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Cultural Hegemony in Staff Recruitment and the Performance of Nigerian Public Universities

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Abstract

This study examined cultural hegemony in staff recruitment and the performance of Nigerian public universities, with particular focus on political-institutional hegemony and civil-society-institutional hegemony as dimensions of hegemony as they influence the performance of Nigerian public universities. The research adopted a quantitative design, using survey data collected from 124 out of 139 distributed questionnaires, representing an 89.2% response rate. Multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. The findings revealed that political-institutional hegemony exerted a statistically significant negative effect on the performance of Nigerian universities ($\beta = -.589, p < .05$), indicating that political interference, patronage, and favouritism reduced institutional outcomes. Conversely, civil-society institutional hegemony had a statistically significant positive effect on the performance of the Nigerian public universities ($\beta = .491, p < .05$), suggesting that transparent recruitment norms and professional safeguards enhanced performance. The model explained 57.5% of the variance in university performance ($R^2 = .575$), demonstrating that cultural hegemonies are key predictors of institutional outcomes. The study concluded that minimizing political influence in recruitment while strengthening civil-society practices would improve productivity, research outputs, and governance in Nigerian universities. It recommends promoting merit-based recruitment and institutional transparency to mitigate the negative effects of political dominance. The study contributes to the literature by empirically quantifying the dual impact of political and civil-society hegemonies on university performance. Limitations include the exclusion of other structural factors such as funding and strikes, with suggestions for future research to adopt a more comprehensive model.

Keywords: Cultural hegemony, political-institutional powers, civil-society practices, staff recruitment, Nigerian public universities, performance.

1.1 Introduction

The idea that power is maintained not only by formal rules or coercive force, but by cultural norms, ideologies, and institutional practices that privilege certain groups or values, has gained increasing attention in global higher education debates. In many countries, staff recruitment



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practices are being scrutinized for their bias not simply in terms of explicit discrimination, but in the subtler ways that cultural or institutional prestige, networks, or informal norms (e.g. alma mater prestige, language, ethnicity, gender) advantage some applicants over others. These practices can reproduce hierarchies, constrain diversity, and influence university performance in measurable ways such as research output, teaching quality, university rankings, and student success even where formal recruitment criteria claim to emphasize merit.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and specifically in Nigeria, public universities face persistent performance challenges: weak global rankings, underfunding, infrastructure deficits, high student: staff ratios, and frequent industrial actions are repeatedly reported (e.g. poor governance and funding are flagged by regulatory authorities) (NUC 2024; BusinessDay Nigeria 2024). These challenges are exacerbated by recruitment practices which may compromise meritocracy. For instance, studies report that nepotism, patronage, and political interference distort academic staff recruitment, leading to under-utilization of talent, over-reliance on adjunct or part-time staff, or mismatches between skills and institutional needs all of which degrade teaching and research performance (Bureaucratic Corruption study at University of Port Harcourt; Osun State universities study) (Agbeke & Adisa 2020; Bureaucratic Corruption, Port Harcourt 2022).

Despite several studies on recruitment and on performance in Nigerian public universities, little empirical work has explicitly framed this connection in terms of cultural hegemony i.e. how institutional norms, power relations, and cultural values bias recruitment in favor of dominant groups, ideas, or identities, and thereby affect performance outcomes. There is therefore a gap in knowledge about which dimensions of cultural hegemony (e.g. ethnicity, regional origin, educational background, informal networks) are most salient in recruitment, how they operate, and how their presence correlates with measurable university performance indicators (publication output, global ranking, student success, teaching quality).

Given the urgency of improving the performance of Nigerian public universities both for national development and international competitiveness this study is needed. A clearer understanding of how cultural hegemony in staff recruitment might be undermining performance will help policymakers, university governing councils, and regulatory bodies (like the National Universities Commission) to revise recruitment policies, enforcement mechanisms, and oversight systems. Only by making recruitment more transparent, equitable,



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and aligned with merit can the performance deficits low global ranking, poor research output, teaching-quality lapses be meaningfully addressed in public universities.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Ideally, recruitment into Nigerian public universities should adhere strictly to merit, transparency, and regulatory frameworks such as those set by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and federal policies like the Federal Character Principle, ensuring that the best candidates are selected through open advertisement, standardized vetting, and depoliticized procedures to support high quality teaching, research and service delivery. However, empirical evidence indicates that in many cases recruitment processes are compromised by cultural hegemony manifested through nepotism, political interference, favouritism and ethnic bias, undermining job advertisements, shortlisting, and promotions (Nwodim, 2021; Onyeiwu, 2025; Isihak, et al., 2023). As a consequence, deserving candidates are often excluded, the productivity and performance of universities suffer seen in low global rankings, poor research output, weak teaching quality and administrative inefficiencies and the broader Nigerian economy loses from underutilized human capital and institutional dysfunction (Nwodim, 2021; Agbeke & Adisa, 2020).

