and resources; students in Nigerian universities often face significant financial burdens. Many are forced to engage in menial jobs to support themselves, which detracts from their academic focus and performance. The prolonged strikes and disruptions in the academic calendar also lead to a loss of acquired knowledge and a general disinterest in academics (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021). These factors collectively contribute to low efficiency in the educational system, affecting the overall quality of education and student outcomes (Ofor-Douglas, 2023).

In South Africa, the situation is similarly challenging. Post-1994, higher education institutions have been pressured to balance their books and operate like profitable businesses, yet they cannot rely on the state to underwrite their debts. This financial strain has led to the implementation of financial exclusion criteria, where students who cannot meet certain financial requirements are unable to continue their studies (Cele, 2008). This practice not only limits access to education but also creates a divide between those who can afford to study and those who cannot, further entrenching economic inequalities. The broader socio-political context compounds the economic hardships faced by students in both countries. In Nigeria, the state's inability to provide minimal social security has led to a reliance on low oil prices as a form of social security, reflecting broader economic instability (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). This instability affects all sectors, including education, where a lack of consistent funding and support undermines the ability of universities to function effectively.

Moreover, the quality of education is compromised by these economic challenges. In many developing countries, including Nigeria and South Africa, students are often taught by poorly qualified and inadequately compensated faculty, utilising outdated curricula and insufficient facilities. This situation is further aggravated by the failure of

the secondary education system to adequately prepare students for higher education, leading to a cycle of underperformance and limited academic progress (Zeilig, 2009). The economic hardships also have psychosocial implications for students and staff. The constant financial stress and uncertainty can lead to mental health issues, decreased motivation, and a sense of hopelessness among students. For staff, the irregular payment of salaries and lack of resources can result in low morale and reduced commitment to teaching and research (Konings, 2009).

Addressing these economic hardships requires a multifaceted approach. Increasing funding for universities, improving the management of financial resources, and ensuring the timely payment of salaries and bursaries are critical steps. Additionally, providing support for students through scholarships, grants, and part-time job opportunities can help alleviate some of the financial burdens they face. By tackling these economic challenges, it is possible to improve the overall productivity and stability of universities in Nigeria and South Africa, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and student outcomes.

2.6.8 Lack of Access to Education

Lack of access to education is a significant factor contributing to student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. This issue is multifaceted, encompassing inadequate educational resources, unequal opportunities, and systemic barriers that hinder students' academic progress and overall campus experience. Promoting an inclusive environment on campus can enhance academic outcomes and foster a more positive campus experience for all students. Empirical findings emphasise the necessity for universities to prioritise equity and inclusivity as a response to social unrest in South Africa. Effective communication and transparency are crucial in addressing social unrest, as they help build trust and cooperation between students and university management (Omodan, 2023b). The disruption of classes, burning of properties, and even loss of lives during protests are some of the severe consequences of student unrest. These actions are often linked to disharmony and disunity among university stakeholders, particularly between students and university authorities. Ineffective communication further exacerbates the problem, contributing to persistent student unrest in universities across Nigeria and other African countries (Omodan et al., 2019, 2020).

To address these challenges, South African universities should prioritise promoting equity and inclusivity by ensuring adequate access to quality educational resources, promoting equal opportunities for all students, and providing support such as tutoring and career counselling. Ensuring equal representation in student organisations and leadership positions is also essential. Additionally, establishing effective communication channels between students and management and engaging in open dialogue to address students' concerns can help build trust and reduce the likelihood of student protests (Omodan, 2023b).

The history and prevalence of student protests in South Africa highlight the overarching goal of education to reshape these countries and rectify the lingering impacts of colonialism. Education aimed to address the colonial legacy in Ghana and Kenya, for example, fostering a new paradigm characterised by equality, mutual benefit, and active participation (Boboyi & Kang'ethe, 2024). This historical context underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of student unrest, including the lack of access to education.

Addressing the lack of access to education requires a comprehensive approach that includes promoting equity and inclusivity, ensuring effective communication, and providing adequate resources and support for students. Thus, by addressing these issues, universities can create a more positive campus environment and reduce the likelihood of student unrest, ultimately improving relations between students and university authorities in both Nigeria and South Africa.

2.6.9 Socio-Economic Inequalities

Socio-economic inequalities play a significant role in shaping the landscape of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These inequalities manifest in various forms, including disparities in income, access to resources, and opportunities for social mobility. The impact of these socio-economic disparities is profound, influencing both the academic and social experiences of students.

In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has left a deep-seated inequality that continues to affect the higher education sector. Despite the democratic transition, many students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds still face significant barriers to accessing quality education. The cost-sharing method of funding universities has exacerbated these

inequalities, as many students struggle to afford tuition fees and other associated costs (Ntombana et al., 2023). This financial strain often leads to protests, as students demand more equitable access to education and better support systems. Similarly, in Nigeria, socio-economic inequalities are evident in the limited employment opportunities available to graduates. While some respondents believe there are sufficient job opportunities in the private sector, the reality is that many graduates lack the necessary skills and access to funds to start their own businesses (Ajadi, 2023). This mismatch between education and employment prospects contributes to frustration and unrest among students, who feel that their academic efforts do not translate into meaningful economic opportunities. The situation is further complicated by the broader economic context in both countries. In South Africa, high levels of unemployment and income inequality persist, with many people feeling disillusioned by the limited improvements since the end of apartheid. The neoliberal policies adopted by the post-apartheid government have not adequately addressed these issues, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and protests (Alexander, 2010). This economic backdrop creates fertile ground for student unrest, as students see their struggles as part of a larger fight for social and economic justice.

In Nigeria, the economic challenges are also significant. The country's economy has been plagued by corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of diversification, which have all contributed to high levels of poverty and unemployment. These economic difficulties are reflected in the higher education sector, where funding is often inadequate and resources are scarce. Students, therefore, find themselves in a precarious position, with limited support and opportunities for advancement (Adesina, 2006). The psychosocial impact of these socio-economic inequalities on students cannot be overstated. The stress and anxiety associated with financial insecurity and uncertain futures can have detrimental effects on students' mental health and academic performance. In South Africa, the discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals in rural-based universities adds another layer of complexity to the issue, as these students often face additional challenges in accessing education and support (Omodan, 2023b).

Addressing these socio-economic inequalities requires a multifaceted approach. Policies aimed at increasing funding for higher education, improving access to financial aid, and creating more employment opportunities for graduates are essential. Additionally, efforts to promote social justice and reduce discrimination within universities can help create a

more inclusive and supportive environment for all students. Based on this, one can argue that socio-economic inequalities are a major driver of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These inequalities affect students' access to education, their academic experiences, and their future prospects. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive policy interventions and a commitment to creating a more equitable and just society.

2.6.10 Institutional Failures

Institutional failures in Nigerian and South African universities have significantly contributed to student unrest and have profoundly impacted university productivity. In Nigeria, the crisis in universities has led to a breakdown of law and order, disturbances of public peace, and loss of lives and property (Joseph Efe et al., 2023). This situation is exacerbated by chronic underfunding, rapidly increasing student enrolment, inadequate facilities, and deteriorating physical infrastructure. The demoralisation of staff and students, coupled with incessant student riots and periodic staff strikes, further highlights the institutional failures within the Nigerian university system (Adeola & Bukola, 2014).

The lack of adequate infrastructure in Nigerian universities creates a significant gap between students in public universities and those in private institutions. This disparity affects students' skill levels and their employability, as they do not have access to necessary facilities to learn effectively. Ofor-Douglas (2022a) indicates that this gap makes it difficult for students from public universities to compete with their counterparts from private institutions when seeking employment.

Corruption is another critical issue plaguing Nigerian universities. Practices such as bribery, lobbying, extortion, cronyism, sex-for-marks, graft, and embezzlement are prevalent, undermining the integrity of these institutions. The persistence of such malfeasance has led to significant brain drain, with dedicated scholars and professionals leaving the country in search of better opportunities where academic practices are supported by robust structures (Aina, 2010). This exodus further weakens the academic and administrative capabilities of Nigerian universities.

In South Africa, similar issues of institutional failure are evident. The over-admission of students without corresponding increases in infrastructure and resources leads to

significant challenges in managing student populations. The delay in processing financial aid allowances through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is a recurrent problem, causing financial strain and unrest among students (Boboyi & Kang'ethe, 2024). Additionally, the lack of timely responses from university management to student issues often leads to protests, highlighting the communication and structural deficiencies within these institutions.

A lack of visionary leadership compounds the governance issues in both countries, as does a disregard for rules and regulations. In Nigeria, the ruling elites have consistently demonstrated an indifference to effective governance, leading to structural and institutional decay, corruption, and impunity. This environment undermines the capacity of the state to uphold the rule of law, further exacerbating the challenges faced by universities (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019).

To address these institutional failures, it is essential to implement strategies that promote good governance and improve the lives of university community members. This includes ensuring adequate funding, improving infrastructure, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency within university administrations (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a, 2022b). Additionally, creating inclusive decision-making processes and establishing dialogical forums can help bridge the communication gap between students and university authorities, thereby reducing the likelihood of unrest (Omodan, 2023b).

Thus, the institutional failures in Nigerian and South African universities are multifaceted and deeply rooted in governance issues, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving governance, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering better communication between students and university authorities. By tackling these issues, it is possible to create a more conducive environment for learning and development, ultimately improving university productivity and student outcomes.

2.6.11 Communication Gaps

Communication gaps play a significant role in exacerbating student unrest in universities. The lack of effective communication between university authorities and students often leads to misunderstandings and escalates tensions. One of the primary

issues is the absence of strategic leadership and communication management during crises. Effective communication is crucial for forming and managing crisis networks, which can help mitigate unrest and ensure organisational stability. The challenges faced by students with visual impairments in accessing and using ICT highlight the broader issue of communication barriers in the virtual environment. These barriers limit the participation of visually impaired students in online activism, thereby excluding them from important discussions and decision-making processes. This exclusion can lead to feelings of marginalisation and frustration, further fuelling unrest.

Inclusive decision-making and effective communication are essential for managing student unrest. The need for decoloniality, which challenges Eurocentric and colonialist thinking, underscores the importance of producing knowledge from the perspectives of marginalised groups. This approach can help address the root causes of unrest by ensuring that all voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. Another significant issue is the lack of coordination and feedback within the university management system. Effective management requires guiding, controlling, and coordinating activities to achieve organisational objectives. However, this can only be accomplished if there is proper coordination and feedback between individuals and groups. The absence of these elements can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings, which can escalate into unrest (Omodan, 2022a). The weak and decaying infrastructure in universities, including inadequate buildings, equipment, and connectivity, further complicates communication efforts. Inadequate staffing and the "brain drain" phenomenon also contribute to the problem, as overburdened and underqualified staff may struggle to maintain effective communication with students (Aina, 2010). This situation is exacerbated by outdated and often irrelevant pedagogical modes and curricula, which fail to address the current needs and concerns of students (Aina, 2010).

The transition from traditional on-campus to online student activism due to COVID-19 lockdowns has introduced new communication challenges. While online platforms offer new opportunities for participation, they also present obstacles, particularly for students with visual impairments. The lack of digital and financial resources, coupled with digital illiteracy, further hinders effective communication and participation in virtual collective behaviour. The general agreement among scholars is that the lack of

digital and financial resources are major economic issues, while digital illiteracy is the main operational problem. These challenges are compounded by traditional pedagogical approaches that do not adequately prepare students for the digital age (Omodan, 2023b). Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving digital literacy, providing adequate resources, and updating curricula to reflect current realities.

Therefore, communication gaps in universities are a significant factor contributing to student unrest. These gaps are caused by a combination of inadequate strategic leadership, lack of coordination and feedback, weak infrastructure, and outdated pedagogical approaches. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving communication strategies, ensuring inclusive decision-making, and providing adequate resources and support for both students and staff. By addressing these communication gaps, universities can create a more inclusive and stable environment that fosters positive relations between students and authorities.

2.7 Proposed Solutions

Proposed solutions to address student unrest in universities must consider the multifaceted nature of the issues at hand. One significant factor contributing to student unrest is the lack of effective communication between students and university management. This communication gap exacerbates tensions, making students feel unheard or ignored. To mitigate this, universities should establish robust communication channels that facilitate regular and transparent dialogue between students and administration. This can help in addressing grievances promptly and effectively, thereby reducing the likelihood of protests.

Another critical aspect is the socioeconomic inequalities prevalent in these universities. These inequalities not only contribute to student unrest but also undermine the quality of education (Omodan, 2023b). Addressing these disparities is essential for promoting social cohesion and improving academic outcomes. Universities should implement policies that ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. This could include financial aid programmes, scholarships, and support services aimed at disadvantaged students.

The use of digital tools for communication and mobilisation by student movements has both advantages and disadvantages. While the Internet is an effective tool to mobilise and galvanise support for student movements, it also presents challenges, such as a leadership vacuum and a lack of collective capacity in organising and decision-making (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). To overcome these challenges, student movements need to engage in sustained periods of collaboration to build a cohesive and effective leadership structure. This can be facilitated through workshops, training programmes, and collaborative projects that foster teamwork and leadership skills.

Furthermore, the presence of universities stimulates social networks, which can play a crucial role in overcoming the "information problem" and the "motivation problem" associated with collective action (Dahlum & Wig, 2021). By leveraging these social networks, universities can create a supportive environment that encourages student participation in governance and decision-making processes. This can be achieved through the establishment of student councils, forums, and committees that provide students with a platform to voice their concerns and contribute to policymaking. In addition to these measures, it is essential to address the broader issue of bad governance, which impacts university productivity and contributes to student unrest. Governments should improve their accountability and transparency, establish institutions to train future leaders, and take measures to end corrupt practices (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a, 2022b). By fostering a culture of good governance, universities can create a more stable and conducive environment for learning and development.

Finally, the rapid dissemination of information through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok has revolutionised the way student activists mobilise support (Omodan, 2023b). While this presents opportunities for swift and widespread communication, it also necessitates the need for responsible use of these platforms. Universities should educate students on the ethical use of social media and encourage them to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue. Addressing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving communication, addressing socio-economic inequalities, leveraging social networks, promoting good governance, and fostering responsible use of digital tools. Thus, by implementing these solutions, universities can create a more harmonious and productive academic environment.

2.7.1 Policy Recommendations

Policy recommendations for addressing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities should focus on several key areas to improve governance, enhance university productivity, and foster better relations between students and university authorities. Firstly, there is a need to update and upgrade the ethics, structures, knowledge systems, and corporate governance within universities. This will help reposition these institutions for global competitiveness and ensure that they are better equipped to handle crises effectively. Implementing comprehensive training and retraining programmes for university administrators can discourage bureaucratic inefficiencies and promote a client-focused approach to service delivery (Aina, 2010). This approach should include the adoption of performance-based algorithms and key performance indicators to enhance administrative efficiency.

Secondly, the reduction in the number of higher education institutions through strategic mergers, as seen in South Africa, can serve as a valuable lesson for Nigeria. The consolidation of universities and technikons has helped streamline resources and improve the management of these institutions (Ntombana et al., 2023). Such mergers can also facilitate the sharing of best practices and foster a more cohesive higher education system.

Furthermore, addressing the psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during student unrest is crucial. Guidance and counselling, along with moral education, can help students recognise their mistakes and initiate behaviour change. However, it is equally important to revise school policies that are overly strict, exclusive, and punitive. Repressive policies often alienate students who are most at risk of engaging in violent protests (Wasonga & Makahamadze, 2020). Instead, policies should be inclusive and supportive, promoting a sense of belonging and engagement among students. Additionally, eradicating tribalism and ethnic and religious discrimination within universities and the broader public and private sectors is essential for ensuring productivity and progress. Increased budgets for education, security, and good governance, along with diligent follow-up on allocations, can significantly benefit citizens and enhance the overall educational environment (Ofor-Douglas, 2022a, 2022b). This approach will help create a more inclusive and equitable atmosphere, reducing the likelihood of unrest.

Moreover, the security of life and property is a fundamental aspect of any development agenda. Ensuring the safety of students and staff within university campuses is paramount. This can be achieved through the implementation of robust security measures and the development of a security-conscious culture within the university community (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). By prioritising security, universities can create a conducive environment for learning and development. Finally, fostering democratic and inclusive organisational structures within universities can help address the root causes of student unrest. Encouraging open dialogue and collective decision-making processes can empower students and staff to work together towards common goals. Acknowledging and addressing the weaknesses within the current system can lead to the development of broader forms of democratic and inclusive organisation, ultimately contributing to a more stable and productive university environment (Motala et al., 2023).

Hence, existing policy recommendations often stress the importance of governance reform, institutional restructuring, psychosocial support, and inclusive engagement. However, these recommendations frequently lack a coherent conceptual framework that clarifies the interactions of these interventions within university systems. Much of the literature suggests solutions without adequately illustrating how policy implementation is influenced by institutional processes like communication, participation, and decision-making. This leads to a disconnect between policy objectives and practical outcomes, particularly in settings where governance issues are deeply ingrained in institutional cultures and practices. This study aims to overcome this limitation by placing policy recommendations in a process-oriented framework. It emphasises that the success of these interventions depends not only on the content of policies but also on how they are implemented, negotiated, and sustained within university settings. By adopting this approach, the study offers a more comprehensive and contextually relevant strategy for policy development and implementation in addressing student unrest.

2.7.2 Institutional Reforms

Institutional reforms are crucial in addressing the underlying issues that contribute to student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These reforms must target the structural and administrative deficiencies that hinder effective governance and the

overall productivity of these institutions. One significant area for reform is the enhancement of student representation in university governance. Historically, students have sought greater involvement in institutional decision-making processes, often through protests. This involvement includes participation in academic forums, faculty committees, and university senates, which allows students to voice their concerns and influence policies related to admissions, social integration, employment, and recruitment (Cele, 2008). By institutionalising these participatory mechanisms, universities can foster a more inclusive environment that proactively addresses student grievances.

Another critical aspect of institutional reform is the improvement of funding and resource allocation. Adequate funding is essential for universities to function efficiently and achieve their educational objectives. Insufficient funding often leads to poor welfare conditions for staff and students, which can exacerbate tensions and lead to unrest. Ensuring better welfare for university staff can prevent them from being swayed by political promises and maintain their focus on educational goals (Ofor-Douglas, 2023). Additionally, a transparent and equitable distribution of resources can help mitigate feelings of neglect and marginalisation among students. The role of political interference in university administration cannot be overlooked. Political instability, poor government policies, and external pressures often disrupt the academic environment, leading to strikes, riots, and demonstrations (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b). To address this, it is necessary to separate political sentiments from the management of universities. Establishing clear boundaries between political activities and academic administration can help create a stable and conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, the adoption of social movement and institutional theories can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of student protests. Social movement theory highlights the strategies and tactics used by student activists to mobilise support and challenge existing power structures. In contrast, institutional theory emphasises the importance of legitimacy in shaping university responses to protests (Omodan, 2023b). By integrating these theories, universities can develop more effective strategies for managing social unrest and addressing the root causes of student dissatisfaction.

The impact of student protests on the academic calendar and curriculum is another area that requires attention. Frequent closures of schools due to demonstrations disrupt

the educational process and have long-term adverse effects on the scope and quality of academic programmes (David, 2023). Implementing policies that ensure the continuity of education during periods of unrest, such as alternative modes of instruction or flexible academic schedules, can help mitigate these disruptions. In addition to these reforms, fostering a culture of solidarity, care, and compassion among university stakeholders is essential. The Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasises shared humanity and mutual support, can be integrated into university governance to manage and prevent conflicts (Omodan, 2022b). By promoting values such as optimism, care, and inner goodness, universities can create a more harmonious and supportive environment for all members of the academic community.

Finally, addressing the psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders during crises is crucial. Students and staff often experience significant stress and anxiety during periods of unrest, which can affect their mental health and overall well-being. Providing adequate support services, such as counselling and mental health resources, can help alleviate these issues and promote a healthier academic environment (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021).

Therefore, while existing scholarly work highlights crucial areas for institutional reform, such as student representation, funding, governance autonomy, and psychosocial support, these suggestions are frequently presented as distinct interventions rather than as interconnected components within broader institutional frameworks. This approach restricts a comprehensive understanding of how reforms are implemented and maintained in practice. The literature contributes to significant discussions concerning governance, legitimacy, and participation, but lacks sufficient integration of these aspects into a coherent framework that elucidates how institutional structures influence the dynamics of student unrest. As a result, there exists a gap in conceptualising institutional reform as a process-oriented phenomenon rather than a series of isolated policy measures. This study aims to address this gap by contextualising institutional reforms through a process-focused perspective, illustrating how the success of reforms relies on the harmonisation of governance procedures, communication channels, and participatory mechanisms in shaping more adaptive and stable university environments.

2.7.3 Psychosocial Support Systems

Psychosocial support systems play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by students during periods of unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These systems are essential for mitigating the negative impacts of social and academic disruptions on students' mental health and overall well-being. One of the primary psychosocial deficiencies observed during student unrest is the lack of adequate support structures that can help students cope with the stress and anxiety associated with such crises. According to Omodan (2022b), fostering a sense of solidarity and promoting positive relationships among stakeholders can significantly enhance the communal atmosphere within universities. This approach not only helps reduce conflicts but also promotes a more peaceful and cooperative environment.

The importance of providing quality educational resources to all students, regardless of their background, cannot be overstated. Ensuring equal access to these resources can help alleviate some of the disparities that contribute to social unrest. Additionally, promoting equal opportunities through scholarships and financial aid can level the playing field and reduce tensions among the student body. These measures are essential for creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Effective communication and transparency between university management and students are also critical components of psychosocial support systems. Transparent communication and inclusive decision-making processes are vital for building trust and preventing conflicts. Implementing policies that promote effective communication can improve student satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of protests (Omodan, 2023b). This approach is supported by empirical findings, which emphasise the need for universities to prioritise these aspects to address social unrest effectively.

Furthermore, the role of student leadership in managing unrest and providing support to their peers is significant. Student leaders often face an identity crisis due to the clash between their roles and goals, as they must perform at various levels of the system simultaneously, presenting competing interests (Pule, 2022). Addressing this identity crisis through targeted support and training can enhance the effectiveness of student leaders in managing unrest and providing psychosocial support to their peers.

The quality of teaching and the availability of learning facilities also play a crucial role in student satisfaction and overall well-being. Studies have shown that facilities have a

positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, and the teaching quality of lecturers can mediate the relationship between governance and learning facilities (Muhsin et al., 2020). Therefore, improving the quality of teaching and ensuring the availability of adequate learning facilities are essential components of psychosocial support systems.

In essence, psychosocial support systems are vital for addressing the challenges faced by students during periods of unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. These systems should focus on promoting solidarity, ensuring equal access to educational resources, fostering effective communication, supporting student leadership, and improving the quality of teaching and learning facilities. By addressing these areas, universities can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that mitigates the negative impacts of student unrest and enhances overall student well-being.

2.7.4 Enhanced Communication Strategies

Enhanced communication strategies are crucial in addressing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. Effective communication can significantly reduce tensions between students and university authorities, thereby preventing crises. One of the primary issues contributing to student unrest is the communication gap between students and university administration. This gap often leads to misunderstandings and escalates conflicts, as seen in the violent demonstrations of 1981 in Nigerian universities (Joseph Efe et al., 2023).

To bridge this gap, universities must establish open and transparent communication channels. This involves not only listening to students' grievances but also providing timely and clear responses. When students feel heard and understood, they are less likely to resort to disruptive behaviours. For instance, the importance of communication in managing student unrest is emphasised, suggesting that proactive communication strategies can mitigate potential conflicts. Moreover, the integration of digital technologies can enhance communication between students and university authorities. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and X offer immediate and widespread dissemination of information, which can be instrumental in promptly addressing student concerns. However, the lack of digital literacy among students can hinder their participation on these platforms, as noted by Omodan et al.

(2019). Therefore, universities should invest in improving students' digital literacy to ensure they can effectively engage in these communication channels.

The role of new media technologies in student movements is also significant. According to Ntuli and Teferra (2017), digital technologies facilitate the mobilisation and communication of student movements, enabling them to advance their causes more effectively. However, while these technologies strengthen virtual activism, they can also weaken traditional forms of student activism. Therefore, a balanced approach that leverages both digital and classical communication methods is essential. In addition to digital communication, face-to-face interactions remain vital. Regular town hall meetings, open forums, and feedback sessions can provide platforms for direct dialogue between students and university authorities. These interactions help build trust and foster a sense of community, which is essential for maintaining a peaceful campus environment. Joseph Efe et al. (2023) highlight that effective communication can diffuse tensions and prevent crises, underscoring the need for continuous and open dialogue.

Furthermore, universities should develop comprehensive communication strategies that include crisis communication plans. These plans should outline procedures for addressing student unrest, including clear roles and responsibilities for university staff, communication protocols, and contingency measures. By having a well-defined plan in place, universities can respond more effectively to crises and minimise their impact on the academic environment.

Guest lectures and peer interactions can also play a role in enhancing communication. As noted by Babalola & Olawuyi (2021), institutions with low capacity can benefit from guest lectures by practitioners and scholars from different parts of the world. These interactions provide diverse perspectives and can help shape the focus of academic programmes. Additionally, peer interactions can facilitate the sharing of high-quality learning materials and resources, contributing to a more collaborative and supportive academic community.

Enhanced communication strategies are essential for managing student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. By establishing open and transparent communication channels, leveraging digital technologies, promoting face-to-face

interactions, and developing comprehensive communication plans, universities can address the root causes of student unrest and improve relations between students and university authorities. These efforts will ultimately contribute to a more peaceful and productive academic environment.

2.8. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive examination of the theoretical frameworks and existing literature central to understanding the phenomenon of student unrest within universities, specifically in Nigeria and South Africa. The theoretical section articulated a robust integration of three complementary frameworks, decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu philosophy, each addressing critical dimensions of the study's objectives. Decoloniality unpacked the social and historical complexities influencing institutional governance and student resistance; environmental determinism explored geographical and spatial differentials shaping crisis management and activism strategies; and Ubuntu provided critical insights into psychosocial implications, fostering psychological resilience and communal reconciliation. Subsequently, the literature review contextualised the study within broader academic discussions, critically evaluating existing research on university governance, crisis management, and student activism, thereby identifying essential gaps that the present study aims to fill. This chapter effectively established the analytical foundation necessary for proposing practical, interdisciplinary solutions towards sustainable institutional governance and harmony.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the comprehensive methodological approach employed in this study, grounded explicitly in the transformative paradigm aimed at fostering significant and sustainable change within Nigerian and South African universities. Guided by a transformative stance, the study adopts a qualitative research approach to deeply explore the complexities surrounding student unrest, facilitating an in-depth understanding of stakeholder experiences, institutional interactions, and power dynamics. Emphasising participatory research (PR) as the research design, this study actively involves university management, lecturers, student leaders, security personnel, counselling heads, and community members in collaborative knowledge generation, prioritising inclusivity and collective problem-solving.

Data collection is primarily achieved through focus group discussions (FGDs), supplemented by interviews and electronic means when necessary, ensuring comprehensive participation despite logistical constraints. Socio-thematic analysis (StA), which integrates thematic and conversational approaches, is employed to interpret the collected data, focusing explicitly on social interactions and power relationships among participants. Ethical considerations underpinning this research are robustly addressed, encompassing informed consent, confidentiality through pseudonyms, secure data management, risk mitigation strategies, and psychological support to protect and respect participants' dignity and well-being. The trustworthiness of the study is also established through strategies ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Collectively, this methodological approach ensures rigorous, context-sensitive research capable of producing actionable insights and transformative outcomes relevant to university governance and stakeholder engagement.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm fundamentally shapes how a researcher understands and investigates phenomena by establishing clear philosophical assumptions around reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), values (axiology), and the approach employed for inquiry (methodology). The ontological dimension addresses

fundamental questions about reality and its nature, critically influencing how phenomena are perceived, interpreted, and understood in research (Scotland, 2012). Epistemology explores the processes through which knowledge is generated and clarifies the role and interactions of the researcher with participants (Crotty, 1998). Axiology foregrounds the importance of values and ethical considerations in the research process, acknowledging how researchers' values shape inquiry (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Lastly, methodology translates these philosophical foundations into practical strategies, guiding the selection of appropriate methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The positivist paradigm is deeply rooted in an ontological belief that reality is singular, objective, and can be measured and understood through empirical observation and quantifiable methods. Positivism asserts an epistemological stance advocating for a detached, objective researcher whose findings remain unaffected by personal biases (Bryman, 2016). Axiologically, positivism emphasises value neutrality, asserting that objective science requires complete independence from ethical or moral positions to maintain validity and reliability (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Methodologically, positivism employs structured and quantitative methods, such as experiments, surveys, and statistical analysis, to test hypotheses and establish causal relationships. Although it has been historically dominant, the positivist paradigm faces criticism for oversimplifying social complexities and neglecting subjective human experiences, especially in studies involving human interactions and social phenomena (Babbie, 2020).

Conversely, the interpretivist paradigm posits that reality is multiple, subjective, and socially constructed through interactions, interpretations, and experiences. Interpretivist ontology acknowledges diverse perspectives and the individual meanings attributed to social realities (Khosla, 2021). Epistemologically, interpretivism emphasises researcher-participant interactions as co-creators of knowledge, suggesting that knowledge production is inherently relational and context-dependent (Crotty, 1998). From an axiological perspective, interpretivists recognise that values are inseparable from the research process, accepting that the researcher’s beliefs and biases actively influence data interpretation. The methodological preference within interpretivism gravitates towards qualitative approaches, such as interviews, case

studies, and ethnographic research, to explore deeply contextual, subjective realities that quantitative methods may not effectively capture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The transformative paradigm emerges distinctly as a response to power inequalities and social injustices within research contexts. Ontologically, transformative research acknowledges that reality is shaped by historical, social, and political structures, emphasising systemic issues of power, marginalisation, and oppression (Mertens, 2009). Epistemologically, transformative researchers advocate for knowledge generation processes grounded in collaboration and mutual trust between researchers and participants, viewing stakeholders as active partners rather than passive subjects (Chilisa, 2019). Axiologically, transformative researchers explicitly embed values such as social justice, human rights, equity, and inclusivity throughout the research process, deliberately addressing power imbalances and aiming for empowerment and structural change. Methodologically, the transformative paradigm frequently adopts participatory and action-oriented methods, enabling marginalised communities to engage actively in research and fostering sustainable transformation and equity in social structures (Mertens & Wilson, 2019).

The Postcolonial Indigenous paradigm specifically addresses issues of epistemological exclusion and cultural hegemony rooted in colonial histories. Its ontology rejects universalistic claims about knowledge, asserting instead that realities are diverse and culturally situated, significantly shaped by indigenous knowledge systems and historical experiences of colonisation (Smith, 2012). Epistemologically, this paradigm centres on indigenous methods of knowing, advocating respect for cultural contexts, oral traditions, community practices, and ancestral wisdom as valid forms of knowledge production. In terms of axiology, Postcolonial Indigenous research prioritises relational ethics, community participation, cultural preservation, and restoration, emphasising the importance of accountability to indigenous communities and their collective well-being. Methodologically, this paradigm emphasises culturally appropriate, participatory, and collaborative research processes, grounded in indigenous worldviews that uphold indigenous sovereignty and intellectual rights (Kovach, 2021).

Finally, the pragmatic paradigm focuses primarily on problem-solving and the practical application of research outcomes. Pragmatism’s ontological position is flexible,

embracing either singular or multiple realities, contingent upon the practical needs of the research question (Morgan, 2014). Epistemologically, pragmatism emphasizes actionable knowledge, advocating flexibility and pluralism in research approaches based on their effectiveness in addressing real-world issues. From an axiological perspective, pragmatism incorporates values explicitly related to practicality, utility, and applicability, emphasising outcomes that yield meaningful, context-sensitive solutions. Methodologically, pragmatism encourages methodological pluralism or mixed-methods research, enabling researchers to integrate qualitative and quantitative techniques to effectively address complex social problems (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Each paradigm thus contributes uniquely to the broader methodological landscape, allowing researchers to select frameworks that are most appropriate for their research contexts, objectives, and underlying values.

3.1.1 Transformative Paradigm as the Adopted Paradigm

The transformative paradigm was adopted as the lens for this study. It is an approach deeply embedded in the pursuit of social justice, equity, and the empowerment of marginalised groups within society. This paradigm emerged as a robust response to the limitations associated with traditional positivist and interpretivist paradigms, which often overlook or inadequately address systemic inequalities, power disparities, and historical injustices embedded within social structures. According to Mertens (2010), the transformative paradigm is distinctive in its explicit commitment to transformative action, emphasising research as a catalyst for meaningful change rather than a mere descriptive exercise. Its adoption in this study aligns with the overarching goal of critically examining university unrest and facilitating substantial improvements in institutional governance within Nigeria and South Africa, both contexts characterised by historical and contemporary forms of inequality and injustice.

Historically and philosophically, the transformative paradigm evolved from critical theories and participatory research methodologies, significantly shaped by feminist, emancipatory, and liberation discourses that highlight oppression, power imbalances, and socio-historical contexts. Originating from the critical traditions of thinkers such as Paulo Freire, who advocated conscientisation and liberation through dialogical engagement, transformative research situates itself within the broader context of social critique and activism (Freire, 1970). The paradigm's philosophical roots draw heavily from the critical theory of scholars like Habermas, who emphasised critical

reflection as a mechanism for social change (Habermas, 1984; Aaisyah & Fauzi, 2025). Furthermore, transformative approaches resonate with feminist research methodologies, which foreground inclusivity, collaborative knowledge production, and ethical responsibilities in research engagements (Habermas, 1984). Thus, building upon these philosophical traditions, the transformative paradigm provides researchers with both the analytical and ethical lenses necessary to not only understand but actively intervene in social realities characterised by injustice and oppression.

Core principles central to the transformative paradigm include the explicit recognition of power dynamics, the active pursuit of social justice, collaborative relationships between researchers and participants, and ethical accountability aimed at transformative outcomes. Mertens (2009) emphasises that transformative researchers must remain cognisant of the historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts shaping participants' lived experiences. Epistemologically, knowledge is viewed as co-created and context-sensitive, necessitating sustained, authentic interactions founded on trust, collaboration, and reciprocal dialogue between researchers and communities (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Ontologically, the transformative paradigm acknowledges multiple socially constructed realities, profoundly shaped by historical inequalities and systemic discrimination, thus prioritising the perspectives of marginalised populations in understanding social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Axiologically, the paradigm explicitly integrates ethical principles of equity, justice, and respect for human dignity into every stage of research, consistently evaluating the social implications of research outcomes on marginalised stakeholders (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Methodologically, transformative research often adopts participatory, action-oriented approaches designed not only to understand but also to practically address structural injustices and empower communities through meaningful participation (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). Collectively, these principles make the transformative paradigm particularly appropriate for addressing the complex issues of student unrest, institutional governance, and social transformation within the African university contexts of Nigeria and South Africa.

3.1.2 Assumptions of the Transformative Paradigm in Relation to the Study

The transformative paradigm carries distinct ontological assumptions that strongly underpin the reality examined within the context of university unrest in Nigeria and

South Africa. This paradigm explicitly acknowledges that realities are socially, historically, and politically constructed, shaped by layers of historical injustice, systemic inequalities, and entrenched power dynamics (Mertens, 2012). In this study, reality is viewed as the complex interaction of past colonial legacies, political histories, such as apartheid in South Africa and military regimes in Nigeria, and the contemporary sociopolitical landscape of university management. Given this perspective, the understanding of student unrest is inherently connected to ongoing structures of oppression and institutionalised disparities, which have consistently impacted stakeholders' perceptions, behaviours, and interactions within the academic environment (Chilisa, 2019). Hence, this ontological stance enables the researcher to explore deeply the conditions influencing student activism, institutional policies, and governance structures from the standpoint that these realities are neither fixed nor neutral, but constantly evolving within historical and political contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Epistemologically, the transformative paradigm posits that knowledge is collaboratively produced through meaningful engagement between the researcher and participants. Unlike traditional paradigms, where researchers maintain objectivity by minimising interaction, transformative research embraces active collaboration and mutual trust as essential components of knowledge generation (Kovach, 2021). In this study, this epistemological orientation implies that understanding student unrest requires genuine interactions between researchers, students, university staff, and community members. This reciprocal relationship facilitates deeper insights and ensures that the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and aspirations fundamentally shape the research outcomes. According to Minkler and Wallerstein (2011), transformative research relies heavily on co-creation and participatory dialogues to establish shared meanings and ensure the credibility and authenticity of findings. Thus, epistemologically, the research process in this study is enriched through a partnership-based approach, actively recognising participants not as mere data sources but as knowledgeable contributors who significantly influence the interpretation of their realities.

The transformative paradigm includes clear axiological assumptions that highlight the centrality of values in shaping research practices and goals. Values such as social justice, equity, human rights, inclusivity, and empowerment are explicitly prioritised and

continuously embedded in all stages of transformative research (Mertens, 2009). This study, driven by a transformative paradigm, explicitly foregrounds these values in examining student unrest, not merely to describe or analyse it but to actively contribute to equitable institutional transformation. The intentional pursuit of equity and inclusivity ensures that marginalised voices, often excluded or underrepresented within institutional power structures, are amplified. Creswell and Poth (2018) reinforce this axiological stance by noting that transformative research not only recognises power disparities but deliberately challenges these structures, striving toward ethical outcomes that benefit participants directly. Consequently, the axiological assumption in this research explicitly positions the researcher to actively address inequalities within university environments, promoting systemic changes and inclusive solutions in university governance practices.

Methodologically, transformative paradigm assumptions significantly influence the choice of research approaches, advocating methods that foster active participation, empowerment, and social change. Under this paradigm, participatory and qualitative methods are highly recommended as they encourage deep engagement, open dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving processes among stakeholders (Freire, 1978). Consequently, this study employs participatory research (PR) and qualitative techniques such as focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews to capture the nuanced experiences of participants and foster collaborative problem-solving dialogues. Wurm and Napier (2017) note that participatory methods are ideal in contexts characterised by significant power imbalances because they offer marginalised communities genuine opportunities to engage meaningfully in research processes. Additionally, qualitative approaches aligned with transformative methodologies allow the researcher to explore subjective experiences, contextual interpretations, and collective actions related to institutional crises in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Hence, the methodological assumptions guiding this research promote the active involvement of stakeholders, ensuring that recommendations for addressing university unrest are contextually relevant, inclusive, and genuinely transformative.

3.1.3 Relevance of the Transformative Paradigm to the Study

The transformative paradigm is highly relevant to this study because it explicitly aligns with the core objectives aimed at understanding and addressing the structural causes of student unrest within universities, particularly in historically unequal and

marginalised contexts such as Nigeria and South Africa. Central to this research is the goal of critically examining and transforming institutional power structures and governance approaches that perpetuate social injustices, marginalisation, and persistent conflict. Mertens (2009) underscores the appropriateness of the transformative paradigm for research objectives that emphasise structural transformation and social equity. Therefore, by aligning itself with objectives that explicitly address the dynamics of power relations, institutional hierarchies, and historical inequalities, this paradigm ensures that the research remains action-oriented, directly confronting the underlying conditions fuelling ongoing unrest and crises in universities.

Furthermore, adopting the transformative paradigm is instrumental in unravelling the complex issues of power imbalances and historical inequalities deeply embedded within university governance systems. Historical events such as apartheid in South Africa and prolonged military rule in Nigeria have profoundly shaped educational institutions, leading to hierarchical management styles characterised by authoritative practices and limited participatory governance (Badat, 2009; Aina, 2010). The transformative paradigm explicitly prioritises the investigation of these underlying power dynamics, foregrounding historical context and systemic inequalities as primary factors influencing current institutional relations and student activism. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasise the paradigm's suitability for exposing and addressing such historical inequalities, as it directs researchers to engage deeply with marginalised voices typically excluded from decision-making processes. Consequently, the transformative framework provides researchers with the necessary conceptual tools to critically dissect entrenched inequalities and oppressive power structures, positioning the research as a crucial vehicle for fostering genuine institutional change.

Methodologically, the transformative paradigm provides comprehensive guidance on employing participatory and collaborative research processes uniquely suited to addressing the study's concerns about student unrest and university governance. According to Minkler and Wallerstein (2011), participatory research methodologies foster meaningful engagement and collaboration, particularly within contexts characterised by significant power disparities. Under transformative research, participants are regarded not merely as sources of data but as active partners whose perspectives and lived experiences guide every stage of the inquiry. This

methodological approach enables a deeper understanding of participants' realities, ensuring that the research processes and outcomes are authentic, context-sensitive, and practically actionable (Chilisa, 2019). Furthermore, participatory methods such as focus group discussions and collaborative dialogues empower stakeholders, students, university staff, and community representatives, to actively contribute to the identification of issues, generation of insights, and formulation of sustainable solutions. Thus, the transformative paradigm ensures methodological consistency by embedding participatory and emancipatory approaches throughout the research process, fundamentally reinforcing the study's commitment to achieving genuine social transformation within university environments.

3.1.3.1 The Research Paradigm and Methodological Implementation

The correlation between the Transformative Paradigm and the methodological implementation of this study is evident in the consistency between its philosophical assumptions and practical research processes. The Transformative Paradigm underscores social justice, inclusion, and the amplification of marginalised voices (Mertens, 2010; Chilisa, 2012), which is put into operation in this study through the application of Participatory Research (PR) and dialogic data collection methods such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews. These methodologies facilitated the active engagement of various stakeholders, including students, university officials, and community representatives, ensuring that knowledge was collaboratively constructed rather than imposed by the researcher. Additionally, the utilisation of socio-thematic analysis (Omodan, 2019; 2020a) corresponds with the paradigm by aiding in the interpretation of power dynamics, social exchanges, and lived experiences within the data. Hence, the study illustrates methodological coherence, where the selection of research design, data collection, and analytical procedures collectively embodies the transformative objective of addressing inequalities and promoting locally grounded solutions to student unrest.

3.2 Research Approach

The term "research approach" encapsulates the broad methodological direction through which researchers systematically conduct inquiries to address their research objectives. It signifies the theoretical assumptions and practical procedures that guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Fundamentally, a research approach

serves as a structured pathway connecting philosophical underpinnings to practical methods, thereby influencing the rigor, coherence, and overall credibility of the research outcomes (Creswell, 2014). Notably, there are three primary research approaches commonly acknowledged by researchers: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research primarily deals with descriptive and interpretive analyses of human behaviours, attitudes, and experiences, emphasising context-bound meaning and depth rather than breadth. Conversely, the quantitative approach involves statistical measurement and numerical analysis, adopting structured methodologies aimed at verifying hypotheses and establishing generalisability. Mixed methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative components to leverage the strengths of both, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of research problems through numerical insights coupled with rich, contextual interpretations (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

In alignment with the transformative paradigm underpinning this research, the qualitative research approach has been specifically chosen. Qualitative research, as argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), enables the exploration of social phenomena within their natural contexts, capturing participants' authentic voices, experiences, and perceptions through flexible, participant-oriented methods. This approach aligns seamlessly with the objectives of this study, which seeks to comprehensively understand student unrest within Nigerian and South African universities. Given the complex social, historical, geographical, and psychological factors influencing such unrest, qualitative inquiry becomes indispensable. It provides the means to explore deeply rooted issues, unravelling the nuanced realities experienced by students, university administrators, lecturers, and community stakeholders. Hence, qualitative research facilitates thorough engagement with participants, ensuring their lived experiences are meaningfully represented and their voices remain integral to the process of knowledge construction.