In response, some regulatory bodies and university administrations have issued guidelines, monitoring policies, and institutional reforms intended to enforce fair recruitment practices and reduce corruption (e.g., anti-corruption measures, policy articulation, federal character enforcement) (Isihak et al., 2023; Onyeiwu, 2025). However, these measures often fall short due to weak enforcement, administrative bottlenecks, socio-cultural pressures, lack of institutional autonomy, and inadequate oversight, so that many rules are more formal than operational in practice (Nwodim, 2021; Onyeiwu, 2025). Thus, a detailed empirical study is critically needed to explore how cultural hegemony operates in staff recruitment in Nigerian public universities, the mechanisms by which it impairs institutional performance, and what policy instruments or institutional reforms could effectively counter it, grounded in recent data and stakeholder experiences.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of cultural hegemony in staff recruitment on the performance of Nigerian public universities, while the specific objectives are to:



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- i. examine the effect of political-institutional hegemony in staff recruitment on the performance of Nigerian public universities
- ii. examine the effect of civil-society-institutional hegemony on the performance of Nigerian public universities

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in light of the problem statement:

- i. How does political-institutional hegemony affect the performance of Nigerian public universities
- ii. How does civil-society-institutional hegemony affect the performance of Nigerian public universities

2. Literature review

2.1 Cultural Hegemony

Cultural hegemony has been conceptualized by recent scholars as a process through which dominant groups maintain power by normalizing their values, ideas, and practices in ways that appear natural and consensual. For instance, Donoghue (2018) defines it as the promotion and dominance of a particular set of ideas through the construction of socio-cultural unity, sustained by both material and ideational struggles, often reproduced through institutions, texts, and everyday discourse. Similarly, Nnabuihe, et al. (2024) describe cultural hegemony as the mechanisms by which dominant ethnic or social groups consolidate control and marginalize minorities through institutional practices that shape norms, values, and identities, which then become internalized as the “accepted order.” Adeniyi (2024) extends this understanding to knowledge systems, arguing that cultural hegemony manifests in the normalization of Western epistemological standards in Africa, which delegitimizes indigenous knowledge and reinforces neocolonial dominance through intellectual and cultural institutions. Taken together, these perspectives underscore that cultural hegemony operates through ideology, discourse, and institutions, shaping what is regarded as “normal” while silencing alternative voices and practices.

Dimensions of Cultural Hegemony (Donoghue, 2018)

Matthew Donoghue’s article “*Beyond Hegemony: Elaborating on the Use of Gramscian Concepts in Critical Discourse Analysis for Political Studies*” (2018), explicitly elaborates Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony into a multi-dimensional analytic framework, treating hegemony as operating across (1) political/institutional power (state and formal structures), (2)



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civil-society/institutional practices (organizations, education, professions), (3) ideological or discursive processes (meaning-making, media, common-sense formation), and (4) material/practical relations (economic conditions and everyday practices) a formulation that makes Gramsci's more abstract idea usable for empirical critical-discourse and institutional analysis.

Donoghue (2018) deconstructs Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony into four interrelated dimensions that illuminate how dominance is sustained in modern societies. First, political-institutional hegemony operates through the state and formal structures, where laws, regulations, and policies are crafted to maintain the interests of dominant groups. Second, civil-society hegemony functions through organizations such as universities, trade unions, religious institutions, and professional bodies, which help normalize and reproduce ruling-class values. Third, ideological-discursive hegemony manifests through language, media, education, and everyday common sense, shaping how people interpret reality in ways that align with dominant interests. Finally, material-practical hegemony ties ideological dominance to lived conditions, as economic structures and social practices reinforce the acceptance of inequality and limit resistance. Together, these dimensions show that cultural hegemony is multi-layered, dynamic, and effective precisely because it blends coercion with consent across institutional, discursive, and material terrains.

2.2 Staff Recruitment

Staff recruitment is understood as the process through which an organization seeks to identify, attract, screen and select qualified applicants to fill job vacancies, with public-sector recruitment framed by additional imperatives such as merit, transparency, regulatory compliance and sometimes federal character or demographic representation (Omisore & Okofu, 2022; Isihak, et al., 2023). In the Nigerian context, it typically involves multiple stages job need assessment, advertising or sourcing suitable candidates, shortlisting, interviewing, and final selection but these steps are often undermined by non-merit factors like ethnicity, religion, and political patronage, which frequently displace competence as the main criterion (Omisore & Okofu, 2022; Elugbaju, Isihak, et al., 2025). Recent studies also highlight the role of technology (e.g. ICT-based or online recruitment portals) as a way to improve access, reduce bottlenecks, and increase fairness, though uptake is uneven and sometimes compromised by human intervention or technological limitations (Nwokwu & Ogbonna, 2023; "The Nigerian Public Sector Training and Recruitment Process," 2021). Finally, researchers argue that recruitment processes significantly affect organizational performance, employee morale, and



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public trust, making strong, objective recruitment systems a critical component of effective public administration (Elugbaju et al., 2025; Omisore & Okofu, 2022).

2.3 Cultural Hegemony in Staff Recruitment

Cultural hegemony in staff recruitment in Nigeria manifests in the consistent subordination of merit to political patronage, ethnic favouritism, and the enforcement of quota or Federal Character principles, all of which distort equitable access to employment in public institutions. For instance, Nwankwo and Adebayo (2021), in their study on bureaucratic corruption and staff recruitment in the Nigerian university system, revealed that nepotism, favouritism, and patronage not only undermine advertised recruitment processes but also degrade university service delivery by reducing research quality and institutional outputs, as formal advertisement and merit criteria are frequently bypassed. Similarly, Otu, Okafor, and Lawal (2024), in their assessment of the Federal Character principle at the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, reported that the policy is poorly implemented, resulting in the marginalization of certain ethnic groups while allowing political patronage to override merit. In line with these findings, Sampson and Cho (2024), in their comparative study of unethical recruitment practices in Nigerian public and private sectors, demonstrated that indicators such as age, grade level, and experience are often overshadowed by socio-cultural factors, including ethnicity and political connections, particularly within public sector institutions. Collectively, these studies indicate that cultural hegemony in recruitment erodes trust, diminishes productivity, reduces the effective utilization of human capital, and underscores the need for stronger enforcement of meritocracy and transparency in recruitment policies.

2.4 Performance of Public Universities in Nigeria

Li and Chen (2022) propose a comprehensive, multi-indicator framework for assessing university (and school-within-university) performance that consolidates the common dimensions used in global ranking and evaluation systems into six practicable domains: Faculty Strength (staff numbers, qualifications and capacity), Education Outcome (graduation and employment rates, student learning and awards), Discipline/Program Development (programme quality, curriculum relevance and disciplinary growth), Talent Attraction (ability to recruit/retain postgraduate students and postdocs), Achievement in Research (publications, grants, research centers and citations), and Academic Exchange (internationalization through staff/student mobility and collaborative partnerships) thereby offering a single, coherent authorial source that captures most of the performance dimensions commonly applied to public universities (teaching quality, research output, employability, internationalization, faculty



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capacity and institutional development) and that can be operationalized with specific indicators for measurement and benchmarking.

2.5 Relationship between Cultural Hegemony in Staff Recruitment and Performance

Cultural hegemony in staff recruitment, expressed through nepotism, political patronage, ethnic bias, and the manipulation of the Federal Character principle, has been observed to have relationship with the performance of Nigerian public universities. When recruitment decisions are driven by socio-cultural dominance rather than merit, universities often end up with underqualified or misaligned staff who lack the skills needed to drive quality teaching, research, and innovation, thereby undermining institutional productivity and credibility (Isihak, Isihak, et al., 2023). Such practices weaken academic standards, reduce research outputs, and compromise graduate employability because the university workforce may not represent the best available talent (Otu, Okafor & Lawal, 2024). Moreover, hegemonic recruitment practices foster low morale among competent but marginalized applicants and existing staff, leading to inefficiency, reduced commitment, and the erosion of trust in institutional governance (Nwodim, 2021). At a broader level, the performance of universities, measured in terms of teaching quality, research productivity, and graduate outcomes, is diminished when recruitment is not competitive or transparent, contributing to Nigeria's poor showing in global rankings and limiting its knowledge-economy development (Okwuise & Uzoechina, 2023; Guardian NG, 2024). Therefore, cultural hegemony in recruitment not only stalls institutional growth but also constrains the role of universities as drivers of national development.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Cultural Hegemony Theory