Moreover, the rationale behind selecting qualitative research for this study extends to its suitability in addressing the study’s transformative intentions. According to Mertens (2009), qualitative approaches are particularly effective in transformative research because they allow marginalised and historically silenced stakeholders to actively participate in knowledge generation processes. Qualitative methods such as focus groups, interviews, and open dialogues create environments where participants can

freely articulate their grievances, insights, and aspirations. This methodological approach is essential in exploring complex relationships, power dynamics, and stakeholder interactions central to understanding institutional conflicts and student activism within universities. Additionally, qualitative research emphasises contextual depth and interpretive richness, attributes necessary for critically examining how colonial legacies, geographical differences, and psychosocial factors distinctly shape institutional governance and stakeholder behaviour within diverse university environments. Ultimately, the choice of qualitative research supports the study's overarching goal of providing comprehensive, context-sensitive insights that contribute meaningfully to transformative policy-making and sustainable governance reforms in universities.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research represents a robust methodological framework aimed at exploring, interpreting, and providing an in-depth understanding of human behaviours, experiences, and perceptions within their natural and contextual settings. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasises numerical data and statistical analyses, qualitative approaches prioritise narrative descriptions, experiential interpretations, and rich textual representations of participants' lived realities (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) further characterise qualitative research as inherently interpretive and emergent, involving researchers and participants as active co-constructors of meaning. This methodology positions human experience at the centre of inquiry, asserting that meaningful knowledge about social phenomena can best be acquired through direct engagement with the subjective realities of individuals and groups. Thus, qualitative research is fundamentally appropriate for examining complex and nuanced phenomena such as student unrest in university settings, where subjective experiences, cultural contexts, historical legacies, and social interactions are critical to a comprehensive understanding.

Several key characteristics and principles distinguish qualitative research from other methodological frameworks, making it particularly suitable for transformative research projects. Firstly, qualitative research is deeply context-sensitive, recognising that social realities are significantly influenced by cultural, historical, geographical, and political contexts (Patton, 2015). This contextual emphasis ensures that research findings are not only detailed but also authentically representative of participants'

experiences. Secondly, qualitative research embraces methodological flexibility, allowing the researcher to adapt approaches and methods according to emerging insights throughout the research process. This flexibility fosters openness to participant-driven insights and the iterative refinement of research directions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2025). Thirdly, the qualitative research approach highlights the significance of researcher reflexivity, where the researcher remains critically aware of their positionality, biases, and interactions with participants, acknowledging how these factors shape research outcomes (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Additionally, qualitative inquiry values rich description, narrative depth, and interpretive richness, facilitating the capture of complex human interactions and multilayered meanings inherent within social phenomena.

Despite its significant strengths, qualitative research also carries inherent limitations, particularly within the context of this study. One notable strength is its profound capacity to capture the depth, complexity, and subjective interpretations of stakeholders, which are essential for understanding and addressing the multifaceted dimensions of student unrest and institutional conflicts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and interviews allow participants to express themselves openly and authentically, producing comprehensive data that quantitative methods might overlook.

However, a recognised limitation of qualitative research is its generalisability. Findings generated through qualitative methodologies are context-specific, limiting their applicability beyond the immediate research setting (Silverman, 2021). Moreover, qualitative research is time-consuming, requiring extensive data collection, transcription, and in-depth interpretative analyses, which can impose practical constraints on researchers. Furthermore, qualitative researchers face challenges related to subjectivity and researcher bias, necessitating continuous reflexivity to maintain the credibility and authenticity of research findings. Despite these limitations, within the transformative context of examining student unrest, the strengths of qualitative research significantly outweigh the drawbacks, providing essential insights to inform meaningful, contextually relevant, and transformative interventions in university governance practices.

3.2.2 Justification for Choosing the Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research approach was explicitly selected for this study due to its inherent alignment with the transformative paradigm and participatory research design. Central to the transformative paradigm is the active involvement of participants and the deliberate intention to understand and challenge prevailing power structures, inequalities, and injustices (Mertens, 2010). Qualitative research inherently facilitates meaningful engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, enabling them to actively voice their experiences, perspectives, and solutions to issues affecting their contexts. Furthermore, this alignment complements the participatory research design, which emphasises collaborative inquiry, mutual respect, and co-creation of knowledge among researchers and participants (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). Therefore, qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions inherently foster trust-based relationships, inclusive dialogues, and collective empowerment, crucial elements underpinning transformative and participatory research paradigms. Through these qualitative methods, participants become genuine co-researchers rather than passive subjects, making the research process genuinely transformative and ethically sound.

In addition to paradigm alignment, qualitative research is particularly suited to this study's objectives because of its distinct ability to explore complex and multidimensional social, geographical, and psychological issues. The intricate nature of student unrest within Nigerian and South African universities involves multiple interacting factors, including historical legacies, institutional governance practices, spatial differences, and psychological impacts. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), excels at capturing these complexities by focusing on contextually rich data and nuanced stakeholder experiences that quantitative methods typically overlook. Moreover, qualitative approaches allow researchers to delve deeply into participants' lived realities, exploring how students, academic staff, administrators, and community members individually and collectively perceive and respond to university conflicts. Consequently, qualitative inquiry enables comprehensive and context-sensitive understandings of unrest, thereby producing detailed insights essential for formulating informed, sustainable, and contextually relevant solutions.

3.2.3 Application of Qualitative Research in the Study

The qualitative research approach adopted in this study primarily involves the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews as the principal methods of data collection. FGDs were selected because they facilitate dynamic interaction among participants, encouraging open dialogue and collective reflection on shared experiences. FGDs provide participants with a safe and collaborative environment where they can freely articulate their perceptions, challenges, and potential solutions regarding student unrest within their universities. Complementing FGDs, individual interviews were conducted to capture more in-depth personal narratives, particularly from participants who might have felt less comfortable sharing sensitive perspectives within a group context. Interviews, therefore, provided an important layer of personalised insight, allowing the researcher to probe deeper into individual experiences, uncover underlying motivations, and clarify intricate aspects of stakeholders' perceptions.

Participants involved in this qualitative study included university management personnel, lecturers, student leaders, security officials, heads of counselling units, and community representatives, each group bringing unique and valuable perspectives to the inquiry. The selection of these stakeholders ensured comprehensive coverage of viewpoints across different institutional roles and responsibilities, allowing the study to identify convergent and divergent perceptions about the causes and effects of unrest. The collaboration among these diverse groups of stakeholders was crucial, as it fostered mutual understanding and recognition of shared interests, thereby promoting a collective approach to addressing institutional conflicts. Participants actively contributed not only by expressing their own experiences but also by collaboratively engaging with others' viewpoints, thus producing a holistic and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced within university communities.

The application of qualitative research methods was particularly relevant and indispensable to achieving the study’s objectives, given their inherent capacity to capture complex human experiences, relationships, and social phenomena. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to uncover not just superficial symptoms of unrest but also deeper-rooted structural, historical, and psychological dimensions influencing stakeholder behaviours and institutional practices. By aligning qualitative methodologies with the transformative paradigm, the study ensured that stakeholders'

lived experiences, subjective interpretations, and transformative aspirations remained central to the inquiry process. This alignment fostered active participation, enabling participants to see themselves as genuine collaborators and agents of potential institutional change. Ultimately, the qualitative approach significantly enhanced the study's capacity to answer critical research questions, ensuring a detailed exploration of institutional dynamics, promoting inclusivity, and laying the foundation for transformative solutions designed to create sustainable harmony within Nigerian and South African universities.

3.3. Research Design

Research design represents the structured framework or blueprint guiding the methodological execution of research, providing systematic directions to address research questions, achieve study objectives, and ensure coherence between theory and practice. A well-articulated research design is crucial as it determines how effectively the research objectives can be fulfilled by aligning research paradigms, theoretical underpinnings, and methodological choices (Creswell, 2014). Essentially, it outlines how data collection, participant selection, data analysis, and interpretation will be executed, ensuring methodological rigour and scholarly validity. Hence, offering a clear procedural path, the research design enables researchers to address potential ethical and practical challenges, manage resources effectively, and maintain consistency throughout the research process (Babbie, 2010). Without a sound research design, studies risk incoherence, methodological ambiguity, and diminished credibility, significantly affecting the validity and applicability of research outcomes.

Moreover, research design serves as an essential conceptual bridge connecting the chosen research paradigm to specific research methods, creating a seamless transition from abstract philosophical assumptions to concrete methodological actions. A research paradigm sets out the philosophical and theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of reality (ontology), the process of knowledge creation (epistemology), the role of values (axiology), and methodological considerations. Research design operationalises these philosophical positions by specifying methods for gathering, analysing, and interpreting data within a coherent, paradigm-aligned framework (Khosla, 2021). In this study, the transformative paradigm emphasises active stakeholder engagement, social justice, and empowerment. Consequently, the participatory research (PR) design adopted operationalises these transformative

principles by employing methods such as focus group discussions and interviews, which actively involve stakeholders in collaborative knowledge generation processes. Thus, the research design strategically translates the transformative paradigm's philosophical assumptions into practical, actionable, and contextually sensitive methods, ensuring methodological coherence and enhancing the study's potential to produce meaningful and transformative insights (Mertens, 2009).

3.3.1 Participatory Research (PR) as the Chosen Research Design

Participatory Research (PR) is a collaborative and action-oriented research design that emphasises equal partnership between researchers and participants throughout the research process. It originated in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of traditional, top-down research approaches that often excluded the voices of marginalised communities. Influenced by the works of Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals-Borda, PR challenged the conventional divide between the "researcher" and the "researched" by positioning community members as co-producers of knowledge (Freire, 1970; Fals-Borda, 1987). The emergence of PR was particularly shaped by grassroots movements and liberation struggles in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia, where the demand for more democratic and inclusive research methods was most urgent. As such, PR became closely associated with social transformation, local empowerment, and the decolonisation of knowledge production (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In academic discourse, PR gained further traction as an alternative to more extractive research paradigms, emphasising relevance, responsiveness, and social accountability.

The defining characteristics of Participatory Research are inclusivity, reflexivity, co-learning, mutual respect, and an orientation towards action and change. PR rests on the principle that those affected by a problem are best positioned to investigate it, analyse its implications, and participate in devising relevant solutions (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Unlike traditional research methods, PR prioritises dialogic engagement over hierarchical knowledge transfer, allowing all participants to contribute meaningfully at each stage of the research, from problem identification to data collection, interpretation, and dissemination. Reflexivity is a key feature of PR, where researchers remain constantly aware of their positionality, power dynamics, and the need for humility in facilitating knowledge processes (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). Moreover, PR is highly context-sensitive, acknowledging that knowledge is situated

and shaped by socio-cultural, historical, and political factors. This context-bound approach makes PR particularly suitable for addressing complex, real-world problems such as student unrest, where multiple stakeholders are involved and lived experiences play a critical role in shaping the dynamics of conflict and resolution.

While PR shares similarities with other qualitative research designs, such as case studies, ethnography, and grounded theory, it also diverges in significant ways. Unlike case studies and ethnographies that often emphasise observation and interpretation by an external researcher, PR requires active involvement and agency from participants, emphasising shared ownership of the research process (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Grounded theory, while systematic and inductive, generally focuses on generating theory rather than addressing immediate practical concerns. PR, on the other hand, is inherently action-oriented and seeks to generate knowledge that directly contributes to solving problems and improving conditions for the participants involved (Chevalier, 2019). Furthermore, PR departs from the notion of neutrality often associated with traditional qualitative designs, instead embracing a value-laden stance that explicitly seeks to address social injustices and promote equity. This distinction is vital in the context of this study, which explores the power dynamics and psychosocial implications of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities, an issue that demands not only understanding but also a participatory pathway toward institutional transformation and healing.

3.3.2 Rationale for Adopting Participatory Research Design

The adoption of Participatory Research (PR) as the research design in this study is strongly rooted in its philosophical and methodological alignment with the transformative paradigm and qualitative research approach. At its core, PR embodies the transformative paradigm's ontological and epistemological commitment to confronting systemic injustices and empowering marginalised voices. This design provides a platform for participants not only to share their lived experiences but also to influence the direction and outcomes of the research itself. Through the qualitative lens, PR allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex social, historical, and psychological dimensions of student unrest, making it a powerful tool for engaging with participants' narratives and generating contextually grounded insights. The synergy between PR, the transformative worldview, and qualitative inquiry ensures that the research remains participatory, inclusive, and action-driven throughout.

PR is particularly well-suited for addressing social inequalities, power asymmetries, and institutional conflicts, which are central concerns in the current investigation of university unrest in Nigeria and South Africa. Traditional research designs often risk reproducing the very hierarchies they seek to study by reinforcing the distance between researchers and participants. In contrast, PR actively challenges such hierarchies by valuing participants as co-creators of knowledge. This is crucial in higher education contexts, where historical legacies of authoritarian governance and colonial systems continue to shape institutional cultures and stakeholder relationships. Thus, by embracing PR, the study creates space for university stakeholders, including students, academic staff, administrators, and community members, to interrogate the conditions of unrest collaboratively, thereby ensuring that the findings and subsequent recommendations reflect collective insights and shared ownership (Wagle, 2022).

Moreover, PR emphasises the principles of collaboration, mutual learning, and empowerment, elements that are indispensable for fostering lasting change in university governance. By engaging participants at every stage of the research, from identifying the problem to interpreting findings, PR not only democratises the process of inquiry but also builds the capacity of participants to engage critically with institutional challenges. This empowerment fosters a deeper commitment to proposed interventions and enhances the sustainability of solutions derived from the research process. The design's collaborative orientation strengthens the legitimacy of the research findings and ensures that recommendations are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable within the lived realities of university communities (Banks et al., 2013). In this way, PR not only facilitates rigorous academic inquiry but also contributes meaningfully to institutional transformation and social justice within higher education.

3.3.3 Application of Participatory Research in the Study

Participatory Research (PR) in this study was operationalised through the deliberate and inclusive engagement of key stakeholders from the university communities of Nigeria and South Africa. The process began with the identification of participants whose roles, experiences, and insights were directly connected to the issue of student unrest. These included student leaders, university management staff, lecturers, security personnel, counselling heads, and community representatives. Their involvement was not limited to data provision but extended throughout the research

process, reinforcing a commitment to collaborative knowledge production. From the early stages, participants were engaged in refining the research focus and objectives, ensuring the study responded directly to lived concerns and institutional realities. Through this approach, the research moved beyond observation and analysis to a joint construction of meaning, grounded in shared experiences and collective engagement.

The data generation process was structured around Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews, providing platforms for participants to articulate challenges, reflect on experiences, and propose potential solutions. FGDs encouraged dynamic group interaction, fostering a sense of collective inquiry where participants could build on one another's contributions, identify shared concerns, and offer contextually grounded insights. The presence of diverse stakeholders within each group, such as students, academic staff, and security personnel, created opportunities for multi-perspective dialogue. Individual interviews were employed to capture more sensitive or personal experiences, particularly where participants felt restricted in group settings. These sessions were instrumental in exploring deeper layers of institutional conflict and psychosocial implications. This approach ensured that participants not only shared information but actively shaped the research direction, contributing meaningfully to both problem identification and the formulation of viable interventions.

Collaboration and mutual learning were central to the implementation of PR in this study. The research process was structured to promote dialogue, reflection, and joint decision-making, where participants were encouraged to challenge assumptions, interrogate institutional norms, and explore alternative strategies for managing unrest. Feedback loops were integrated throughout the process, allowing participants to review preliminary findings and validate interpretations. This ensured accuracy, relevance, and collective ownership of the research outcomes. Importantly, the methodology nurtured a sense of empowerment among participants, as their insights were acknowledged as critical to both understanding and transforming university governance practices. The process fostered trust, strengthened institutional relationships, and demonstrated the value of inclusive inquiry in addressing complex institutional challenges. Through PR, the study not only investigated the phenomenon of student unrest but also modelled a participatory and transformative approach to knowledge production and institutional engagement.

3.3.4 Strengths and Potential Challenges of PR Design in this Study

The application of Participatory Research (PR) in this study provided several strengths that significantly contributed to the achievement of the research objectives. Chief among these strengths was PR's ability to foster authentic stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, by involving participants from various sectors of the university system, students, staff, administrators, security personnel, and community members, the study ensured that diverse perspectives were represented, enriching the quality and depth of the data collected. This inclusivity allowed for a nuanced exploration of the causes and consequences of student unrest, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the institutional dynamics at play. Additionally, the collaborative nature of PR promoted a sense of shared ownership over the research outcomes, increasing the likelihood that the insights generated would inform meaningful and sustainable change within the participating institutions.

Despite its strengths, the application of PR in this study was not without challenges. One of the primary difficulties encountered was managing the power dynamics between different categories of participants. Bringing together student leaders and senior university administrators in the same space for focus group discussions occasionally created tensions, as historical grievances and existing hierarchies influenced communication patterns. To mitigate this, the research process was carefully facilitated to create an environment of mutual respect and open dialogue, with ground rules established to ensure that all voices could be heard without fear of reprisal. Another challenge was logistical, as coordinating the schedules of participants from different sectors proved difficult, especially across two countries. This was addressed by employing a flexible data collection strategy, which included the use of virtual platforms to reach participants who could not attend in person.

The use of PR in this context also yielded important lessons regarding the practice of collaborative research in complex institutional settings. One key lesson was the importance of sustained engagement and follow-up, as building trust with participants required more than a single encounter. Establishing and maintaining open communication channels before, during, and after the data collection process was crucial in fostering credibility and deepening stakeholder commitment. Another lesson was the value of reflexivity, acknowledging and adapting to the positionality of the researcher and the influence it could have on the process. The researcher learned to

be adaptive, sensitive to group dynamics, and responsive to the needs and concerns of participants. Ultimately, PR proved to be an effective and contextually appropriate design for this study, offering both a robust framework for inquiry and a participatory model for institutional reflection and transformation.

3.3.5 Relevance of the Research Design

Participatory Research (PR) was adopted in this study as the most suitable research design for engaging with the complexity and contextual depth of student unrest within Nigerian and South African universities. Its emphasis on collaboration, inclusion, and empowerment made it particularly appropriate for addressing the research objectives, which required both critical analysis and practical engagement with institutional stakeholders. PR enabled the study to move beyond mere observation, fostering genuine dialogue between participants and ensuring that the research outcomes were grounded in lived realities. The design allowed the researcher to engage directly with those most affected by institutional conflict, facilitating a process that was not only investigatory but also transformative in its purpose and structure.

The adoption of PR aligned seamlessly with the transformative paradigm and the qualitative research approach, both of which emphasise the value of context, the centrality of human experience, and the imperative to challenge systemic inequalities. By grounding the study in the principles of mutual trust, reflexivity, and action, PR served as a methodological vehicle that translated the abstract commitments of the transformative paradigm into concrete, participatory practices. Its compatibility with qualitative inquiry was evident in the depth and richness of the data it generated, as well as the openness it allowed for interpretive and iterative engagement with the subject matter. The method's responsiveness to social, geographical, and psychological dimensions further reinforced its relevance, ensuring that each objective of the study was addressed with sensitivity and nuance.

Ultimately, the use of PR significantly enhanced the potential of the study to produce meaningful and actionable outcomes. Rather than imposing externally constructed solutions, the process facilitated the co-development of insights and strategies that were rooted in the everyday experiences and institutional understandings of participants. This not only strengthened the validity of the findings but also increased the likelihood of their acceptance and application within university communities. By

creating a space where dialogue, mutual learning, and shared problem-solving could occur, PR contributed not only to the generation of knowledge but also to the advancement of democratic practices within the academic environment. The research design thus served as both a methodological and ethical commitment to transformation, supporting the study's ultimate goal of promoting equity, inclusion, and sustainable institutional change.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) served as the primary method for generating in-depth, collective insights into the phenomenon of student unrest within selected Nigerian and South African universities. FGDs facilitated dynamic interactions among participants, allowing diverse institutional voices, including student leaders, university management, lecturers, security personnel, and community representatives, to converge and collaboratively reflect on the causes, nature, and responses to unrest. This method capitalised on the power of group dynamics to elicit rich, multilayered data, enabling participants to express, debate, and build upon each other's perspectives. The conversational format of FGDs encouraged open dialogue and collective meaning-making, making it particularly suitable for participatory research focused on institutional transformation and stakeholder engagement. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), FGDs offer a structured yet flexible platform to explore shared understandings and divergences, especially when multiple stakeholder groups are involved in complex social issues.

However, managing FGDs within the university setting posed certain challenges, particularly due to existing power hierarchies among participants. The potential presence of high-ranking university officials in the same group as student leaders or security personnel required careful facilitation to ensure equitable participation and prevent dominance by more authoritative voices. To mitigate this, groups were thoughtfully composed to allow for balanced representation, and ground rules were established at the outset to encourage mutual respect and inclusivity. The moderator's role was crucial in fostering a non-threatening environment, guiding discussions, and ensuring that all voices were acknowledged. FGDs were audio-recorded, with consent, and later transcribed for thematic analysis. The group setting not only revealed consensus and contestation around institutional governance practices but also provided opportunities for participants to collectively propose reforms, making the

method an effective tool for both diagnosis and solution-building in line with the study's transformative objectives.

As an alternative to those who cannot attend the FGDs, one-on-one interviews were conducted to provide an opportunity for their participation. This also ensured confidentiality for participants who were unable or unwilling to share openly in a group setting. These interviews allowed for the exploration of sensitive or personal experiences related to student unrest, particularly where individuals felt constrained by institutional affiliations or power dynamics. The one-on-one format created a more intimate and secure space, facilitating candid disclosures and critical reflections that might have remained unexpressed in the group context. Semi-structured interview guides were used to maintain consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on areas most relevant to their lived realities. As Patton (2015) affirms, in-depth interviews are particularly valuable when researching politically or emotionally charged issues, as they enable participants to speak freely and in detail.

These interviews also served as an important corrective mechanism to complement the data collected through FGDs, offering insights into how institutional roles shaped individuals' experiences and perceptions of unrest. For example, student leaders and academic staff often provided contrasting perspectives on the same events, which enriched the dataset and deepened the analytical rigour of the study. Furthermore, individual interviews were especially valuable in accommodating participants who were constrained by time or organisational obligations. Interviews were transcribed with the same rigour as FGDs and subjected to socio-thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, contradictions, and unique insights. As Rubin and Rubin (2012) note, qualitative interviews are not merely about collecting facts but about constructing meaning through dialogue, a principle that strongly aligns with the participatory and transformative orientation of this research.

Given the transnational nature of the study and the logistical constraints of in-person engagements, digital and remote data collection methods were integrated to ensure broader accessibility and inclusion. Platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and telephone calls were utilised to accommodate participants who were unable to attend face-to-face sessions due to distance, safety concerns, or scheduling

conflicts. This flexibility was vital to ensuring that the research process remained inclusive and adaptive to participants' needs and contexts. Digital tools also facilitated continuity in data collection amid disruptions while maintaining high ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data security. As Deakin and Wakefield (2014) observe, online interviews and discussions can be equally rich in content and offer additional advantages in reaching geographically dispersed or otherwise hard-to-reach participants.

3.5 Selection of Research Site and Participants

The decision to select Nigeria and South Africa as the research sites was informed by their unique yet intersecting trajectories in higher education governance, political history, and student activism. Both countries represent significant cases within the African continent where student unrest has been a recurring feature in university spaces, often reflecting deeper systemic and governance-related tensions. The study aimed to examine the underlying causes, patterns, and responses to student unrest; these two contexts provided a wealth of experiential and structural diversity to inform such an inquiry.

The two selected universities exhibit characteristics common to public higher education institutions in Africa, yet each reflects the socio-political realities of its immediate environment. The names of the participating institutions are withheld for the purpose of anonymity. However, the Nigerian institution is located in Ekiti State, a semi-urban region where governance structures are highly centralised, and student activism is frequently influenced by national and state political dynamics and economic pressures. Conversely, the South African institution is situated in the Eastern Cape Province, a historically under-resourced yet politically vibrant region renowned for its strong traditions of civic participation and youth mobilisation. Despite these differing contexts, both universities face persistent challenges, including limited infrastructure, strained governance processes, and entrenched cultures of student protest, making them particularly suitable for examining the complexities of unrest and conflict management in African public universities.

From an institutional perspective, the choice of universities in Nigeria and South Africa was also aligned with the core objectives of the study, which sought to understand the social, psychological, and geographical dimensions of student unrest. Institutions in

both countries operate within bureaucratic and often hierarchical governance systems where student grievances tend to be met with delayed or inadequate institutional responses. This has led to entrenched mistrust between students and university authorities, creating fertile ground for confrontation and prolonged crises. The selected institutions demonstrated characteristics that mirrored the broader governance and political structures of their respective countries. They also reflected challenges common to public universities across the continent, including limited infrastructure, overstretched resources, and contested decision-making processes. These factors made them appropriate settings for a study examining the politics of institutional processes and the extent to which they contribute to or mitigate student unrest.

Historically, both Nigeria and South Africa bear the legacies of authoritarian rule, military regimes in Nigeria and apartheid in South Africa, which continue to influence university culture and administration. These histories have shaped not only the structures of institutional governance but also the collective consciousness of students, many of whom inherit ideologies and methods of resistance from earlier political struggles. In Nigeria, students often operate within a political culture that normalises confrontation and views protest as a necessary tool for achieving change. Similarly, in South Africa, the history of youth involvement in anti-apartheid movements has cemented protest as a powerful and legitimised form of political expression within the academic environment. The historical baggage in both countries informs not only how university unrest unfolds but also how institutional actors interpret and respond to such unrest. As a result, these sites provide critical insight into the enduring impact of political history on contemporary university management practices.

Geographically, the two countries offer contrasting yet complementary environments that allow for the exploration of spatial dynamics in the management of university conflict. South African universities are generally more integrated within urban landscapes, often reflecting a more cosmopolitan and politically engaged student body. In contrast, many Nigerian institutions are located in semi-urban or rural areas, where student activism may be shaped by different socio-economic pressures and levels of access to external support structures. These geographical differences have implications for institutional responsiveness, the mobilisation of protest, and the psychological impact of unrest on university communities. Furthermore, by selecting sites from two geographically and administratively diverse nations, the study benefits

from a broader understanding of how place, history, and institutional culture intersect to produce unique yet comparable patterns of unrest and resistance within higher education.

3.5.1 Participant Composition and Sampling Strategy

This study engaged a diverse group of participants selected to reflect the complexity and multiplicity of voices within the university community. The categories of participants included 2 student leaders, 2 university management representatives, 2 academic staff, 2 security personnel, 2 members of the counselling unit, and 2 local community members, totalling 28 participants. Each of these groups holds a distinctive yet interconnected role in the dynamics of student unrest. Student leaders were chosen based on their involvement in student governance structures and protest organisations, making them crucial informants on the motivations, grievances, and strategies of student activism. Academic staff and management were included to provide institutional perspectives, shedding light on governance practices, communication gaps, and administrative responses to unrest. Security personnel and counsellors offered insights into crisis response, student welfare, and institutional mechanisms for mitigating conflict. Community members, particularly those residing near the universities, contributed an additional layer by providing external viewpoints on the ripple effects of unrest and the nature of university-community relations.

To access these groups effectively, the study employed both convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to select participants based on their availability and willingness to participate, particularly within the constraints of time, location, and institutional access. This method is particularly useful in qualitative inquiry, where the aim is to gather in-depth and context-specific insights rather than to generalise findings to a larger population. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), convenience sampling offers a practical route for accessing information-rich participants when probability sampling is either unnecessary or infeasible. In parallel, snowball sampling was applied to identify participants not easily reached through formal administrative structures. This approach involved initial respondents recommending others with relevant experience or expertise, thereby creating a chain of participant recruitment that was both organic and targeted. Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie (2017) affirm that snowball sampling is especially effective in reaching hidden or hard-to-access populations, particularly

when dealing with politically sensitive topics such as protest dynamics and institutional critique.

The combination of these sampling strategies ensured a balanced and contextually grounded participant pool. By incorporating both formal institutional actors and informal stakeholders, the study captured a wide spectrum of experiences and narratives, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of student unrest. The use of multiple techniques also allowed the researcher to navigate logistical and ethical considerations more effectively. Alvi (2016) notes that the flexibility of non-probability sampling methods, particularly in qualitative research, makes them well-suited for studies involving complex social phenomena and multiple stakeholder categories. Furthermore, Battaglia (2008) emphasises that these methods are particularly beneficial when the aim is to illuminate variation across perspectives rather than to seek statistical representativeness. In this study, the priority was to ensure the depth, diversity, and contextual relevance of data, which was achieved through careful and purposeful engagement with participants across all relevant categories.

The inclusion of diverse participants was both methodologically strategic and ethically imperative. It recognised that student unrest is not a phenomenon experienced or understood uniformly across the university system. Different stakeholders are situated differently in relation to the unrest, and their perceptions are shaped by their institutional roles, historical experiences, and social identities. Ensuring that a variety of voices were represented in the research enabled a more equitable and holistic analysis. It also aligned with the participatory and transformative goals of the study, which sought not only to examine institutional conflict but also to promote inclusive dialogue and shared ownership of possible solutions. Diversity in participation enhanced the interpretive depth of the findings and positioned the study to offer recommendations that are both context-sensitive and institutionally informed.

3.5.2 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

The inclusion of participants in this study was guided by clearly defined criteria that ensured the relevance, credibility, and richness of the data generated. The primary criterion was direct involvement or proximity to the governance and management of student affairs within the selected universities. This included individuals with firsthand experience in the planning, mediation, or response to student unrest, comprising those

whose professional responsibilities or student leadership roles placed them at the heart of institutional conflict or its resolution. Academic staff were selected based on their engagement in administrative committees or student mentorship, while university management personnel were chosen from offices responsible for policy implementation, student services, or disciplinary oversight. Student leaders were required to hold or have recently held official positions within recognised student representative councils, ensuring that their insights were grounded in institutional engagement rather than peripheral observation.

Additionally, the inclusion criteria extended to individuals within the university's security apparatus and psychological support systems, such as campus security officials and heads of counselling centres. Their participation provided a critical layer of insight into crisis response mechanisms and the psychosocial impact of unrest on campus life. Community members were selected based on their established relationship with the university, particularly those who had observed or participated in conflict mediation between students and authorities or who had been affected by disruptions arising from student protests. All participants were required to demonstrate familiarity with the specific events or institutional conditions under investigation, as this was essential for generating reflective, informed, and contextually grounded contributions. Age, gender, and years of experience were also considered to ensure diverse representation and a range of perspectives. This multi-dimensional approach to inclusion ensured that the study captured the full spectrum of stakeholder experiences within the dynamics of university unrest.

Participants were excluded from this study based on specific criteria designed to maintain the integrity, relevance, and focus of the research. Individuals who lacked direct or recent experience with the governance structures or unrest-related incidents within the selected universities were not considered for participation. This included members of the university community who had no active role in student affairs, institutional management, or conflict resolution processes. Additionally, students who had not held leadership roles or who had not been involved in any form of organised advocacy or protest activity were excluded, as their perspectives, while potentially valuable in other contexts, fell outside the scope of this inquiry. Likewise, staff members whose responsibilities were administrative but unrelated to student engagement, crisis response, or institutional policymaking were not included, as their

contributions would not align with the core objectives of the study. Community members with no formal or informal linkages to the universities, or those unfamiliar with the institutional environments under investigation, were also excluded to avoid speculative or second-hand data. The exclusion criteria thus ensured that all participants could offer informed, experience-based insights into the phenomenon of student unrest and institutional governance.

3.6 Positionality

The positionality of the researcher plays a central role in shaping the orientation, interaction, and interpretive stance throughout the research process. This study was conducted within the philosophical commitment of the transformative paradigm, which necessitates that the researcher acknowledges their embeddedness in the social realities they seek to examine. As a scholar rooted in the African academic landscape and engaged in discourses of institutional reform, equity, and student engagement, the researcher brings to the study a perspective informed by both academic training and lived experiences within the higher education systems of Nigeria and South Africa. This dual grounding in scholarly inquiry and contextual familiarity fosters an understanding of the historical, social, and political forces that continue to shape university governance and student activism in these regions.

The researcher's identity, which intersects with various academic and socio-political networks within the participating countries, positioned them both as an insider and an outsider during the course of the study. This duality allowed the researcher to navigate the field with a degree of cultural competence while also maintaining the critical distance necessary for analytical rigour. As an insider, the researcher had access to local idioms, administrative nuances, and the broader socio-political subtext surrounding student unrest. These dimensions enriched data generation and facilitated trust-building with participants. Simultaneously, the researcher exercised self-awareness and reflexivity to avoid the assumption that familiarity with institutional contexts would automatically translate to objectivity or representativeness. Rather, the process required constant reflection on how personal assumptions, values, and institutional affiliations could influence the framing of questions, interpretation of responses, and interaction with participants.

In keeping with the participatory nature of the research, I consciously positioned myself not as a detached observer but as a collaborative learner within a shared space of inquiry. This involved respecting the expertise and lived knowledge of participants while also facilitating a dialogue that enabled the co-construction of meaning. Recognising the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, particular care was taken to avoid reinforcing hierarchies or marginalising less vocal stakeholders during focus group discussions and interviews. The use of multiple platforms, including physical and digital engagement, allowed the researcher to be responsive to participants' preferences and ensured that no group was excluded due to logistical or technological barriers. Furthermore, the researcher remained attentive to language, tone, and non-verbal cues, which were critical in managing sensitive discussions around protest, governance, and institutional dissatisfaction.

Ultimately, the researcher's positionality influenced the methodological decisions, ethical considerations, and interpretive frameworks applied in this study. The choice to adopt participatory research methods and a transformative paradigm was not merely methodological but emerged from a value-laden commitment to fostering inclusion, accountability, and critical engagement. This awareness informed every stage of the research, from the design of data collection instruments to the facilitation of discussions and the interpretation of findings. By openly acknowledging and engaging with their positionality, the researcher ensured that the study remained both intellectually rigorous and ethically grounded, contributing not only to scholarly knowledge but also to the ongoing transformation of university governance and student engagement practices in African higher education.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative and participatory research serves the critical function of making sense of complex, contextually grounded narratives by identifying patterns, interpreting meanings, and constructing thematic insights that reflect participants' lived realities. In this study, data analysis was not a detached process but a socially embedded activity that involved careful engagement with participants' words, experiences, and expressions within their institutional and sociopolitical contexts. The process of analysis began immediately after data collection, as the iterative nature of qualitative research demands continual reflection and responsiveness to emerging ideas. This approach aligns closely with the principles of participatory research, which

views analysis not simply as an intellectual exercise but as a shared space for meaning-making, reflexivity, and transformation. As Flick (2018) observes, data analysis in qualitative inquiry must be grounded in the interpretive engagement with context, language, and power dynamics. Similarly, Nowell et al. (2017) argue that rigorous qualitative analysis involves moving beyond surface-level coding to uncover deeper structures of meaning that reflect the complexities of social life. The selected analysis method, socio-thematic analysis, mirrors the transformative paradigm by privileging participants' voices, enabling power-conscious interpretations, and linking the production of knowledge to institutional change. This is consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework, which encourages flexibility and depth in the thematic process, and aligns with the participatory ethos described by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012), who stress the importance of co-constructed meaning and the socio-cultural location of interpretation. The analytical method employed in this study therefore not only supported the research design and objectives but also upheld the ethical and epistemological commitments of transformative and participatory scholarship.

3.7.1 Overview of Socio-Thematic Analysis (StA)

Socio-Thematic Analysis (StA), as employed in this study, is a methodological framework developed by Bunmi Omodan in 2019 to enrich traditional thematic analysis with a deeper understanding of social interaction and performative language (Omodan, 2019). The method combines the established procedures of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, such as coding, theme generation, and interpretation, with conversation analysis and the conceptual lens of social action (Omodan, 2020; Omodan, 2020a). What distinguishes StA is its attention not only to the content of participants' statements but also to the ways in which these statements are socially enacted. In this approach, meaning is not merely found in what is said, but in how participants perform acts of agreement, resistance, clarification, and questioning within their interactions. Omodan's model introduces the idea of a "sociality test," through which each thematic category is examined in terms of the power dynamics, dependencies, and social positioning it reveals. This makes StA especially valuable for analysing discussions around conflict, governance, and institutional relationships, where meaning is often negotiated rather than directly stated.

The analytical strength of StA lies in its ability to uncover how participants construct and convey meaning through both verbal content and social engagement. It draws from Omodan's (2019, 2020a, 2020b) argument that language functions as a tool for social performance, especially in settings where individuals from different institutional and community backgrounds interact. In this study, the application of StA enabled the researcher to explore not only thematic concerns such as protest triggers, administrative responses, and psychological impact, but also the underlying structures of interaction that shaped these narratives. For example, during focus group discussions and interviews, participants' ways of responding to authority figures, aligning with or contesting dominant views, and negotiating shared meanings were carefully examined to interpret how social and institutional hierarchies influenced the conversation. This level of analysis aligns with the goals of participatory and transformative research, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between discourse and power. Through this method, the researcher was able to illuminate how structural tensions and institutional histories are reflected in everyday language and interaction, contributing to a comprehensive and socially grounded interpretation of student unrest in the selected university settings.

3.7.2 Steps in Socio-Thematic Analysis

The first step in Socio-Thematic Analysis involves rigorous familiarisation with the data through repeated listening to audio recordings and detailed reading and re-reading of transcripts. This phase allowed the researcher to fully immerse in the participants' expressions, tone, and interactive patterns. Familiarisation was not treated as a passive process but as active engagement with both the content and context of spoken narratives. In this study, the researcher listened to each focus group discussion and interview multiple times, noting not only what was said but how it was said, including moments of silence, overlaps, and emotional expressions. This initial engagement formed the foundation for deeper interpretation by enabling sensitivity to nuanced social cues and embedded meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this, the second step involved initial coding and the categorisation of meaning units. The researcher began by segmenting the transcribed data into meaningful units of analysis, phrases, sentences, or exchanges that reflected specific concepts, experiences, or responses related to student unrest and institutional practices. Each unit was assigned an interpretive label based on its apparent significance, a process

that facilitated the comparison of recurrent expressions and the identification of potential thematic groupings (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

The third step centred on the generation of themes through an interpretive process rooted in social interaction and conversational cues. At this stage, the researcher did not merely identify semantic similarities but paid close attention to how participants positioned themselves, responded to others, and navigated conflicting ideas. Themes were thus constructed with an awareness of agreement, contradiction, reinforcement, and negotiation within conversations. By prioritising these interactive elements, the analysis reflected the dialogic nature of the data and the socio-political positioning of speakers (Gee, 2014). In the fourth step, the social testing of themes was undertaken to ensure their coherence, inclusivity, and representation of power dynamics across the dataset. Each theme was interrogated through a sociality lens, examining whether the theme captured diverse participant voices, reflected tensions in hierarchical relationships, and acknowledged institutional and cultural complexities. This test ensured that themes did not generalise or flatten stakeholder perspectives but instead revealed the underlying social structures influencing discourse (Omodan, 2020b). The final step involved synthesising and interpreting these themes into broader analytic narratives. This was not a mere summary but a process of weaving together individual contributions, dialogic exchanges, and power-laden subtexts into coherent findings that illuminated institutional cultures, unrest dynamics, and stakeholder positionalities. Interpretation was thus informed by the interplay between language, structure, and context, making the findings socially grounded and analytically robust (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

3.7.3 Rationale for Using Socio-Thematic Analysis in this Study

Socio-Thematic Analysis was selected for this study due to its capacity to engage deeply with dialogue-based data generated through focus group discussions and individual interviews. Unlike conventional thematic analysis, which tends to focus primarily on content, StA provides a framework for examining the layered social meanings embedded in conversations. This includes how participants negotiate their ideas, respond to others, and perform their roles through language. The study explored sensitive topics such as student unrest, institutional conflict, and governance dynamics, issues that are inherently dialogic and laden with social tension. Therefore, a method that could capture not only what was said but how it was said, to whom, and

under what conditions was essential. StA enabled the researcher to account for the interpersonal dynamics and shifts in tone, agreement, or disagreement that surfaced during conversations. In doing so, it offered a more nuanced understanding of how participants' lived experiences were shaped and expressed within the institutional context.

Furthermore, the strength of StA lies in its focus on social action, interaction, and the visibility of power relations in language. This was particularly important for a study rooted in the transformative paradigm, where the aim is not only to describe phenomena but also to uncover structural imbalances and promote equity. StA allowed for an interrogation of how authority, resistance, and solidarity were performed and challenged within discourse. The method's sensitivity to conversational structure and social cues made it ideal for tracing how hierarchies within the university space were navigated by different stakeholders. Whether in student responses to administrative decisions or in the guarded language of management officials, StA facilitated the detection of implicit power dynamics and institutional positioning. It contributed to the depth of the research by offering a framework that respected both the thematic content and the social interactions through which meaning was co-constructed. Ultimately, this analytical approach supported the study's transformative goals by ensuring that the findings were not only descriptive but also critical, reflexive, and capable of informing meaningful institutional change.

3.7.4 Ethical Management of Data During Analysis

The ethical management of data during analysis was a fundamental priority in this study, particularly because of the sensitive nature of the issues explored and the participatory approach that underpinned the research design. Secure data handling was upheld through meticulous procedures aimed at preserving confidentiality and protecting participant identities. Audio recordings from interviews and focus group discussions were stored on password-protected digital devices, while physical notes and printed transcripts were locked in secure storage accessible only to the researcher. All identifiable information was removed during the transcription process, and pseudonyms were used consistently throughout the analysis and reporting phases. These steps ensured that the privacy and safety of participants were never compromised and that the research adhered to the ethical guidelines approved by the institutional review board overseeing the study.

Reflexivity in interpretation was equally central to the analytical process, requiring the researcher to maintain a critical awareness of their influence on the meaning-making process. As an insider to the academic environment under investigation, the researcher acknowledged the potential for bias and continuously engaged in self-examination to question assumptions, values, and positional judgments. This reflexive stance was not a one-time exercise but an ongoing commitment throughout the analysis, particularly during the coding, theme identification, and synthesis stages. By interrogating their own interpretations and remaining open to disconfirming evidence within the data, the researcher ensured that the findings reflected the authentic voices and perspectives of the participants, rather than the preconceptions of the analyst. Reflexivity also included regularly revisiting field notes and analytic memos to ensure that insights were grounded in the data and not shaped by personal inclinations.

Respecting participant voices and their social contexts was a guiding principle in theme construction and interpretation. The analysis did not reduce participant expressions to abstract categories but instead sought to honour the contexts from which their narratives emerged. Statements were interpreted in relation to participants' roles, social positions, and the broader institutional dynamics influencing their experiences. Special attention was given to preserving the tone, intention, and emotional weight behind participants' contributions. Themes were constructed to reflect not only recurrent patterns but also the diversity of viewpoints and the complexity of the issues discussed. This approach ensured that marginalised or less dominant voices were not overshadowed in the analysis and that the final representation of findings upheld the participatory spirit of the research. In doing so, the study reinforced its ethical commitment to producing knowledge that is inclusive, respectful, and socially accountable.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval is a cornerstone of all credible academic research, particularly when the inquiry involves human participants and sensitive institutional dynamics. In this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee at North-West University, South Africa, following a thorough review of the research proposal, methodology, and potential risks to participants. This process ensured that the study adhered to established ethical protocols and that appropriate safeguards were in place to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of all stakeholders involved.

Obtaining this formal clearance not only legitimised the research process but also reinforced the commitment to upholding ethical responsibility throughout the study. According to Wiles et al. (2008), institutional review boards play a vital role in maintaining public trust in research by ensuring that ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are upheld in both design and implementation.