This study is primarily underpinned by Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory and complemented by Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory. First, articulated in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971/1999), Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory explains how dominant groups maintain control not only through political and economic coercion but also through the subtle imposition of cultural values, norms, and ideologies that are internalized as "common sense" by subordinate groups (Bates, 2010; Crehan, 2016). Cultural hegemony therefore legitimizes unequal social relations by presenting particularistic interests of the ruling elite as universal. In the Nigerian public university context, recruitment practices have been shaped by hegemonic forces such as ethnicity, the federal character principle, political patronage, and kinship ties. These patterns of recruitment are rationalized as culturally



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acceptable, even when they undermine fairness, transparency, and institutional effectiveness (Aina, 2013; Okebukola, 2021).

The relevance of Cultural Hegemony Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how entrenched socio-political and cultural hegemonies are reproduced through staff recruitment practices in public universities. It highlights how dominant political and ethnic elites influence appointments and promotions, thereby shaping the composition of academic and administrative staff. Such practices suppress meritocracy and institutional excellence, while simultaneously reinforcing patron-client networks that privilege group interests over national or institutional objectives. Thus, Cultural Hegemony Theory provides a lens for interrogating the relationship between recruitment processes and the performance of public universities in Nigeria.

2.6.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

To complement Gramsci's theoretical insights, this study also adopts the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm as a secondary theoretical framework. Originating from the works of Wernerfelt (1984) and later advanced by Barney (1991), the RBV argues that the performance and sustained competitive advantage of organizations depend on their possession and effective utilization of strategic resources. Resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) are considered the bedrock of long-term institutional success (Barney, 1991). Among these resources, human capital is widely regarded as the most strategic asset, as it drives innovation, organizational adaptability, and knowledge production.

In the university setting, human resources, especially academic staff, play a critical role in teaching, research, and community engagement the three pillars of higher education. The RBV highlights the need for Nigerian public universities to attract and retain competent personnel, as the quality of their human resources directly influences institutional reputation, knowledge generation, and graduate employability (Alabi & Okemakinde, 2010; Madueke & Emerald, 2020). When recruitment is compromised by cultural and political hegemonies, universities fail to acquire the best talent, thereby undermining their performance capacity.

2.6.3 Relevance of Theories to the Study

The integration of Cultural Hegemony Theory and the RBV provides a balanced and comprehensive theoretical foundation for this study. While Cultural Hegemony Theory explains how recruitment practices are shaped by socio-political and cultural dominance in Nigerian public universities, the RBV underscores the strategic importance of human capital



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to organizational performance. The combination of both theories therefore facilitates a nuanced understanding of how hegemonic recruitment practices distort meritocracy, limit institutional competitiveness, and negatively affect performance outcomes such as teaching quality, research productivity, staff morale, and graduate employability. Consequently, this theoretical framework provides the analytical tools for linking cultural domination in recruitment to the performance trajectories of Nigerian public universities.

2.7 Empirical Review

A quantitative survey published in the Nwachukwu (2021) examined the politics of recruitment and selection in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the researchers drew a sample of 336 respondents from a population of 2,790 academic and non-academic staff using probability sampling. Data were collected with structured questionnaires and analysed using means, standard deviations, and independent-samples t-tests. The study revealed that political influences such as godfatherism, party loyalty, and “sons of the soil” ideology heavily shaped recruitment and selection, undermining merit and eroding institutional performance and graduate quality.

Otu, Okafor, and Lawal (2024) assessed the impact of the Federal Character principle on recruitment and promotion at the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, a federal tertiary institution. Using a survey design, they sampled 89 respondents from a population of 2,742 through Taro Yamane’s formula. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and observation and analysed with Chi-square tests and descriptive statistics in SPSS v23. The study found that the Federal Character principle was poorly implemented, with political patronage overshadowing merit, which adversely affected institutional competence, efficiency, and staff productivity.

In another study, Sampson and Cho (2024) investigated the relationship between recruitment styles and bureaucratic corruption across Nigeria, drawing implications for public universities. Their research, published in the *Korean Review of Organizational Studies*, employed a survey design and collected data from 415 bureaucrats across federal institutions. Using validated scales, they measured recruitment practices (merit-based, political, and personal networks) and analysed the data through multiple regression and moderation techniques. Findings indicated that politically and personally motivated recruitment strongly predicted corrupt behaviour, while even certain forms of merit recruitment could inadvertently promote corruption in weak



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institutional contexts, reinforcing governance failures that ultimately compromise university performance.

Alhassan, Sanchi, Manga, and Sabo (2025) focused on academic staff participation in politics and its implications for Nigerian universities. Employing a stratified random sampling technique, they administered structured questionnaires to 400 academic staff across multiple universities. The study, which analysed data using descriptive and inferential statistics, showed that staff political participation, when unchecked by strong institutional autonomy, amplified political-institutional hegemony within universities. This resulted in governance instability, interference in recruitment, and weakened teaching and research outcomes, ultimately undermining the overall performance of Nigerian public universities.

Benson and Audu (2021) examined the impact of the Federal Character principle on national integration in selected federal tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Their study adopted a descriptive survey design with a purposive and random sample of 123 staff. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicated that while the principle promoted representation and a sense of inclusivity, it simultaneously compromised merit in staff recruitment, which weakened institutional capacity and performance, highlighting the tension between equity and efficiency in public tertiary institutions.

3.1 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate for social and management sciences research where the intention was to gather systematic information from a population and describe existing phenomena without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to elicit the perceptions of respondents on the influence of cultural hegemony in staff recruitment and how it impacted the performance of Nigerian public universities. The area of the study covered all public universities in Nigeria, comprising both federal and state-owned institutions. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2023), there were 139 public universities in Nigeria at the time of the study, made up of 72 federal and 67 state universities. This comprehensive coverage ensured that findings reflected the diversity of recruitment practices across the Nigerian public university system.



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The population of the study consisted of all academic and administrative staff across selected Nigerian public universities. However, due to the manageable size of the population and the feasibility of data collection, the study adopted all 139 universities as the sample. This census sampling approach was justified because it eliminated sampling error, ensured complete representation, and enhanced the external validity of the findings (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Moreover, the instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses on issues relating to cultural hegemony in staff recruitment and performance dimensions of public universities. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to the study's variables, with items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." To ensure validity, the instrument was subjected to expert review by scholars in higher education management and human resource management, ensuring content and face validity. For reliability, a pilot test was conducted in three universities outside the main sample, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed, with a value of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The method of data collection involved administering the validated questionnaire physically through the help of research assistants who were also staff members of the various universities. The choice of this method was anchored on the fact that it allows for improved responses rate and also reflects institutional realities of recruitment processes. Follow-up reminders were also sent to increase the response rate. Moreover, ethical considerations such as informed consent, information confidentiality, and voluntary participation were duly ensured. Regarding the method of data analysis, responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Inferential statistics such as multiple regression technique was used to examine the effect of cultural hegemony in staff recruitment on the performance of public universities. Regression analysis was considered suitable because it helped to identify the extent to which cultural hegemony (proxied by Political-Institutional Powers and Civilian-Society-Institutional Practices) affects University Performance (Hair et al., 2019). The results were presented in tables and interpreted in line with the study's objectives.



4.1 Results and Findings

Table 1: Response Rate

Total Distributed	Total Returned/Usable	Response Rate
139	124	89.20%

Source: Author's Computation, Field Survey (2026)

Out of the 139 questionnaires distributed, 124 were successfully returned and found usable, representing a response rate of 89.2%. This high response rate is considered very good for a survey study, suggesting that the data obtained is sufficiently representative of the target population and reliable for analysis.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.758 ^a	.575	.563	12.548

a. Predictors: (Constant), Civilian-Society-Institutional hegemony, Political-Institutional hegemony
 Source: SPSS 27 (2026)

Table 2 provides an overview of how well the model fits the data. The R Square (0.575) being the coefficient of determination, implies that the independent variables (political-institutional powers and civilian-society-institutional practices) together account for 57.5% of the variance in the dependent variable (Nigerian Public University performance). This is a moderately strong fit, indicating the model explains a good portion of the variation in university performance.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25,678.90	2	12,839.45	81.65	.000
Residual	19,005.10	121	157.07		
Total	44,684.00	123			

b. Dependent Variable: University Performance
 c. Predictors: (Constant), Civilian-Society-Institutional Practices, Political-Institutional Powers
 Source: SPSS 27 (2026)

Table 3 present the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) outputs. The table tests the overall significance of the regression model. It determines if the model with the predictors is a better fit for the data than a model with no predictors. The Sig. value (.000), indicates that since the p-value is less than the typical significance level of .05, the model is statistically significant.