In addition to ethical clearance, written letters of permission were secured from the administrative authorities of each participating university in Nigeria and South Africa. These letters served as formal institutional consent, granting access to research sites and endorsing the involvement of staff, students, and other stakeholders. Where necessary, the researcher relied on gatekeepers, individuals with access to or influence within the institutions, to facilitate introductions, clarify research intentions, and assist in the coordination of participant recruitment. Gatekeepers were particularly valuable in contexts where institutional hierarchy and bureaucracy might have otherwise delayed access or limited transparency. Their role was carefully negotiated to maintain the autonomy of potential participants and avoid undue influence. As Head (2020) cautions, gatekeepers must be managed ethically to prevent them from filtering access in ways that compromise inclusivity or distort data. Similarly, Clark (2011) notes that institutional liaisons can provide essential support in navigating organisational cultures, especially when conducting research in politically sensitive environments such as universities experiencing unrest.

3.8.1 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Ensuring informed consent is a foundational ethical requirement in human-centred research and was rigorously applied in this study. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with a clear and accessible explanation of the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and anticipated outcomes. This included a detailed account of what their participation would involve, such as the duration, format, and nature of focus group discussions and interviews, as well as the intended use of the findings. The researcher emphasised transparency, allowing participants to raise questions or request clarification before agreeing to take part. This process was conducted verbally and in writing, depending on the context, and ensured that each individual had an adequate understanding and time to consider their involvement. As Diener and Crandall (1978) assert, informed consent is not merely a procedural formality but a process of communication through which the participant gains an adequate

understanding to make an autonomous decision regarding their involvement in the research.

In line with ethical standards, participation in this study was strictly voluntary, and all individuals were informed of their unconditional right to decline or withdraw from the study at any point without any form of penalty or disadvantage. This assurance was crucial, especially given the potentially sensitive nature of the discussions around student unrest and university governance. Participants were also informed of their right to withhold responses to any questions they found uncomfortable or intrusive. Written consent forms were distributed and signed before the commencement of each data collection activity, including focus group discussions and individual interviews. These forms outlined participants' rights and confirmed their willingness to be audio-recorded. For those unable to provide written consent due to remote participation, verbal consent was documented with audio confirmation. The consistent use of informed consent procedures ensured that participants' autonomy and dignity were protected throughout the research process. As Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) note, obtaining and respecting informed consent is a crucial step in demonstrating the ethical integrity of qualitative research, particularly when dealing with complex and emotionally charged topics.

3.8.2 Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Protection

Confidentiality and anonymity were foundational to ensuring the ethical soundness of this study, given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the hierarchical structures within university environments. To protect the identities of participants, all data were anonymised at the point of transcription and analysis. Pseudonyms were assigned based on the participants' roles to maintain clarity while safeguarding their privacy. The participants were coded as follows: university authorities (UA), members of committees on conflict management/resolution (CM), student leaders (SL), lecturers (L), security personnel (SP), one member of counselling centres (MCC), and one community leader (CL). These codes were used consistently throughout the analysis to represent participant voices without exposing personal or institutional identities. This strategy preserved anonymity while maintaining the coherence and authenticity of the narratives shared.

Data protection measures were strictly observed in both digital and physical forms. All electronic data, including recorded audio files and typed transcripts, were stored on password-protected and encrypted devices accessible only to the primary researcher. Backup copies were secured on an external encrypted drive to guard against data loss. Physical documents, such as consent forms and handwritten notes, were stored in a locked cabinet in a private office environment. Access was restricted to the researcher alone, thereby reducing the risk of unauthorised access. These measures ensured that the integrity and confidentiality of the data were maintained throughout the research process.

Regarding data retention and disposal, all collected data will be securely stored for a period of five years post-completion of the study, following institutional research policy guidelines. This retention period will allow for potential future academic reference or re-analysis, subject to renewed ethical clearance. After the designated period, all physical records will be permanently destroyed through shredding or incineration, while digital files will be erased using secure data deletion software to prevent recovery. These steps are essential to guarantee long-term confidentiality and uphold the ethical promise made to participants at the outset of the study.

3.8.3 Minimising Risk and Harm

Recognising the sensitive nature of the research focus, deliberate efforts were made to anticipate and minimise any potential psychological discomfort that could arise during data generation. Discussions around student unrest, governance failures, and institutional conflict can often evoke distressing memories or emotional strain, particularly for participants who have experienced or witnessed such events firsthand. To mitigate this, the researcher adopted a trauma-sensitive approach by framing questions in a non-confrontational and reflective manner, giving participants the freedom to skip any questions they found uncomfortable. Participants were also assured that they could withdraw from the discussion or interview at any time without any form of consequence. In addition, debriefing was offered after each session, providing participants with space to express lingering concerns or emotions and to restore emotional equilibrium before disengaging from the research process.

In managing the diversity of opinions present in group discussions, particular attention was paid to conflict sensitivity and respectful facilitation. The focus group discussions

brought together participants from various stakeholder groups, including student leaders, university management, academic staff, and security personnel, individuals who might hold conflicting views or have been on opposing sides during episodes of unrest. The researcher's role as moderator was carried out with caution and neutrality, ensuring that no participant dominated the conversation or belittled others' perspectives. Ground rules were established at the beginning of each session to promote mutual respect, confidentiality, and constructive dialogue. This facilitated a balanced exchange of ideas and created a safe space where participants could voice their experiences and opinions without fear of confrontation or marginalisation. Efforts were also made to structure the group composition in a way that minimised overt power differentials, while individual interviews were offered as alternatives for those who might have felt constrained in a group setting.

To further safeguard participants, strong measures were implemented to protect them from potential stigmatisation or institutional backlash. Given that the study involved critiques of university governance and management practices, anonymity was strictly upheld to prevent any possibility of identification. The use of role-based pseudonyms (e.g., UA, SL, CM, L, MCC, SP, CL) ensured that even within the research outputs, no individual could be directly or indirectly associated with specific statements. The researcher also committed to a careful and ethical presentation of data in all public forms of dissemination, avoiding sensationalism or language that could implicate individuals or institutions. These measures collectively upheld the ethical imperative of doing no harm, maintaining the integrity of the research while protecting the well-being and dignity of all participants.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research reflects the integrity, quality, and rigour of the entire research process, ensuring that the findings accurately represent participants' experiences and perspectives. In this study, trustworthiness was established by adhering to four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These elements were carefully considered to enhance the authenticity of the data and to ensure that the study's outcomes were both meaningful and grounded in the lived realities of the participants. Each criterion provided a lens through which the research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation were tested for consistency, transparency, and relevance. This commitment to trustworthiness helped safeguard

the validity of the study and ensured that the findings could be confidently shared within academic and institutional communities.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent participants' lived experiences. This study ensured credibility through deep engagement with the research setting and sustained interactions with stakeholders who had experienced or participated in episodes of student unrest. That is, spending considerable time in the field and developing familiarity with institutional practices, the researcher gained a richer understanding of the nuanced relationships and power structures within the university system. Multiple data collection methods, focus group discussions and individual interviews, were employed to enable comprehensive data collection. This approach helped to confirm recurring patterns across different participants and contexts. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to review summaries of the findings to ensure their views were accurately captured. This process of member validation enhanced the authenticity of the narratives and provided space for clarification, correction, or elaboration where necessary (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability concerns the extent to which the findings may be applied in similar contexts beyond the immediate study sites. This was addressed by providing a rich, thick description of the research settings, including the socio-political climate of the universities, the institutional structure, and the roles of each category of participant. These detailed contextual descriptions enable readers to assess whether the findings might be applicable to their own institutional environments. Rather than offering generalisations, the study presents insights that resonate with the broader experiences of university systems that have undergone historical and political transitions. Hence, highlighting contextual differences and similarities between Nigerian and South African universities, the study allows others working in comparable systems to reflect on parallel issues and potentially adopt or adapt strategies relevant to their own challenges (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability was upheld through systematic documentation of the research design, data collection procedures, and analysis process. The researcher maintained a

comprehensive record of how data were generated, coded, and interpreted, ensuring that the research process was consistent and traceable. Changes that occurred during the course of fieldwork were recorded with clear justification, and methodological decisions were transparently communicated. A reflective journal was also kept to track thoughts, emerging insights, and methodological reflections throughout the study. In addition, the research process was reviewed regularly in consultation with academic supervisors and peers, which helped maintain analytical consistency and rigour. These strategies supported the logical flow of the study and ensured that its results could be reviewed and understood by others in a systematic manner (Connelly, 2016).

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability was achieved by actively mitigating personal bias and grounding interpretations in the voices of the participants. The researcher's positionality was acknowledged, and ongoing reflexivity was practised to maintain awareness of personal assumptions, values, and perspectives throughout the research process. Data were presented in a manner that allowed participants' expressions and viewpoints to be heard directly, often through carefully selected quotations that illustrated key themes. This practice ensured that findings were not researcher-driven but derived from what participants themselves conveyed through their interactions and dialogue. An audit trail of the coding process and analytic decisions was maintained to support transparency and enable others to trace the logic behind the study's conclusions. The study's commitment to presenting findings rooted in participant narratives reinforces its integrity and trustworthiness (Forero et al., 2018).

3.10 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter presents a detailed account of the methodological framework that guided the study, anchored within the transformative paradigm and informed by a qualitative, participatory research approach. It begins by explaining the philosophical assumptions underlying the research, including ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological perspectives, followed by a rationale for adopting the transformative paradigm and its alignment with the study's focus on addressing social injustices within university governance. The qualitative research approach is justified as a means to explore the complex social, geographical, and psychological dimensions of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. Participatory Research (PR) is

outlined as the chosen design, enabling inclusive engagement with diverse stakeholders such as student leaders, academic staff, university management, security personnel, and community members. Methods of data collection, including focus group discussions, individual interviews, and digital tools, are carefully explained, along with the strategies for selecting research sites and participants. Ethical considerations are comprehensively addressed, covering informed consent, confidentiality, data security, and the protection of participant wellbeing. The chapter also details the application of Socio-Thematic Analysis (StA) as the analytic method, highlighting its suitability for socially engaged research and its capacity to interpret interactional dynamics, power relations, and thematic meanings within discourse. Lastly, the trustworthiness of the study is established through strategies ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Together, these methodological choices provide a coherent, ethically sound, and rigorous framework for investigating and interpreting the lived realities of institutional conflict in higher education contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARTICLE PLAN BASED ON THE OBJECTIVES

This section presents the three articles that were indicated in Chapter One. The main focus of the study was to deconstruct the politics of the process that is allegedly responsible for the unrest among students in African universities. Therefore, the following objectives were established to accomplish this study:

- examine the understanding of the politics of process and the extent to which it has affected university productivity;
- investigate the comparative backgrounds of the selected countries regarding crisis situations and their management;
- expose the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities;
- examine the challenges responsible for students' unrest in the university system of the selected countries and
- examine solutions to the existing challenges associated with unrest, mostly between students and university authorities.

Within the framework of the five objectives, the first objective led to the development of a research article titled "Conceptualizing the Politics of Process as a Solution to Student Unrest in Universities." The second and third objectives subsequently influenced the production of a publication titled "Psychosocial Implications of Student Unrest in Africa: Perspectives from South Africa and Nigeria." This publication tackles two research questions derived from its title, which are outlined below:

- How has the comparative background of the selected countries regarding the crisis situation and its management affected the level of student unrest on campuses?
- What is the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities?

Lastly, objectives four and five have contributed to the development of a scholarly article entitled "A Comparative Response to Student Unrest in African Universities: Challenges and Solutions." This research work delves into two specific research questions that are directly derived from the title. The research questions are outlined as follows:

- What are the challenges hindering the management of student unrest in the university system of the selected countries?
- What are the possible solutions to the existing challenges associated with the management of student unrest in universities?

The research articles are presented below:

4.1 Article one: Conceptualising politics of process as an antidote to student unrest in universities

Abstract

Student unrest in Africa has become a persistent problem that hampers university productivity. These issues are closely linked to the politics of process within academic institutions. This includes management and leadership styles, organisational culture and values, rules and regulations, decision-making processes, and internal mechanisms. The connection between student unrest and university politics of process highlights the need to redirect these dynamics towards peaceful operations in African universities. To address this, the study introduces the concept of politics of process and explores its potential in managing student unrest. The study is grounded in decoloniality and adopts a transformative worldview to challenge the politics of process and promote a peaceful and just university system. Through conceptual analysis, it identifies management and leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values as key factors in the politics of process. The study argues that understanding and effectively managing these elements can bring about transformative change and effectively address social unrest.

Keywords: Politics of process, student unrest, university governance, decoloniality, transformative worldview.

Introduction

Student unrest and violent protests at African universities have garnered significant attention from various stakeholders, including university management, government institutions, intergovernmental organisations, and the general public. These protests, also referred to as student unrest in this study, stem from a range of factors, such as students' dissatisfaction with their living conditions in hostel accommodations or the standard of education they receive (Maringira & Gukurume, 2016; Fomunyam, 2017). Contributing to these grievances are economic hardships, political instability, and inadequate resources (Saleh, 2013; Anjum & Aijaz, 2014; Greeff et al., 2021; Saud & Ashfaq, 2022). Furthermore, many universities suffer from insufficient funding (Aluede et al., 2005; Hamilton & Nielsen, 2021) and overcrowding, exacerbating discontent among students. Additionally, numerous students come from impoverished backgrounds and struggle to adapt to the demands of university life, leading to frustration and feelings of exclusion (Ngidi et al., 2016). Regardless of the underlying causes, these protests frequently result in substantial damage to university property and, tragically, loss of life.

In Nigeria, student unrest has tragically resulted in the death of innocent students and other university staff (Akintola, 2010; Etadon, 2013). These grave consequences have far-reaching implications for the country's peace and security. Efforts to prevent such unrest have been undertaken by university management and the Nigerian government, including measures like adequate funding, collaborative decision-making processes, and bolstering campus security (Uyanga, 2016; Gbadamosi, 2017; Marete et al., 2020). However, despite these initiatives, the issue persists unabated. The recent student unrest in South Africa also elicited a heavy-handed response to on-campus protests, with students facing arrests and dehumanising treatment (Maringira & Gukurume, 2016; Mpofu, 2017). Notably, the protests at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2022 and Cape Peninsula University of Technology in 2023 carried severe implications for the affected students, resulting in suspensions and disciplinary actions (Wits, 2022; Ebrahim, 2023). These authoritarian responses have only served to further escalate tensions, as crackdowns involving tactics like tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets are perceived as excessively harsh by the students.

Student protests and unrest are not exclusive to universities in South Africa and Nigeria, as Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Cameroon universities have also experienced their fair share of student protests, some of which have escalated into violence. For instance, at the University of Ghana, students protested against the deteriorating state of infrastructure and the lack of basic amenities (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014). These protests have occasionally turned violent, resulting in clashes between students and the police. Similarly, students at the University of Zimbabwe protested against the government's decision to increase university fees (Gukurume, 2017; Hodgkinson, 2013). These protests have also resulted in violence, with students damaging university property and engaging in confrontations with law enforcement. Likewise, in Kenya, students have been protesting the government's decision to shut down universities (Luescher-Mamashela et al., 2011; Okeyo, 2017). These protests have also turned violent, with incidents of arson and clashes with the police.

While student unrest in both South Africa and Nigeria often arises from dissatisfaction with university governance, the specific contextual triggers differ significantly. In South Africa, protests have largely been catalysed by issues such as financial exclusion, epistemological injustice, and the demand for decolonised curricula, as evidenced by the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements (Badat, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). These movements reveal students' broader discontent with persisting inequalities and colonial-era institutional cultures in a post-apartheid society. In contrast, in Nigeria, the origins of unrest tend to centre around infrastructural decay, inadequate funding, limited access to learning resources, and autocratic management styles, all of which have roots in the country’s prolonged experience with military rule and centralised educational governance (Akinyemi, 2002; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). Thus, while both contexts experience governance-related unrest, the socio-political histories and institutional triggers are not identical and must be understood accordingly.

Nevertheless, a common thread across both countries is the dysfunctional internal mechanisms of governance, manifesting through exclusive policy formulation, opaque decision-making processes, and a lack of meaningful student representation (Cross, 2014; Luescher-Mamashela, 2015). These structural deficiencies, although nuanced

by local conditions, contribute to perceptions of injustice and marginalisation among students, thereby fuelling unrest. The assertion that unrest is “inextricably linked” to internal governance processes is therefore not intended to equate the two contexts wholesale, but rather to highlight that institutional crises in both South Africa and Nigeria share a systemic root in exclusionary and rigid management practices. Recognising these contextual divergences while drawing attention to shared structural weaknesses allows for a more accurate and comparative understanding of student unrest in African universities.

These student unrests are inextricably linked to issues within the management and governance of university systems. These issues encompass various aspects, including policy formulation, implementation, management and leadership styles, organisational culture and values, decision-making processes, rules and regulations, internal mechanisms, and the application of codes of conduct. This study introduces the concept of the "politics of process" to capture these interconnected factors that contribute to conflicts within university organisations. Although not a widely established term, the "politics of process" is conceptualised in this study as a significant contribution to the literature on governance and organisational processes. Omodan (2019) first employed this concept in his work titled "Defacing Machiavellianism in university politics: A discourse to reconstruct leadership through Ubuntu." He argued that the intricacies involved in university management, such as leadership approaches and management strategies, constitute what he referred to as the politics of process. According to his argument, embracing a politics of process rooted in ubuntu principles will yield more favourable outcomes compared to a Machiavellian approach in university management.

Recent literature confirms that student unrest in universities is frequently the result of internal governance failures, particularly in how policies are formulated and implemented. For instance, Anho (2023) identifies poor communication, lack of transparency, and exclusionary decision-making processes as key administrative shortcomings that escalate student dissatisfaction. Similarly, Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) argue that autocratic leadership styles that marginalise student voices often intensify perceptions of injustice, leading to protest action. Cross (2014) emphasises that when university governance fails to align with shared organisational values and

democratic practices, students respond with resistance aimed at institutional transformation. Omodan (2023b) adds that the absence of collaborative decision-making mechanisms creates systemic tensions between management and students, which frequently erupts into unrest. These findings collectively underscore that student protests are not merely reactionary but are rooted in deeply embedded institutional cultures that lack inclusivity, accountability, and responsiveness. These findings highlight the interconnectedness between student unrest and university politics, emphasising the importance of redirecting efforts towards fostering peaceful university operations in Africa. In light of this gap in knowledge and the necessity to establish the concept of the politics of process, the study aims to address the following research question: *What is the politics of process, and how can it be used to redirect the management of student unrest in the university system?*

Research Objectives

In order to answer the above research question, the following research objectives were formulated to guide the study:

- The study conceptualises the politics of process as a new concept in the field of management and governance.
- The study presents the politics of process as a management mechanism to prevent student unrest in universities.

Theoretical viewpoint

Decoloniality is a term that has been utilised to describe the process of undoing the damaging effects of colonialism (Maldonado-Torres & Cavooris, 2017; Silva et al., 2022). It is a significant concept for comprehending the history of oppression and working towards social cohesion (Garcia & Shirley, 2012). The term decoloniality refers to the process of liberating oneself from the dominance of a coloniser (Lindblad & Post, 2009). This can be accomplished through various means, such as education, political action, and cultural practices. However, I argue that decoloniality is not solely about rectifying the past damage caused by colonialism but also about forging a new future in which all individuals are free from oppression, intimidation, subjugation, and power imbalances. Because decoloniality is an approach that can be applied in diverse contexts, from education to governance, scholars and activists worldwide have

embraced it to challenge Eurocentric assumptions and contribute to the construction of more equitable societies (Rutazibwa, 2019).

It is grounded in the principle that all individuals are equal and should be treated with respect. Decoloniality encourages people to celebrate their distinct cultures and traditions and to learn from one another. By fostering understanding and cooperation among people from different cultures, decoloniality has the potential to reshape society by promoting equity and respect for all (Dube et al., 2017). According to the arguments put forth by Ziai, Bendix, and Müller (2020), the decolonial movement has gained momentum in recent years as more individuals have become aware of the detrimental effects of colonialism and the need for change. This may be due to the fact that it offers a path forward that is founded on mutual respect and cooperation, which is a crucial step in the journey towards a more fair and just world. Based on this, one can argue that this framework, if practised within the universities, could foster peaceful relationships between university authorities and student populations, where all traditional power structures and hierarchical systems can be challenged, and instead, horizontal relationships between people can be promoted.

Universities have faced increasing criticism for their failure to act as catalysts for societal change. This has been particularly evident in the aftermath of widespread social unrest, such as the student protests that have swept across university campuses, particularly in Africa in recent years (Uleanya, 2019). However, it is also evident that universities are vital in contributing to peacebuilding worldwide. One way in which universities can contribute to peacebuilding is by implementing the core principles of decoloniality, which include epistemic justice, inclusive participation, historical redress, and the dismantling of colonial power hierarchies within institutional systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mignolo, 2011). These principles challenge dominant Eurocentric models of governance and knowledge production, advocating instead for decision-making processes that are participatory, dialogic, and rooted in local contexts and lived experiences. Within the university setting, this necessitates the reform of policies and governance structures that are perceived as authoritarian or exclusionary, replacing them with transparent, inclusive, and culturally responsive practices that acknowledge student voices as legitimate stakeholders in institutional development.

The application of these decolonial principles can dismantle the perceived unethical politics or processes, termed in this study the "politics of process", that often marginalise students and provoke unrest. Continuous exclusion of students from key decisions, particularly those affecting their academic and social well-being, perpetuates colonial logics of dominance and silence. Decoloniality calls for the reimagining of university governance as a space of mutual respect, co-creation, and shared power, where grievance mechanisms, conflict resolution, and policy formulation are grounded in values of justice, dialogue, and Ubuntu (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019; Le Grange et al., 2020). Consequently, adopting a decolonial approach in this study is not merely theoretical; it provides a concrete framework for diagnosing and transforming the root causes of student unrest within African universities.

Methodology

This conceptual argument is framed within the transformative paradigm, which has had a significant impact on the field of social research. The transformative paradigm represents a shift in understanding the role of the researcher and the relationship between the researcher and participants (Mertens, 2007; Mertens, 2017). Transformative research is based on the belief that research is a process of social change (Qutoshi, 2015) and emphasises the active involvement of those being researched in the research process (Romm, 2015). This approach has fostered a more collaborative and empowering style of research, leading to transformative effects on both social research as a field and the lives of research participants (Doctors, 2001; Qutoshi, 2015).

Based on this, it is more accurately stated that the transformative paradigm serves as a philosophical lens through which this study interrogates and challenges structures of power and inequality within university governance systems. While it does not enact change directly, the paradigm is rooted in the principles of social justice, human rights, and inclusive participation, guiding researchers to design studies that empower marginalised voices and advocate for systemic transformation (Chilisa, 2012; Mertens, 2009). In the context of this study, the transformative paradigm aligns with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) design by foregrounding student experiences and enabling the co-construction of meaning around the politics of process and unrest. As argued in Chapter Three, transformative paradigms are inherently political and ethical, they compel the researcher to confront the colonial legacies and authoritarian

management practices that underpin student unrest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Omodan, 2020a). Thus, the paradigm does not "cause" change, but provides the epistemological and axiological foundation upon which change-oriented inquiry is built. For example, as discussed by Mertens (2010), studies grounded in this paradigm aim to produce actionable knowledge that can inform more equitable social policies and institutional reforms. This relevance is particularly pronounced in this study's focus on university unrest, where the transformative lens ensures that students are not merely research subjects but active participants in interrogating governance systems.

To elucidate the concept of the "politics of process," a method of conceptual analysis was employed. Concept analysis is a technique used in analytic philosophy to clarify the meanings of words and phrases by assigning specific meanings to them (Weaver & Mitcham, 2008; Kahn & Zeidler, 2017). It involves breaking down a complex concept into simpler components, each with its own referents (Abdolrahim et al., 2017). The aim is to gain a clear understanding of the concept's ontological status, epistemic role, and linguistic usage. However, this method of analysis has been criticised for its tendency to neglect context and rely heavily on intuitions. Nonetheless, it remains one of the most effective methods in philosophical arguments and has made significant contributions to numerous philosophical debates. In the context of this study, concept analysis is relevant because it helps examine the meaning of the concept of "politics of process" and its associated attributes. Therefore, it serves as a valuable tool for clarifying terminology and enhancing communication within a specific field.

The following section presents and interprets the concept of the "politics of process," discusses its four cardinal assumptions, explores its evidentiary connection to student unrest, and presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Presentation of analysis

The study presents the concept of politics of process within this section, focusing on four cardinal points of reference. These include various management mechanisms such as management and leadership styles, the decision-making process, organisational culture, and values.

Politics of Process as a Concept

The concept of the politics of process has gained significant importance in the realm of organisational structure. A successful management approach necessitates an

understanding of the mechanisms that influence individual and collective decision-making. This overview aims to delve into four key areas: management and leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values. Each of these components can greatly impact how organisations approach and manage political decisions. By attaining a deeper comprehension of these elements, organisations can make decisions that are more cognizant of their political implications, ultimately enhancing their efficiency. Consequently, an understanding of the dynamics associated with the politics of process is crucial for organisations seeking to optimise their performance. This knowledge is particularly essential during long-term planning or negotiation processes. By acknowledging the various factors that shape the politics of process, organisations can adopt a proactive approach to managing their organisational environment and optimise outcomes for stakeholders.

- **Management and leadership styles as politics of process:** Management and leadership styles often play a crucial role in achieving organisational goals. Political processes, such as distributive bargaining, impression management, and the development of power politics, are applied by contemporary managers to effectively balance their own interests with those of the organisation. Leadership style is also used to build effective teams that can effectively leverage resources and be competitive in their given environment. Distributive bargaining focuses on individual reward systems (Gan, 2017), while impression management shapes a collaborative culture by developing a perceived reputation in the eyes of superior management or stakeholders (Pearce & Vitak, 2016). Power politics involves leveraging personal influence among employees to promote specific initiatives over others. Ultimately, understanding how managers use these political tactics is critical for understanding how they contribute to organisational effectiveness.

  On the one hand, managers are expected to fulfil their responsibilities on behalf of their subordinates while leading teams by example. On the other hand, they are required to exert influence through subtle negotiation and bargaining that often involve shaping interactions with both peers and superiors. Thus, management and leadership styles become operative forces in reshaping contingency plans and strategies, employee conduct, and public relations

strategies in a way that allows organisations to exceed expectations over time. These dynamic processes within organisations contribute significantly to productivity.

- **Decision-making processes as a politics of process:** The decision-making process within governance is a crucial aspect of the political process. As policymakers engage in activities such as evaluation, problem-solving, and strategy development, they impact power dynamics among stakeholders and foster greater participation in political discourse. In particular, considering community needs thoughtfully during the decision-making process promotes transparency and citizen engagement, ultimately fostering trust in leadership among community members (Rega & Baldizzone, 2015). Embracing inclusive approaches that incorporate diverse perspectives allows decision-makers to gather a broader range of information on potential solutions to complex policy issues. Consequently, adopting a politics of process approach to governance can strengthen democracies by amplifying public voices and facilitating informed discussions during decision-making. Moreover, by examining various decision-making models employed in different governmental systems, one can gain insights into the underlying political ideologies and their implications for citizens. Understanding these processes also sheds light on the reasons behind specific decisions, highlighting how they may either benefit or neglect certain populations, potentially leading to conflicts.

- **Organisational culture as politics of process:** Organisational culture has emerged as a significant factor in effective management and governance within organisations (Lapiņa et al., 2015; Alreemy et al., 2016). The process of political dynamics, guided by internalised norms of behaviour, assists individuals in identifying and combining values to establish a collective sense of responsibility. This shared standard of behaviour provides organisations with the stability, integrity, and trustworthiness necessary for successful operations. Additionally, organisational culture facilitates knowledge transfer, assigns responsibilities, and establishes roles and relationships among individuals by providing a guiding vision for their actions (Lee et al., 2016). Consequently, it

effectively motivates employees to enhance productivity and achieve overall success (Nazir & Zamir, 2015).

The argument posits that a well-established organisational culture can promote employee cooperation, ensure effectiveness, streamline processes, increase productivity, and establish unified goals. Furthermore, it can also equip an organisation with resilience during periods of change, such as leadership transitions and emergency responses. This is because organisational culture can shape reactions and provide a pathway for staff members to effectively handle external factors (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). Therefore, it is evident that leveraging the unique features of organisational culture as a process of political dynamics can be a critical tool for successful management and governance.

- **Organisational values as politics of process:** The significance of organisational values as a politics of process and a tool for effective governance cannot be overstated. Values such as transparency, ethical behaviour, and accountability propel the entire organisation towards progress in achieving organisational objectives. Consequently, without well-established and clearly communicated organisational values that are consistently upheld and enforced, any form of implementation or success will prove challenging to attain. By establishing shared values that are embraced and safeguarded by all members, organisations can not only mitigate potential sources of conflict but also channel them towards mutually beneficial outcomes. This implies that organisational values can be utilised to effectively manage the sometimes divergent interests and needs of staff, stakeholders, partners, clients, customers, and other constituencies within a dynamic context. Ultimately, leveraging organizational values as a politics of process and a tool for effective governance holds the potential to significantly contribute to an organisation's ability to advance its mission.

Politics of Process and management of student unrest

This section discusses the politics of process as a management mechanism that could prevent student unrest in universities. It includes a diagrammatic illustration of the

politics of process and its correlational evidence on student unrest. The illustration will be presented as a model below, followed by a discussion.

Figure 1: Politics and process management model

Management-leadership styles politics of process and management of student unrest

For leadership teams, developing the appropriate management-leadership style is crucial in effectively addressing student protests or conflicts. This may involve adapting policies or approaches in some cases, while in others, it could entail negotiating solutions that move away from traditional management styles and instead focus on collaboration as a means of providing long-term resolutions. In contrast to the conventional top-down hierarchies of management, leadership styles that are rooted in the politics of process can have a transformative impact on universities. Under this approach, university management and student representatives collaborate to find innovative solutions to student unrest. During discussions, the voices of students should be central, and all stakeholders should contribute equally to the conversation. The ability to engage in constructive dialogue about contentious issues is vital for the success of any problem-solving process. When each side is given a chance to be heard and respected, it is more likely that common ground can be reached without resorting to extreme measures. Ultimately, this can facilitate lasting positive change within higher education institutions.

This viewpoint aligns with the argument that leadership styles play a crucial role in various aspects of education, including managing student unrest. Research has indicated that different leadership styles can impact student achievement and behaviour. Transformational leadership, for instance, has been associated with better outcomes in academic settings (Amitay et al., 2005). Furthermore, in the context of student unrest, democratic and facilitative leadership styles have been identified as effective tools for addressing unrest and challenging students' mindsets (Omodan, 2020). Additionally, studies exploring the relationship between leadership styles and student satisfaction have found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and higher levels of student satisfaction (Bogler et al., 2013). Effective governance can also contribute to more efficient student leadership, potentially reducing unrest within educational institutions (Okeyo, 2017). Understanding the nature of student unrest, which can manifest in various forms such as violence, boycotts, and bullying, is essential for developing strategies to address and prevent such behaviours (Chemutai et al., 2020).

Therefore, in universities, the management-leadership styles adopted by administrators can be crucial factors in achieving successful outcomes and positive experiences for all parties involved in managing student unrest situations. From dispute resolution models to institutional changes pursued through legislative action, these leaders must have a keen understanding of the dynamics at play and utilise effective management approaches to meet the needs of their students. As administrators grapple with pressing issues such as student unrest or civil disobedience on campus, it is crucial that they draw upon knowledge of effective management techniques and pursue leadership objectives that lead to successful resolutions for all parties involved.

Decision-making processes politics of process and management of student unrest

An examination of the decision-making politics and management of student unrest in universities is a complex endeavour. Various factors, including background context and legal infrastructures, have implications at the local and institutional levels in higher education institutions. Effective strategies should focus on building trustful relationships between students and institutions while addressing broader institutional issues that may contribute to unrest. Additionally, policies should be regularly updated

to reflect the concerns of different stakeholders, including students' rights, free speech, and the specific needs of marginalized communities. Considering these components when making decisions regarding student unrest can lay a strong foundation for successful outcomes.

Research has shown that implementing democratic management styles and collegial leadership approaches can significantly enhance decision-making processes in educational institutions, thereby reducing instances of student unrest (Ronald, 2023; Omodan, 2023). The establishment and utilization of student councils have also been recognized as effective strategies for minimizing disturbances and involving students in governance (Tikoko & Kimame, 2022; Griebler & Nowak, 2012). Communication and inclusivity are critical in fostering a positive campus atmosphere and preventing social unrest (Omodan, 2023; Anho, 2023). These studies collectively suggest that effective communication, transparency, and student participation in decision-making are essential components of managing student unrest in higher education settings.

As universities strive for equitable learning and engagement, it is important to understand the power dynamics of institutional governance in student-institution interactions that may lead to unrest. When establishing policies and protocols related to these interactions, universities should consider the perspectives of all stakeholders and collaborate with students, faculty, staff, and administrators towards shared goals. Engaging in dialogue with stakeholders and ensuring that strategies serve the interests of all university constituents are crucial steps in creating an inclusive and harmonious learning environment.

Organisational culture politics of process and management of student unrest

The politics and processes of managing student unrest in universities entail complex issues that necessitate careful consideration. In this regard, universities must move beyond conventional approaches to comprehend the intricacy of student dissatisfaction. Factors such as educational inequity, inadequate support for mental health needs, racial discrimination, and financial pressures all necessitate consideration when formulating an effective response. Gaining a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of student discontent and establishing pathways to address these grievances offers a more comprehensive approach than

merely addressing superficial concerns. This may involve improving communication between university administration and students, enhancing transparency regarding policies and procedures, and being open to establishing new avenues for more effective engagement. Ultimately, creating an environment that facilitates proactive conversations is pivotal in fostering meaningful change with regard to social justice issues in the university context.

The argument posited here is that organizational culture plays a significant role in the management of student unrest. The manner in which an organization's values, beliefs, and norms are structured can influence how conflicts and unrest among students are addressed. This is supported by studies that have demonstrated that a positive organisational culture can assist in shaping responses to external challenges, including student unrest (Oriade et al., 2021). Additionally, the extent of students' involvement in decision-making processes, as a cultural aspect of management, has been observed to have an indirect relationship with the prevalence of student unrest (Odebode, 2019). Consequently, it can be concluded that when dealing with student unrest, it is essential to consider the broader socio-political context. Factors such as socio-political instability can impact students' learning experiences and contribute to the emotional turmoil associated with social unrest (Fung, 2021). Understanding the influence of disciplinary roles, organisational culture, and leadership in mitigating student unrest is crucial for the implementation of effective management strategies (Tikoko & Kimame, 2022).

Despite these positive correlations, some institutions may be inclined to deny or disregard the discontent among university students. An effective approach to managing these issues is to adopt a proactive attitude towards understanding and addressing their underlying causes. Establishing protocols for respectful dialogue between university administration and students, creating opportunities for active student involvement in management processes, and providing adequate communication channels are all necessary components in fostering successful reconciliation between the parties involved. Such steps could ultimately lead to greater unity across the educational system, ensuring student safety and enabling universities to operate within a peaceful environment.

Organisational values politics of process and management of student unrest

Within any university setting, there are always a variety of issues that need to be addressed by the administration. One such topic is the politics of process and values. In any successful organisation, values and ethical standards are of utmost importance in determining how to carry out activities fairly and handling situations that could lead to potential unrest. Understanding the opinions and feelings of all parties involved is essential to developing strategies that promote peace while maintaining moral grounding within the institution's culture. Through recognising ethical values with students and staff, stability can be achieved on college campuses regarding organisational values when considering politics of process and management involving student unrest.

In line with the above, organisational values are integral in managing student unrest within educational institutions. Isalano (2021) demonstrates a positive correlation between church-appointed administrative leadership and effective student unrest management, highlighting the importance of leadership in addressing such issues. This underscores the disruptive impact of student unrest on university objectives, emphasising the need for prompt resolution of these challenges. Additionally, Pop-Vasileva et al. (2011) explore how organisational factors like support systems influence academic attitudes, indicating that organisational values and practices significantly shape student perceptions and engagement, potentially impacting student unrest occurrences. This emphasises the significance of inclusive management approaches in fostering positive student-authority relationships.

Since the political dynamics within organisations are often a great source of tension due to their values and norms, both of which must be considered when controlling student unrest. Processes used to effectively manage an organisation’s students should not only be seen as preventative or repressive but should also facilitate the underlying expectation that all parties have a vested interest in maintaining a balance of autonomy with accountability. While many organisations assume that punitive policies and rigid bureaucratic infrastructures will suppress dissent, this overlooks the potential for quality openness and ultimately drives further frustrations from those that it is intended to control. Thus, effective management of student unrest requires

understanding and appreciating the organisational norms and values and approaches that value mutual collaboration and respect.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study conceptualises the politics of process as a managerial process suitable for managing student unrest in the university system. It is positioned to transform the issue of social unrest prevalent in African universities. The conclusion drawn is that management and leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values are elements of the politics of process capable of managing student unrest in universities. The suggestion is that understanding the politics of process as a managerial process helps to bring about transformational change and effective management of social unrest. This is informed by the view that leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values are integral parts of the politics of the process. The research's conclusion reveals that the proper execution of these aspects could be used to effectively manage student unrest in universities. Moreover, it is postulated that the way decisions are made, how leadership and management styles are conducted, the values embedded into organisational cultures, and how these broader structures define processes can either propel or steer student unrest in universities. Additionally, it is recommended that further empirical studies be conducted to better understand and improve university policies in order to ensure safe environments for all members. Ultimately, such strategies may have widespread positive effects across university communities in Africa.

References for Article Number One

Abdolrahimi, M., Ghiyasvandian, S., Zakerimoghadam, M., & Ebadi, A. (2017). Therapeutic communication in nursing students: A Walker & Avant concept analysis. *Electron Physician*, *9*(8), 4968-4977. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28979730

Akintola, B. (2010). The perils of protest: State repression and student mobilisation in Nigeria. In *Encountering the Nigerian state* (pp. 99–121). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Alreemy, Z., Chang, V., Walters, R., & Wills, G. (2016). Critical success factors (CSFs) for information technology governance (ITG). *International Journal of Information Management*, *36*(6), 907–916. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.05.017

Aluede, O., Jimoh, B., Agwinede, B. O., & Omoregie, E. O. (2005). Student unrest in Nigerian universities: Looking back and forward. *Journal of Social Sciences*, *10*(1), 17-22.

Amitay, M., Popper, M., & Lipshitz, R. (2005). Leadership styles and organizational learning in community clinics. *The Learning Organization*, 12(1), 57-70. https://doi.org/10.1108/09696470510574269

Anjum, S., & Aijaz, A. (2014). Student's unrest: Causes and remedies. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, *5*(6), 767-769.

Bogler, R., Caspi, A., & Roccas, S. (2013). Transformational and passive leadership. Educational Management Administration &Amp; *Leadership*, 41(3), 372-392. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143212474805

Carangio, V. (2021). Responsible research practice: revisiting transformative paradigm in social research. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 44*(8), 1406–1408. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1831569

Chemutai, B., Onkware, K., & Iteyo, C. (2020). Nature of student unrest in secondary schools in Kericho county Kenya. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 7(11), 6293-6307. https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v7i011.04

Doctors, S. (2001). Historical Problematics of the Collaborative Divide. In *ACSA Teachers Seminar, Performative Practices: Architecture and Engineering in the 21st Century.* New York (June 16–18). Available for download at http://apps. acsa-arch. org/resources/proceedings/indexsearch.aspx.

Dube, B., Nkoane, M. M., & Hlalele, D. (2017). The ambivalence of freedom of religion, and unearthing the unlearnt lessons of religious freedom from the Jonestown incident: A decoloniality approach. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, *30*(2), 330-349. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2017/v30n2a14

Ebrahim, N. (2023). CPUT buildings set alight as student protests escalate. News 24. https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/cput-buildings-set-alight-as-student-protests-escalate-20230510

Etadon, F. I. (2013). Campus conflicts involving students' and university management in Nigeria: The case of the University of Ibadan. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, *5*(3), 333-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2013.11890094

Fomunyam, K. G. (2017). Student protest and the culture of violence at African universities: An inherited ideological trait. *Yesterday and Today*, (17), 38-63. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2017/n17a3

Fung, H. T. (2021). Impacts of the socio-political instability in Hong Kong on university students' learning experience. 7th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'21). https://doi.org/10.4995/head21.2021.12834

Gan, I. (2017). Advancing a Distributive-Bargaining and Integrative-Negotiation Integral System: A Values-Based Negotiation Model (VBM). *Social Sciences*, *6*(4), 115. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6040115

Garcia, J., & Shirley, V. (2012). Performing decolonisation: Lessons learned from Indigenous youth, teachers and leaders' engagement with critical Indigenous pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *28*(2), 76-91.

Gbadamosi, T. V. (2017). „Students' Unrest: Suggested Measures for Building Peaceful Learning Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Oyo State,". *Building Safer World through Education*, 931-946.

Greeff, M., Mostert, K., Kahl, C., & Jonker, C. (2021). The# Feesmustfall Protests in South Africa: Exploring First-Year Students' Experiences at a Peri-Urban University Campus. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *35*(4), 78-103. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-high_v35_n4_a6

Gukurume, S. (2017). # ThisFlag and# ThisGown cyber protests in Zimbabwe: Reclaiming political space. *African Journalism Studies*, *38*(2), 49-70. https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2017.1354052

Hamilton, L. T., & Nielsen, K. (2021). *Broke: The racial consequences of underfunding public universities*. University of Chicago Press.

Hodgkinson, D. (2013). The 'hardcore' student activist: The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), state violence, and frustrated masculinity, 2000–2008. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *39*(4), 863-883. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2013.858538

Isalano, M. A. (2021). Relationship between church appointed school administrative leadership and the management of the students' unrest in siaya county. *Journal of Education*, 4(5), 94-107. https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4014

Joseph Efe, Anho, Jane Golohor Kporhobo, & Juliet Ufuoma Aweto (2023). Students unrest in nigerian universities: types, causes and administrative strategies to the challenges. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 18(3), 376-385. https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2023.18.3.1072

Kahn, S., & Zeidler, D. L. (2017). A case for the use of conceptual analysis in science education research. *Journal of research in science teaching*, *54*(4), 538-551. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21376

Lapiņa, I., Kairiša, I., & Aramina, D. (2015). Role of organisational culture in the quality management of university. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, *213*, 770-774. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.472

Le Grange, L., Du Preez, P., Ramrathan, L., & Blignaut, S. (2020). Decolonising the university curriculum or decolonial-washing? A multiple case study. *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, (80), 25-48. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i80a02

Lee, J. C., Shiue, Y. C., & Chen, C. Y. (2016). Examining the impacts of organisational culture and top management support of knowledge sharing on the success of software process improvement. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, *54*, 462-474. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.030

Lindblad, J. T., & Post, P. (2009). Indonesian economic decolonisation in regional and international perspective an introduction. In *Indonesian Economic Decolonization in Regional and International Perspective* (pp. 1-15). Brill.

Luescher-Mamashela, T. M., & Mugume, T. (2014). Student representation and multiparty politics in African higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(3), 500-515. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.896183

Luescher-Mamashela, T. M., Luescher, T. M., & Kiiru, S. (2011). *The University in Africa and Democratic Citizenship: Hothouse Or Training Ground?: Report on Student Surveys Conducted at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania*. African Minds.