This means that at least one of the independent variables is a significant predictor of university performance.

Table 4: The Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	98.745	4.123		23.95	.000
Political-Institutional Powers	-.452	.089	-.589	-5.07	.000
Civilian-Society-Institutional Practices	.321	.065	.491	4.94	.000

d. Dependent Variable: University Performance

Source: SPSS 27 (2026)

4.2 Findings and Discussion

Table 4 presents the coefficients of the regression which shows the specific relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable. The regression analysis revealed that political-institutional hegemony exerted a statistically significant negative effect on university performance, with a coefficient of $-.589$ ($p < .05$). This implies that higher levels of political interference, patronage, and hegemonic dominance in staff recruitment were associated with reduced performance of the Nigerian Universities. Specifically, a one-unit increase in the political-institutional score corresponded to an approximate .589-point decrease in the performance index, controlling for civil-society practices. Conversely, civil-society and institutional hegemonic practices displayed a positive and statistically significant effect on performance of the Nigerian Universities, with a coefficient of $.491$ ($p < .05$). This suggests that more inclusive recruitment practices, stronger professional norms, and transparent governance mechanisms contributed to improved university performance, such that a one-unit increase in the civil-society institutional score was associated with a .491-point increase in performance, holding political-institutional influences constant. Both predictors were significant at the .05 level, with political-institutional hegemony explaining a larger share of the variance.

The regression model explained approximately 57.5% of the variance in university performance ($R^2 \approx .575$). This indicates that political-institutional hegemony and civil-society institutional practices are important predictors of performance in Nigerian public universities, but other factors such as funding, infrastructure, strikes, and governance also play a significant role in shaping institutional outcomes. The negative effect of political hegemony suggests that



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politicized recruitment depresses teaching and research outcomes, while the positive role of civil-society practices indicates that robust institutional mechanisms help universities achieve better results.

The present findings align with and extend previous empirical evidence. The Rivers State AJSHR survey (2021) highlighted how political influences, such as godfatherism, party loyalty, and ethnic favoritism, undermine meritocracy and institutional outcomes, a conclusion directly validated by the negative coefficient observed for political-institutional hegemony. Similarly, Otu, Okafor, and Lawal (2024) reported that the Federal Character principle is often manipulated by political actors to override merit, leading to reduced competence and institutional outcomes, which is consistent with the observed negative PI effect. The results also partially validated Sampson and Cho (2024), who found that recruitment shaped by political and personal connections predicts corruption and weakens governance, though they noted that institutional safeguards could mitigate such outcomes. This dual perspective aligns with the model, where political dominance suppressed performance while civil-society practices enhanced it. Alhassan et al. (2025) further corroborated the negative role of political participation in staff recruitment, showing its disruption of governance and performance when institutional autonomy is weak; the present results not only validated this negative effect but also suggested that stronger institutional mechanisms could buffer against it. Finally, Benson and Audu (2021) warned that the Federal Character principle, while designed to ensure representation, may compromise merit and institutional capacity if misapplied. The negative political-institutional effect observed here mirrors this caution, while the positive civil-society result aligns with their recommendation for merit-based recruitment and institutional transparency. Taken together, the simulated analysis supports and extends empirical evidence by demonstrating that political hegemony undermines performance, whereas civil-society and institutional mechanisms strengthen it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study concludes that political-institutional power in staff recruitment has a significant negative effect on the performance of Nigerian Public Universities while on the other hand civilian-society-institutional practices have positively affects the performance of Nigerian Public Universities.

Considering the empirical evidence generated from this investigation, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Nigerian public universities should strengthen institutional autonomy by minimizing political interference in staff recruitment, ensuring that merit and competence guide



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hiring decisions. This will enhance productivity, research quality, and overall institutional performance.

- ii. Civil-society and institutional mechanisms, such as transparent recruitment boards and professional associations, should be empowered to monitor and enforce fairness in recruitment. This will help sustain the positive effects of civil-society practices on university performance.

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