Maldonado-Torres, N., & Cavooris, R. (2017). The decolonial turn. In *New approaches to Latin American studies* (pp. 111-127). Routledge.

Marete, J. B., Mugwe, M., Ochieng, P., & Reche, G. N. (2020). An assessment of school management decision-making practices and its influence on students'unrest management in public secondary schools in Meru County of Kenya. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, *2*(3), 54-74.

Maringira, G., & Gukurume, S. (2016). Being Black'in# FeesMustFall and# FreeDecolonisedEducation: Student Protests at the University of the Western Cape. *An analysis of the# FeesMustFall movement at South African universities*, 35-48.

Maringira, G., & Gukurume, S. (2016). Being Black'in# FeesMustFall and# FreeDecolonisedEducation: Student Protests at the University of the Western Cape. *An analysis of the# FeesMustFall movement at South African universities*, 35-48.

Mertens, D. M. (2007). Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *1*(3), 212-225. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689807302811

Mertens, D. M. (2017). Transformative research: Personal and societal. *International Journal for Transformative Research*, *4*(1), 18-24. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijtr-2017-0001

Mpofu, S. (2017). Disruption as a communicative strategy: The case of# FeesMustFall and# RhodesMustFall students' protests in South Africa. *Journal of African Media Studies*, *9*(2), 351-373. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.9.2.351_1

Nazir, N., & Zamir, S. (2015). Impact of Organizational Culture on employee's performance. *Industrial Engineering Letters*, *5*(9), 31-37.

Ngidi, N. D., Mtshixa, C., Diga, K., Mbarathi, N., & May, J. (2016, June). 'Asijiki'and the capacity to aspire through social media: the# FeesMustFall movement as an anti-poverty activism in South Africa. In *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development* (pp. 1-11). https://doi.org/10.1145/2909609.2909654

Nkinyangi, J. A. (1991). Student protests in sub-Saharan Africa. *Higher Education*, *22*(2), 157-173. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00137474

Odebode, A. A. (2019). Factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions: implications for counselling practices. Mimbar Pendidikan, 4(2), 93-102. https://doi.org/10.17509/mimbardik.v4i2.22199

Okeyo, W. (2017). Student unrest in public universities in Kenya: the nexus between principles of governance and student leadership. *European Scientific Journal*, ESJ, 13(31), 159. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n31p159

Omodan, B. I. (2019). Defacing Machiavellianism in University Politics: A Discourse to Reconstruct Leadership through Ubuntu. *African Renaissance (1744-2532)*, *16*(4), 33-51. https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2019/16n1a2

Omodan, B. I. (2020). Combatting the imperativeness of modernity in students' unrest: the need to decolonise the minds through ubuntu. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(4), 310. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n4p310

Omodan, B. I. (2023). Addressing the underside of student unrest in South African universities using collegial leadership as approach. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 8. https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v8i0.273

Oriade, A., Osinaike, A., Aduhene, K., & Wang, Y. (2021). Sustainability awareness, management practices and organisational culture in hotels: evidence from

developing countries. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 92, 102699. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102699

Parent, J. D., & Lovelace, K. J. (2018). Employee engagement, positive organisational culture and individual adaptability. *On the Horizon*, 26(3), 206-214. https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-01-2018-0003

Pearce, K. E., & Vitak, J. (2016). Performing honor online: The affordances of social media for surveillance and impression management in an honor culture. *New Media & Society*, *18*(11), 2595-2612. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815600279

Pop-Vasileva, A., Baird, K., & Blair, B. (2011). University corporatisation. Accounting, Auditing &Amp; *Accountability Journal*, 24(4), 408-439. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513571111133045

Qutoshi, S. B. (2015). Auto/ethnography: A transformative research paradigm. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, *9*, 161-190. https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v9i0.14027

Rega, C., & Baldizzone, G. (2015). Public participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment: A practitioners' perspective. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, *50*, 105-115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2014.09.007

Romm, N. R. (2015). Reviewing the transformative paradigm: A critical systemic and relational (Indigenous) lens. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *28*(5), 411-427. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-015-9344-5

Ronald, K. (2023). Democratic management style and students' unrest in public boys boarding secondary schools in Bungoma county, Kenya. IJRDO- *Journal of Educational Research*, 9(6), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.53555/er.v9i6.5752

Rutazibwa, O. U. (2019). What's there to mourn? Decolonial reflections on (the end of) liberal humanitarianism. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, *1*(1), 65-67. https://doi.org/10.7227/JHA.010

Saleh, A. (2013). Relative Deprivation Theory and Political Violence in Iran. In *Ethnic Identity and the State in Iran* (pp. 85-103). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Saud, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2022). Civil resistance campaign for the Free Papua Movement and student protests in 2019 in Surabaya, Indonesia. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2022.2066653

Silva, J. M., Fernández, J. S., & Nguyen, A. (2022). “And now we resist”: Three testimonios on the importance of decoloniality within psychology. *Journal of Social Issues*, *78*(2), 388-412. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12449

Tikoko, B. J. and Kimame, L. (2022). Influence of disciplinary roles played by student councils in curbing the frequency of student unrests in public boys boarding secondary schools in Elgon sub-county, Kenya. *Journal of Education Management and Leadership* (JEML), 1(1), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.51317/jeml.v3i1.67

Uleanya, C. (2019). Comparative correlates of campus unrest nexus learning abilities of undergraduates in South Africa and Nigeria. *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development*, *8*(1), 83. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-155feaa1c3

Uyanga, U. U. (2016). Factors influencing student unrest in institutions of higher learning and its implications on the academic performance of students in University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Research in pedagogy*, *6*(1), 27-42.

Verjee, B. (2010). Service-learning: Charity-based or transformative?. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, *4*(2), 1-13.

Weaver, K., & Mitcham, C. (2008). Nursing concept analysis in North America: state of the art. *Nursing Philosophy*, *9*(3), 180-194. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1466-769X.2008.00359.x

Wits University (2022). Update on student protests (2 March 2022 - 18:00). https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2023/2023-03/update-on-student-protests-2-march-2022---1800.html

Ziai, A., Bendix, D., & Müller, F. (2020). Decolonising knowledge orders, research methodology and the academia: An introduction. *D. Bendix, F. Müller, F., & A. Ziai (Eds.), Beyond the Master’s Tool*, 1-16.

4.2 Article Two: Psychosocial implications of student unrest in Africa: The South Africa and Nigeria Perspectives

Abstract

African universities, especially those in Nigeria and South Africa, have been plagued by student unrest due to various socio-political and economic factors. This has resulted in significant disruptions in the academic environment. The unrest is driven by inadequate student representation, financial difficulties, and strained relationships between students and university authorities. These issues are further exacerbated by the historical and geographical contexts of each country. The goal of this study is to examine the comparative backgrounds and psychosocial deficiencies of Nigeria and South Africa regarding student unrest. Specifically, the study aims to address how these factors affect the level of unrest on campuses and the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders. The study is based on two theoretical frameworks: Environmental Determinism and Ubuntu. Environmental Determinism helps us understand the geographical issues (objective 1), while Ubuntu helps us analyse the psychological implications (objective 2). The study follows a Transformative Paradigm and utilises a qualitative research approach with participatory research as the study's design. One university was selected from each participating country, and a total of 28 participants were chosen using convenient sampling and snowballing techniques. The participants included community elders with geographical knowledge. Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. Socio-thematic analysis (StA) was employed for data interpretation. The study findings reveal that effective crisis management in universities requires a combination of administrative policies, conflict resolution committees, and security measures. Strategic planning and collaboration are crucial in addressing the underlying causes of unrest. However, reliance on reactive security measures and a lack of collaboration between the university and the community often exacerbate tensions and miss opportunities for sustainable conflict resolution.

Keywords: Psychosocial implications, student unrest, African universities, South African perspectives, Nigeria perspectives.

Introduction

African universities have experienced significant turmoil in recent decades, with unrest among students, staff, and university authorities. The social crises have been widespread, encompassing student rivalries, conflicts with faculty and administrators, and student unrest, which has been particularly alarming. Nigeria and South Africa have dealt with this issue violently through security forces (Fomunyam, 2017; Maringira & Gukurume, 2021). This study specifically focuses on the Nigerian and South African experiences, which are emblematic of the turbulence seen in universities throughout the region. To gain insight into this phenomenon, it is crucial to understand the root causes and consequences of this behaviour. These causes often include a desire for greater student representation (Espinoza & González, 2013; Omodan, 2020), inadequate facilities and resources, financial difficulties (Aluede et al., 2005; Mariene, 2012), health and safety concerns, victimisation by staff members who are accused of unfairness and favouritism, and underlying grievances between students, leadership bodies, and university management (Mutua, 2010; Marete et al., 2020; Maringira & Gukurume, 2021).

Despite the tumultuous political and social history experienced by Nigeria and South Africa, their universities hold vast potential. Political strife, racism, and military dictatorship have all served as barriers to realising these institutional ambitions, and student unrest continues to hinder progress. Multiple studies conducted over different periods support this argument, including Akinyemi (2002), Aluede (2000, 2001), Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi (2018), and Omodan (2020). As a result, student unrest of varying degrees has become pervasive within the university systems of these countries and is intertwined with the complexities of political processes. In South Africa, movements such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall exemplify how systemic exclusion, historical injustices, and epistemological marginalisation continue to fuel large-scale protests across institutions (Badat, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). In Nigeria, persistent unrest is linked to inadequate infrastructure, underfunding, autocratic leadership, and unresolved grievances dating back to the era of military rule (Akinyemi, 2002; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). These protests disrupt academic calendars, damage university property, and highlight governance deficiencies, rendering student unrest a structural and cyclical challenge rather than isolated incidents within African higher education systems.

The term "politics of process" in this study, as mentioned in the article by Omodan and Heydenrych (2023) (article 1), refers to the intricate workings and management of an organisation. This includes the formulation and implementation of policies, decision-making processes, management strategies, organisational culture and shared values, as well as rules and regulations governing behaviour. The argument here is that when these factors go awry, an organisation, including its human capital, such as students, is likely to face problems.

From a geographical perspective, the politics of the process that underlies student unrest are regional-specific. The issues vary significantly between geographical locations, and the impacts of demographic patterns, physical features, and differences in knowledge systems come into play. For instance, some universities in South Africa are located in historically marginalised rural areas, where student activism is profoundly influenced by spatial inequalities, inadequate service delivery, and a persistent demand for epistemic transformation grounded in the decolonial agenda (Badat, 2016). In contrast, the Nigerian university context is characterised by a densely populated urban environment, where unrest is frequently associated with infrastructural decay, erratic policy implementation, and the centralised nature of university governance, which reflects remnants of military authoritarianism (Akinyemi, 2002; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). These distinct demographic and institutional realities significantly shape the manifestation of unrest and the responses of stakeholders to crises in each context.

In other words, the way people from different places respond to issues could be linked to geographical factors that cannot be separated from the origin of student unrest. For example, the remnants of military rules in Nigeria and the history of anti-apartheid militarised resistance in South Africa contribute to the unique characteristics of student unrest in these locations. The geographical factors, combined with the behaviour of people and other unique factors, border on the explanation of these variations. In order to provide a viable solution to this problem, an exploration of the influence and interplay of spatial and geographical elements will provide a robust understanding of the differences and similarities in the politics of the process at different universities.

From a psychological perspective, navigating any crisis can be difficult and experiencing unrest can have significant consequences on mental health. Universities provide an important microcosm for understanding these effects, particularly for adolescents. Studies consistently show that experiences of unrest at universities directly impact students' psychological well-being, leading to a range of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive responses (Corrigan & Penn, 1999; Klar & Kasser, 2009; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Woodford et al., 2015; Houkamau et al., 2020). These experiences can intensify anxiety levels and make it challenging for individuals to maintain balance in their lives, ultimately affecting their academic success. Unfortunately, after crises and unrest situations, university stakeholders often lack sufficient support systems in place to address their psychological well-being and mental health. Reports from the Education Bureau of Special Education Division and Educational Psychology Service (2016) and Nyutu et al. (2019) confirm that access to psycho-education, counselling, psychotherapeutic services, and social support is insufficient for helping individuals cope with the stress of the situation. These resources are essential for allowing people to rebuild their lives and regain a sense of normalcy. Without them, many members of university communities struggle with long-term trauma caused by unrest.

Thus, examining the psychological perspectives, this study aims to gain a better understanding of student unrest. Exploring these aspects provides a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions driving this phenomenon. Considering spatial and psychological factors broadens the investigation, offering insights into systemic factors and moving beyond observable evidence. This comprehensive interpretation can be used to address current issues and develop preventative measures against future unrest. Therefore, the study examines the comparative backgrounds and psychosocial deficiencies of selected universities in Nigeria and South Africa regarding crises and their management.

Research questions

Based on this, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- How has the comparative background of the selected countries regarding the crisis situation and its management affected the level of student unrest on campuses?

- What is the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders as a result of student unrest in selected universities?

Theoretical frameworks

The study is underpinned by two theoretical frameworks, namely environmental determinism and Ubuntu. Environmental determinism is employed to comprehend the geographical aspects pertaining to objective 1, while Ubuntu is utilised to explore the psychological implications associated with objective 2.

Environmental determinism as a lens to unravel geographical differentials

Environmental determinism has been a central concept in the study of human-environment relationships for many years. Supporters of this viewpoint argue that the physical environment directly influences human behaviour and thinking, while critics contend that this approach overlooks individual differences in experience (Peet, 1985; Livingstone, 2011). Although there is ongoing debate, Lethwaite's (1966) influential work provided a valuable starting point for understanding how environmental changes can impact humanity and our use of resources. Alexander (1999) also noted the significant role of climate and culture in shaping behaviour and guiding societal processes. Furthermore, recent research by Önal (2018) suggests that environmental factors can be viewed as governing forces that shape broader social structures and human decision-making in general. These diverse studies highlight the complexity of environmental determinism while shedding light on its potential to explain nuanced aspects of human life.

This study takes an environmental deterministic approach to examine the extent, motivations, and form of student activism, as well as the response of university administrations to student unrest. Much of this rationale can be traced to the natural environment, which influences how individuals interact with and respond to their surroundings. Recognising the unique environmental and cultural characteristics of each area is crucial for understanding why student activism manifests differently across universities. For example, many universities in South Africa are situated in rural areas, sometimes regarded as historically disadvantaged, where many students come from impoverished backgrounds and rely heavily on state funding and institutional

support for survival. The campus infrastructure is surrounded by economic deprivation and limited access to urban resources, which contributes to heightened sensitivity to service delivery delays, exclusionary policies, and perceived injustices. Conversely, the Nigerian university is located in a more urbanised and populated setting, where the student body is highly diverse, and the institutional culture is shaped by the pressures of population growth, intermittent infrastructural collapse, and competition for limited academic and financial resources. These contextual differences help explain the variations in the intensity, frequency, and form of unrest in both universities, as students' lived realities are shaped by the broader socio-environmental dynamics surrounding their institutions.

That is, the universities' awareness of their natural environment extends beyond geography, it refers to students' social and physical ecosystems. These include factors such as where students live (on-campus vs. off-campus), how they travel to university, the socio-economic spaces they move through daily, and their interaction with broader community tensions. Some students reside on campus in university-provided accommodation, often isolated from the townships or rural areas they originate from, while others commute long distances between under-resourced communities and campuses. This transitional existence, moving between contrasting worlds, shapes students' perceptions of inequality and exclusion. As Lewthwaite (1966) argued, individuals respond spatially to their environments, and in these cases, students' responses to unrest may be driven not just by university policies but by broader structural frustrations embedded in their everyday realities. Therefore, an environmental deterministic approach allows this study to capture the nuanced geographies of student life and inform tailored, context-sensitive strategies for addressing unrest.

Ubuntu as a lens to unravel the psychological effect of unrest

The concept of Ubuntu, often referred to as "I am because we are" or "humanity towards others," recognises the significance of establishing a robust communal bond (Sulamoyo, 2010; Larkin, 2015). This African philosophy underscores the necessity of unity for survival and encourages individuals to transcend individualism (Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). Ubuntu encompasses a system of values and principles that advocate for mutual respect and self-determination, aiming to enhance collective well-

being (Mabovula, 2011). Throughout history, Ubuntu has served as a tool for promoting social cohesion, illustrating the interconnectedness of human beings (Banda, 2019). Presently, this influential philosophy continues to inspire courage, compassion, and mutual understanding, shaping relationships between individuals.

African philosophies, including Ubuntu, present a novel perspective when seeking to comprehend and address the psychological ramifications of student unrest in universities. Ubuntu finds its roots in languages such as IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, and IsiSwati, embodying concepts of humanity, unity, and diversity (Brock-Utne, 2016). The phrase "a person is a person through others" encapsulates the core essence of Ubuntu, which places emphasis on relational interdependence and interconnectedness between individuals (Lefa, 2015; Variri & Variri, 2019). Thus, this study delves into African philosophies to shed light on the most effective approach to addressing the psychological impacts of student unrest in universities, employing a sense of humanity and respect for interpersonal relationships. In considering the psychological effects of student unrest and proposing solutions, the Ubuntu philosophy, with its focus on love, unity, oneness, and humanity, presents an effective framework to guide such efforts.

The idea of Ubuntu - with its emphasis on love, togetherness, trust, and understanding (Mawere & Van Stam, 2016) - extends beyond interpersonal relationships to encompass larger contexts like universities. It becomes particularly pertinent in the study of university governance. By establishing a shared sense of rights and space between university authorities and students, both parties can recognise that they are part of the same team. This understanding dissipates when universities fail to acknowledge the needs and desires of their students, resulting in unrest. Thus, reintegrating the values of Ubuntu into university governance and campus life, institutions can actively cultivate a culture of mutual respect, empathy, and shared responsibility. This reintegration can be operationalised through inclusive participatory structures, such as consultative student forums, restorative justice practices in disciplinary processes, and peer-led mediation initiatives. For example, university leadership can embrace dialogue-driven conflict resolution that considers student concerns not merely as complaints, but as legitimate contributions to institutional development, an embodiment of Ubuntu’s emphasis on interconnectedness and collective dignity (Letseka, 2012). The curriculum can also reflect Ubuntu principles by

embedding service-learning, community engagement, and African philosophical thought, enabling students to perceive themselves not as isolated individuals, but as relational beings within a broader learning community.

Although this study did not empirically test the application of Ubuntu-based interventions, evidence from previous studies supports the assertion that Ubuntu values can significantly enhance the relational dynamics within educational settings. For instance, Metz (2011) argues that Ubuntu-inspired leadership fosters relational harmony and accountability, which can reduce adversarial encounters in conflict-prone environments. Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) suggests that decolonial transformation rooted in African humanist values such as Ubuntu can restore trust and reshape governance in ways that validate the voices of previously marginalised stakeholders. Therefore, the assertion that Ubuntu "can significantly improve" student-authority relationships is not merely aspirational, it is grounded in scholarly evidence that highlights the potential of Ubuntu to reframe student protests not as threats, but as calls for recognition, fairness, and shared humanity.

The integration of the Ubuntu philosophy in understanding the dynamics of student unrest in African universities offers a valuable perspective for examining the socio-psychological aspects of this phenomenon. Ubuntu, embodying African communal values, highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within a society, positing that the well-being of one is intertwined with the well-being of all (Mawere & Van Stam, 2016; Banda, 2019). This viewpoint is crucial for analysing the causes and consequences of student unrest as it shifts the focus from individual grievances to a collective experience. It suggests that solutions ought to address not only the immediate triggers of unrest but also cultivate a sense of community and mutual respect among students, faculty, and administration. By applying Ubuntu principles, such as compassion, mutual understanding, and respect for human dignity, educational institutions can establish an environment that not only alleviates the factors leading to unrest but also fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. This approach aligns with the findings of Sulamoyo (2010) and Larkin (2015), who underscore the significance of strong communal bonds in addressing social challenges. Consequently, incorporating the Ubuntu philosophy into strategies for managing student unrest may provide a comprehensive and culturally grounded framework that resonates with the values and societal norms of the African context.

This integration would enhance the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving university governance and student welfare.

Methodology

Research paradigm

The study adopts The Transformative Paradigm (TP) as a lens. The TP is a paradigm that aims to transform and adapt existing knowledge by amplifying marginalised voices and narratives (Qutoshi, 2015; Whitaker et al., 2021). The TP provides a framework for critically engaging with power imbalances in dominant narratives and examining the epistemological limitations of current research practices (Armstrong & McMahon, 2013). By utilising the TP, researchers can gain valuable insights into previously unaddressed forms of knowledge production. In doing so, it enables fresh perspectives on how traditional findings can be used to generate innovative concepts and lines of inquiry. However, establishing trust between the researcher and the researched is crucial in order to facilitate inclusive knowledge generation when exploring different versions of reality and power dynamics (Mertens, 2010). Therefore, when adopted as a lens through which studies are conducted, the TP can significantly contribute to our understanding of social issues and how to effectively address them.

Research approach

The study is a qualitative study. The decision to employ a qualitative research approach in this study is justified by the nature of the investigation into student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities. Qualitative research is particularly effective at exploring complex social phenomena, allowing for a deep understanding of human behaviour, perceptions, and the socio-cultural contexts in which these behaviours and perceptions occur (Hancock et al., 2021). This approach is most suitable for this study as it aims to uncover the nuanced experiences, motivations, and impacts of student unrest, which are deeply embedded in the unique socio-political and cultural landscapes of the two countries. By using a qualitative approach, the research is able to capture the rich, subjective narratives of those directly involved in or affected by student unrest, including university authorities, students, and community members (Mason-Bish, 2019). This process facilitates the generation of detailed insights into the causes, manifestations, and resolutions of unrest beyond what could be achieved

through quantitative measures alone. The qualitative approach aligns with the transformative paradigm and participatory research design of the study, emphasising collaboration, the amplification of marginalised voices, and the pursuit of social change through research. This methodological choice ensures that the research remains sensitive to the complexities of the issue at hand, allowing for the development of grounded, contextually relevant findings and recommendations.

Research design

Participatory Research (PR) was chosen as the research design for this study due to its ability to foster collaboration between the researcher and the research subjects. This approach ensures that the solutions proposed are practical and align with the needs of the individuals being studied (Bach et al., 2017). PR also supports the transformation goals of the study, as it requires genuine involvement from the participants, allowing for meaningful change to occur. Additionally, the use of PR is consistent with the suggestion by Ruffa and Harrison (2020) that genuine participation should be enabled in transformative research employing this design. Therefore, PR is considered an appropriate choice for this research, as it promotes social engagement in exploring student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities.

The importance of PR in this study on student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is underscored by its ability to create a co-creative environment where knowledge is collaboratively constructed. PR is not just a methodology but a philosophy that values the experiences and expertise of all participants, treating them as co-researchers rather than mere subjects. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of student unrest, where understanding the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders - students, faculty, security personnel, and community leaders - is crucial. By incorporating these different viewpoints, PR ensures that the research outcomes not only capture collective experiences but also resonate with the complex real-world issues at hand. Moreover, PR's emphasis on mutual learning and empowerment aligns with the transformative objectives of the study, which aims not only to investigate but also to initiate positive change within the educational communities involved. The design's focus on practical and actionable solutions ensures that the research findings have direct implications for policy and practice, making it strategically suited to address the challenges of student unrest. Therefore, the choice of PR as the research design

enhances the study's capacity to bring about meaningful and sustainable improvements in the management of student unrest in the selected universities.

Selection of research site and research participants

One university was chosen from each participating country. The selection of participants consisted of twenty-eight participants, comprising fourteen individuals from a Nigerian university and fourteen from a South African university. Each university contributed a diverse group, including two members of university management, two members of conflict resolution committees, two student leaders, two lecturers, two security personnel, two members of counselling centres, and two community leaders. The participants were chosen based on their experience and involvement, as well as their actions and inactions in student unrest, using the convenient sampling technique. This technique was employed due to its time efficiency and ease of approach, assuming that the members of the target population are homogeneous and easily accessible (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Alvi, 2016). To gather data on spatial and geographical aspects, the snowballing technique was employed to select community elders who possess adequate geographical knowledge, cultural background, and familiarity with the university locations.

Method of Data Collection

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method is highly regarded as an effective tool for collecting data due to its alignment with the objectives of the research. It adheres to the principles of Participatory Research by involving stakeholders in discussions aimed at understanding their objectives and challenges (Kieffer et al., 2005; Barnack-Tavlaris et al., 2013). Through dialogue, questioning, and collaboration among stakeholders (participants), more precise and targeted solutions can be identified that might otherwise remain unknown. Nonetheless, the research acknowledges the potential existence of power differentials among participants and is interested in exploring how these differences can be managed and addressed. In addition to the FGDs, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted to complement and enrich the data collection process. These interviews were specifically employed with participants who were either unable to attend group sessions due to scheduling conflicts or institutional responsibilities or who preferred a more private setting due to the sensitive nature of the topic. The interviews provided a confidential space where

individuals, such as university staff, student leaders, and community representatives, could share personal or politically sensitive insights that may not have emerged in a group environment. This method ensured a diverse range of perspectives and strengthened the analytical depth of the study, particularly in exploring how roles and power dynamics shaped different experiences of student unrest. Transcriptions from these interviews were incorporated into the broader socio-thematic analysis, offering a rigorous, multi-layered understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Analysis

Socio-thematic analysis (StA) presents an innovative approach to data interpretation by synthesising various established methodologies. Introduced by Bunmi Omodan in 2019, StA is based on thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), as well as conversational analysis as outlined by Omodan (2019) and Nordquist (2019). Essentially, StA focuses on the social actions that are accomplished through dialogue - such as describing, agreeing, questioning, and offering - while also considering the underlying tone of voice that conveys sociality. This approach provides a more comprehensive perspective on the interactions between participants and their surrounding context. Omodan's socio-thematic analysis offers an in-depth method for examining power differentials in various settings. By employing a system of categorising, coding, and naming themes, this approach enables a deeper understanding of the social dependencies among participants, surpassing the limitations of traditional quantitative methodologies. In this study, through the thorough examination of data and conversational dynamics, previously unexpressed details become discernible. Undoubtedly, this technique has the potential to yield systematic findings that accurately depict the nature of power dynamics within the university society and community.

Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by the relevant ethics committee of Northwest University, South Africa. The research was conducted with rigorous adherence to the rules, standards, and ethical principles of investigation. Careful consideration was given to the applicable regulations in the selected universities for which permission letters were written. Additionally, measures were implemented to ensure ethical considerations and prevent potential harm to both researchers and participants throughout the data

collection process, as outlined by Dube (2016). Consent from participants was obtained, ensuring that all actions were carried out with mutual agreement. These steps allowed for a strategic and secure research process. Pseudonyms were used during the data production stage to protect the identity of the participants. The participants were coded as follows: university authorities (UA), members of committees on conflict management/resolution (CM), student leaders (SL), lecturers (L), security personnel (SP), one member of counselling centres (MCC), and one community leader (CL).

Presentation of data

The complex dynamics of crises within university settings necessitate a robust and comprehensive approach to crisis management. This analysis delves into several key themes related to crisis management mechanisms, psychosocial challenges caused by student unrest, and the support mechanisms for addressing these challenges. Drawing from the data, insights provided by university authorities, student leaders, security personnel, lecturers, and community members reveal the various strategies and their effectiveness in managing crises. The findings reveal a similar context regarding crisis management in both countries.

The themes explored include the role of administrative policies, the influence of spatial and contextual factors, the psychosocial impact of student unrest, and the mechanisms available to support those affected by these crises. This comprehensive examination aims to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and propose ways to enhance the resilience and well-being of the university community.

Crises management mechanisms

The participants from both countries discussed the different mechanisms that have been implemented in order to effectively manage crises. The examination of crisis management practices in universities serves to highlight the intricacies of management strategies, conflict resolution efforts, and security measures. These measures have a significant impact on both the internal operations of universities and their external collaborations. Please refer to the diagram provided for a visual representation of the data.

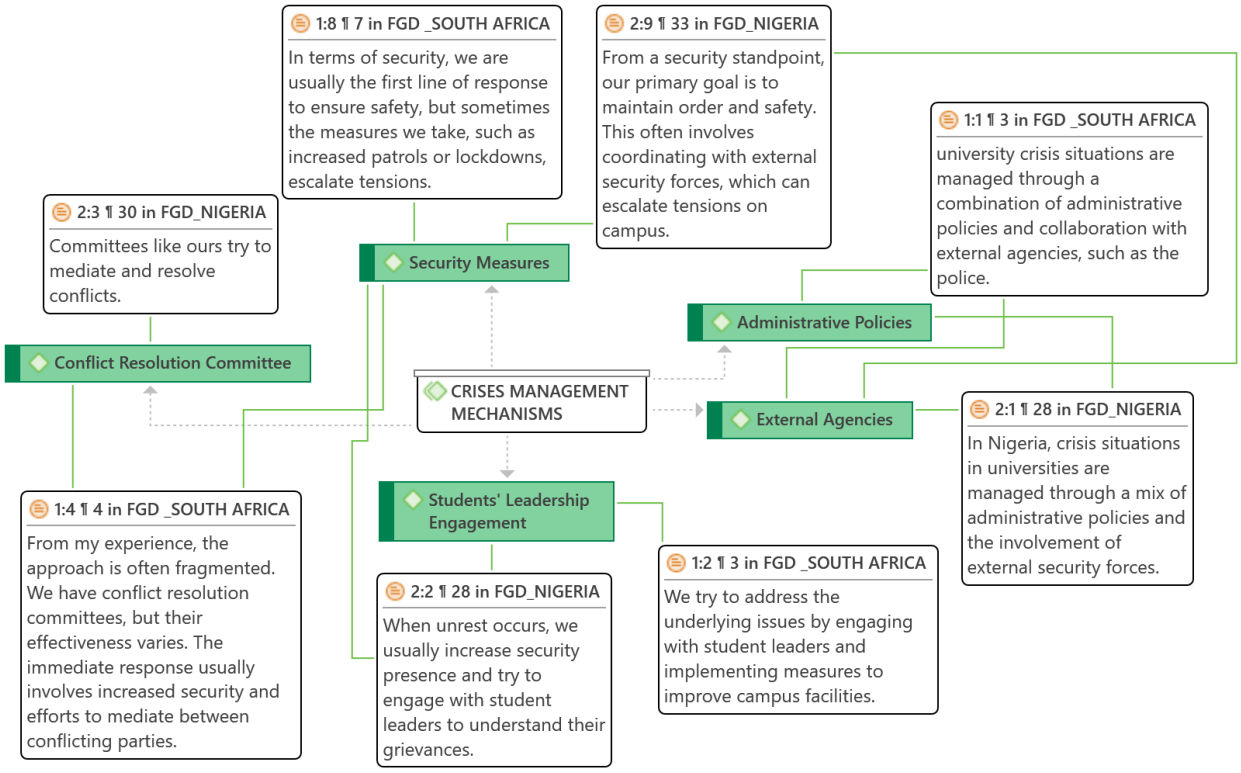


Figure 1: Crises Management Mechanisms

- **Administrative policies and collaboration with external agencies** - Administrative policies are central to crisis management, with universities often relying on strategic planning and collaboration with external agencies such as the police. This combination is important for the effective treatment of the problem. This was asserted by the University Authority from both countries.

  University crisis situations are managed through a combination of administrative policies and collaboration with external agencies, such as the police (University Authority/South Africa)

  In Nigeria, crisis situations in universities are managed through a mix of administrative policies and the involvement of external security forces (University Authority/Nigeria)

- **Conflict resolution committees** - The use of effective Conflict Resolution Committees was also mentioned by the participants. This plays an important role, although their effectiveness may vary. The immediate response includes increased security and reconciliation efforts, highlighting the need for a robust

and sustainable conflict resolution process. According to the conflict management representative from Nigeria, the "*Committee …try to mediate and resolve conflicts"* (Conflict Management/Nigeria). Similar to this statement, a conflict management representative from South Africa shared,

> "*From my experience, the approach is often fragmented. We have conflict resolution committees, but their effectiveness varies. The immediate response usually involves increased security and efforts to mediate between conflicting parties*" (Conflict Management/South Africa).

- **External agencies -** The FGD participants also shared the roles of External Agencies in Crisis Management. According to them, external agencies are often involved in university crisis management, demonstrating their reliance on external support to maintain order in times of crisis, as presented in the excerpts below,

  > *University crisis situations are managed through a combination of administrative policies and collaboration with external agencies, such as the police.* (University Authority/South Africa)

  > *In Nigeria, crisis situations in universities are managed through a mix of administrative policies and the involvement of external security forces* (University Authority/Nigeria)

  > *From a security standpoint, our primary goal is to maintain order and safety. This often involves coordinating with external security forces, which can escalate tensions on campus* (Security Personnel /Nigeria)

- **Security measures -** Participants also shared that security measures are an important part of emergency response for stability. However, using security guards and increased restrictions can sometimes worsen conflicts, suggesting the need for appropriate security measures. Participants shared experiences about initial security response during crises,

From my experience, the approach is often fragmented. We have conflict resolution committees, but their effectiveness varies. The immediate response usually involves increased security and efforts to mediate between conflicting parties (Conflict Management/South Africa).

When unrest occurs, we usually increase security presence and try to engage with student leaders to understand their grievances (University Authority/Nigeria).

Also, the security personnel representatives from different countries shared their experiences with the impact of security measures.

In terms of security, we are usually the first line of response to ensure safety, but sometimes the measures we take, such as increased patrols or lockdowns, escalate tensions (Security Personnel/South Africa)

From a security standpoint, our primary goal is to maintain order and safety. This often involves coordinating with external security forces, which can escalate tensions on campus (Security Personnel/Nigeria)

- **Students' leadership engagement -** Another strategy pointed out by participants is engagement with student leaders. The involvement of student leaders is recognised as important, and efforts are made to involve student leaders in addressing these issues. However, participants shared that the partnership must be meaningful and flexible to build trust and prevent conflict. According to a University Authority representative from Nigeria,

  When unrest occurs, we usually increase security presence and try to engage with student leaders to understand their grievances (University Authority/Nigeria).

Similarly, the University Authority representative from South Africa shared that they

… try to address the underlying issues by engaging with student leaders and implementing measures to improve campus facilities (University Authority/South Africa).

The views expressed during the Focus Group Discussions emphasised the importance of a comprehensive and fair approach to university crisis management, the implementation of administrative procedures, effective conflict management, appropriate protection and student participation.

Pattern of crisis management

The crisis management pattern in universities comprises various practices. This system is intricately connected to the historical context of protest and riot management in the country. The focus group discussion reveals several recurring patterns, as inferred from the participants' responses, thereby offering valuable insights into the management of crises. Refer to the diagrammatic representation of the data.

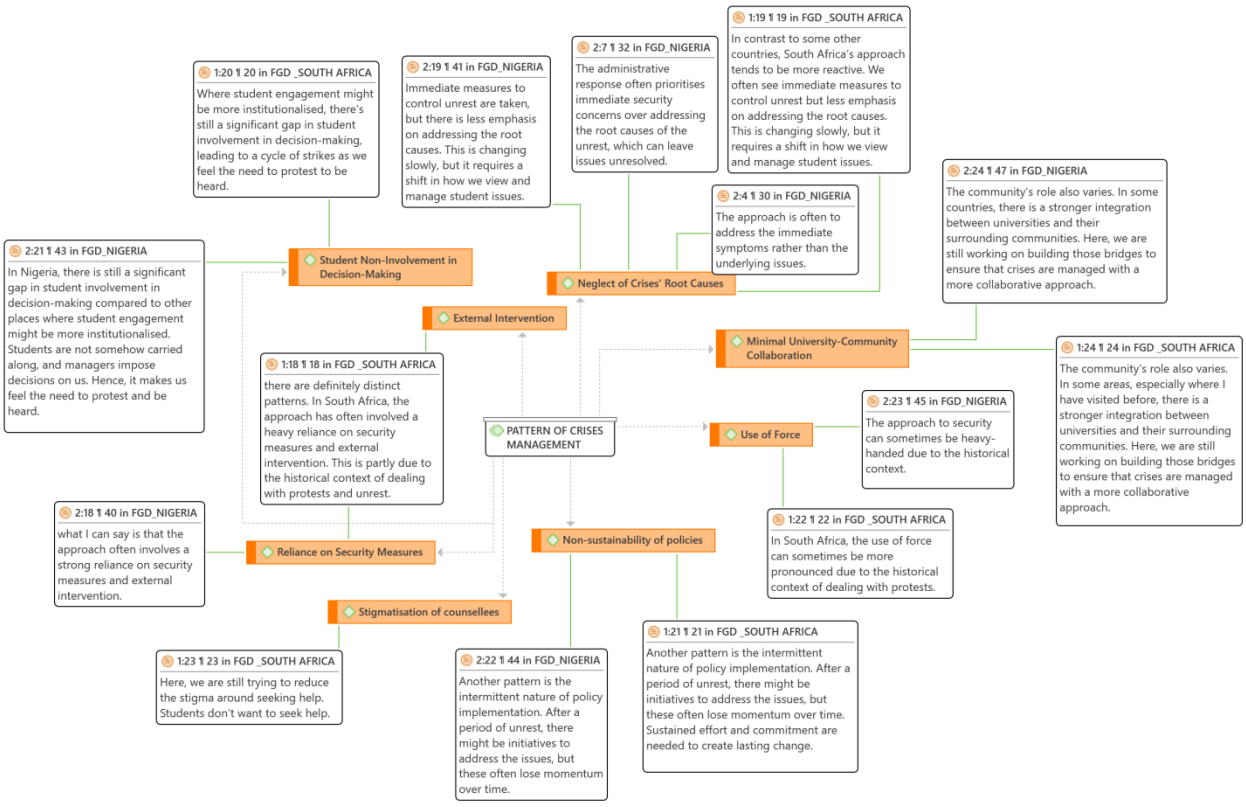


Figure 2: Pattern of Crises Management

- **Reliance on security measures/external intervention -** Participants from both countries observed that there is heavy reliance on security measures and external intervention. Security measures are the first response to a crisis, featuring quick, often forceful, intervention. Although important, these measures can sometimes increase conflict and must be resolved through other means.

There are definitely distinct patterns. In South Africa, the approach has often involved a heavy reliance on security measures and external intervention. This is partly due to the historical context of dealing with protests and unrest (University Authority/South Africa)

In South Africa, the use of force can sometimes be more pronounced due to the historical context of dealing with protests (Security Personnel/South Africa)

What I can say is that the approach often involves a strong reliance on security measures and external intervention. This is partly due to the historical context of dealing with protests and unrest. There is a growing recognition of the need for more preventative and inclusive strategies, but students are hard to manage (University Authority/Nigeria)

The approach to security can sometimes be heavy-handed due to the historical context. There's a need for a balance between maintaining order and respecting students' rights (Security Personnel/Nigeria)

- **Minimal university-community collaboration -** Another pattern observed by the participants from both countries is minimal university-community collaboration. The participating community leaders felt that efforts made to build strong relationships between the university and the surrounding community were not enough. As deduced from the quotations below, effective crisis management requires improved collaboration to ensure more supportive and cohesive responses.

  The community's role also varies. In some areas, especially where I have visited before, there is a stronger integration between universities and their surrounding communities. Here, we are still working on building those bridges to ensure that crises are managed with a more collaborative approach." (Community Leader/ South Africa)

"The community's role also varies. We seem to have good relationships with the universities, but it still does not translate to peace." (Community Leader/ Nigeria).

- **Neglect of crises' root causes -** The participants also pointed out that there is a reactive measure over preventative strategies. The approach to crisis management tends to be reactive, focusing on immediate control rather than addressing underlying issues. There is a need for a paradigm shift towards more preventative strategies to manage student issues effectively.
  According to the participants,

  In contrast to some other countries, South Africa's approach tends to be more reactive. We often see immediate measures to control unrest but less emphasis on addressing the root causes. This is changing slowly, but it requires a shift in how we view and manage student issues (Conflict Management/South Africa)

  …There are times when the response has been more reactive than proactive (University Authority/South Africa)

  The approach is often to address the immediate symptoms rather than the underlying issues (Conflict Management/Nigeria)

  The administrative response often prioritizes immediate security concerns over addressing the root causes of the unrest, which can leave issues unresolved (Lecturer/Nigeria)

- **Non-sustainability of policies -** Participants also shared that policy implementation is often intermittent, with initiatives losing momentum over time. Sustained commitment and continuous efforts are essential to create lasting change and prevent recurrent crises. One of the lecturers shared that:

  Another pattern is the intermittent nature of policy implementation. After a period of unrest, there might be initiatives to address the issues, but

these often lose momentum over time. Sustained effort and commitment are needed to create lasting change (Lecturer/South Africa)

Another pattern is the intermittent nature of policy implementation. After a period of unrest, there might be initiatives to address the issues, but these often lose momentum over time(Lecturer/Nigeria)

- **Stigmatisation of counselees -** One of the participants complained that there are many criticisms of mental health support among students. This challenge must be addressed to ensure that students can get the help they need without fear of judgment. "*Here, we are still trying to reduce the stigma around seeking help. Students don't want to seek help*" (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa)

- **Top-down/student non-involvement decision-making -** The students' leaders also complained about the reoccurring pattern of lack of genuine student engagement. Lack of good communication with students can lead to distrust and mistrust again, showing the need for a decision-making process with participation and participation. The lack of real student participation in the decision-making process leads to feelings of exclusion and distrust, leading to a cycle of protests and strikes. As shared in the quotations below, more inclusive and inclusive approaches are needed to close this gap.

  Where student engagement might be more institutionalised, there's still a significant gap in student involvement in decision-making, leading to a cycle of strikes as we feel the need to protest to be heard …As a student leader, I've observed that the management of crises can feel very top-down. There's often a lack of genuine dialogue with students before decisions are made. It used to have some mistrust, which further led to unrest (Student Leader/South Africa)

  In Nigeria, there is still a significant gap in student involvement in decision-making compared to other places where student engagement

might be more institutionalized. Students are not somehow carried along, and managers impose decisions on us. Hence, it makes us feel the need to protest and be heard (Student Leader/Nigeria)

Impact of psychosocial deficiencies

The influence of psychosocial shortcomings on crisis management in universities is significant and intricate. Several sub-themes surfaced during the Focus Group Discussions, shedding light on the broader consequences for students, staff, and the surrounding community. Refer to the diagrammatic representation of the data.

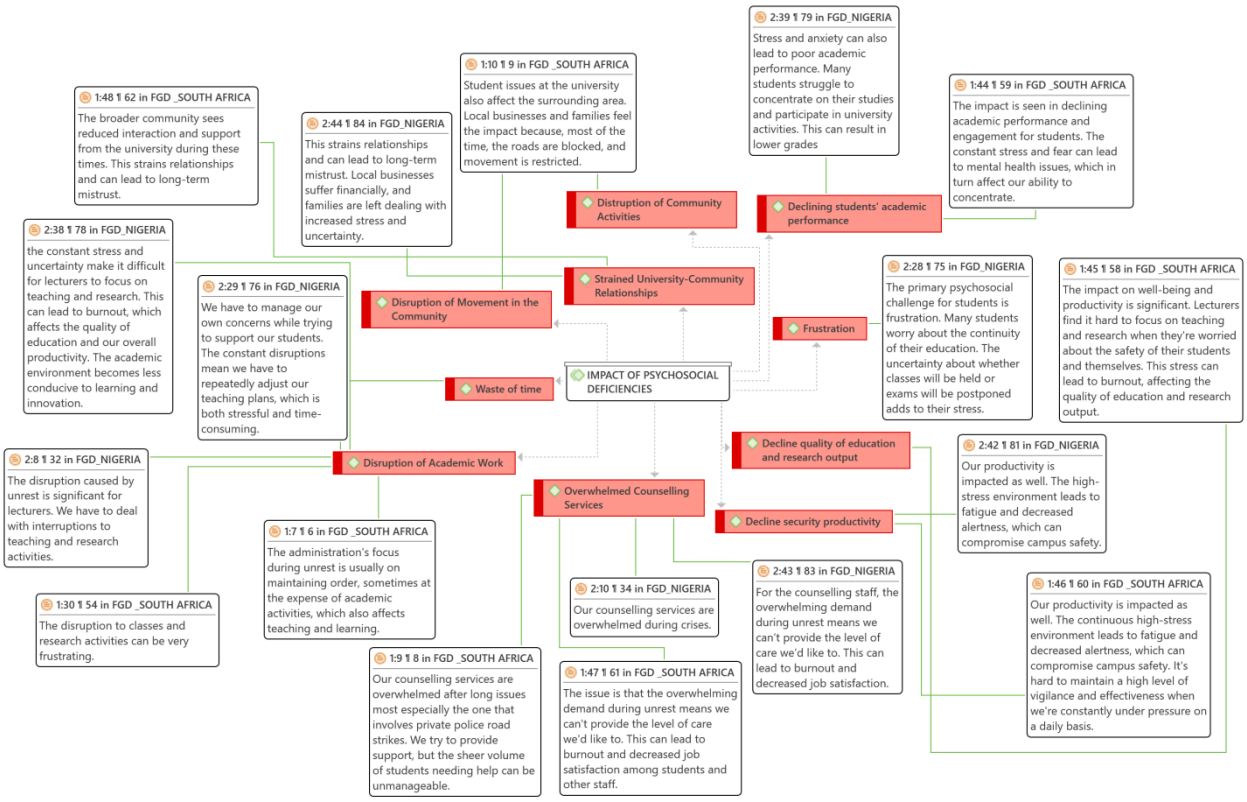


Figure 3: Impact of Psychosocial Deficiencies

- **Decline in quality of education and research output -** The participants expressed that the crises in the universities affect the overall work and well-being of the university community as a result, can have a great impact on providing quality education and productive output. This will also cause stress and burnout among lecturers, according to one of the participants,

  The impact on well-being and productivity is significant. Lecturers find it hard to focus on teaching and research when they're worried about the safety of their students and themselves. This stress can lead to burnout,

affecting the quality of education and research output (Lecturer/South Africa)

- **Decline in security productivity -** From the angle of the security personnel, there were complaints about a decrease in security productivity. This is because the security staff experience fatigue and lack of concentration due to constant stressful situations, which undermines the security of university grounds and the effectiveness of crisis management.

  Our productivity is impacted as well. The continuous high-stress environment leads to fatigue and decreased alertness, which can compromise campus safety. It's hard to maintain a high level of vigilance and effectiveness when we're constantly under pressure on a daily basis (Security Personnel/South Africa)

  Our productivity is impacted as well. The high-stress environment leads to fatigue and decreased alertness, which can compromise campus safety (Security Personnel/Nigeria)

- **Decline in students' academic performance -** Another observed psychosocial impact is the decline in students' academic performance as a result of mental health issues and concentration. It was noted by one of the student leaders that constant anxiety and fear among students lead to mental health problems, affecting their academic performance and poor participation.

  The impact is seen in declining academic performance and engagement for students. The constant stress and fear can lead to mental health issues, which in turn affect our ability to concentrate (Student Leader/South Africa)

  Stress and anxiety can also lead to poor academic performance. Many students struggle to concentrate on their studies and participate in university activities. This can result in lower grades… The primary psychosocial challenge for students is frustration. Many students worry about the continuity of their education. The uncertainty about whether

classes will be held or exams will be postponed adds to their stress. (Student Leader/Nigeria)

- **Disruption of academic work -** The participants also noted disruption of academic work. The focus is always on maintaining the system during the crisis that often disturbs the main academic activities, causing frustration among lecturers and students due to the interruption of classes and research.

  The administration's focus during unrest is usually on maintaining order, sometimes at the expense of academic activities, which also affects teaching and learning…The disruption to classes and research activities can be very frustrating. (Lecturer/South Africa)

  The disruption caused by unrest is significant for lecturers. We have to deal with interruptions to teaching and research activities…We have to manage our own concerns while trying to support our students. The constant disruptions mean we have to repeatedly adjust our teaching plans, which is both stressful and time-consuming…The constant stress and uncertainty make it difficult for lecturers to focus on teaching and research. This can lead to burnout, which affects the quality of education and our overall productivity. The academic environment becomes less conducive to learning and innovation (Lecturer/Nigeria).

- **Disruption of activities and movement in the community -** According to the community leaders, social activities are disrupted by community mobility. Student issues disrupt broad social activities, increasing feelings of distrust on campus. It affects surrounding communities, and road closures and movement restrictions affect local businesses and families, showing the wider impact of the school crisis. In the words of the community leaders,

  Student issues at the university also affect the surrounding area. Local businesses and families feel the impact because, most of the time, the roads are blocked, and movement is restricted (Community Leader/South Africa)

- **Overwhelmed counselling services/decline job satisfaction -** The counselling session complained of the inability to meet demand during unrest. Counselling services are struggling to meet high demand in times of crisis, leading to staff burnout, a decline in job satisfaction and insufficient student support.

  Our counselling services are overwhelmed after long issues, most especially the ones that involve private police road strikes. We try to provide support, but the sheer volume of students needing help can be unmanageable …The issue is that the overwhelming demand during unrest means we can't provide the level of care we'd like to. This can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction among students and other staff (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa)

  For the counselling staff, the overwhelming demand during unrest means we can't provide the level of care we'd like to. This can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction (Member of Counselling Centre/Nigeria)

- **Time wastage** - One of the participants also asserted that crises lead to time wastage during academic activities.

  We have to manage our own concerns while trying to support our students. The constant disruptions mean we have to repeatedly adjust our teaching plans, which is both stressful and time-consuming (Lecturer/Nigeria).

- **Reduced interaction and support -** Another impact pointed out by participants is reduced university-community relations and support in times of crisis, which can worsen public relations and lead to long-term distrust and challenges in collaborative efforts. In the words of a community leader,

  The broader community sees reduced interaction and support from the university during these times. This strains relationships and can lead to long-term mistrust (Community Leader /South Africa)

This strains relationships and can lead to long-term mistrust. Local businesses suffer financially, and families are left dealing with increased stress and uncertainty (Community Leader/Nigeria).

Generally, these findings support the need for a comprehensive approach to treating psychosocial problems and promoting problem-solving strategies. This includes promoting mental health support, fostering strong school-community relationships, and ensuring that both learning and safety needs are adequately addressed.

SPATIAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Conflict management in universities is highly influenced by spatial and contextual factors. These factors include the physical structure of the facilities, the economic and cultural conditions of the students, and the relationship between the university and the surrounding community. See the diagrammatic representation of the data.

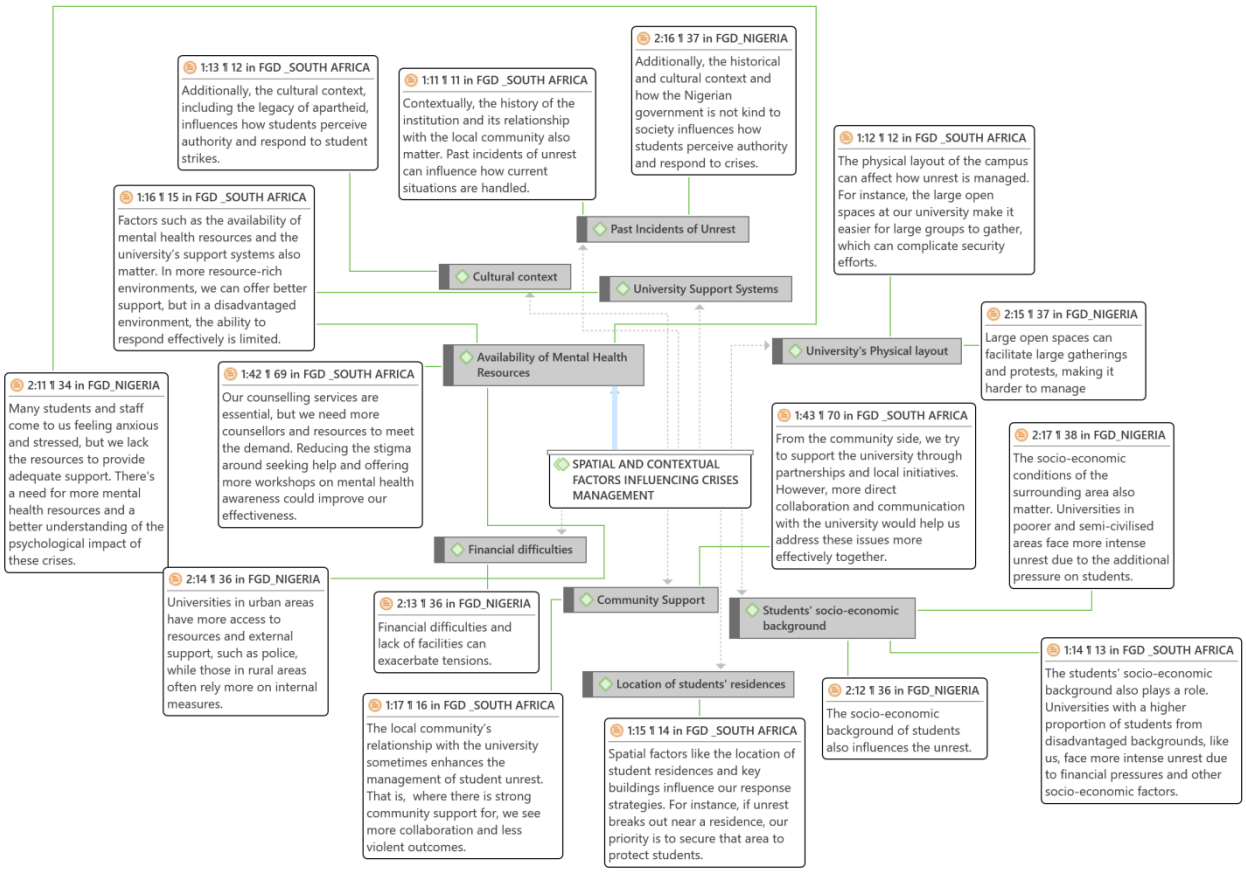


Figure 4: Spatial and Contextual Factors Influencing Crises Management

- **Availability of mental health resources** - As asserted by the member of a counselling centre, the resources available will influence how crises will be managed.

  Factors such as the availability of mental health resources and the university's support systems also matter. In more resource-rich environments, we can offer better support, but in a disadvantaged environment, the ability to respond effectively is limited…Our counselling services are essential, but we need more counsellors and resources to meet the demand. Reducing the stigma around seeking help and offering more workshops on mental health awareness could improve our effectiveness (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa)

  Many students and staff come to us feeling anxious and stressed, but we lack the resources to provide adequate support. There's a need for more mental health resources and a better understanding of the psychological impact of these crises (Member of Counselling Centre/Nigeria)

  Universities in urban areas have more access to resources and external support, such as police, while those in rural areas often rely more on internal measures (Lecturer/Nigeria)

- **Community support** - Community leaders discussed the impact of strong community relationships**.** Strong relationships with communities can improve crisis management through better cooperation and reduced violence. However, there is a need for direct and effective communication between the university and the surrounding community.

  The local community's relationship with the university sometimes enhances the management of student unrest. That is, where there is strong community support for, we see more collaboration and less violent outcomes…From the community side, we try to support the university through partnerships and local initiatives. However, more direct collaboration and communication with the university would help

us address these issues more effectively together (Community Leader/South Africa)

- **Cultural context** - Participants also noted influence of historical and cultural factors. Historical and cultural heritage, such as the impact of racism, determines how students perceive and respond to authorities, affecting student behaviour and management. "*Additionally, the cultural context, including the legacy of apartheid, influences how students perceive authority and respond to student strikes*" (Student Leader/South Africa).

- **Location of students' residences -** The proximity of student residences to high-risk buildings has significant implications for the planning of security responses in times of crisis. According to one of the Security Personnel

  Spatial factors like the location of student residences and key buildings influence our response strategies. For instance, if unrest breaks out near a residence, our priority is to secure that area to protect students (Security Personnel/South Africa)

- **Past incidents of unrest** - There is a historical influence of past occurrences on the current management of crises. A lecturer pointed out that "*Contextually, the history of the institution and its relationship with the local community also matter. Past incidents of unrest can influence how current situations are handled*." (Lecturer/South Africa). The student leader said, "*Additionally, the historical and cultural context and how the Nigerian government is not kind to society influences how students perceive authority and respond to crises"* (Student Leader/Nigeria).

- **Students' socio-economic background** - Financial difficulties and socioeconomic pressures contribute to student unrest, requiring that measures be developed to address the underlying issues.

  The students' socio-economic background also plays a role. Universities with a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds,

like us, face more intense unrest due to financial pressures and other socio-economic factors (Conflict Management/South Africa)

The socio-economic background of students also influences the unrest… Financial difficulties and lack of facilities can exacerbate tensions (Lecturer/Nigeria)

The socio-economic conditions of the surrounding area also matter. Universities in poorer and semi-civilised areas face more intense unrest due to the additional pressure on students (Conflict Management/Nigeria)

- **University support systems** - Effective crisis management depends on a strong support system, which is often rare in a critical environment, limiting the ability of the university to respond.

  "Factors such as the availability of mental health resources and the university's support systems also matter. In more resource-rich environments, we can offer better support, but in a disadvantaged environment, the ability to respond effectively is limited (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa).

- **University's physical layout** - The physical design of the universities, such as large spaces, can support large gatherings and increase security efforts, and special plans are required to address these issues.

  The physical layout of the campus can affect how unrest is managed. For instance, the large open spaces at our university make it easier for large groups to gather, which can complicate security efforts (Student Leader/South Africa)

  Large open spaces can facilitate large gatherings and protests, making it harder to manage (Student Leader/Nigeria)

Psychosocial challenges caused by students' unrest

During the Focus Group Discussion, it became evident that the psychological challenges arising from student unrest had a significant impact not only on the

students and staff of the institution but also on the neighbouring community. Refer to the diagrammatic representation of the data.

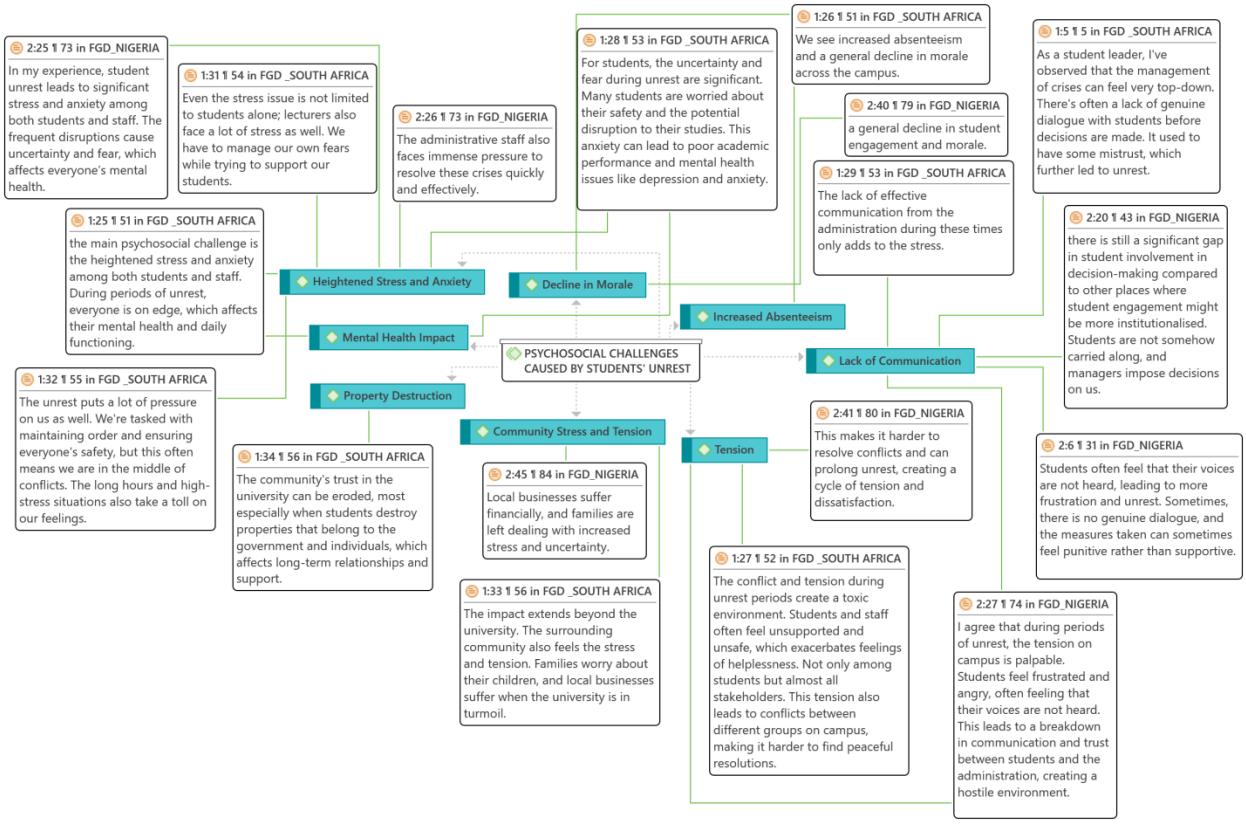


Figure 5: Psychosocial Challenges Caused by Students' Unrest

- **Community stress and tension** - According to the community leaders, the whole community is under stress and problems because of the university unrest, affecting the business of the community and families who care about the safety of their children. Conflict during a crisis creates a toxic environment, leading to a sense of distrust and further conflict between different groups in the university.

  The conflict and tension during unrest periods create a toxic environment. Students and staff often feel unsupported and unsafe, which exacerbates feelings of helplessness, not only among students but almost all stakeholders. This tension also leads to conflicts between different groups on campus, making it harder to find peaceful resolutions (Conflict Management/South Africa)

The impact extends beyond the university. The surrounding community also feels the stress and tension. Families worry about their children, and local businesses suffer when the university is in turmoil (Community Leader/South Africa)

*Local businesses suffer financially, and families are left dealing with increased stress and uncertainty (*Community Leader/Nigeria)

I agree that during periods of unrest, the tension on campus is palpable. Students feel frustrated and angry, often feeling that their voices are not heard. This leads to a breakdown in communication and trust between students and the administration, creating a hostile environment …This makes it harder to resolve conflicts and can prolong unrest, creating a cycle of tension and dissatisfaction. (Conflict Management/Nigeria)

- **Increased absenteeism/decline in morale** - The unrest has led to increased absenteeism and a general decline in student and staff participation, which affects the entire university campus**.** Representatives of the University Authority asserted that "*We see increased absenteeism and a general decline in morale across the campus*" (University Authority/South Africa)

- **Heightened stress and anxiety/mental distress** - As presented in the quotations below, most of the participants shared that students and staff experience a lot of stress and anxiety during unrest periods. This affects mental health and daily activities; students fear for their safety, and it disrupts their studies. Constant stress and fear during the unrest contribute to mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, which affect academic performance and general well-being.

  The main psychosocial challenge is the heightened stress and anxiety among both students and staff. During periods of unrest, everyone is on edge, which affects their mental health and daily functioning (University Authority/South Africa)

For students, the uncertainty and fear during unrest are significant. Many students are worried about their safety and the potential disruption to their studies. This anxiety can lead to poor academic performance and mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Student Leader/South Africa)

Even the stress issue is not limited to students alone; lecturers also face a lot of stress as well. We have to manage our own fears while trying to support our students (Lecturer//South Africa)

The unrest puts a lot of pressure on us as well. We're tasked with maintaining order and ensuring everyone's safety, but this often means we are in the middle of conflicts. The long hours and high-stress situations also take a toll on our feelings (Security Personnel/South Africa)

In my experience, student unrest leads to significant stress and anxiety among both students and staff. The frequent disruptions cause uncertainty and fear, which affects everyone's mental health…The administrative staff also faces immense pressure to resolve these crises quickly and effectively (University Authority/South Africa)

- **Lack of communication** - A top-down approach to problem management and a lack of effective communication lead to mistrust and anxiety, hindering effective problem-solving.

  As a student leader, I've observed that the management of crises can feel very top-down. There's often a lack of genuine dialogue with students before decisions are made. It used to have some mistrust, which further led to unrest…The lack of effective communication from the administration during these times only adds to the stress (Student Leader/South Africa)

  Students often feel that their voices are not heard, leading to more frustration and unrest. Sometimes, there is no genuine dialogue, and the

measures taken can sometimes feel punitive rather than supportive…there is still a significant gap in student involvement in decision-making compared to other places where student engagement might be more institutionalised. Students are not somehow carried along, and managers impose decisions on us (Student Leader/Nigeria)

I agree that during periods of unrest, the tension on campus is palpable. Students feel frustrated and angry, often feeling that their voices are not heard. This leads to a breakdown in communication and trust between students and the administration, creating a hostile environment (Conflict Management/Nigeria)

- **Property destruction** - Property destruction during a crisis undermines community trust in the university and destroys long-term relationships.

  The community's trust in the university can be eroded, most especially when students destroy properties that belong to the government and individuals, which affects long-term relationships and support (Community Leader/South Africa)

From the findings, social challenges include increased stress and anxiety, low mood, increased lack of opportunities and lack of effective relationships. These factors contribute to a toxic environment and cause long-term problems such as mental health problems, social disruption and property destruction.

Support mechanisms for psychosocial deficiencies

The support system for managing psychosocial deficiencies plays a crucial role in crisis management. It is imperative to adopt a comprehensive and collaborative approach to enhance the mental health and general well-being of the university community. The following section presents the findings and includes quotes from participants to offer valuable insights into their perspectives.

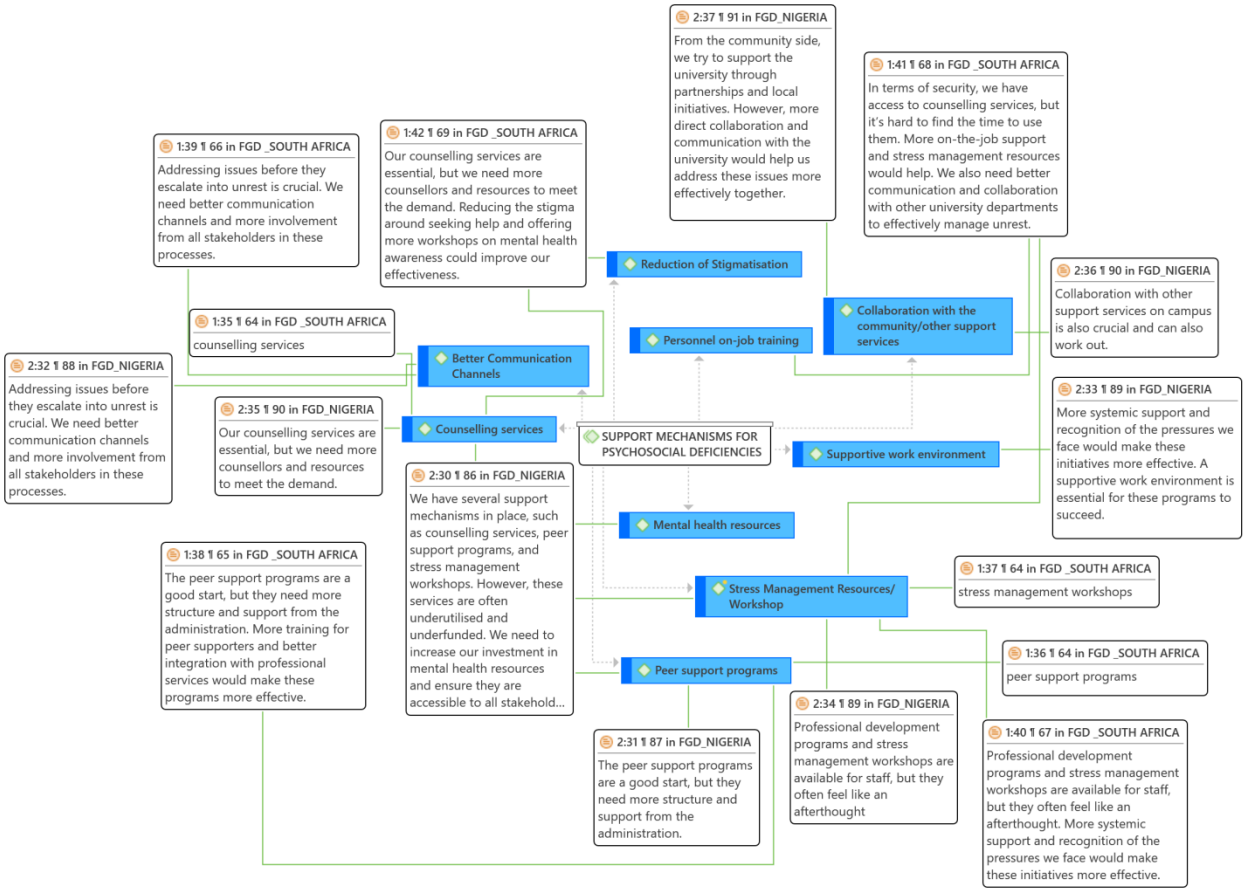


Figure 6: Support Mechanisms for Psychosocial Deficiencies

- **Better communication channels -** Establishing communication channels and involving all stakeholders can help solve problems before they escalate, promoting a faster approach to problem management, according to the conflict management representative.

  Addressing issues before they escalate into unrest is crucial. We need better communication channels and more involvement from all stakeholders in these processes (Conflict Management/South Africa)

- **Community partnerships/other support services:** Collaborating with external support services and local communities can create a comprehensive support network that benefits both students and staff.

  Collaboration with other support services on campus is also crucial and can also work out (Member of Counselling Centre/Nigeria)

From the community side, we try to support the university through partnerships and local initiatives. However, more direct collaboration and communication with the university would help us address these issues more effectively together (Conflict Management/Nigeria).

- **Counselling services and mental health resources**: Increasing counselling services and mental health resources, reducing the stigma associated with seeking help, can improve mental health outcomes. Similar to counselling services, expanding mental health resources and ensuring they are accessible to all university community members is critical. This includes increasing the number of mental health professionals and integrating mental health education into the university's framework. According to the representative of the counselling centre, the

  …counselling services are essential, but we need more counsellors and resources to meet the demand. Reducing the stigma around seeking help and offering more workshops on mental health awareness could improve our effectiveness (Member of Counseling Centre/South Africa)

  We have several support mechanisms in place, such as counselling services, peer support programs, and stress management workshops. However, these services are often underutilised and underfunded. We need to increase our investment in mental health resources and ensure they are accessible to all stakeholders (University Authority/Nigeria)

  Our counselling services are essential, but we need more counsellors and resources to meet the demand (Member of Counseling Centre/Nigeria)

- **Peer support programs -** Building and supporting peer support programs with appropriate training, organisation, and professional services can increase their crisis management effectiveness. The student leader pointed out that,

  The peer support programs are a good start, but they need more structure and support from the administration. More training for peer supporters and better integration with professional services would make these programs more effective (Student Leader/South Africa)

We have several support mechanisms in place, such as counselling services, peer support programs, and stress management workshops. However, these services are often underutilised and underfunded. We need to increase our investment in mental health resources and ensure they are accessible to all stakeholders (University Authority/Nigeria)

The peer support programs are a good start, but they need more structure and support from the administration (Student Leader/Nigeria)

- **Personnel on-the-job training** - Providing workplace support and stress management tools, especially for security personnel and other employees, can help manage sustainability-related stress from the perspective of security personnel.

  In terms of security, we have access to counselling services, but it's hard to find the time to use them. More on-the-job support and stress management resources would help. We also need better communication and collaboration with other university departments to effectively manage unrest (Security Personnel/South Africa)

- **Reduction of stigmatisation** - reducing stigma around mental health and raising awareness through education can encourage more people to seek the help they need.

  Our counselling services are essential, but we need more counsellors and resources to meet the demand. Reducing the stigma around seeking help and offering more workshops on mental health awareness could improve our effectiveness." (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa)

- **Stress management resources/workshops** - In the view of the participants, providing stress management workshops and professional development programs can help create a healthy university environment by supporting and understanding employee stress.

  Professional development programs and stress management workshops are available for staff, but they often feel like an

afterthought. More systemic support and recognition of the pressures we face would make these initiatives more effective (Lecturer/South Africa)

In terms of security, we have access to counselling services, but it's hard to find the time to use them. More on-the-job support and stress management resources would help. We also need better communication and collaboration with other university departments to effectively manage unrest (Security Personnel/South Africa)

Professional development programs and stress management workshops are available for staff, but they often feel like an afterthought…More systemic support and recognition of the pressures we face would make these initiatives more effective. A supportive work environment is essential for these programs to succeed (Lecturer/Nigeria)

The group discussions show that effective support systems for social psychological problems require different approaches. Important steps include the development of communication channels, the expansion of community relations and other support services, the expansion of counselling and mental health, and the development of peer support programs. In addition, providing on-the-job training, reducing criticism, and providing stress management resources and education are essential to creating a supportive and flexible school environment.

Discussion of findings

The discussion of findings section comprehensively addresses the two main research questions of the study, which are how the comparative background of Nigeria and South Africa influences the level of student unrest on campuses and the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders as a result of student unrest in selected universities. This section explores crisis management mechanisms, patterns of crisis management, the impact of psychosocial deficiencies, and the influence of spatial and contextual factors to provide a nuanced understanding of the underlying causes and effects of student unrest. Moreover, the analysis of psychosocial

challenges and support mechanisms emphasises the crucial necessity for tailored strategies to cultivate a supportive and resilient academic environment.

Crises management mechanisms

The study uncovers that crisis management mechanisms in universities in South Africa and Nigeria comprise a combination of administrative policies, conflict resolution committees, security measures, and engagement with student leadership. This finding corroborates the existing literature, which emphasises the significance of strategic planning and collaboration with external agencies such as the police to effectively handle university crises (University Authority/South Africa, University Authority/Nigeria). According to Czerniewicz et al. (2019), administrative policies play a crucial role in addressing the root causes of unrest, such as financial exclusion and epistemological biases, thereby promoting inclusivity in education. Similarly, Anho (2023) highlights the importance of administrative measures and effective communication channels between students and university management in preventing disruptive behaviour in Nigerian universities. Taking the theoretical perspective of environmental determinism, Alexander (1999) suggests that the effectiveness of these mechanisms is influenced by geographical and cultural contexts, which shape the implementation and perception of crisis management strategies. Furthermore, the Ubuntu philosophy, as described by Thakhathi and Netshitangani (2020), underscores the necessity of unity and collective effort in crisis management, suggesting that these mechanisms should foster a sense of community and mutual respect to be effective. This comprehensive approach ensures that both immediate security concerns and long-term socio-cultural factors are addressed in managing student unrest.

Pattern of crisis management

The study reveals that crisis management in universities tends to be reactive, relying heavily on security measures and lacking in university-community collaboration. This finding is supported by existing literature, which indicates that universities in South Africa and Nigeria prioritise immediate security responses over proactive strategies (Czerniewicz et al., 2019; Anho, 2023). Czerniewicz et al. (2019) note that in South Africa, historical approaches to managing protests often involve forceful security interventions, reflecting a reactive approach. Similarly, Anho (2023) points out that Nigerian universities frequently implement administrative policies focused on

immediate control rather than addressing underlying issues. Drawing from the theoretical perspective of environmental determinism, Lewthwaite (1966) suggests that these reactive measures are influenced by the geographic and historical contexts of the regions, where past experiences of military rule and apartheid have shaped current practices. The Ubuntu philosophy, as articulated by Mawere and Van Stam (2016), emphasises the significance of community engagement and collective decision-making. The study's identification of a lack of university-community collaboration contradicts the principles of Ubuntu, which advocate for inclusive and participatory approaches to crisis management. By disregarding these communal bonds, universities may escalate tensions and miss opportunities for sustainable conflict resolution.

Impact of psychosocial deficiencies

The study has demonstrated that psychosocial deficiencies have a significant impact on students, staff, and the wider community, resulting in a deterioration in the quality of education, heightened stress and anxiety levels, and decreased productivity. This finding is supported by existing literature, which highlights the adverse effects of student unrest on mental health and academic performance. For example, Woodford et al. (2015) discuss how psychological distress caused by unrest impairs students' ability to concentrate and succeed academically, while Nyutu et al. (2019) emphasise the lack of adequate mental health support in universities, exacerbating stress and anxiety among students and staff. From an environmental determinism standpoint, Alexander (1999) suggests that the physical and socio-economic environment plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' psychological responses. The findings of this study align with this view, as the environmental stressors present in the university setting contribute to an overall decline in well-being and productivity. The Ubuntu philosophy, as described by Lefa (2015), underscores the significance of communal support and collective well-being. The absence of robust support systems and the resulting psychosocial deficiencies contradict Ubuntu's emphasis on interconnectedness and mutual support, leading to increased feelings of isolation and mental health problems. By neglecting to address these deficiencies, universities not only compromise educational outcomes but also undermine the broader sense of community and collective well-being that are crucial for fostering a healthy academic environment.

Spatial and contextual factors influencing crises management

The study reveals that spatial and contextual factors, such as the physical layout of campuses, the socio-economic background of students, and the availability of mental health resources, play a pivotal role in crisis management. This finding is supported by literature that underscores the significance of these factors in shaping the dynamics of student unrest and the effectiveness of crisis management strategies. Herman (2016) discusses how the physical environment, including campus layout, influences the ability to handle large gatherings and protests, often complicating security efforts. Czerniewicz et al. (2019) observe that socio-economic disparities among students, particularly in South Africa, exacerbate feelings of exclusion and unrest, necessitating tailored approaches to crisis management. From the theoretical perspective of environmental determinism, Livingstone (2011) suggests that geographical and environmental factors significantly influence human behaviour and institutional responses, underscoring the need for context-specific strategies in managing crises. The Ubuntu philosophy, as articulated by Banda (2019), emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing the socio-economic and cultural contexts to foster a sense of community and collective well-being. The lack of adequate mental health resources, as highlighted in the study, undermines the principles of Ubuntu by failing to provide the necessary support for individuals' well-being. Therefore, recognising and integrating spatial and contextual factors into crisis management strategies is essential for creating a more resilient and supportive university environment.

Psychosocial challenges caused by students' unrest

The study demonstrates that student unrest causes significant psychosocial challenges, such as increased stress and anxiety, higher rates of absenteeism, and a decrease in morale (University Authority/South Africa, Student Leader/South Africa). These challenges have been extensively documented in the literature, which establishes a link between unrest and various mental health problems, as well as reduced academic engagement. Klar and Kasser (2009) emphasise that exposure to unrest can heighten stress and anxiety among students, negatively impacting their mental health and academic performance. Similarly, Houkamau et al. (2020) highlight how student unrest leads to significant psychosocial strain, contributing to a decline in both academic engagement and overall well-being. According to Alexander (1999),

from an environmental determinism perspective, historical and cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping the intensity and nature of these psychosocial challenges. Past experiences of conflict and unrest influence current responses and stress levels. Lefa (2015) articulates the Ubuntu philosophy, which underscores the importance of mutual support and collective well-being. The study's findings indicate that the lack of effective communication and inclusive decision-making processes exacerbates these psychosocial challenges, as it undermines the sense of community and interconnectedness at the core of Ubuntu. Thus, addressing these psychosocial challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that promotes inclusive decision-making, mutual support, and consideration of the unique historical and cultural contexts of each university.

Support mechanisms for psychosocial deficiencies

The study reveals that support mechanisms for managing psychosocial deficiencies include improved communication channels, expanded counselling services, peer support programs, and stress management resources (Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa, Student Leader/South Africa). These findings are in line with existing literature that emphasises the importance of comprehensive mental health support and effective communication in addressing the consequences of unrest. Nyutu et al. (2019) highlight the crucial role of counselling services and mental health resources in mitigating the negative effects of student unrest on psychological well-being. Similarly, Woodford et al. (2015) emphasise the significance of peer support programs and stress management workshops in establishing a network of care and support for students. Taking an environmental determinism perspective, Peet (1985) suggests that the effectiveness of these support mechanisms is influenced by the geographical and cultural contexts of universities, indicating the need for tailored approaches that take local conditions and resources into account. The Ubuntu philosophy, as articulated by Banda (2019), underscores the importance of cultivating strong community relationships and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. By incorporating these principles, universities can develop comprehensive support systems that address the immediate and long-term psychosocial needs of their communities, thereby enhancing overall well-being and resilience against future unrest.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concludes that student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities is significantly influenced by a combination of spatial, contextual, and psychosocial factors. Crisis management mechanisms, which are often reactive and heavily reliant on security measures, are found to be insufficient without strong collaboration between universities and the community, as well as effective communication channels. The study highlights the prevalent psychosocial deficiencies, including increased stress and anxiety, decreased morale, and reduced academic performance, emphasising the need for comprehensive support systems. Moreover, the findings emphasise the critical role of contextual understanding and the application of inclusive, culturally sensitive frameworks such as Ubuntu. It also highlights the importance of geographical insights provided by environmental determinism. This holistic approach is essential in addressing the underlying causes of unrest and fostering a supportive and resilient academic environment.

To improve crisis management mechanisms, universities should enhance administrative policies, strengthen conflict resolution committees, and engage student leadership meaningfully. In order to shift from reactive to proactive patterns, universities should reduce their reliance on security measures, enhance collaboration between the university and the community, and focus on preventative strategies that address underlying issues such as financial constraints and cultural marginalisation. Mitigating the impact of psychosocial deficiencies requires increasing access to mental health resources, promoting mental health awareness, and providing robust support systems for both students and staff. Addressing spatial and contextual factors involves tailoring crisis management strategies to specific geographical and cultural contexts, improving campus infrastructure, and developing programs to support disadvantaged students. Finally, addressing the psychosocial challenges caused by student unrest necessitates enhancing communication channels, implementing structured peer support programs, and fostering a sense of community through the principles of Ubuntu, which promote collective well-being and mutual respect.

References for article two

Akinyemi, B. (2002). *Management of students' crisis in Higher Institutions in Ekiti State* [Unpublished M. Ed Thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti].

Alexander, D.E. (1999). Environmental determinism. Environmental geology. *Encyclopedia of Earth Science*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4494-1_112

Aluede, O. O. (2000). An analysis of the attitude of university students towards campus unrest. *The Progress of Education,* 74, 154 –160.

Aluede, O. O. (2001). Factors influencing students' unrest in tertiary institutions in the Edo State of Nigeria. *Educational Research Quarterly, 24*(3), 10–26.

Aluede, O., Jimoh, B., Agwinede, B. O., & Omoregie, E. O. (2005). Student unrest in Nigerian universities: Looking back and forward. *Journal of Social sciences*, *10*(1), 17-22.

Alvi, M. (2016). A manual for selecting sampling techniques in research. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive,*1-56.

Armstrong, D. E., & McMahon, B. J. (2013). Developing socially just leaders: Integrative antiracist approaches in a transformational paradigm. In *Collective efficacy: Interdisciplinary perspectives on international leadership*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Bach, M., Jordan, S., Hartung, S., Santos-Hövener, C., & Wright, M. T. (2017). Participatory epidemiology: the contribution of participatory research to epidemiology. *Emerging themes in epidemiology*, *14*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12982-017-0056-4

Banda, C. (2019). Ubuntu as human flourishing? An African traditional religious analysis of ubuntu and its challenge to Christian anthropology. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, *5*(3), 203-228. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1acd9e91de

Barnack-Tavlaris, J. L., Garcini, L., Sanchez, O., Hernandez, I., & Navarro, A. M. (2013). Focus group discussions in community-based participatory research to inform the development of a human papillomavirus (HPV) educational intervention for Latinas in San Diego. *Journal of Cancer Education*, *28*(4), 784-789. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-013-0516-7

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Brock-Utne, B. (2016). The ubuntu paradigm in curriculum work, language of instruction and assessment. *International Review of Education*, *62*(1), 29-44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-016-9540-2

Corrigan, P. W., & Penn, D. L. (1999). Lessons from social psychology on discrediting psychiatric stigma. *American psychologist*, *54*(9), 765–776. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.9.765

Dube, B. (2016). *A socio-religious hybridity strategy to respond to the problems of religious studies in Zimbabwe* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).

Espinoza, O., & González, L. E. (2013). Causes and consequences of the student protests in Chile. In *Fairness in Access to higher education in a Global perspective* (pp. 237-257). Brill.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A. & Alkassim, R. A. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fomunyam, K. G. (2017). Student protest and the culture of violence at African universities: An inherited ideological trait. *Yesterday and Today*, (17), 38-63. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2017/n17a3

Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2001). *An introduction to qualitative research.* London: Trent focus group.

Herman, R. D. K. (2016). Traditional knowledge in a time of crisis: climate change, culture and communication. *Sustainability Science*, *11*(1), 163-176. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-015-0305-9

Houkamau, C. A., Stronge, S., Osborne, D., Sibley, C. G., & Dell, K. (2020). Exploring the relationship between support for protest and psychological well-being for Māori. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, *49*(1), 38-47.

Kieffer, E. C., Salabarría-Peña, Y., Odoms-Young, A. M., Willis, S. K., Baber, K. E., & Guzman, J. R. (2005). The application of focus group methodologies to

community-based participatory research. *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*, 146-166.

Klar, M., & Kasser, T. (2009). Some benefits of being an activist: Measuring activism and its role in psychological well-being. *Political Psychology*, *30*(5), 755-777. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00724.x

Larkin, A. (2015). I am because we are: Rethinking service learning and the possibility of learning from Ubuntu. In *International Service Learning* (pp. 266-276). Routledge.

Lefa, B. J. (2015). The African philosophy of ubuntu in South African education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *1*(1), 15.

Lewthwaite, G. R. (1966). Environmentalism and determinism: A search for clarification. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *56*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1966.tb00540.x

Livingstone, D. N. (2011). Environmental determinism. *The SAGE handbook of geographical knowledge*, 368-380.

Mabovula, N. N. (2011). The erosion of African communal values: A reappraisal of the African Ubuntu philosophy. *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 38-47. https://doi.org/10.4314/ijhss.v3i1.69506

Marete, J. B., Mugwe, M., Ochieng, P., & Reche, G. N. (2020). An assessment of school management decision-making practices and its influence on students'unrest management in public secondary schools in Meru county of Kenya. *African Journal of Emerging Issues*, *2*(3), 54-74.

Mariene, J. G. (2012). *Strategies for addressing student unrest in Secondary schools in Kenya*. Northcentral University.

Maringira, G., & Gukurume, S. (2021). Politics, (Re) Possession and Resurgence of Student Protests in South African Universities. *Politikon*, *48*(3), 486-505. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2021.1952738

Mason-Bish, H. (2019). The elite delusion: Reflexivity, identity and positionality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 19*(3), 263-276.

Mawere, M., & Van Stam, G. (2016). Ubuntu/Unhu as Communal Love: Critical Reflections on the Sociology of Ubuntu and Communal Life in sub-Saharan Africa. *Violence, politics and conflict management in Africa: Envisioning transformation, peace and unity in the twenty-first century*, 287-304.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). Philosophy in mixed methods teaching: The transformative paradigm as illustration. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, *4*(1), 9-18. https://doi.org/10.5172/mra.2010.4.1.009

Mutua, A. (2010). *The Impact of Leadership Styles on Student Unrest in Secondary Schools in Machakos District* (Doctoral dissertation, United States International University-Africa).

Nordquist, R. (2019). *Conversation analysis (CA): Glossary of grammatical and rhetorical terms*. ThoughtCo https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-conversation-analysis-ca-1689923

Nyutu, J. G., Merecia, A. S. A., & Wilfridah, O. (2019). Effectiveness of counselling services on retention rate of undergraduate students in selected universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling*, *11*(4), 30-38. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJPC2019.0558

Omodan, B. I. (2019). A strategy to enhance crisis management between students and university authorities in Nigeria. PhD thesis, University of the Free State, South Africa.

Omodan, B. I. (2020). Combatting the Imperativeness of Modernity in Students' Unrest: The Need to Decolonise the Minds through Ubuntu. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *9*(4), 310-319.

Omodan, B. I. (2020a). Combatting the imperativeness of modernity in students' unrest: the need to decolonise the minds through Ubuntu. *International Journal of Higher Education, 9*(4), 310–319. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n4p310

Omodan, B. I., Dube, B. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2018). Collaborative governance and crisis management in Nigerian universities: An exploration of students' activism. In M. M. Dichaba & M. A. O. Sotayo (Eds.), *Rethinking teaching and learning in the 21st century* (pp. 48-68). Pretoria: African Academic Research Forum.

Önal, H. (2018). Reflections of environmental determinism in the questions prepared by geography teacher candidates. *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, *8*(1), 74-92.

Peet, R. (1985). The social origins of environmental determinism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *75*(3), 309-333. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1985.tb00069.x

Qutoshi, S. B. (2015). Auto/ethnography: A transformative research paradigm. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, *9*, 161-190. https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v9i0.14027

Ruffa, S. C. & Harrison, K. (2020). Ask me what I want: Community-based participatory research to explore transition-age foster youth's use of support services. Children and *Youth Services Review*. 108, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104608

Sulamoyo, D. (2010). " I Am Because We Are": Ubuntu as a Cultural Strategy for OD and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Organization Development Journal*, *28*(4), 41-51.

Thakhathi, A., & Netshitangani, T. G. (2020). Ubuntu-as-Unity: Indigenous African proverbs as a 're-educating'tool for embodied social cohesion and sustainable development. *African Identities*, *18*(4), 407-420. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1776592

Van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2013). The social psychology of protest. *Current Sociology*, *61*(5-6), 886-905. https://doi.org/10.1177/001139211347931

Variri, N. & Variri, M. (2019). The teaching of Unhu/Ubuntu through Shona novels in Zimbabwean secondary schools: A case for Masvingo urban district. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 10(8), 101–114. https://doi.org/10.5897/JASD2018.0508

Whitaker, L., Smith, F. L., Brasier, C., Petrakis, M., & Brophy, L. (2021). Engaging with transformative paradigms in mental health. *International Journal of Environmental*

Research and Public Health, *18*(18), 9504. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189504

Woodford, M. R., Paceley, M. S., Kulick, A., & Hong, J. S. (2015). The LGBQ social climate matters: Policies, protests, and placards and psychological well-being among LGBQ emerging adults. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, *27*(1), 116–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2015.990334

4.3 Article three: A comparative management response to student unrest in African universities: Challenges and solutions

Abstract

Student unrest in African universities, particularly in Nigeria and South Africa, has had a significant impact on academic productivity and stability. This unrest is mainly attributed to factors such as inadequate resources, poor governance, and unresolved historical issues like military dictatorship and apartheid. As a result, it causes disruptions and delays in course delivery, property damage, and institutional instability, further exacerbating the existing challenges faced by these educational institutions. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the challenges that hinder the management of student unrest in Nigerian and South African universities and propose viable solutions. The study is grounded in the theory of Decoloniality, which focuses on the enduring impacts of colonialism and aims to decolonise knowledge and educational systems. Adopting a transformative paradigm, the research utilises a qualitative approach and a participatory research design to explore the dynamics of student unrest and its management. One university was selected from each participating country, with a total of 28 participants. The selection of participants was done using convenience sampling and snowballing techniques, which included community elders with extensive geographical knowledge. Data collection was carried out through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. Socio-thematic analysis (StA) was employed to interpret the collected data. The findings of this study indicate that inadequate funding, overcrowding, ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, academic pressures, and political interference significantly impede the management of student unrest in universities. To address these challenges, several essential solutions are proposed, including improving communication, promoting university autonomy, allocating resources effectively, providing conflict resolution training, revamping the curriculum, increasing funding, engaging the community, and providing mental health support.

Keywords: Comparative management, student unrest, African universities, challenges, solutions

Introduction

Student unrest has been a long-standing issue for universities in Africa, although its causes and consequences vary across national and institutional contexts. In South Africa, major protests such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall reflect tensions surrounding financial exclusion, epistemic injustice, and institutional cultures that continue to marginalise historically disadvantaged groups (Badat, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). Conversely, in Nigeria, unrest primarily stems from inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent policy implementation, tuition increases, and limited access to basic amenities such as housing and learning resources (Akinyemi, 2002; Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). In both contexts, broader societal issues such as poverty and unemployment exacerbate students' sense of exclusion and frustration (Maringira & Gukurume, 2016; Amutabi, 2002). Poor governance structures, characterised by top-down decision-making, limited student inclusion, and slow responsiveness, further fuel grievances (Muli, 2012; Mugume & Luescher, 2015). These drivers of unrest reveal not only localised problems but also structural weaknesses embedded within higher education governance systems.

The impact of student unrest on productivity manifests at both the student and institutional levels. At the student level, unrest results in missed lectures, delayed course delivery, psychological trauma, and academic demotivation, all of which hinder progression and graduation timelines (Mjema, 2013; Uyanga, 2016; Mbhele & Sibanyoni, 2022). Institutionally, protests lead to the suspension of teaching and research, tense negotiations with student representatives, damage to infrastructure, and significant financial losses (Obondoh, 2003; Odebode, 2019). Research outputs and funding streams are also affected when campuses are closed or when academic staff are unable to carry out scholarly work due to instability. As Ntim (2021) observe, university credibility suffers when academic calendars are frequently disrupted, leading to a loss of public confidence. Odebode (2019), Pitan and Muller (2023) and Gwama (2024) further contend that repeated unrest undermines institutional resilience, creating a cyclical crisis that hampers long-term planning and investment. Kaim, George, and Mpofu (2023) emphasise that prolonged disruptions compromise teaching quality and continuity, particularly when psychosocial support systems are

underdeveloped. Thus, the productivity toll of unrest is far-reaching, affecting learning, research, human resource morale, and institutional reputation.

Student unrest, as one of the social crises in the university system, has been linked to deficiencies in human relations interaction, which can lead to unease and disagreement (Cheloti et al., 2014; Odebode, 2019). These deficiencies in the university system may be connected to ineffective and non-inclusive governing processes (Is'aloluwa, 2014; Akinyeye, 2019). Between 2018 and 2019, the Qwaqwa campus of the University of the Free State in South Africa experienced four different instances of social unrest due to strained relationships between students and the university authority. Each of these incidents disrupted academic activities for at least a month. It is important to note that social unrest is not limited to the University of the Free State. According to Engelbrecht (2015), virtually all universities in South Africa have witnessed varying levels of student unrest, often driven by issues related to management or mismanagement, commonly referred to as the politics of process. Similarly, other universities such as the University of Zululand, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Pretoria, North-West University, Tshwane University of Technology, and the University of Cape Town have recently faced different instances of unrest (Mutekwe, 2017; Mavunga, 2019).

In the case of Nigeria, student violence has been a longstanding issue dating back to 1917. However, significant unrest began with the 1978 student unrest at the University of Lagos. Since then, there have been various incidents, including the 1999 students' unrest at the University of Ibadan, the social unrests in 2001, 2006, and 2008 at the University of Ado Ekiti, social unrest between students and the university authorities of Federal University of Technology, Akure in 2002 (Akinyemi, 2002), the University of Lagos in 2002, Ebonyi State University in 2004, the University of Lagos in 2004, and the Ladoke Akintola University crises in 2019 (Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020).

Managing student unrest in African universities presents a critical challenge that requires comprehensive and effective solutions. Scholars have proposed a range of holistic approaches to address the issues at hand, emphasising the importance of collaboration between governments, private organisations, and civil society to help African universities effectively tackle protest movements (Eldridge et al., 2018). By

coordinating efforts across all stakeholders, educational institutions can access the necessary resources to address the underlying causes of disruption and ultimately establish sustainable production capacities (Uyanga, 2016; Menon et al., 2022). This cooperative action is essential for developing meaningful solutions that will have a long-lasting impact on students' experiences

Despite the solutions mentioned above, student unrest continues to persist and remains a significant issue in universities. The motivation for this study stems from the ongoing and frequent incidents of student unrest and crises observed in various African universities. It is believed that these continuous disruptions are a result of the conflicting approaches to university governance between the authorities and the student body. Akeusola et al. (2012) have also noted that student crises are on the rise in universities. Etadon (2013), Davies et al. (2015), Omodan and Dube (2019) further confirmed that little has been done to address the problem adequately. Additionally, it is evident that remnants of military dictatorship in Nigeria and the militarised resistance to apartheid in South Africa have yet to be fully addressed. This may be due to the ongoing discourse on the decolonisation of universities, particularly concerning leadership and governance in Africa. However, it is undeniable that when students engage in social unrest, universities are often compelled to shut down, consequently disrupting the learning environment and delaying the production of graduates (Omodan, 2016). This is one of the primary reasons for conducting this study.

Research questions

Based on the above problem, the study is positioned to answer the following research questions:

- What are the challenges hindering the management of student unrest in the university system of the selected countries?
- What are the possible solutions to the existing challenges associated with the management of student unrest in universities?

Theoretical framework

Decoloniality is adopted to unravel the sociality of university unrest in Africa, with its focus on South Africa and Nigeria. Decoloniality offers an alternative path to understanding the various dynamics of university unrest in Africa, with particular emphasis being placed on South Africa and Nigeria. The concept of decoloniality itself is rooted in a move away from colonial remnants, also referred to as modernity, in African contexts (Heydenrych, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Additionally, Mignolo (2011) has argued that it should not only be seen as a counter to old imperialistic practices but rather as a method for overcoming Eurocentric perspectives around knowledge and action. As such, decoloniality falls within the scope of critical theory as formulated by Habermas (Dube, 2016), pushing us to challenge long-held beliefs and begin exploring other ways of being. One can then argue that the construct of decoloniality works to challenge and disrupt the persistent dominance of Western values in places like Nigeria and South Africa, stemming from the dramatic effects of military dictatorship and apartheid that still linger in these countries. Bhambra (2014) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) suggest that decoloniality as a movement was born as a direct response to this political and cultural domination, whereby universities are drawn into this messy inheritance through their heavily colonised management and governance systems. Therefore, one can conclude that decoloniality is an indispensable concept for reconstructing society in a way that critically considers decolonizing approaches from all aspects.

Decoloniality has emerged as a crucial concept in addressing social unrest within Nigeria and South African universities. The recognition that colonial power dynamics and epistemologies have shaped the modern world, leading to a disconnect between Africans and their heritage, has fuelled a growing movement to decolonise educational systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This movement has gained significant traction in South African universities, where social unrest has been a prominent issue in recent years (Omodan, 2023). The student protests in 2015 and 2016 have played a key role in stimulating decolonisation discourse within the South African academic sphere (Le, 2021). However, the transition towards decoloniality in education is not limited to South Africa; it is also evident in other African nations. Scholars emphasise the importance of embracing Africa-centred approaches to address coloniality and racism within educational systems (Malherbe et al., 2021). This approach aims to establish

connections between instances of racist violence and global colonial systems while advocating for collective organised resistance against such injustices (Malherbe et al., 2021). The advocacy for decoloniality in education extends beyond theoretical discussions; it also encompasses practical aspects of teaching and curriculum development. Scholars have examined the challenges of teaching decolonial theory amidst neoliberal market pressures and the imperative for critical community psychology programmes to adopt decolonial practices (Canham et al., 2021). Thus, by engaging in dialogue, reflection, and action, academic institutions can make progress towards implementing decolonial practices in their programs (Rasool & Harms-Smith, 2021).

Despite advancements in technology and the rise of democratic governance structures, many students continue to employ traditional forms of activism, such as physical protests, boycotts, sit-ins, and campus shutdowns, as their primary method of demanding institutional change. This persistence is not solely due to a disregard for modern channels but often results from a deep-seated mistrust of university authority and a historical memory of resistance rooted in liberation struggles. In Nigeria, during the military regimes of the 1970s to 1990s, universities were one of the few spaces where youth could express dissent against authoritarian governance (Akinyemi, 2002). Similarly, in South Africa, student-led movements were central to the anti-apartheid struggle and have remained a significant political force in the post-apartheid era (Badat, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). These historical experiences continue to shape how students perceive protest, not merely as a disruptive tool but as a legitimate language of resistance against structures they deem unresponsive, exclusionary, or repressive.

Moreover, the perception that “force is the only language university authorities understand” arises when students' peaceful attempts at engagement are either ignored or met with bureaucratic delay, surveillance, or securitisation. For example, during the #FeesMustFall protests, students in South Africa initially submitted memoranda and requested negotiations, but only gained traction after engaging in mass mobilisation and campus shutdowns (Godsell & Chikane, 2016). Similarly, in Nigeria, repeated delays in addressing student grievances, such as poor living conditions, erratic academic calendars, or policy enforcement, have often escalated into confrontations when formal channels fail (Omodan, Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020). This

suggests that the continued use of confrontational activism is not merely ideological but also structural, driven by experiences of exclusion and the absence of effective platforms for student voices to influence institutional decision-making (Gertzel, 2015). Therefore, understanding student activism requires a historical, political, and relational lens, one that considers how power dynamics, institutional culture, and unresolved grievances compel students to resort to familiar, forceful tactics.

Limitless to students, the university authority, on the other hand, is also perceived as being superior to other university stakeholders, including students. This argument may be responsible for the allegation that university management has no respect for the rights and freedom of the students. However, post-apartheid in South Africa and military dictatorship in Nigeria seem to have failed to reconstruct the duo's relationships toward a democratic and transformative dispensation. It has also failed to harmonise the critical stakeholders and disarm the students' mindset and thinking towards meritocracy, thereby bridging the power politics between them by introducing peaceful means of deconstructing the power differential between them.

Decoloniality holds significant relevance in the study of student unrest in African universities, particularly due to its critical examination of the enduring impacts of colonialism and the pursuit of decolonising knowledge. This approach is of utmost importance in countries like South Africa and Nigeria, where the historical legacies of apartheid and military dictatorship continue to affect educational institutions. Decoloniality provides a framework for comprehending and addressing the fundamental causes behind student protests and unrest by promoting a departure from Eurocentric epistemologies and the reassessment of Western-dominated knowledge systems. It challenges and aims to dismantle inherited colonial power structures and governance models that often perpetuate inequality, marginalisation, and misinterpretation within the university environment. Through this lens, student unrest is not merely perceived as a response to immediate grievances but as a profound expression of resistance against systemic injustices and a plea for transformative change in the management and governance of educational institutions. Therefore, decoloniality not only offers the theoretical foundation for analysing the dynamics of university unrest in Africa but also guides the development of more inclusive, fair, and contextually appropriate educational practices and policies.

Methodology

Research paradigm

This study adopts a qualitative approach and is framed within the Transformative Paradigm (TP), which is rooted in principles of social justice, equity, and the inclusion of marginalised voices. As articulated by Mertens (2009) and supported by Al Riyami (2015), the TP does not merely seek to understand a social phenomenon but aims to contribute to the amelioration of unjust conditions by producing knowledge that supports structural change. The paradigm is particularly well-suited for research involving groups that have historically experienced exclusion or oppression, such as students in African higher education systems who often face governance-related marginalisation, epistemic silencing, and social injustice.

The ontological stance of the Transformative Paradigm assumes that reality is socially and historically constructed and shaped by power relations (Chilisa, 2012). This implies that the study recognises that the institutional challenges students face, such as recurring unrest, authoritarian governance, and limited participatory spaces, are not neutral or accidental but rooted in colonial legacies and systemic inequality. The study also contends that both the paradigm and theoretical framework share a common philosophical foundation: they reject the dominance of Eurocentric worldviews and aim to challenge and transform oppressive institutional structures. Decoloniality, as employed herein, aligns with the transformative paradigm in its focus on emancipatory knowledge production, where the goal is not only to study unrest but to contribute to more just and inclusive higher education environments across Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Mignolo, 2011).

Accordingly, this research embraces a participatory and dialogic approach informed by the values of collaborative knowledge creation and reflexivity. It engages directly with the lived experiences of students and other university stakeholders to co-construct meaning around the phenomenon of student unrest. The intention is not merely to document conflict, but to explore context-specific solutions that empower student voices, inform governance reform, and support peacebuilding on university campuses. By grounding the research in both the transformative paradigm and

decoloniality theory, the study remains committed to the pursuit of positive social change through critically engaged, ethically grounded inquiry.

Research design

Participatory Research (PR) in this study was a deliberate research decision that allowed the researcher to understand how internal practices, politics, and processes were perceived in relation to student unrest. PR is recognised for its ability to empower participants to express their opinions, shape the research design, make decisions, and move forward confidently (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Cahill, 2013). This approach has been successfully employed in previous studies investigating social crises, providing an opportunity to identify key areas and comprehend what is necessary to effect positive change (Jagosh et al., 2012). In this particular study, PR ultimately assisted the researcher in identifying factors that may influence desirable outcomes in addressing student unrest. Thus, a participatory research design, guided by collaborative knowledge production, aims to offer an informed solution to the issue of student interest in university campuses. This necessitates the collaboration of all individuals under study, allowing participants to collectively construct knowledge and find long-lasting solutions (Bergold & Thomas, 2012) that will aid universities in effectively managing student unrest.

Understanding the challenges associated with the management of student unrest on campuses is crucial. Therefore, a participatory research design helps inform and construct knowledge through collaborative efforts, bringing together individuals under study to find solutions that enhance universities' ability to manage student unrest. By collectively addressing this critical issue, potential solutions can be developed using insights from multiple perspectives (Johnson et al., 2004). The process of collective knowledge production becomes particularly impactful when everyone works together to generate solutions within their shared reality, enabling the transformation of the current university environment and fostering meaningful engagement between students and university life.

Participants and the selection methods

The study engaged a total of twenty-eight participants (14 from the selected university in Nigeria, and 14 from the selected university in South Africa), ensuring equal

representation from a Nigerian university and a South African university. Each institution contributed a diverse cohort, which included two university management officials, two members of conflict resolution committees, two student leaders, two academic staff members, two security personnel, two representatives from counselling centres, and two community leaders. Carefully chosen based on their involvement in student conflicts and their abilities to provide insight into causes and solutions for unrest events, these participants hopefully provide invaluable information to researchers and policymakers who work toward creating societies with strong conflict resolution capacities.

Convenience sampling was utilised as the method of participant selection in this study because of its efficiency and ease. This technique is less time-consuming (Stratton, 2021) than other methods and is most useful when the target population consists predominantly of members who display similar characteristics. In addition, all members of the target population are usually easy or convenient to approach (Krupnikov et al., 2021). The main assumption associated with this type of sampling is that the same overriding characteristics apply to all target population members, such as sociodemographic variables or social background experiences. Overall, convenience sampling was chosen due to its ability to quickly access a reliable sample size while providing valid results.

Method of data collection

The focus group discussion (FGD) method was used to gather information from participants to implement PR. FGD is a widely used qualitative research method for PR because it helps to understand participants' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviours on a specific topic (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). Additionally, FGD allows participants to share their experiences and opinions in a structured and organised setting (Hollis et al., 2002). It also encourages interaction between the facilitator and participants, as well as among group members (Millward, 2012). However, it is important to note that successful FGD requires effective pre-planning, including clear objectives and useful guidelines to facilitate purposeful discussions. Therefore, FGD is crucial in this study as it enables the collection of authentic data, leading to meaningful insights. Its usage in this particular study is beneficial because it elicits

valuable information from participants, which can then be incorporated to broaden the study's scope and develop meaningful solutions.

Method of data analysis

Socio-thematic analysis (StA) is an innovative method of interpreting data developed by B.I. Omodan in 2019. Omodan (2019; 2020a) presents a method for socio-thematic analysis that combines thematic and conversational analysis. This approach is based on the concept of conversationality, where language is used to perform specific actions such as discussing, agreeing, questioning, and offering. By using this two-pronged approach, Omodan proposes breaking down transcribed data into relevant units or themes. This process involves becoming familiar with the data and creating codes to identify the relevant themes. Once these themes are identified, they should be given clear names before reports and analyses are conducted based on their conversationality. This allows for various insights to be gained from the dataset. Therefore, in socio-thematic analysis, analysts can assess social interactions and power dynamics among participants. This provides an understanding of how students and university authorities interact within the university system. This method also allows researchers to quantify sociality and draw concrete conclusions that can be compared to other studies on communities and societies. Omodan (2019; 2020b) has observed that the findings of such analyses are often used to assess student engagement and community integration, leading to calls for changes or interventions at both institutional and external levels.

Ethical consideration

The study was approved by the relevant ethics committee of Northwest University, highlighting the importance placed on ethical issues. All participants were provided with safety measures to protect their confidentiality and were identified only by pseudonyms. The researchers not only respected the participants' willingness to take part in the study but also prioritised their autonomy, allowing them to withdraw at any point without facing any consequences. This commitment to upholding such principles demonstrates the mature and responsible attitudes of the departments involved in this project. The following pseudonyms were used in the data presentation and analysis: university authorities (UA), members of committees on conflict

management/resolution (CM), student leaders (SL), lecturers (L), security personnel (SP), one member of counselling centres (MCC), and one community leader (CL).

Presentation of results

The management of student unrest in universities is a complex issue that is influenced by various interrelated factors. In both South Africa and Nigeria, universities face a range of challenges that hinder the effective management of student unrest. These challenges include the high cost of living, academic pressure, communication gaps, disparities in resource allocation, inadequate security infrastructure, ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, stigmatisation, university autonomy, a lack of adequate funding, community spirit, trust, and overcrowding. However, these problems can be mitigated through the implementation of possible solutions. This discussion draws on insights from focus group discussions (FGDs) with participants from both countries to explore the themes of "Challenges Hindering the Management of Students' Unrest in the University System" and "Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering the Management of Students' Unrest in the University System."

Challenges hindering management of students' unrest

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the theme of "Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest in the University System" includes several interconnected sub-themes. These sub-themes illustrate the complexity of the issue and are derived from the codes and quotations obtained from participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in South Africa and Nigeria.

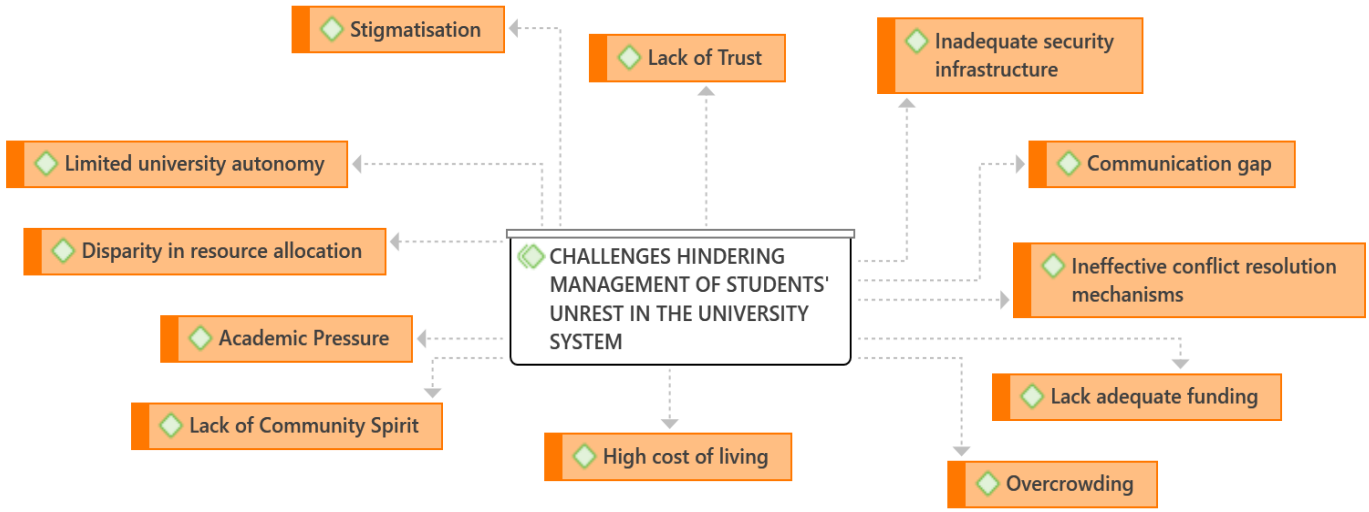


Figure 1: Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest

- **Lack of adequate funding -** One significant challenge is the lack of adequate funding, which affects various aspects of university life. As one participant noted, "*The lack of adequate funding is a major issue. Our university suffers from poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, and insufficient living conditions. These deficiencies create frustration among students, leading to unrest*" (FGD/University Authority/Nigeria). This sentiment is echoed in South Africa, where another participant stated, "*There is a significant gap in funding and resources for mental health services. Without adequate funding, it is challenging to provide the necessary support and services to students, contributing to their stress and frustration*" (FGD/Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa).
- **High cost of living/economic hardship-** The high cost of living and its impact on students' well-being also play a crucial role in fuelling unrest. As observed in South Africa, "*Also, the high cost of living and the cost of living adds to our stress. When students struggle to afford basic needs, it heightens tensions and demands for change*" (FGD/Student Leader/South Africa). This issue is closely related to economic hardship, as noted by another participant, "*Additionally, the economic hardship faced by students, such as high tuition fees and lack of financial aid, exacerbates their stress and tensions, leading to protests*" (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria). This statement was also backed by the Lecturer, who expressed that "*Economic hardship faced by students cannot be ignored. High tuition fees, lack of financial aid, and general economic instability contribute to their stress and lead to protests and unrest*" (FGD/Lecturer/Nigeria).
- **Overcrowding and poor infrastructure** - Rapid increases in student enrolment without corresponding infrastructure development lead to overcrowding and poor living conditions. As one participant highlighted, *"Furthermore, the rapid increase in student enrolment without a corresponding increase in facilities and staff contributes to the strain on existing resources, exacerbating student dissatisfaction"* (FGD/University Authority/South Africa).
- **Disparity in resource allocation** - The disparity in resource allocation among universities, particularly affecting those in disadvantaged locations, is another

critical issue. As noted, *"One of the major challenges is the disparity in resource allocation. Many universities, especially those in disadvantaged locations, lack the necessary resources"* (FGD/University Authority/South Africa). This view was also expressed by other participants from both countries, thus:

> *"Furthermore, the rapid increase in student enrollment without a corresponding increase in facilities and staff also contributes to overcrowding and strain on existing resources, exacerbating student dissatisfaction"* (FGD/ University Authority/South Africa)

> *"There is a significant gap in funding and resources for mental health services. Without adequate funding, it is challenging to provide the necessary support and services to students, contributing to their stress and frustration"* (FGD/Member of Counseling Centre/South Africa)

> *"The lack of adequate funding is a major issue. Our university suffers from poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, and insufficient living conditions. These deficiencies create frustration among students, leading to unrest"* (FGD/University Authority/Nigeria)

> *"Economic and social inequities outside the university also impact student behaviour. These external pressures often find expression within the university setting"* (FGD/Community Leader/Nigeria).

- **Ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms** - The lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms exacerbates tensions and can lead to larger conflicts. One participant pointed out, *"A significant issue is the lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. I don't want to sound negative, but this is why many universities end up with well-structured systems that fail to address student grievances promptly and fairly. This leads to a build-up of resentment, which eventually escalates into larger conflicts"* (FGD/Conflict Management/South Africa). Another participant also asserted that *"One of the primary challenges is the perceived disconnect between university management and the student body. We students often feel that their voices are not heard and their concerns are not taken seriously. This perceived lack of representation and engagement fuels frustration and unrest"* (FGD/Student Leader/South Africa).

- **Communication gaps** - Communication gaps between students and university personnel hinder the effective management of unrest. As expressed by a participant, *"Communication is a significant problem. There is a noticeable gap between the administration and the students. When students feel unheard and their grievances ignored, it naturally escalates into unrest"* (FGD/Conflict Management/Nigeria). This issue is compounded by mistrust; as another participant mentioned, *"There's also a lack of trust between students and security personnel. These students don't trust us; they think that we are supporting the university against them. This mistrust can hinder effective communication and resolution of security-related issues, contributing to a tense campus atmosphere"* (FGD/Security Personnel/South Africa).
- **Security infrastructure** - Inadequate security infrastructure further complicates the management of student unrest. As noted, *"Security infrastructure is also inadequate. Insufficient training and resources for campus security personnel make it difficult to manage and prevent unrest effectively, and this is why many times, universities will be forced to involve police in the..."* (FGD/Security Personnel/Nigeria).
- **Academic pressure** - Academic pressures and dissatisfaction with the quality of education are contributing factors to student unrest. A participant in South Africa stated, *"Academic pressures and the quality of education are also contributing factors. Sometimes, students are dissatisfied with the quality of teaching. When they feel that their education does not prepare them for the job market"* (FGD/ Lecturer/South Africa). This issue also seems prevalent in Nigeria, where a participant shared*, "Students often deal with personal and academic challenges without any support"* (FGD/ Member of Counselling Centre/Nigeria).
- **Limited university autonomy** - External political interference undermines university autonomy and complicates the management of student issues. As one participant from Nigeria noted*, "Political interference is a huge challenge. External political forces often influence university decisions, which undermine the administration's autonomy. This interference disrupts the management of student issues"* (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria). This is reinforced by another participant's observation*, "Another challenge is the limited autonomy we have*

due to external political interference. This sometimes affects our ability to make swift and effective decisions to manage student issues" (FGD/University Authority/Nigeria).

- **Lack of community spirit** - The lack of engagement and support from the surrounding community exacerbates challenges faced by students and the university administration. As one participant explained, *"A lack of engagement and support from the surrounding community can amplify the challenges faced by students and the university administration. You know, most of these students see themselves as supported sometimes by the community people where they are doing the student good"* (FGD/Community Leader/Nigeria). Also, a community from South Africa asserted that *“Poor engagement and the lack of spirit of collaboration with the local knowledge lead to conflicts that spill over into the university. When students feel disconnected from communal life and the university is not building such spirit in students, it affects their overall experience, and they see the world from different perspectives”* (FGD/Community Leader/South Africa).
- **Stigmatisation** - The stigma attached to seeking counselling prevents many students from accessing the help they need, further exacerbating their problems. A participant highlighted, *"There is a stigma attached to seeking counselling because other students may think that whoever is seeking counselling is not mentally balanced, which prevents many students from accessing the help they need, further exacerbating their problems"* (FGD/ Member of Counselling Centre/Nigeria).

The management of student unrest in universities is a multifaceted issue influenced by various factors such as inadequate funding, high cost of living, poor infrastructure, ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, communication gaps, inadequate security infrastructure, academic pressure, limited university autonomy, lack of community spirit, and stigmatisation. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that involves improving funding, enhancing infrastructure, fostering better communication, and ensuring effective support systems for students.

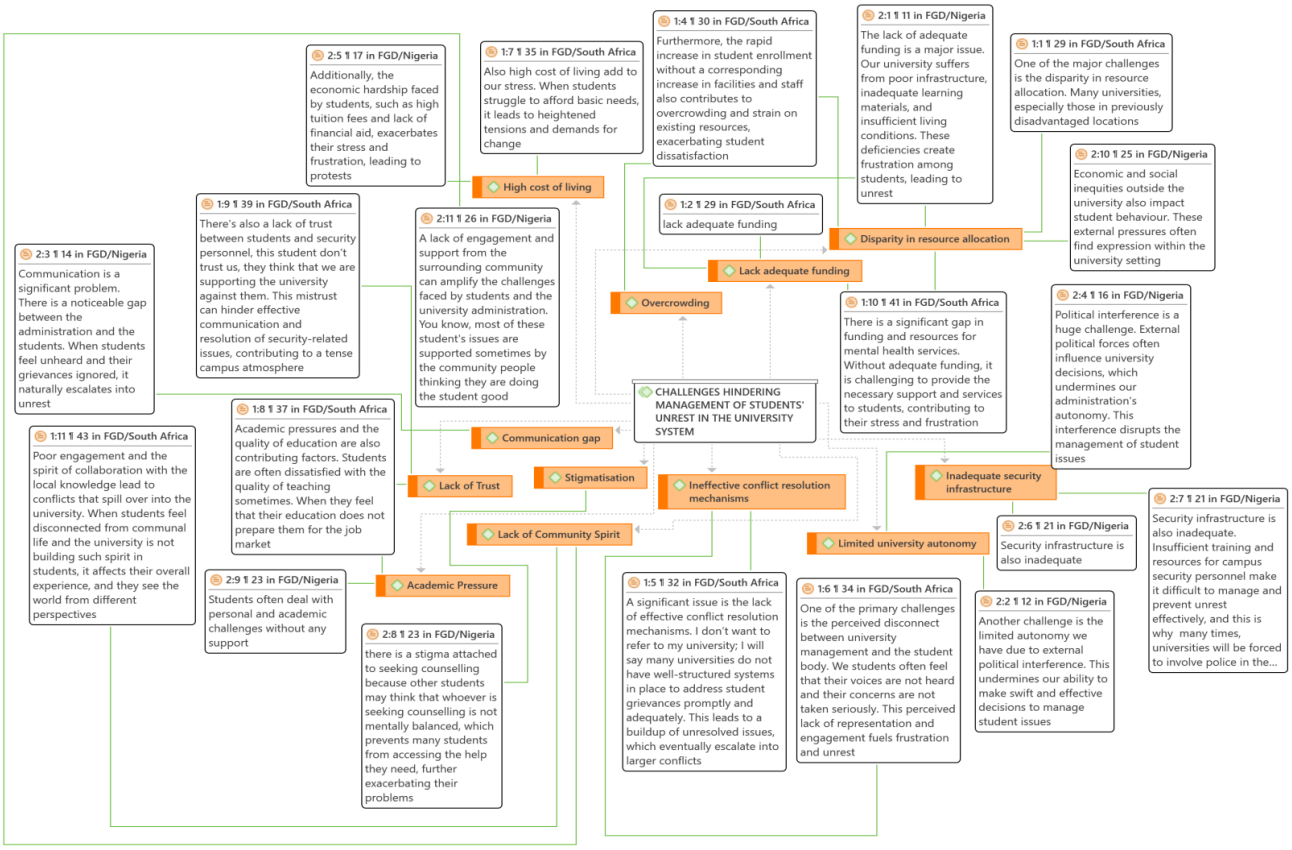


Figure 2: Responses on Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest

Possible solutions to challenges hindering management of students' unrest

Figures 3 and 4 reveal that the theme "Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest in the University System" comprises several interrelated sub-themes highlighting potential strategies and interventions that can alleviate student unrest. The codes and quotations from participants' responses in the focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in South Africa and Nigeria are discussed below.

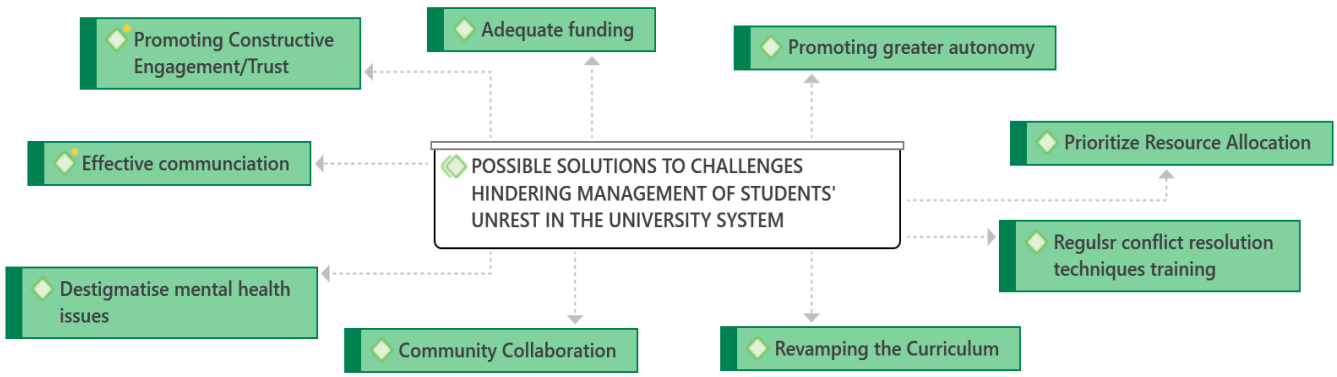


Figure 3: Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest

- **Effective communication -** Improving communication channels between students and university authorities is crucial. As one participant stated, "*Improving communication channels between students and university authorities is critical. Regular forums for dialogue where students can voice their concerns and be part of the decision-making process will help build trust and reduce misunderstandings*" (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria). The participant further emphasised the role of student leaders, "*As student leaders, we can also work towards bridging the gap between the student body and university authorities by acting as liaisons and facilitating communication flow that can ensure that student concerns are heard and addressed*" (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria).
- **Promoting greater autonomy -** Promoting greater autonomy for universities can help them make decisions in the best interest of students. As noted, "*Additionally, promoting greater autonomy for universities and reducing political interference will allow university administrators to make decisions that are in the best interest of the students without external pressures*" (FGD/University Authority/Nigeria).
- **Prioritize resource allocation -** Effective resource allocation is necessary to address the most pressing issues affecting students. One participant suggested, "*Authorities should also prioritise and allocate resources strategically to address the most pressing issues affecting students, ensuring that improvements are made where they are needed most*" (FGD/Security Personnel/Nigeria).
- **Regular conflict resolution techniques training -** Training staff and students in conflict resolution techniques can help create a harmonious campus environment. As one participant recommended, "*Regular training for staff and students in conflict resolution techniques will also help build a more harmonious campus environment*" (FGD/Conflict Management/South Africa). It was also expressed by a member of the Conflict Management that there is **"***…need to establish and strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms. Having well-*

structured systems in place to address student grievances promptly and effectively will help prevent issues from escalating (FGD/Conflict Management/Nigeria).

- **Revamping the curriculum -** Revamping and decolonising the curriculum to ensure it is inclusive and relevant to the job market is essential. A participant from South Africa stated, "*Revamping and decolonising the curriculum to ensure it is inclusive, relevant, and prepares students for the job market is crucial. Engaging students in the curriculum development process can also enhance their sense of ownership and satisfaction*" (FGD/Lecturer/South Africa).
- **Adequate funding -** Increasing funding and implementing equitable funding models can address disparities between universities. As mentioned, "*One potential solution is to implement a more equitable funding model that addresses the disparities between historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities. This would provide sufficient academic resources and adequate student accommodations*" (FGD/University Authority/South Africa). Similarly, "*The first one is to increase funding and improve resource allocation to the universities by the respective government, either state or federal governments. This will enable the university to improve infrastructure development, provide adequate learning materials, and enhance living conditions; we can address most of the root causes of student dissatisfaction*" (FGD/University Authority/Nigeria).
- **Community collaboration -** Engaging the community and local businesses to support students can alleviate some socioeconomic challenges. One participant shared, "*Advocating for support from local businesses and organisations to provide internships, mentorships, and financial aid can help alleviate some of the socioeconomic challenges faced by students*" (FGD/South Africa). The participant had earlier emphasised the importance of community leaders. In his words, "*Community leaders can help strengthen the relationship between the university and the surrounding community by organising joint initiatives and programmes that benefit both students and local residents*" (FGD/Community Leader/South Africa).

- **Promoting constructive engagement/trust -** Building trust through transparency and engagement is essential for reducing tensions. As one participant noted, "*University authorities must commit to transparency and open communication. Regularly updating students on decisions and changes and seeking their input will foster a more collaborative environment*" (FGD/Security Personnel/Nigeria). The lecturer suggested that *"Offering professional development and support for academic staff is important as well. When lecturers are well-supported, they can better engage with and mentor students, contributing to a more positive learning environment"* (FGD/Lecturer/Nigeria). The student Leader viewed that *"Encouraging responsible and peaceful advocacy among students is also important. Promoting constructive engagement and dialogue rather than confrontational approaches will help in achieving lasting solutions."* (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria). Another participant added, "*Security personnel can foster a safe campus environment by implementing community policing strategies that involve students in safety planning initiatives. Building trust through transparency and regular interactions will also help reduce tensions*" (FGD/Security Personnel/South Africa).
- **Destigmatize mental health issues -** Collaborating with student organisations to destigmatise mental health issues is vital. As a participant suggested, "*Collaborating with student organisations to destigmatise mental health issues and promote a culture of seeking help will be essential in supporting student well-being*" (FGD/Member of Counselling Centre/South Africa).
- **Addressing socioeconomic challenges -** Addressing financial challenges by increasing scholarships, bursaries, and emergency financial aid can alleviate economic pressures. As noted, "*Addressing financial challenges by increasing scholarships, bursaries, and emergency financial aid will alleviate some of the economic pressures that lead to student unrest*" (FGD/Student Leader/South Africa). This sentiment was echoed in Nigeria, "*Addressing socioeconomic challenges by offering more financial aid and support services for students can also mitigate some of the stressors that lead to unrest*" (FGD/Student Leader/Nigeria).

The management of student unrest in universities requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving communication, promoting university autonomy, prioritising

resource allocation, training in conflict resolution, revamping the curriculum, ensuring adequate funding, fostering community collaboration, building trust through transparency, destigmatising mental health issues, and addressing socioeconomic challenges. Implementing these solutions will create a more supportive and harmonious university environment, ultimately reducing the incidence of student unrest.

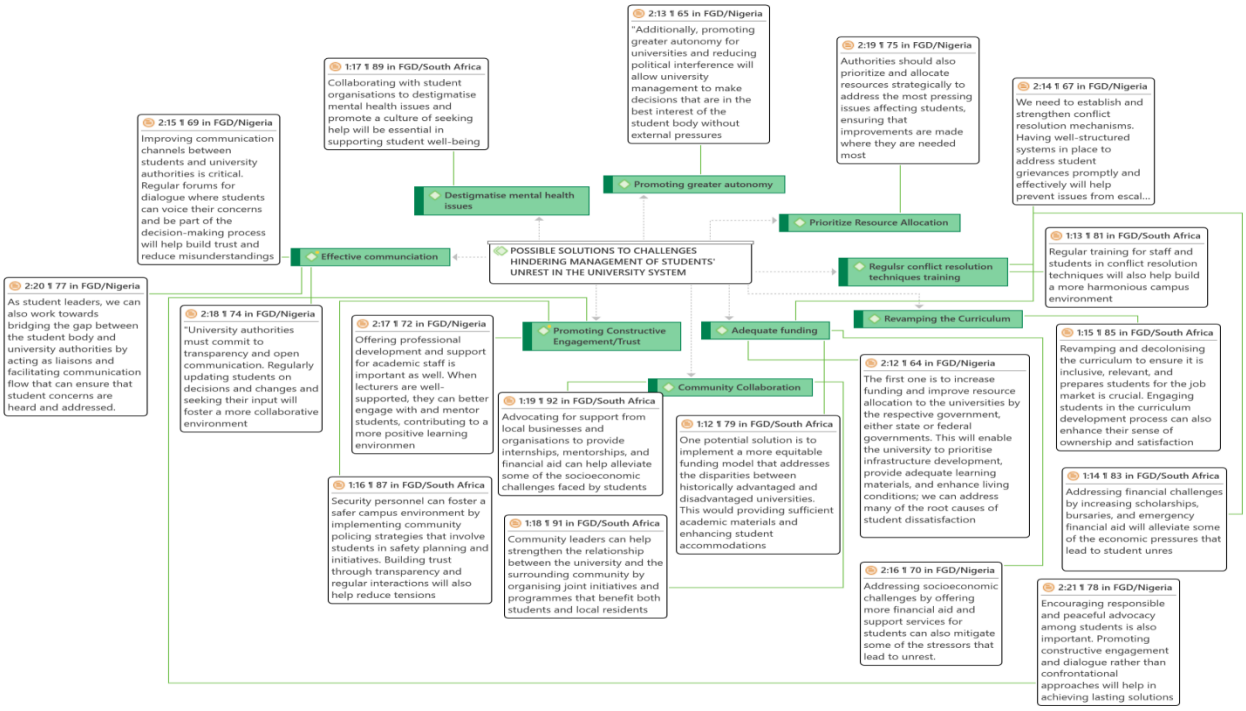


Figure 4: Responses on Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest

Taking into account the several underlying issues, a multidimensional and comprehensive strategy is needed to address student unrest in universities. To effectively manage student unrest, one must enhance communication channels, encourage more university autonomy, give resource allocation top priority, offer regular conflict resolution training, restructure the curriculum, guarantee sufficient funding, promote community cooperation, establish trust through openness, de-stigmatize mental health issues, and address socioeconomic issues. Universities can improve student well-being and academic experience generally and lower the frequency of student unrest by putting these strategies into practice. Reaching these objectives and promoting a stable and positive university environment need cooperation between university administration, students, and the local community.

Discussion of findings

The study's findings addressed the two research questions in a comprehensive manner. It identified the challenges that hinder the management of student unrest in universities and proposed possible solutions to these challenges. The study drew on both empirical data and theoretical insights from relevant literature.

Challenges hindering management of students' unrest in the university system

The study revealed that managing student unrest in universities is hampered by a range of interconnected challenges. One major issue is insufficient funding, which negatively impacts various aspects of university life, including infrastructure, learning materials, and living conditions. This lack of funding causes frustration among students, ultimately leading to unrest. According to Alimba (2008) and Mugume & Luescher (2015), the scarcity of financial resources results in subpar facilities and insufficient incentives for staff, ultimately affecting the quality of education and student satisfaction. The theoretical framework of decoloniality also addresses this issue, emphasising the need to reallocate resources to overcome the lasting effects of historical underfunding and to promote equitable development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

Moreover, the high cost of living and economic hardships, such as steep tuition fees and limited financial aid opportunities, further contribute to student stress and unrest. As noted by Amutabi (2002) and Maringira & Gukurume (2016), rising tuition fees and societal poverty levels restrict access to education and heighten student discontent. Odebode's (2019) findings also highlight unfavourable government policies and strained staff-student relationships as catalysts for unrest. The decoloniality theory further critiqued neoliberal policies that exacerbate economic hardships, calling for a reassessment of educational funding models to better support marginalised students (Mignolo, 2011).

Furthermore, the rapid increase in student enrolment without corresponding infrastructure development results in overcrowding and inadequate living conditions, further fuelling student dissatisfaction. Engelbrecht (2015) and Mutekwe (2017) highlight that insufficient infrastructure to accommodate the growing student

population leads to packed lecture halls and substandard living arrangements, thereby intensifying tensions on campus. The theoretical perspective of decoloniality advocates for infrastructure development that aligns with the needs and realities of African universities, moving away from Eurocentric models that may not be suitable (Bhambra, 2014).

Disparities in resource allocation among universities, especially those in disadvantaged locations, pose significant challenges. Unequal distribution of resources impacts students' access to necessary amenities and services, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and unrest. This inequality is supported by Omodan (2023a) and Omodan, Dube, and Tsotetsi (2020), who discuss how the historic underfunding of disadvantaged universities perpetuates educational inequities. Decoloniality theory emphasises addressing these disparities through equitable funding models that consider the historical and socio-economic contexts of different institutions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms within universities escalate tensions and contribute to more significant conflicts. The lack of prompt and fair grievance redressal leads to a build-up of resentment among students, ultimately resulting in unrest. Rhoads (2016) and Anho (2023) underscore the importance of good governance practices, including effective conflict resolution, to prevent and mitigate student unrest. From a decoloniality perspective, incorporating indigenous conflict resolution practices can offer more culturally relevant and effective solutions to disputes within African universities (Canham et al., 2021).

Communication gaps between students and university personnel hinder the effective management of student unrest. Poor communication and mistrust between students and security personnel exacerbate tensions and contribute to a hostile campus environment. Cheloti et al. (2014) and Engelbrecht (2015) discuss this issue and note that transparent and inclusive communication strategies are essential for maintaining peace on campus. Decoloniality theory advocates for participatory governance models that include students in decision-making processes, fostering trust and cooperation (Mignolo, 2011).

Additionally, inadequate security infrastructure complicates the management of student unrest. Insufficient training and resources for campus security personnel lead

to ineffective prevention and management of unrest, often requiring external intervention. This finding aligns with Mutekwe (2017) and Uyanga (2016), who point out that poor security measures can escalate minor conflicts into major disruptions. The theoretical framework of decoloniality suggests that security approaches should be context-specific and rooted in local realities rather than importing models that may not address the unique challenges of African universities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Academic pressures and dissatisfaction with education quality significantly contribute to student unrest. The stress from academic demands and concerns about the relevance of education to the job market increase frustrations among students. Omodan (2023a) and Anho (2023) emphasise the need for curriculum reforms to make education more relevant and responsive to students' needs. Decoloniality theory supports the decolonisation of curricula to better reflect African contexts and knowledge systems, thereby improving student engagement and satisfaction (Bhambra, 2014).

External political interference undermines the effective management of student issues due to limited university autonomy. Political forces often influence university decisions, complicating the administration's ability to promptly and effectively address student concerns. This challenge is supported by Odebode (2019) and Engelbrecht (2015), who discuss how external political pressures can destabilise university governance. Decoloniality theory calls for greater institutional autonomy to allow universities to operate independently of external political influences, ensuring decisions are made in the best interest of the academic community (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The lack of engagement and support from the surrounding community exacerbates challenges faced by students and university administration alike. Poor community involvement and support contribute to feelings of isolation among students and hinder the development of a supportive campus environment. This finding is supported by Murage et al. (2019) and Chemutai et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of community collaboration in fostering a positive university environment. Decoloniality theory advocates for strengthening ties between universities and their local communities to build supportive networks that enhance student well-being and reduce unrest (Canham et al., 2021).

Additionally, the stigma attached to seeking counselling prevents many students from accessing necessary mental health support, worsening their problems and contributing to unrest. Chandratre (2020) and Tikoko and Kimame (2022) highlight the critical role of mental health services in supporting student well-being and preventing unrest. Decoloniality theory emphasises the need to destigmatise mental health issues and incorporate culturally appropriate support systems to better address the mental health needs of students (Rasool & Harms-Smith, 2021).

Possible Solutions to Challenges Hindering Management of Students' Unrest in the University System

The study uncovers several potential approaches to tackling the challenges associated with managing student unrest in universities. It emphasises the critical nature of enhancing communication channels between students and university authorities. Convening regular dialogue forums that allow students to express their concerns and actively participate in decision-making processes can foster trust and reduce misunderstandings. Cheloti et al. (2014) and Rhoads (2016) accentuate the significance of transparent communication and student involvement in decision-making to alleviate tensions and cultivate a collaborative campus environment. In line with this, decoloniality theory advocates for participatory governance models that incorporate students into university management, promoting transparency and mutual respect (Mignolo, 2011).

The study demonstrates that empowering universities with greater autonomy and reducing political interference can enable university administrators to make student-centred decisions without external pressures, thereby enhancing the management of student concerns. Amutabi (2002) and Engelbrecht (2015) argue that external political forces frequently complicate university governance, hampering effective responses to student issues. Decoloniality theory highlights the significance of institutional autonomy in enabling universities to function independently, detached from external political influences that may not align with academic interests (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The study underscores the necessity for effective resource allocation to address the most pressing student issues. Authorities should prioritise and strategically allocate resources to ensure targeted improvements in areas of utmost need. Omodan (2023a)

and Uyanga (2016) propose that targeted resource allocation can bridge critical gaps in infrastructure, learning materials, and student support services. From a decoloniality perspective, equitable distribution of resources is crucial in redressing historical imbalances and supporting marginalised institutions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

The study reveals that regular training for both staff and students in conflict resolution techniques can contribute to a harmonious campus environment. Establishing and strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms can facilitate the timely and efficient resolution of student grievances. Anho (2023) and Murage et al. (2019) underscore the importance of conflict resolution training in preventing and mitigating unrest. Decoloniality theory encourages the incorporation of indigenous conflict resolution practices to develop culturally relevant and effective solutions (Canham et al., 2021).

The study demonstrates that it is imperative to revamp and decolonise the curriculum in order to ensure its inclusivity, relevance, and ability to prepare students for the job market. Involving students in the process of curriculum development has the potential to enhance their sense of ownership and satisfaction. Omodan (2023b) and Anho (2023) emphasise the necessity of curriculum reforms that take into account local contexts and address the demands of the job market. Decoloniality theory advocates for the decolonisation of curricula, including the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives, in order to make education more meaningful and engaging for students (Bhambra, 2014).

The study finds that disparities between universities can be addressed by increasing funding and implementing equitable funding models. Adequate funding has the potential to improve infrastructure, provide sufficient learning materials, and enhance living conditions, thereby addressing the root causes of student discontent. Muli (2012) and Tirivangasi et al. (2012) discuss how increased funding and fair distribution of resources can mitigate the inequities that fuel student unrest. Decoloniality theory supports these measures by advocating for the redistribution of resources to historically disadvantaged institutions in order to promote equality and justice (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The study reveals that involving the community and local businesses in supporting students can alleviate some of the socioeconomic challenges they face. Community leaders can strengthen the relationship between the university and the surrounding

community by organizing collaborative initiatives and programs. Mutekwe (2017) and Chemutai et al. (2020) emphasize the role of community engagement in creating a supportive environment for students. Decoloniality theory underscores the importance of community involvement in educational governance, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and support (Rasool & Harms-Smith, 2021).

The study demonstrates that building trust through transparency and engagement is also crucial. University authorities should commit to open communication, regularly update students on decisions and changes, and seek their input to cultivate a collaborative environment. This approach is supported by Maringira and Gukurume (2016) and Tikoko and Kimame (2022), who argue that transparency and student engagement are key to reducing tensions and fostering trust. Decoloniality theory aligns with this perspective by advocating for participatory governance and transparent decision-making processes (Mignolo, 2011).

The present study establishes that engaging in collaborative efforts with student organisations to destigmatise mental health issues and foster a culture of seeking assistance can effectively enhance student well-being and diminish instances of unrest associated with mental health challenges. Chandratre (2020) and Murage et al. (2019) highlight the significance of mental health support as a preventive measure against unrest. Furthermore, decoloniality theory advocates for the destigmatisation of mental health concerns and the integration of culturally appropriate support systems to better cater to the mental health requirements of students (Canham et al., 2021).

The investigation uncovers that addressing financial difficulties through the augmentation of scholarships, bursaries, and emergency financial aid can alleviate economic burdens on students, thereby ameliorating some of the stressors that contribute to student unrest. Uyanga (2016) and Engelbrecht (2015) propose that mechanisms of financial support play a pivotal role in reducing economic hardships that contribute to unrest. In line with these insights, decoloniality theory endorses the implementation of such measures by advocating for increased financial aid and support for marginalised students, thereby addressing the socioeconomic disparities that fuel dissatisfaction (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concludes that managing student unrest in African universities is a complex issue influenced by various interrelated challenges. Key obstacles include inadequate funding, high living costs, disparities in resource allocation, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms. These factors collectively contribute to student dissatisfaction and unrest. Additional factors such as communication gaps, insufficient security infrastructure, academic pressures, limited university autonomy, and a lack of community engagement further complicate the situation. The theoretical framework of decoloniality provides a valuable perspective to understand these challenges, highlighting the importance of addressing historical imbalances and promoting inclusive governance. By recognising the deep-rooted issues stemming from colonial legacies and current socio-political dynamics, the study emphasises the complexity of student unrest and the need for comprehensive, contextually appropriate strategies to create a harmonious and productive university environment.

To effectively mitigate student unrest, the study recommends several strategic actions. Improving communication channels and fostering transparent, participatory governance can help build trust and reduce misunderstandings between students and university authorities. Enhancing university autonomy and reducing external political interference will empower administrators to prioritise student welfare. Targeted resource allocation and increased funding are essential to address infrastructure deficits and support student needs fairly. Regular training in conflict resolution and the integration of culturally relevant practices can help manage disputes effectively. Updating curricula to be inclusive and relevant, along with community engagement initiatives, can alleviate socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, addressing mental health stigma and increasing financial aid through scholarships and bursaries will support student well-being. By implementing these solutions, universities can create a supportive and harmonious environment, ultimately reducing the incidence of student unrest and fostering a more equitable and just educational system in Africa.

References for article three

Akeusola O., Viatonu, O. & Asikhia, O. A. (2012). Perceived causes and control of students' crises in higher institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice, 3*(10), 60–68.

Akinyemi, B. (2002). Management of students' crisis in higher institutions in Ekiti State. Unpublished MEd thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti.

Akinyeye, T. V. (2019). Administrative effectiveness in university system: The trajectory of students' involvement in governance. *Journal of Education Research and Rural Community Development, 1*(1), 73–88.

Al Riyami, T. (2015). Main approaches to educational research. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences*, *2*(5), 412-416.

Alimba, C. N. (2008). Lecturer-students' perception of the causes, effects and management patterns of students' unrest in tertiary institutions. *African Journal of Educational Management*, *11*(1), 170-189.

Amutabi, M. N. (2002). Crisis and student protest in universities in Kenya: Examining the role of students in national leadership and the democratization process. *African Studies Review*, *45*(2), 157-177. https://doi.org/10.2307/1514792

Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 191-222. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41756482

Bhambra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial studies*, *17*(2), 115–121.

Cahill, C. (2013). Doing research with young people: Participatory research and the rituals of collective work. In *Doing Children's Geographies* (pp. 104-119). Routledge.

Canham, H., Bowman, B., Graham, T., Stevens, G., Langa, M., Jithoo, V., … & Alexander, D. (2021). Conundrums in teaching decolonial critical community

psychology within the context of neo-liberal market pressures. Journal of Social Issues, 78(2), 366-387. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12462

Cheloti, S. K., Obae, R. N., & Kanori, E. N. (2014). Principals' management styles and students' unrest in public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice, 5*(29), 1-10.

Chilisa, B., & Kawulich, B. (2012). Selecting a research approach: Paradigm, methodology and methods. *Doing social research: A global context*, *5*(1), 51-61.

Davies, K. U., Ekwere, G. E., & Uyanga, U. U. (2015). *Factors influencing students' unrest in institutions of higher learning and its implications on the academic performance of students in* the *University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.* Istraživanja u pedagogiji*, 6*(1), 27-42. https://doi.org/10.17810/2015.21

Dube, B. (2016). *A socio-religious hybridity strategy to respond to the problems of religious studies in Zimbabwe* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).

Eldridge, K., Larry, L., Baird, J., & Kavanamur, D. (2018). A collaborative governance approach to improving tertiary education in Papua New Guinea. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *38*(1), 78-90. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2018.1423949

Engelbrecht, N. (2015). Student protests in democratic South Africa**.** *South African History Online.* https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/student-protests-democratic-south-africa

Etadon, F. I. (2013) Campus conflicts involving students' and university management in Nigeria: The case of the University of Ibadan. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(3), 333–343, https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2013.11890094

Gertzel, C. (2015). The politics of independent Kenya. The Australasian Review of African Studies, 36(2), 1–50.

Godsell, G., Chikane, R., & Mpofu-Walsh, S. (2016). *Fees must fall: Student revolt, decolonisation and governance in South Africa*. NYU Press.

Gullifer, J., & Tyson, G. A. (2010). Exploring university students' perceptions of plagiarism: A focus group study. *Studies in Higher Education*, *35*(4), 463-481. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070903096508

Heydenrych, P. W. (2016). Constitutionalism and coloniality: A case of colonialism continued or the best of both worlds? *New Contree*, 75, 116-133. http://hdl.handle.net/10394/19410

Hollis, V., Openshaw, S., & Goble, R. (2002). Conducting focus groups: Purpose and practicalities. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *65*(1), 2-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/030802260206500102

Is'aloluwa, E. L. (2014). *Non inclusive post-war government structure: a hindrance to predictable political succession in the great lakes region* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Jagosh, J., Macaulay, A. C., Pluye, P., Salsberg, J. O. N., Bush, P. L., Henderson, J. I. M., ... & Greenhalgh, T. (2012). Uncovering the benefits of participatory research: implications of a realist review for health research and practice. *The Milbank Quarterly*, *90*(2), 311-346. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0009.2012.00665.x

Johnson, N., Lilja, N., Ashby, J. A., & Garcia, J. A. (2004, August). The practice of participatory research and gender analysis in natural resource management. In *Natural Resources Forum* (Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 189-200). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Krupnikov, Y., Nam, H. H., & Style, H. (2021). Convenience samples in political science experiments. *Advances in Experimental Political Science*, *165*.

Le, G. L. (2021). Decolonisation and a third possibility for the university. South African *Journal of Higher Education*, 37(1). https://doi.org/10.20853/37-1-5676

Malherbe, N., Ratele, K., Adams, G., Reddy, G., & Suffla, S. (2021). A decolonial africa(n)-centered psychology of antiracism. *Review of General Psychology*, 25(4), 437-450. https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680211022992

Maringira, G., & Gukurume, S. (2016). Being Black'in# FeesMustFall and# FreeDecolonisedEducation: Student Protests at the University of the Western

Cape. *An analysis of the# FeesMustFall movement at South African universities*, 35-48.

Menon, K., Parekh, A., & Sinha, S. (2022). Steering and Rowing through a Crisis. *Quality Assuring Unknown Territory*, 13-24.

Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options* . Duke University Press.

Millward, L. (2012). Focus groups. *Research methods in psychology*, *4*, 411-438.

Mjema, M. M. (2013). *The causes and management of students' unrest at the University of Arusha in Tanzania* (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).

Mugume, T., & Luescher, T. M. (2015). The politics of student housing: Student activism and representation in the determination of the user-price of a public–private partnership residence on a public university campus in South Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, *3*(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v3i1.89

Muli, F. (2012). *Institutional factors influencing students' unrest in secondary schools in Nairobi North district, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi, Kenya).

Mutekwe, E. (2017). Unmasking the ramifications of the fees-must-fall conundrum in higher education institutions in South Africa: A critical perspective. *Perspectives in Education, 35*(2), 142–154.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). Why decoloniality in the 21st century? *The Thinker*, *48*(10), 5-9.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). Decoloniality as the future of Africa. History Compass, *13*(10), 485–496.

Obondoh, A. (2003). *The Politics of Participatory Decision Making in Campus Governance* (No. 14). Association of African Universities.

Odebode, A. A. (2019). Factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions: Implications for counselling practices. *Mimbar Pendidikan, 4*(2), 93–102. https://doi.org/10.2121/mp.v4i2.1227

Omodan, B. I. (2019). A strategy to enhance crisis management between students and university authorities in Nigeria. PhD thesis, University of the Free State, South Africa.

Omodan, B. I. & Dube, B. (2019). Bridging the dichotomous gaps between trade unions and management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 10*(1), 285–300.

Omodan, B. I. (2020a). Combatting the imperativeness of modernity in students' unrest: the need to decolonise the minds through Ubuntu. *International Journal of Higher Education, 9*(4), 310–319. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n4p310

Omodan, B. I. (2020b). Managing students' unrest in universities: Unmasking the threat and success implication through Ubuntu. *Multicultural Education, 6*(2), 27–38. http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4023124

Omodan, B. I. (2023). Causes and institutional responses of social unrest in South African universities. SAGE Open, 13(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231218775

Omodan, B. I., Dube, B. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2020). Politics of process and social crises in Nigerian universities: Challenges and solutions. *African Renaissance. 17*(4), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2020/17n4a6

Rasool, S. and Harms-Smith, L. (2021). Towards decoloniality in a social work programme: a process of dialogue, reflexivity, action and change. *Critical African Studies*, 13(1), 56-72. https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2021.1886136

Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and disaster Medicine*, *36*(4), 373-374. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X21000649

Tirivangasi, H. M., Rapanyane, M. B., & Mugambiwa, S. S. (2021). The toxicity of welfare state: A discourse analysis of# feesmustfall movement in South Africa. *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, *10*(2), 7.

Uyanga, U. U. (2016). Factors influencing student unrest in institutions of higher learning and its implications on the academic performance of students in University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Research in pedagogy*, *6*(1), 27-42.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL REFLECTION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the reflections on the findings of the three articles, the conclusion and recommendations of the study, and the contribution to knowledge is also presented. The main focus of the study was to deconstruct the politics of the process that is responsible for student unrest in African universities. Therefore, the following objectives were established to accomplish this study. That is, the study:

- Examines the understanding of the politics of process and university productivity.
- Investigates the comparative backgrounds of the selected countries regarding crisis situations and their management.
- Expose the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities.
- Examine the challenges responsible for students' unrest in the university system of the selected countries.
- Examine solutions to the existing challenges associated with unrest, mostly between students and university authorities.

Within the framework of the five objectives, the first objective resulted in the development of a research article titled "Conceptualising politics of process as an antidote to student unrest in universities." The second and third objectives then informed the creation of a publication titled "Psychosocial Implications of Student Unrest in Africa: The South Africa and Nigeria Perspectives." This publication addresses two research questions derived from its title, which are as follows:

- How has the comparative background of the selected countries regarding the crisis situation and its management affected the level of student unrest on campuses?
- What is the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities?

Lastly, objectives four and five contributed to the composition of a scholarly article titled "A comparative response to student unrest in African universities: Challenges and solutions." This work delves into two research questions that directly arise from its title. These research questions are outlined as follows:

- What are the challenges hindering the management of student unrest in the university system of the selected countries?
- What are the possible solutions to the existing challenges associated with the management of student unrest in universities?

5.1 Findings from the first article

To conceptualise the politics of process and its potential for redirecting the management of student unrest in universities, the study found that adopting democratic and facilitative leadership styles significantly improves the resolution of student conflicts. These styles move away from traditional top-down hierarchies and instead, prioritise collaborative approaches that involve all stakeholders in decision-making. This shift allows for more creative and effective solutions, as student voices are given a central role. By directly engaging students and fostering a sense of inclusion and respect, university leaders can address the root causes of unrest and work towards long-term stability and positive change on campus.

To understand the politics of process in decision-making and its impact on managing student unrest, the study argued that inclusive and transparent decision-making frameworks are crucial. Effectively managing student unrest involves building trusting relationships between students and university administration and ensuring that policies are regularly updated to reflect ongoing dialogues about students' rights and free speech. Additionally, the establishment and utilisation of student councils have been recognised as powerful strategies for involving students in governance, which in turn helps mitigate potential issues. When students feel that their voices are heard and that they are active participants in the governance of their institutions, there is a higher likelihood of achieving common ground and reducing the frequency and intensity of unrest.

In examining the politics of process within the context of organisational culture and its role in managing student unrest, the study revealed the importance of a positive

organisational culture. Universities need to go beyond traditional approaches and address comprehensive factors such as educational inequity, mental health support, racial discrimination, and financial pressures. By fostering better communication, transparency, and proactive engagement with students, universities can create an environment where the underlying causes of student dissatisfaction are addressed. This proactive approach not only helps manage immediate conflicts but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and support, which is essential for long-term stability and harmony within the university community.

Regarding the politics of process and organisational values in managing student unrest, the study found that ethical standards and values play a crucial role. Universities must understand and respect the opinions and feelings of all parties involved to develop fair and effective strategies. Emphasising ethical values within the institution's culture helps achieve stability and resolve conflicts. Effective management should extend beyond punitive measures and include collaborative approaches that balance autonomy with accountability. By fostering an environment where mutual respect and ethical standards are upheld, universities can ensure a more peaceful and productive educational environment. This approach not only addresses immediate issues but also builds a foundation for ongoing positive interactions and trust between students and the administration.

5.2 Findings from the second article

This study unveils that crisis management mechanisms in universities in South Africa and Nigeria encompass a combination of administrative policies, conflict resolution committees, security measures, and engagement with student leadership. These mechanisms are deliberately designed to address immediate security concerns, as well as long-term socio-cultural factors. Effective crisis management relies on strategic planning and collaboration with external agencies, such as the police, while also promoting inclusivity and confronting underlying causes of unrest, such as financial exclusion and epistemological biases. This approach fosters unity and collective effort, ensuring the maintenance of a sense of community and mutual respect in the management of student unrest.

The study identifies that the pattern of crisis management in universities is frequently reactive, relies heavily on security measures, and possesses minimal university-community collaboration. Universities in South Africa and Nigeria typically prioritise immediate security responses over proactive strategies, reflecting historical influences and past experiences. This reactive stance often involves heavy-handed security interventions that address surface-level issues without addressing underlying causes. The absence of collaboration with the broader university community contradicts the principles of inclusive and participatory crisis management, ultimately potentially intensifying tensions and overlooking opportunities for sustainable conflict resolution.

The study demonstrates that psychosocial deficiencies significantly impact students, staff, and the broader community, resulting in a deterioration of educational quality, heightened stress and anxiety, and decreased productivity. Student unrest exacerbates mental health issues, impairs academic performance, and diminishes overall well-being. The lack of adequate mental health support and robust support systems contradicts the principles of mutual support and interconnectedness. Addressing these deficiencies is crucial not only for enhancing educational outcomes but also for nurturing a sense of community and collective well-being within the university context.

The study reveals that spatial and contextual factors, such as the physical layout of campuses, the socio-economic background of students, and the availability of mental health resources, play a vital role in crisis management. These factors influence the dynamics of student unrest and the efficacy of crisis management strategies. For instance, campus layouts can complicate security efforts during large gatherings and protests, while socio-economic disparities among students can intensify feelings of exclusion and unrest. Recognising and integrating these spatial and contextual factors into crisis management strategies is indispensable for cultivating a more resilient and supportive university environment.

The study unveils that student unrest is responsible for significant psychosocial challenges, leading to the heightened prevalence of stress and anxiety, increased rates of absenteeism, and a decline in morale. These challenges have a direct impact on the mental well-being and academic performance of students, resulting in reduced

engagement and productivity. Moreover, the absence of efficient channels of communication and inclusive decision-making processes exacerbates these challenges by diminishing the sense of community and interconnectedness. To tackle these psychosocial challenges, a comprehensive approach is necessary, which prioritizes inclusive decision-making and mutual support and acknowledges the historical and cultural contexts unique to each university.

The study indicates that various support mechanisms are crucial in managing psychosocial deficiencies. These mechanisms include improving communication channels, expanding counselling services, establishing peer support programs, and implementing stress management resources. It is imperative to integrate these support mechanisms to mitigate the detrimental effects of student unrest on mental well-being. By implementing a holistic approach that encompasses comprehensive mental health support, effective communication strategies, and peer support programs, universities can establish an interconnected network of care and support. This approach would address both the immediate and long-term psychosocial needs of the university community, thereby enhancing overall well-being and building resilience against future instances of unrest.

5.3 Findings from the third article

The findings for article three were reflected based on the two objectives that piloted the article, such as the challenges hindering the management of student unrest and the possible solutions.

5.3.1 Challenges hindering management of students' unrest in the university system

The study revealed that inadequate funding significantly hinders the management of student unrest in universities. This lack of financial resources affects infrastructure, learning materials, and living conditions, leading to frustration among students and contributing to unrest. High tuition fees and the absence of financial aid worsen economic hardships, increasing student stress and prompting protests. Economic pressures faced by students are further intensified by unfavourable government policies and poor staff-student relationships, which act as catalysts for unrest.

Rapid increases in student enrolment without corresponding infrastructure development result in overcrowding and poor living conditions, further exacerbating student dissatisfaction. The study highlights that inadequate infrastructure to accommodate growing student populations leads to overcrowded lecture halls and insufficient living arrangements, increasing tensions on campus. Disparities in resource allocation among universities, particularly those in disadvantaged locations, pose significant challenges, affecting students' access to necessary amenities and services and leading to widespread dissatisfaction and unrest.

Ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms within universities escalate tensions and contribute to larger conflicts. The lack of prompt and fair grievance redressal nurtures resentment among students, resulting in unrest. Poor communication and mistrust between students and university personnel further hinder the effective management of student unrest. Inadequate security infrastructure and insufficient training and resources for campus security personnel lead to ineffective prevention and management of unrest, often requiring external intervention.

Academic pressures and dissatisfaction with the quality of education are significant contributors to student unrest. The stress from academic demands and concerns about the relevance of their education to the job market heighten frustrations among students. The lack of adequate mental health support and strong support systems exacerbates these issues, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and reduced productivity. The stigma attached to seeking counselling prevents many students from accessing necessary mental health support, worsening their problems and further contributing to unrest.

Limited university autonomy due to external political interference undermines the effective management of student issues. Political forces often influence university decisions, complicating the administration's ability to address student concerns promptly and effectively. The lack of engagement and support from the surrounding community exacerbates challenges faced by both students and university administration. Poor community involvement and support create feelings of isolation among students and hinder the development of a supportive campus environment.

5.3.2 Possible solutions to challenges hindering management of students' unrest

The study reveals that improving communication channels between students and university authorities is crucial. Regular forums for dialogue where students can voice their concerns and be part of the decision-making process can help build trust and reduce misunderstandings. Open communication and student involvement in decision-making processes are essential for reducing tensions and fostering a collaborative campus environment.

The study shows that promoting greater autonomy for universities and reducing political interference can help university administrators make decisions in the best interest of the students without external pressures, thereby improving the management of student issues. Greater institutional autonomy allows universities to operate independently, free from external political influences that may not align with academic interests.

The study finds that effective resource allocation is necessary to address the most pressing issues affecting students. Authorities should prioritise and allocate resources strategically to ensure improvements are made where they are needed most. Targeted resource allocation can address critical gaps in infrastructure, learning materials, and student support services, thereby mitigating the disparities that fuel student unrest.

The study reveals that regular training for staff and students in conflict resolution techniques can help create a harmonious campus environment. Establishing and strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms can help address student grievances promptly and effectively. Incorporating indigenous conflict resolution practices can offer more culturally relevant and effective solutions to disputes within African universities.

The study shows that revamping and decolonising the curriculum to ensure it is inclusive, relevant, and prepares students for the job market is essential. Engaging students in the curriculum development process can enhance their sense of ownership

and satisfaction. Decolonising curricula to include indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives makes education more relevant and engaging for students.

The study finds that increasing funding and implementing equitable funding models can address disparities between universities. Sufficient funding can improve infrastructure, provide adequate learning materials, and enhance living conditions, addressing the root causes of student dissatisfaction. The equitable distribution of resources is essential to redress historical imbalances and support marginalised institutions.

The study has revealed that involving the community and local businesses in supporting students can help alleviate certain socioeconomic challenges. Organising joint initiatives and programs can strengthen the relationship between the university and the surrounding community, with community leaders playing a vital role in this process. When communities are engaged in educational governance, it fosters a sense of shared responsibility and support, ultimately enhancing student well-being and reducing unrest.

In order to build trust, transparency and engagement are crucial. It is essential for university authorities to commit to open communication, regularly updating students on decisions and changes, and seeking their input to create a collaborative environment. Transparency and student engagement are key factors in reducing tensions and fostering trust.

The study also finds that collaborating with student organisations to destigmatise mental health issues and promote a culture of seeking help can significantly support student well-being and reduce instances of unrest related to mental health challenges. By destigmatising mental health issues and integrating culturally appropriate support systems, we can better address the mental health needs of students.

Furthermore, the study reveals that addressing financial challenges through the provision of increased scholarships, bursaries, and emergency financial aid can effectively alleviate economic pressures on students, thus mitigating some of the stressors that contribute to student unrest. Having robust financial support

mechanisms in place is crucial for reducing economic hardships that fuel dissatisfaction, thus addressing socioeconomic disparities.

5.4 Consolidating the "Politics of Process" as a Mid-Range Theoretical Contribution

The findings presented in the three articles collectively illustrate that the concept of "*the politics of* process" serves as a cohesive mid-range theoretical framework that interconnects governance structures, institutional practices, and stakeholder interactions in the management of student unrest. In Article One, the concept is explicitly defined through leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values, emphasising how internal governance dynamics influence the emergence or alleviation of unrest. Article Two expands on this by demonstrating how these processes are reflected in crisis management mechanisms, response patterns, and the handling of psychosocial challenges, thus indicating that the politics of process transcends abstract governance to manifest in everyday institutional practices. Article Three further underpins this framework by highlighting that deficiencies in funding, communication, autonomy, and conflict resolution are not isolated issues but rather manifestations of deeper process-related governance inadequacies. Throughout all the articles, the politics of process consistently elucidates how institutional actions, or lack thereof, shape the circumstances under which student unrest arises, is managed, or prolonged.

Positioning the politics of process as a mid-range theoretical contribution, the study is able to bridge theoretical concepts with empirical evidence. Instead of merely a descriptive notion, it functions analytically to link macro-level governance concerns with meso-level institutional practices and micro-level stakeholder perspectives. This integrative role ensures that the concept remains coherent across the articles, serving as a unifying framework through which leadership practices, crisis management strategies, and systemic issues are analysed. By consistently illustrating that student unrest is influenced by the quality, inclusivity, and responsiveness of institutional processes, the study establishes the politics of process as a versatile and contextually sensitive framework for examining university governance. This consolidation enhances the conceptual integrity of the thesis, demonstrating that each article

contributes to a progressive comprehension of how process-oriented governance can either disrupt or enhance higher education environments.

5.5 Conclusion

The study has successfully achieved its objectives by conducting a thorough examination of the politics of the process and its impact on university productivity. The findings demonstrate that management leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and values all play vital roles in addressing student unrest. By adopting democratic and facilitative leadership approaches, universities can establish environments where student voices are central to decision-making, resulting in more effective and sustainable conflict resolutions. Understanding this is crucial for improving university productivity, as inclusive and transparent governance fosters a positive academic atmosphere and addresses the root causes of unrest.

The study also compared the backgrounds of South Africa and Nigeria, revealing significant differences and similarities in crisis situations and their management. It highlighted the reactive nature of crisis management in both countries, where universities often rely on security measures rather than proactive strategies. The historical and geographical contexts, such as past experiences of military rule and apartheid, influence current practices, underscoring the need for tailored approaches. The study emphasises the importance of community engagement and collective decision-making, which is aligned with the Ubuntu philosophy, to effectively and sustainably address crises.

Furthermore, the study identified the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by stakeholders in the selected universities. Significant issues include high levels of stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction among students, exacerbated by inadequate mental health support and poor living conditions. The study also detailed how these psychosocial challenges impact the quality of education and the overall well-being of students and staff. Additionally, it examined the challenges contributing to student unrest, such as inadequate funding, rapid enrolment increases without corresponding infrastructure development, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms. The study proposes solutions like improved communication, increased funding, curriculum reforms, and community engagement, providing a roadmap for addressing these

challenges and fostering a supportive university environment. These solutions aim to enhance trust and cooperation between students and university authorities, ultimately leading to a more stable and productive educational system.

5.5.1 Recommendations for practice

To effectively address the challenges of student unrest, universities should prioritise adopting democratic and facilitative leadership styles. This approach ensures that student voices are at the forefront of decision-making processes, promoting a sense of inclusion and respect. Universities should establish regular forums for dialogue where students can express their concerns and actively participate in governance. This will help build trust and transparency, reducing misunderstandings and potential conflicts.

In addition, it is crucial for universities to implement inclusive and transparent decision-making frameworks. Policies should be regularly updated to reflect current discussions on students' rights and freedom of speech. Student councils and governance bodies should be empowered to play a significant role in these processes, ensuring that all stakeholders feel heard and respected.

Improving infrastructure and resource allocation is another critical area that needs attention. Universities must strategically allocate resources to address pressing issues such as overcrowding, poor living conditions, and inadequate learning materials. Increasing funding and implementing equitable funding models can help reduce disparities between institutions, particularly those in disadvantaged locations.

Furthermore, enhancing mental health support is essential. This can be achieved by increasing counselling services, establishing peer support programs, and destigmatising mental health issues. Regular training in conflict resolution for both staff and students can also contribute to creating a harmonious campus environment.

5.5.2 Recommendations for further studies

Future research should explore the long-term impact of democratic and facilitative leadership styles on resolving student unrest and enhancing overall university productivity. These studies could investigate how these leadership approaches

influence student satisfaction, academic performance, and institutional stability over extended periods of time. Furthermore, additional research could examine the effectiveness of specific conflict resolution mechanisms and indigenous practices in various cultural contexts. By understanding the nuances of these practices, valuable insights can be gained towards developing culturally relevant and effective strategies for managing student unrest in diverse university environments.

Another area that warrants further study is the role of community engagement in mitigating student unrest. Research should explore how partnerships between universities and local communities contribute to creating a supportive environment for students. Studies should investigate the impact of joint initiatives and programs on student well-being as well as university-community relations. Additionally, future research should delve into comparative analysis of crisis management strategies across different regions and countries, with the aim of identifying best practices and lessons learned. By examining how various socio-economic and historical factors influence crisis management, a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play can be achieved, which in turn can inform the development of tailored approaches for different contexts.

5.6 Contribution to knowledge

The study's contribution to knowledge is categorised into three dimensions. The first dimension is deduced from the conceptual model in Figure 1. The second dimension is deduced from the success of combining three theoretical frameworks. Lastly, the findings also contribute to knowledge.

- **The model as Contribution to Knowledge:** This study provides an original contribution through a rigorous conceptual synthesis that reinterprets student unrest as a consequence of institutional processes rather than isolated structural or behavioural factors. The *"politics of* process" model (Figure 1) consolidates four key governance dimensions - management and leadership styles, decision-making processes, organisational culture, and organisational values - within a single, comprehensive conceptual framework. While these dimensions have been previously examined separately in the literature, this study advances understanding by illustrating how their interplay forms a cohesive process-based rationale for student unrest. The model reveals that

unrest is not solely incited by external factors such as funding or policy but is instead influenced by how universities structure, communicate, and execute their internal processes. This conceptual amalgamation exposes the underlying mechanisms by which dissatisfaction is generated, intensified, or alleviated within institutional settings.

The merit of this contribution lies in explicitly delineating and analytically utilising the connections between these dimensions. The model demonstrates that leadership approaches impact participation, decision-making processes influence trust, organisational culture shapes daily experiences, and institutional values govern fairness and respect. Therefore, by synthesising these dimensions into a unified framework, the study offers a clearer and more organised approach to understanding student unrest as a process-oriented occurrence. This transcends fragmented interpretations and presents a consolidated conceptual perspective that can inform both analysis and practical applications. Consequently, the novelty of the study does not lie in introducing entirely new variables, but in systematically integrating existing ones into a coherent model that elucidates how governance processes collectively influence the dynamics of student unrest in African universities.

- **Theoretical contribution to knowledge:** The integration of three theoretical frameworks - Decoloniality, Environmental Determinism, and Ubuntu - offers a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to comprehending and resolving student unrest in African universities. Decoloniality provides a critical perspective for examining the sociopolitical legacies of colonialism and their ongoing influence on university governance and student behaviour. By challenging Eurocentric and colonial practices, decoloniality aims to transform power dynamics within universities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. This approach reveals the deep-rooted historical and systemic issues that contribute to student unrest, laying the groundwork for reevaluating university policies and practices in a manner that acknowledges and rectifies past injustices.

  On the other hand, Environmental Determinism draws attention to the geographical and cultural contexts that shape student activism and university

responses. Hence, considering the physical and cultural environment, this framework highlights how various spatial and cultural factors affect the nature and intensity of student unrest. Understanding these environmental determinants allows for more tailored and context-specific strategies to manage and prevent unrest. Lastly, the Ubuntu philosophy emphasises the significance of community, unity, and mutual respect in addressing the psychological and relational aspects of student unrest. Ubuntu promotes a sense of belonging and shared humanity, advocating for governance practices that prioritise the well-being and mental health of all university stakeholders. By fostering a culture of empathy and support, Ubuntu helps alleviate the psychological impact of unrest and cultivates stronger, more resilient university communities.

Together, these theoretical frameworks contribute to a holistic understanding of student unrest, encompassing its social, geographical, and psychological dimensions. The combination of these theories enables a comprehensive approach that not only identifies the underlying causes of unrest but also proposes multifaceted solutions that can be adapted to different contexts. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the study's capacity to provide practical and effective recommendations for university governance, ultimately contributing to the creation of more peaceful and productive academic environments.

- **Findings as Contribution to Knowledge:** The findings of this study make a significant contribution to knowledge by conceptualizing the politics of process as a framework for managing student unrest in African universities. By adopting democratic and facilitative leadership styles, the study demonstrates that involving students in decision-making processes fosters inclusion and respect, leading to more creative and effective conflict resolution. This shift away from traditional top-down hierarchies towards collaborative approaches ensures that student voices are central in addressing the root causes of unrest, thereby promoting long-term stability and positive change on campus. The study highlights the importance of transparent and inclusive decision-making frameworks that build trust between students and university administration. It also emphasizes the strategic utilization of student councils as a tool for

involving students in governance, thus reducing the frequency and intensity of unrest.

Furthermore, the study underscores the role of organisational culture and values in managing student unrest. By addressing educational inequity, providing mental health support, tackling racial discrimination, and alleviating financial pressures through better communication and proactive engagement, universities can create an environment that addresses the underlying causes of student dissatisfaction. This proactive approach not only manages immediate conflicts but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and support, which is essential for long-term harmony within the university community. Ethical standards and values play a crucial role in this framework, as universities must develop fair and effective strategies that prioritise mutual respect and ethical behaviour. The study's interdisciplinary approach, integrating the theories of decoloniality, environmental determinism, and Ubuntu, provides a comprehensive understanding of student unrest and proposes actionable solutions for creating a peaceful and productive academic environment. This holistic approach enhances university governance and conflict resolution strategies, making a significant contribution to the field of educational management.

5.7 Implications for Methodology

This study evidences that the alignment between the Transformative Paradigm and Participatory Research (PR) design is not solely theoretical but operational, shaping the entire research process from data generation to interpretation. The Transformative Paradigm's focus on social justice, inclusion, and the co-construction of knowledge (Mertens, 2010; Chilisa, 2012) is mirrored in the intentional involvement of diverse stakeholders through Focus Group Discussions and interviews. These methods ensured that participants were not treated as passive subjects but as active contributors to knowledge production, thereby reinforcing the participatory nature of the study. Moreover, the utilisation of socio-thematic analysis allowed the researcher to interpret not only the content of participants' responses but also the relational and power dynamics embedded within them. This methodological alignment emphasises the significance of selecting analytical tools that are coherent with the underlying

paradigm, especially in studies aiming to foreground marginalised voices and challenge predominant knowledge systems.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the necessity of methodological consistency in research that embraces transformative and participatory orientations. Instead of treating paradigm, design, and methods as separate entities, this research demonstrates how they operate as an interconnected system, where each element reinforces the others. The implications reach into future research in higher education, particularly within African settings, where intricate social phenomena demand approaches that are both contextually sensitive and inclusive. By showing that the transformative purpose of the study permeates its conclusions and recommendations, this research confirms that methodological alignment is most significantly realised not only in procedural explanations but also in the nature of the insights generated and their potential to inform socially responsive and contextually relevant interventions.

References

Aaisyah, S., & Fauzi, M. F. B. (2025). Comparison of the concept of Pancasila deliberations and consensus and Habermas theory of communicative action in democratic discourse. *Santhet (Jurnal Sejarah Pendidikan Dan Humaniora)*, *9*(1), 58-68.

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2000). The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *American Economic Review*, *91*(5), 1369-1401.

Adamu, A. Y., & Balsvik, R. R. (2017). Students' participation in and contribution to political and social change in Ethiopia. In *What Politics?* (pp. 265-284). Brill.

Adelabu, M. A., & Akinwumi, F. S. (2008). Factors affecting academic quality in Nigerian universities. *Journal of the World Universities Forum*, 1(5), 47–61.

Adeola, A. O., & Bukola, A. B. (2014). Students' participation in governance and organisational effectiveness in universities in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5* (9), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n9p400

Adesina, J. O. (2006). Global trends in higher education reform: What lessons for Nigeria? *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, 1-23.

Aina, T. A. (2010b). Beyond reforms: The politics of higher education transformation in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *5* (1), 21–40. https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0290

Ajadi, O. T. (2023). Demand for university education and students' employment prospects in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics Education and Entrepreneurship*, *4* (1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.20527/jee. v4i1.6400

Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa.* Brookings Institution Press.

Akeusola O., Viatonu, O., & Asikhia, O. A. (2012). Perceived causes and control of students' crises in higher institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice, 3*(10), 60–68.

Akinyemi, B. (2002). *Management of students' crisis in higher institutions in Ekiti State.* [Unpublished MEd thesis, University of Ado-Ekiti].

Akinyeye, T. V. (2019). Administrative effectiveness in university system: The trajectory of students' involvement in governance. *Journal of Education Research and Rural Community Development, 1*(1), 73–88.

Akparep, J. Y. (2019). An examination of the causes of student-management conflicts in university for development studies from 1999 to 2009. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 08(02), 75-94. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2019.82005

Alexander, D.E. (1999). Environmental determinism. Environmental geology. *Encyclopedia of Earth Science*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4494-1_112

Alexander, P. (2010). Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests–a preliminary analysis. *Review of African Political Economy*, *37*(123), 25-40.

Aluede, O. O. (2000). An analysis of the attitude of university students towards campus unrest. *The Progress of Education,* 74, 154 –160.

Aluede, O. O. (2001). Factors influencing students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Edo State of Nigeria. *Educational Research Quarterly, 24*(3), 10–26.

Alvi, M. (2016). *A manual for selecting sampling techniques in research.* University of Karachi, Iqra University Research Gateway.

Anugwom, E. E. (2019). Beyond the Narratives of Decolonization: Re-situating Sociological Knowledge within the Context of Development in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, *50*(1), 18-33.

Armstrong, R. (2003). Participatory action research: A guide for community-based organisations. http://www.visionmanagement.ca/Assets/Articles/Participatory%20Action%20Research.pdf Retrieved 12/10/2019.

Asante, L. A., & Helbrecht, I. (2018). Seeing through African protest logics: A longitudinal review of continuity and change in protests in Ghana. *Canadian*

Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études Africaines, *52* (2), 159–181.

Asogwa, K. C., Edeh, H. C., Ajah, A. C., Omeh, P. H., Asadu, M. I., Ogbuabor, D. C., & Ngwu, E. C. (2021). The state, end Sars protests and human rights violation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies*, *22* (2). https://doi.org/10.53836/ijia/2021/22/2/004

Babalola, A., & Olawuyi, D. S. (2021). Advancing environmental education for sustainable development in higher education in Nigeria: Current challenges and future directions. *Sustainability*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910808

Babbie, E. (2010). The Practice of Social Research (12th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Babbie, E. (2020). *The practice of social research* (15th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Bakare, K. A. (2019). University administration in Nigeria: history, ethics and corporate governance. *Journal of Advanced Sociology*, *1*(1), 1-16.

Banks, S., Armstrong, A., Carter, K., Graham, H., Hayward, P., Henry, A., ... & Strachan, A. (2016). Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research. In *Knowledge Mobilisation and Social Sciences* (pp. 97-111). Routledge.

Baragwanath, R. (2016). Social media and contentious politics in South Africa. *Communication and the Public*, *1* (3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047316667960

Bassin, M. (2003). Politics from nature: Environment, ideology, and the determinist tradition. In J. A. Agnew, K. Mitchell, & G. Toal (Eds.), *A companion to political geography* (pp. 13–28). Blackwell Publishing.

Battaglia, M. P. (2008). Nonprobability sampling. *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*, *1*, 523-526.

Battle, M. (2009). *Ubuntu: I in you and you in me*. Church Publishing, Inc.

Bennett, T. W. (2011). Ubuntu: an African equity. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, *14*(4), 30-61.

Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 191-222.

Bhambra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies*, *17*(2), 115–121.

Boboyi, A., & Kang'ethe, S. M. (2024). Unpacking challenges within South African institutions of higher learning in addressing student grievances: A literature review. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, *7* (2), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2024.20

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Broodryk, J. (2002). *Ubuntu: life lessons from Africa*. Ubuntu School of Philosophy.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Cele, M. (2008). The contradictory and complementary relationship between student constructive engagement and protest strategies in South African higher education. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *6*(2-3), 77-106.

Cele, M. B. (2014). *Student politics and the funding of higher education in South Africa: the case of the University of the Western Cape, 1995-2005* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape].

Chandratre, S. (2020). Medical students and COVID-19: challenges and supportive strategies. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, 7, 238212052093505. https://doi.org/10.1177/2382120520935059

Chang, C., Rosen, C. C., & Levy, P. E. (2009). The relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and employee attitudes, strain, and behaviour: a meta-analytic examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(4), 779-801. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.43670894

Chasi, C., & Rodny-Gumede, Y. (2021). Rethinking peace journalism in light of ubuntu. In *Media, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Africa* (pp. 19-30). Routledge.

Cheloti, S. K., Obae, R. N., & Kanori, E. N. (2014). Principals' management styles and students' unrest in public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice, 5*(29), 1-10.

Chemutai, B., Onkware, K., & Iteyo, C. (2020). Nature of student unrest in secondary schools in Kericho county Kenya. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 7(11), 6293-6307. https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v7i011.04

Chevalier, J. M. (2019). *Participatory action research: Theory and methods for engaged inquiry*. Routledge.

Chilisa, B. (2019). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Sage publications.

Chilisa, B., & Kawulich, B. (2012). Selecting a research approach: Paradigm, methodology and methods. *Doing social research: A global context*, *5*(1), 51-61.

Chilisa, B., Major, T. E., & Khudu-Petersen, K. (2017). Community engagement with a postcolonial, African-based relational paradigm. *Qualitative Research*, *17*(3), 326-339.

Chukwudi, E. C., & Idowu, S. S. (2021). Asuu strike and the Nigerian governments: Implications on students and society in a changing world. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, *12* (4), 294–304. https://doi.org/10.9734/SAJSSE/2021/v12i430336

Chukwuere, P. C., Chukwuere, J. E., & Adom, D. (2021). The psychosocial effects of social media cyberbullying on students in selected African countries. *Acta Informatica Malaysia*, *5* (2), 62–70. https://doi.org/10.26480/aim.02.2021.62.70

Clark, A., Holland, C., Katz, J., & Peace, S. (2009). Learning to see: lessons from a participatory observation research project in public spaces. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 12(4), 345–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570802268587

Clark, T. (2011). Gaining and maintaining access: Exploring the mechanisms that support and challenge the relationship between gatekeepers and researchers. *Qualitative Social Work*, *10*(4), 485-502.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The journal of positive psychology*, *12*(3), 297-298.

Cloete, N., Maassen, P., & Bailey, T. (2015). *Knowledge production and contradictory functions in African higher education* (p. 310). African Minds.

Coetzee, C., & Egbunike, L. U. (2023). Nigerian campus forms. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *35* (3), 249–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2023.2238200

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge.

Cornwall, A. (2003). Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development. *World development*, *31*(8), 1325-1342.

Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science & Medicine, 41*(12), 1667–1676.

Corr, A. (2021). *The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy & Hegemony* (Vol. 1). Optimum Publishing International.

Costandius, E., & Bitzer, E. (2015). *Engaging higher education curricula: A critical citizenship perspective* (Vol. 6). African Sun Media.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research*. Sage Publications.

Czerniewicz, L., Trotter, H., & Haupt, G. (2019). Online teaching in response to student protests and campus shutdowns: academics' perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0170-1

Dahlum, S., & Wig, T. (2021). Chaos on campus: Universities and mass political protest. *Comparative Political Studies*, *54* (1), 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020919902

Dappa, K., Bhatti, F., & Aljarah, A. (2019). A study on the effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction: the role of gender, perceived organizational politics and perceived organizational commitment. *Management Science Letters*, 823-834. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.3.006

David, A. (2023). Students' crisis in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions: A review of the causes and management style. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *56*.

Davids, N., & Waghid, Y. (2016). FeesMustFall: History of South African student protests reflects inequality's grip. *Mail & Guardian,* 10, 1–2.

Davies, K. U., Ekwere, G. E., & Uyanga, U. U. (2015). Factors influencing students' unrest in institutions of higher learning and its implications on the academic performance of students in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Istraživanja u pedagogiji, 6*(1), 27-42. https://doi.org/10.17810/2015.21

Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative research*, *14*(5), 603-616.

Dei, G. J. S., & Kempf, A. (2006). *Anti-colonialism and education: The politics of resistance* (Vol. 7). Brill.

Dei, G. J. S., & McDermott, M. (2014). *Introduction to the politics of anti-racism education: In search of strategies for transformative learning* (pp. 1-11). Springer Netherlands.

Dei, G. J. S., Magro, K., & Honeyford, M. (2019). Decolonising education for inclusivity: Implications for literacy education. *Transcultural literacies: Re-visioning relationships in teaching and learning*, 5-30.

Dei, S. G. J. (2008). Indigenous knowledge studies and the next generation: Pedagogical possibilities for anti-colonial education. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *37*(S1), 5-13.

Dei, S. G. J. (2008). Schooling as a community: Race, schooling, and the education of African youth. *Journal of Black Studies*, *38*(3), 346-366.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (4th ed., pp. 1–20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Deutschmann, A. (2023). Education and politics: Student activism for elite recruitment in Kenya. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *41* (1), 106–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2022.2034761

Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in social and behavioural research*. University of Chicago Press.

Dube, B. (2016). *A socio-religious hybridity strategy to respond to the problems of religious studies in Zimbabwe* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).

Edwards, S., Makunga, N., Ngcobo, S., & Dhlomo, M. (2004). Ubuntu: A cultural method of mental health promotion. *International Journal of mental health promotion*, 6(4), 17-22.

Engelbrecht, N. (2015). Student protests in democratic South Africa. *South African History Online.* https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/student-protests-democratic-south-africa,

Escalada, M. & Heong, K. L. (2014). Focus Group Discussion. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242589494_Focus_Group_Discussion_1. Accessed on 14/10/2019.

Etadon, F. I. (2013) Campus conflicts involving students' and university management in Nigeria: The case of the University of Ibadan. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(3), 333–343.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A. & Alkassim, R. A. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fals-Borda, O. (1987). The application of participatory action research in Latin America. *International sociology*, *2*(4), 329-347.

Fanon, F., Sartre, J. P., & Farrington, C. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (Vol. 36, pp. 3-317). New York: Grove Press.

Farinloye, T., Adeola, O., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Typology of Nigerian universities: A strategic marketing and branding implication. In *Understanding the higher education market in Africa* (pp. 168-198). Routledge.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Freire, P. (1978). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* In J. Beck, C. Jenks, N. Keddie, & M. F. D. Young (Eds.), *Toward a sociology of education* (1st ed., pp. 13–21). Routledge.

Frenkel, S. (1992). Geography, empire, and environmental determinism. *Geographical Review*, 143-153.

Friesen, P. (2022). *Democratic Enculturation: Explaining Inaugural Party Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa*. University of Notre Dame.

Gade, C. B. (2012). What is ubuntu? Different interpretations among South Africans of African descent. *South African Journal of Philosophy= Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Wysbegeerte*, *31*(3), 484-503.

Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Gertzel. C. (2015). The Australasian Review of African Studies. *ARAS, 36* (2), 1-50.

Godsell, G., Chikane, R., & Mpofu-Walsh, S. (2016). *Fees must fall: Student revolt, decolonisation and governance in South Africa*. NYU Press.

Gregory, D., Johnston, R., Pratt, G., Watts, M., & Whatmore, S. (Eds.). (2009). *The dictionary of human geography*. John Wiley & Sons.

Grosfoguel, R. (2007). The epistemic decolonial turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms. *Cultural studies*, *21*(2-3), 211-223.

Grosfoguel, R. (2011). Decolonising post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. *Transmodernity: Journal of the peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-hispanic World*, *1*(1), 1-38.

Grosfoguel, R. (2013). The structure of knowledge in Westernized universities. *Human Architecture: Journal of the sociology of self-knowledge*, *11*(1), 73-90.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action* (Vol. 1). Beacon Press.

Hailey, J. (2008). Ubuntu: A literature review. *Tutu Foundation*, 1-26.

Han, F. (2010). Studies on college student psychological crisis intervention system. *International Journal of Psychological Studies, 2*(1), 151–153.

Hatane, S. E., Supangat, S., Tarigan, J., & Jie, F. (2019). Does internal corporate governance mechanism control firm risk? Evidence from Indonesia's three high-risk sectors. Corporate Governance: *The International Journal of Business in Society, 19*(6), 1362–1376. https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-02-2019-0071

Head, G. (2020). Ethics in educational research: Review boards, ethical issues and researcher development. *European Educational Research Journal*, *19*(1), 72-83.

Heffernan, A. (2015). Black Consciousness's lost leader: Abraham Tiro, the University of the North, and the seeds of South Africa's student movement in the 1970s. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *41*(1), 173-186.

Heydenrych, P. W. (2016). Constitutionalism and coloniality: A case of colonialism continued or the best of both worlds? *New Contree*, 75, 116-133. http://hdl.handle.net/10394/19410

Himonga, C., Taylor, M., & Pope, A. (2013). Reflections on judicial views of Ubuntu. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, *16*(5), 369-427.

Huang, F. (2024). Practical exploration of ideological and political education in colleges and universities under the perspective of collaborative parenting. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.2478/amns-2024-0470

Ibrahim, J. (2022). The Nigerian University System, Corruption and Erosion of the Public Good. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *20*(2), 111-136. https://doi.org/10.57054/jhea.v20i2.2728

Ibrahim, M. Y., Abd Muis, M., Bakar, M. H., Zainal, M. A., Hashim, M. J., & Jusoh, M. H. (2023). Factors on political involvement among university student in Malaysia. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 6(5), 2024060. https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2024060

Ingwe, R., Ikeji, C. C., & Ugwu, U. (2011). Sub-national regional development and degree-awarding tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria: descriptive, geo-demographic and geo-spatial analyses. *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis*, *3*(1), 77-103.

Is'aloluwa, E. L. (2014). *Non inclusive post-war government structure: a hindrance to predictable political succession in the great lakes region* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Iwilade, A. (2013). Crisis as opportunity: Youth, social media and the renegotiation of power in Africa. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *16*(8), 1054-1068.

Jansen, J. (Ed.). (2019). *Decolonisation in universities: The politics of knowledge*. Wits University Press.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, *33*(7), 14-26.

Joseph Efe, A., Jane Golohor, K., & Juliet Ufuoma, A. (2023). Students unrest in Nigerian universities: Types, causes and administrative strategies to the challenges. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, *18* (03), 376–385.

Judkins, G., Smith, M., & Keys, E. (2008). Determinism within human–environment research and the rediscovery of environmental causation. *Geographical Journal*, *174*(1), 17-29.

Kabir, A. H., & Greenwood, J. (2017). Neoliberalism, violence and student resistance in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. *Society and Culture in South Asia*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10. 1177/2393861716674106

Kaim, A., Lev-Ari, S., & Adini, B. (2023). Distress following the COVID-19 pandemic among schools' stakeholders: psychosocial aspects and communication. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20(6), 4837. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20064837

Kaminer, D., & Eagle, G. (2010). *Traumatic stress in South Africa*. Wits University Press.

Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2013). Ubuntu in South Africa: A sociolinguistic perspective to a pan-African concept. In *The global intercultural communication reader* (pp. 240-250). Routledge.

Khosla, I. (2021). Book Review: Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 696828.

Khoza, R. (2012). *Attuned leadership: African humanism as compass*. Penguin Random House South Africa.

Khushk, A. A., Zhang, Z., & Aman, N. (2021). Game of organizational politics leading to turnover intention. *Journal of Advanced Research in Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 2(2), 35-49. https://doi.org/10.47631/jareas.v2i2.223

Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2007). Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place. London: Routledge.

Konings, P. (2009). University crisis and student strikes in Africa: The case of the University of Buea (Cameroon). *JHEA/RESA*, *7* (1&2), 211–233.

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Lalude, O. M. (2021). Tasking the leviathan: Right to protest, good governance, and implications for national security and international law. *Journal of Social Change*, *13* (2), 103–117. https://doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2021.13.2.09

Landa, N., Zhou, S., & Marongwe, N. (2021). Education in emergencies: lessons from covid-19 in South Africa. *International Review of Education*, 67(1-2), 167-183. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-021-09903-z

Le Grange, L. (2019). Different voices on decolonising of the curriculum. *The decolonisation of the curriculum project: The affordances of indigenous knowledge for self-directed learning*, *2*, 25-47.

Lefa, B. J. (2015). The African philosophy of ubuntu in South African education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *1*(1), 15.

Leibowitz, B. (2017). Power, knowledge and learning: Dehegomonising colonial knowledge. *Alternation Journal*, *24*(2), 99-119.

Letseka, M. (2012). In defence of Ubuntu. *Studies in philosophy and education*, *31*, 47-60.

Lewthwaite, G. R. (1966). Environmentalism and determinism: A search for clarification. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *56*(1), 1-23.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2013). *The constructivist credo*. Left Coast Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128). Sage Publications.

Livingstone, D. N. (2011). *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Luckett, K. (2019). Gazes in the post-colony: an analysis of African philosophies using Legitimation Code Theory. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *24*(2), 197-211.

Lutz, D. W. (2009). African Ubuntu philosophy and global management. *Journal of business ethics*, *84*(Suppl 3), 313-328.

Mabovula, N. N. (2011). The erosion of African communal values: A reappraisal of the African Ubuntu philosophy. *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 38-47.

MacDonald, C. (2012). Understanding participatory action research: A qualitative research methodology option. *Canadian Journal of Action Research, 13*(2), 34-50.

Mahmud, M. (2019). The use of politeness strategies in the classroom context by English university students. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(3), 597. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v8i3.15258

Mahmud, M. H. and Mahmud, A. A. (2024). Good governance and student politics in public university campuses: Bangladesh perspective. Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi, 22(52), 308-323. https://doi.org/10.35408/comuybd.1352473

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept. *Cultural studies*, *21*(2-3), 240-270.

Mamdani, M. (2016). Between the public intellectual and the scholar: Decolonization and some post-independence initiatives in African higher education. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *17*(1), 68-83.

Mangena, F. (2016). African ethics through Ubuntu: A postmodern exposition. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *9*(2), 66-80.

Martono, S., Nurkhin, A., Pramusinto, H., Afsari, N., & Arham, A. F. (2020). The relationship of good university governance and student satisfaction. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *9*(1), 1-10.

Mavunga, G. (2019). #feesmustfall protests in South Africa: a critical realist analysis of selected newspaper articles. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 7(1). https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v7i1.3694

May, E. (2024). Critical pedagogy and disability in participatory research: a review. *Information and Learning Sciences*, 125(7/8), 437–455. https://doi.org/10.1108/ils-02-2023-0021

Mbembe, J. A. (2016). Decolonising the university: New directions. *Arts and humanities in higher education*, *15*(1), 29-45.

Mbhele, S. and Sibanyoni, E. K. (2022). A case study of student hooligan behaviour during protest action at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. *Journal for Students Affairs in Africa*. https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v10i1.2195

Mboti, N. (2015). May the real ubuntu please stand up? *Journal of Media Ethics*, *30*(2), 125-147.

McKay, C. L. (2021). The university college of the north, student politics and the national union of South African students, 1960-1968. *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, *46* (1). https://doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH46.v1.2

Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. Guilford Press.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). Philosophy in mixed methods teaching: The transformative paradigm as illustration. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, *4*(1), 9-18.

Mertens, D. M. (2012). Ethics in qualitative research in education and the social sciences. In S. D. Lapan, M. T. Quartaroli, & F. J. Riemer (Eds.), *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (pp. 19–39). Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M., & Wilson, A. T. (2019). *Program evaluation theory and practice*. Guilford Publications.

Metz, T. (2011). Ubuntu as a moral theory and human rights in South Africa. *African human rights law journal*, *11*(2), 532-559.

Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Durham: Duke UP.

Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural studies*, *21*(2-3), 449-514.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds.). (2011). *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mkhize, N. (2008). Ubuntu and harmony: An African approach to morality and ethics. In R. Nicolson (Ed.), *Persons in community: African ethics in a global culture* (pp. 23-34). University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Moorosi, P. & Bantwini, B. (2016). School district leadership styles and school improvement: Evidence from selected school principals in the Eastern Cape Province. *South African Journal of Education*, *36*(4), 1–9.

Morgan, D. L. (2014). *Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach*. Sage Publications.

Motala, E., Senekal, I., & Vally, S. (2023). A commentary on student struggles, violence and organisational weakness. *Education as Change*, *27*, 13712. https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/13712

Mugumbate, J., & Nyanguru, A. (2013). Exploring African philosophy: The value of ubuntu in social work. *African Journal of Social Work*, *3*(1), 82-100.

Murage, L. M., Njoka, J. N., & Gachahi, M. W. (2019). Challenges faced by student leaders in managing student affairs in public universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 7(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.7n.1p.1

Murithi, T. (2006). Practical peacemaking wisdom from Africa: Reflections on Ubuntu. *The Journal of Pan African studies*, *1*(4), 25-34.

Murithi, T. (2009). An African perspective on peace education: Ubuntu lessons in reconciliation. *International review of education*, *55*, 221-233.

Mutekwe, E. (2017). Unmasking student activism in higher education: A South African perspective. *Perspectives in Education, 35*(2), 142-154

Mutekwe, E. (2017). Unmasking the ramifications of the fees-must-fall conundrum in higher education institutions in South Africa: A critical perspective. *Perspectives in Education, 35*(2), 142–154.

Muxe Nkondo, G. (2007). Ubuntu as public policy in South Africa: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, *2*(1), 88-100.

Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education, 14*(3), e67670.

Naidoo, K., Lewis, S., Essop, H., Koch, G. G., Khoza, T. E., Phahlamohlaka, N. M., … & Badriparsad, N. R. (2023). July 2021 civil unrest: South African diagnostic radiography students' experiences. *Health SA Gesondheid*, 46(1). https://doi.org/10.4102/hsag.v28i0.2253

Ndelu, S., Dlakavu, S., & Boswell, B. (2017). Womxn's and nonbinary activists' contribution to the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall student movements: 2015 and 2016. *Agenda*, *31*(3-4), 1-4.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). Why decoloniality in the 21st century? *The Thinker*, *48*(10), 5-9.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2015). Decoloniality as the future of Africa. *History Compass*, *13*(10), 485–496.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., & Zondi, S. (2016). *Decolonising the university, knowledge systems and disciplines in Africa*. Carolina Academic Press.

Ndofirepi, A. P. (2014). Transforming epistemologies in the postcolonial African university? the challenge of the politics of knowledge. *Journal of Education and Learning* (EduLearn), 8(4), 291-298. https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v8i4.119

Ngonso, B. F. (2022). Ethical lapses in the Nigerian higher education system: Obiora F. Ike's ethics of Education and the Nigerian context. *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education*, (1), 53-73.

Nikolayenko, O. (2021). Anti-corruption protests and university students: evidence from Russian cities. *Government and Opposition*, 58(2), 207-226. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.54

Nisa, N. U., Nawaz, M. S., & Makhdoom, T. R. (2021). The role of organizational politics, its impact on employee job attitude and creativity: exploration and implications for the higher education institutions. *International Review of Management and Business Research*, 10(1), 183-191. https://doi.org/10.30543/10-1(2021)-14

Nkulu-N'Sengha, M. (2009). Ubuntu philosophy and human rights: The quest for justice in the African context. In F. Dokman & E. M. Cornelli (Eds.), *Beyond Bantu philosophy: Contextualizing Placide Tempels's initiative*. Routledge.

Nordquist, R. (2019). *Conversation analysis (CA): Glossary of grammatical and rhetorical terms*. ThoughtCo https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-conversation-analysis-ca-1689923

Ntombana, L., Gwala, A., & Sibanda, F. (2023). Positioning the #FeesMustFall movement within the transformative agenda: Reflections on student protests in South Africa. *Education as Change*, *27*(1), 1-18.

Ntuli, M. E., & Teferra, D. (2017). Implications of Social Media on Student Activism. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *15*(2), 63-80.

Nussbaum, B. (2003). Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African on our common humanity. *Reflections*, *4*(4), 21-26.

Nyamnjoh, B. (2020). *Decolonising the academy*. African Books Collective.

O'Connor, P., Hodgins, M., Woods, D. R., Wallwaey, E., Palmen, R., Van Den Brink, M., & Schmidt, E. K. (2021). Organisational characteristics that facilitate gender-based violence and harassment in higher education? *Administrative sciences*, *11*(4), 138.

Obasi, I. N. (2007). Analysis of the emergence and development of private universities in Nigeria (1999–2006). *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *5*(2-3), 39-66.

Odebode, A. A. (2019). Factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions: Implications for counselling practices. *Mimbar Pendidikan, 4*(2), 93–102. https://doi.org/10.2121/mp.v4i2.1227

Ofor-Douglas, S. (2022a). University education, good governance and challenges of insecurity in Nigeria. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, *5* (1), 54–65. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.1.555

Ofor-Douglas, S. (2022b). Gains and setbacks related to institutional governance reforms in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, *5* (1), 184–196. https://doi.org/10. 37284/ijar.5.1.990

Ofor-Douglas, S. (2023). University education and politics of funding in Nigeria. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, *6*(1), 389–403. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.1.1270

Ogunrotifa, A. B. (2013). Class theory of terrorism: A study of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 27-59.

Okebukola, P. (2006). Principles and policies guiding current reforms in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, 25-36.

Omodan, B. I. & Dube, B. (2019). Bridging the dichotomous gaps between trade unions and management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 10*(1), 285–300.

Omodan, B. I. (2019). Defacing Machiavellianism in university politics: A discourse to reconstruct Leadership through Ubuntu. *African Renaissance*, *16(*4), 33–51. http://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2019/16n1a2

Omodan, B. I. (2019). Strategy to enhance crisis management between students and university authorities in Nigeria (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of the Free State, South Africa.

Omodan, B. I. (2020). Combatting the Imperativeness of Modernity in Students' Unrest: The Need to Decolonise the Minds through Ubuntu. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *9*(4), 310-319.

Omodan, B. I. (2020). Managing students' unrest in universities: Unmasking the threat and success implication through Ubuntu. *Multicultural Education, 6*(2), 27–38. http://ijdri.com/me/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/4.pdf

Omodan, B. I. (2020). Managing the psycho-social vacuum of COVID-19 among rural learners through Ubuntu. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 10*(6), 266-278.

Omodan, B. I. (2022a). Virtual management of students' unrest during the COVID-19 new normal: The need for an innovative approach. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, *5* (1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2022.2

Omodan, B. I. (2022b). Ubuntu politics of process: An alternative conflict management culture in universities. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, *9*(4), 42–54. https://doi.org/10.29333/ ejecs/1277

Omodan, B. I. (2023a). Addressing the underside of student unrest in South African universities using collegial leadership as approach. *Transformation in Higher Education*, *8*, 273.

Omodan, B. I. (2023a). Causes and institutional responses of social unrest in South African Universities. SAGE Open, 13(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231218775

Omodan, B. I. (2023d). Psychological implication of student unrest on student leaders: a social support perspective. *Heliyon*, 9(11), e22334. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e22334

Omodan, B. I. (2024). Deradicalising student unrest in South Africa using a decolonial approach. *Perspectives in Education*, *42*(4), 171–185. https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v42i4.7017

Omodan, B. I., Dube, B. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2018). Collaborative governance and crisis management in Nigerian universities: An exploration of students' activism. In M. M. Dichaba & M. A. O. Sotayo (Eds.), *Rethinking teaching and learning in the 21st century* (pp. 48-68). Pretoria: African Academic Research Forum.

Omodan, B. I., Dube, B. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2020). Politics of process and social crises in Nigerian universities: Challenges and solutions. *African Renaissance. 17*(4), 119–139. https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2020/17n4a6

Omodan, B. I., Tsotetsi, C. T., & Dube, B. (2020). Analysis of human relations theory of management: A quest to re-enact people's management towards peace in the university system. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *18*, 10.

Omodan, T. C. & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2019). Framing Ubuntu philosophy to reconstruct principals' behaviour and teachers' effectiveness in secondary schools. *Issues in*

Educational Research. Journal of Education Research and Rural Community Development, *1*(1), 25–45. https://jerrcd.org/article/view/19647/13241

Önal, H. (2018). Reflections of environmental determinism in the questions prepared by geography teacher candidates. *Review of International Geographical Education Online* (RIGEO), *8*(1), 74–92. http://www.rigeo.org/vol8no1/Number1Spring/RIGEO-V8-N1-4.pdf

Onuoha, F. C. (2012). The audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, analysis and emerging trend. *Security Journal*, *25*(2), 134-151.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 33*(1), 93–96.

Oyebanji, S. O., & Adeoye, E. A. (2017). Geography and university governance in Nigeria: The role of spatial analysis in policy formulation. *International Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*, 3(2), 28–36.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Peet, R. (1985). The social origins of environmental determinism. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *75*(3), 309-333.

Pillay, S. R. (2016). Silence is violence:(Critical) psychology in an era of Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *46*(2), 155-159.

Pitan, O. S. and Muller, C. (2023). Assessment of strategies for preparing graduates for the disruptive workplace: evidence from Nigeria and South Africa. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 14(1), 15-30. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2023vol14no1art1576

Prinsloo, E. D. (2000). The African view of participatory business management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *25*, 275-286.

Pule, N. (2022). South African student leadership unrest and unsettled constructions: A cabaret analysis. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *36*(2), 239–257. https://doi.org/10.20853/36-2- 4718

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International sociology*, *15*(2), 215-232.

Ramose, M. B. (2015). Ubuntu: Affirming a right and seeking remedies in South Africa. In L. Praeg & S. Magadla (Eds.), *Ubuntu: Curating the Archive* (pp. 121–136). Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press.

Ramose, M. B. (2016). African philosophy through Ubuntu. In M. Letseka (Ed.), *Ubuntu and African Philosophy in Education* (pp. 15–25). Routledge.

Ratele, K. (2017). Frequently asked questions about African psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *47*(3), 273-279.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Rhoads, R. A. (2016). Student activism, diversity, and the struggle for a just society. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 9(3), 189-202. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000039

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ruffa, S. C. & Harrison, K. (2020). Ask me what I want: Community-based participatory research to explore transition-age foster youth's use of support services. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 108, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104608

Samaila, M., Uzochukwu, O. C., & Ishaq, M. (2018). Organisational politics and workplace conflict in selected tertiary institutions in Edo state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences*, *4*(1), 26–41. https://doi.org/10.20448/2001.41.26.41

Sartorius, R. (2022). The notion of "development" in Ubuntu. *Religion and Development*, *1*(1), 96-117.

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research. *English Language Teaching, 5*(9), 9–16.

Semple, E. C. (1911). *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthropo-geography*. Henry Holt Constable.

Shang, X., Ju, Y., & Mao, W. (2023). Practice and exploration of ideological and political work systems in colleges and universities. *Frontiers in Educational Research*, 6(25). https://doi.org/10.25236/fer.2023.062510

Shay, S. (2016). Decolonising the curriculum: It's time for a strategy. *South African Journal of Science, 112*(5/6), 1–2.

Shutte, A. (2001). *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa.* Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Sikwebu, D. (2008). A search for post-apartheid collective identities: Ethnic student organisations at a South African university. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *6*(2-3), 107-133.

Silverman, D. (2021). *Doing qualitative research*: Sage Publications.

Sithole, T. (2016). The concept of the black subject in Fanon. *Journal of Black Studies*, *47*(1), 24-40.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Song, B. and Qiu, R. (2024). The influence of digital virtual technology on contemporary college students' ideological and political education. IEEE Access, 1-1. https://doi.org/10.1109/access.2020.3020167

Stevens, G., & Lockhat, R. (2003). Black adolescent identity during and after apartheid. *Social psychology: Identities and relationships*, 130-147.

Strauss, M. (2019). A historical exposition of spatial injustice and segregated urban settlement in South Africa. *Fundamina*, *25*(2), 135-168.

Swanson, D. M. (2007). Ubuntu: An African contribution to (re) search for/with a'humble togetherness'. *Journal of contemporary issues in education*, *2*(2), 53-67.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). Putting the human back in "human research methodology": The researcher in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *4*(4), 271-277.

Termeer, C., Dewulf, A., Van Rijswick, H., Van Buuren, A., Huitema, D., Meijerink, S., ... & Wiering, M. (2011). The regional governance of climate adaptation: A framework for developing legitimate, effective, and resilient governance arrangements. *Climate law*, *2*(2), 159-179.

Tikoko, B. J. and Kimame, L. (2022). Influence of disciplinary roles played by student councils in curbing the frequency of student unrest in public boys boarding secondary schools in Elgon sub-county, Kenya. *Journal of Education Management and Leadership* (JEML), 1(1), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.51317/jeml.v3i1.67

Tisdell, E. J., Merriam, S. B., & Stuckey-Peyrot, H. L. (2025). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Turner, C. C. (2014). Civic engagement in the capstone: The "state of the community" event. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *47*(2), 497-501. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096514000444

Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. London: Rider.

Vally, S., & Motala, E. (2014). *Education, economy & society*. Unisa Press.

Van den Heuvel, H., Mangaliso, M. P., & Van de Bunt, L. (2006). Prophecies and protests: Ubuntu in global management. In *M. Karsten (Ed.), Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (pp. 233–254). Praeger Publishers.

Variri, N. & Variri, M. (2019). The teaching of Unhu/Ubuntu through Shona novels in Zimbabwean secondary schools: A case for Masvingo urban district. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, *10*(8), 101–114. https://doi.org/10.5897/JASD2018.0508

Vaughn, L. M. & Jacquez, F. (2020). Participatory research methods – choice points in the research process. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, 1(1). https://doi.org/10.35844/001c.13244

Venter, E. (2004). The notion of ubuntu and communalism in African educational discourse. *Studies in philosophy and education*, *23*, 149-160.

Wa Thiong'o, N. (2009). *Something torn and new: An African renaissance*. Basic Books.

Waghid, Y. (2013). *African philosophy of education reconsidered: On being human*. Routledge.

Wagle, S. K. (2022). Towards Participatory Worldview in Education and Research: A Philosophical Inquiry on the Question-Why Participatory? *Journal of Transformative Praxis*, *3*(1), 9-24.

Walker-Janzen, W., Véliz-Campos, M., & Veliz, L. (2019). Academic journeys of socially disadvantaged students in Chile's more equitable pathways to university entry. *Issues in Educational Research*, *29*(4), 1348-1368.

Wallerstein, N. B., & Duran, B. (2006). Using community-based participatory research to address health disparities. *Health promotion practice*, *7*(3), 312-323.

Washington, K. (2010). Zulu traditional healing, Afrikan worldview and the practice of Ubuntu: Deep thought for Afrikan/Black psychology. *The Journal of pan African studies*, *3*(8), 24-39.

Wasonga, T. A., & Makahamadze, T. (2020). Boarding schools as colonizing and oppressive spaces: Towards understanding student protest and violence in Kenyan secondary schools. *European Journal of Educational Management*, *3* (2), 25–35. https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.3.2.25

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2008). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International journal of social research methodology*, *11*(5), 417-428.

Wurm, S., & Napier, J. (2017). Rebalancing power: Participatory research methods in interpreting studies. *Translation & Interpreting: The International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Research*, *9*(1), 102-120.

Xiu-yin, B. (2018). Research on the performance evaluation of ideological and political education of college students based on fuzzy comprehensive evaluation. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Egitim Bilimleri,* *18*(5), 2394-2402.. https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2018.5.138

Yagboyaju, D. A., & Akinola, A. O. (2019). Nigerian state and the crisis of governance: A critical exposition. *SAGE Open*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019865810

Zeilig, L. (2009). The student-intelligentsia in sub-Saharan Africa: Structural adjustment, activism and transformation. *Review of African Political Economy*, *119* (63-78). https://doi.org/10. 1080/03056240902885705

Zeilig, L., & Dawson, M. (2008). Introduction: student activism, structural adjustment and the democratic transition in Africa. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *6*(2-3), 1-31.

Zeleza, P. T., & Olukoshi, A. O. (Eds.). (2004). *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century: Knowledge and Society* (Vol. 2). Unisa Press.

Zhang, S. (2021). Selection method of network ideological and political education resources under big data. *Journal of Education and Culture Studies*, 5(6), p1. https://doi.org/10.22158/jecs.v5n6p1

Zhang, Y. (2023). The Role of Retired College Student Soldiers in Ideological and Political Work in Universities. *Adult and Higher Education*, *5*(18), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.23977/aduhe.2023.051801

Ениколопов, P., Makarin, A., & Petrova, M. (2020). Social media and protest participation: evidence from Russia. *Econometrica*, 88(4), 1479-1514. https://doi.org/10.3982/ecta14281

Appendix 1: Proposal Approval Letter

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: (018) 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Focus Area: Social Transformation
Scientific Committee
Tel: (018) 299 1647
Fax (018) 299 1776

9 October 2023

Dr PW Heydenrych

School of Governance
Potchefstroom Campus

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Student name: Omodan, BI
Student no: 40406962
Supervisor: Dr Pieter Heydenrych
Ethical risk level: Low risk
Title of the study:

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Reconstruct the Politics of Process Underlying Student Unrest in African Universities

This letter hereby serves to confirm that the research proposal of the above-mentioned study has been approved by the Scientific Committee of the Focus Area Social Transformation.

Ethical clearance is required: *http://humanities.nwu.ac.za/basic-and-social-sciences-research-ethics-committee-bassrec.*

Kind regards

Prof. LM Fourie
Research Director: Focus Area Social Transformation

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval Letter

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Training and Support

North-West University Human Social Science Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HSSREC)

Tel: +27 18 289 2899
Email: Erhabor.Idemudia@nwu.ac.za

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 016 103 4446
Email: Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

12 June 2024

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HSS-REC)** on **12/06/2024**, the North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Reconstruct the Politics of Process Underlying Student Unrest in African Universities.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr Pieter Heydenrych

Student: Mr Bunmi Isaiah Omodan (40406962)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	1	5	1	-	2	4	-	A	7
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single-Study

Commencement date: **12/06/2024** **Risk Category:** **Medium**

Expiry date: 12/06/2025

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the NWU-HSS-REC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the NWU-HSS-REC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

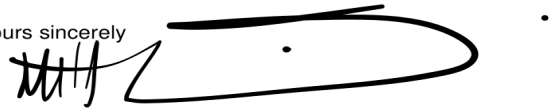
General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HSS-REC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HSS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and NWU-HSS-REC reserves the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HSS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
    - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*
- *NWU-HSS-REC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via HSSREC-Admin@nwu.ac.za or 018 285 3037.*

The NWU-HSS REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HSS REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof E. Idemudia
Chairperson NWU Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 NWU-HSS-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

Appendix 3: Declaration by participant

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in a research study entitled:

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 _____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Signature of witness**

- You may contact me again ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
- I would like a summary of the findings of this research ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
- I would like feedback on my functioning/wellbeing as reflected in the questionnaires I completed ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____
Postal Address: _____
Email: _____
Phone Number: _____
Cell Phone Number: _____

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email: _____

_____

1

Appendix 4: Declaration by person obtaining consent

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I *(name)* _____ declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____20 ____

_____ _____

Signature of person obtaining consent **Signature of witness**

Declaration by researcher

I *(name)* _____ declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____20 _____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Signature of witness**

Appendix 5: Declaration by researcher and participant

Declaration by researcher and participant

Personal face-to-face interviews during Covid-19 restrictions

Additional declaration by participant in those instances where the participant requests to participate in a personal face-to-face semi-structured interview:

By signing below, I _____, acknowledge the following information related to the required measures regarding Covid-19:

I declare that:

- It is my personal choice and preference to participate in a personal face-to-face semi-structured interview with the researcher.
- This requires that I consent to the following strict measures to safeguard the personal health and safety of myself and that of the researcher/interviewer/primary investigator:

  - I consent to the researcher taking my temperature before the interview using a thermometer. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
  - I confirm that my temperature measured at _____ degrees. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
  - I consent to use the three-ply mask provided by the researcher. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
  - I consent to wear the three-ply mask for the full duration of the interview. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
  - I consent to the researcher sanitising the interview context using a sanitiser with an 80% alcohol content before the commencement of the interview. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**
  - I consent to the researcher using a sanitiser with an 80% alcohol content before and during the interview if required. ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 ____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Signature of researcher**

Appendix 6: Language Editing Certificate

CERTIFICATE

OF LANGUAGE EDITING

ERRCDF

Rethinking Education 4 Inclusive Development

The certificate is awarded to

Bunmi Omodan

This certificate confirms that Bunmi Omodan's thesis titled "An interdisciplinary approach to reconstruct the politics of process underlying student unrest in two African universities" was edited by a professional English-language editing staff at the ERRCD Forum.

2025 AWARD

23/11/2025

Oluchi Anyakudo
ERRCDF Language Editing Service
LangEditor@errcd.com
www.errcd.com

Appendix 7: Data Protocol Questions

The table below indicates how each sub-research question (except for question one, which is addressed conceptually) was addressed among the participants during the data collection sessions.

S/N	Objectives	FGD/Interview Questions
Question 2, Article 2	How has the comparative background of the selected countries regarding the crisis situation and its management affected the level of social unrest on campuses?	• Can you describe how crisis situations are managed in your university based on your experience or observations around you? • How do geographical factors influence the management of student unrest in the university? • Are there distinct patterns or approaches observed in the management of student unrest in your university or your observations in other universities?
Question 3, Article 2.	What is the extent of psychosocial deficiencies faced by the stakeholders in the selected universities?	• Can you share your experiences or observations regarding the psychosocial challenges faced by stakeholders as a result of student unrest in your university? • How do these psychosocial deficiencies caused by student unrest impact the well-being and productivity of the university stakeholders? • What support mechanisms currently address these deficiencies within the university context, and are they effective?
Question 4, article 3.	What are the challenges hindering the management of student unrest in the universities selected in the selected countries?	• What, in your opinion/experience/observations, are the primary challenges responsible for student unrest in your university or other universities you are familiar with? • What do you think is hindering or preventing university authority from addressing these challenges?

Question 5, Article 3.	What are the possible solutions to the existing challenges associated with the management of student unrest in universities?	• Can you suggest any preemptive measures/solutions that can or have been taken to avoid student unrest in the universities?