INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented to any college or university for academic credit

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This dissertation has been presented for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Pastor and mentor of 25 years; Rev Taiwo Bayo Opajobi

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in public universities in Southwest Nigeria, with social justice tested as a moderating variable. The study responded to the concern that although public universities bring together students from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, inclusion, intercultural participation, curriculum responsiveness, and student belonging remain uneven. The objectives were to examine the influence of participative, shared, team, and motivational leadership on cultural diversity, and to determine the moderating role of social justice in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. Five null hypotheses guided the study. The study was anchored on Democratic Leadership Theory, Social Justice Leadership Theory, and Social Identity Theory. The study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy and a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 592 final-year students across six selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 14 educational leaders who held administrative responsibilities. Democratic leadership was measured through participative, shared, team, and motivational leadership. Cultural diversity was measured through intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation, while social justice was measured through equity, inclusive learning environment, access to resources, and diversity. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ordinal logistic regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Both strands were integrated through triangulation. The composite ordinal logistic regression showed that democratic leadership significantly influenced cultural diversity, $\chi^2(3) = 18.138$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .038$. At the dimensional level, participative leadership had a significant but small influence, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .015$. Shared leadership was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 5.421$, $p = .143$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .011$. Team leadership was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 19.252$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .037$, motivational leadership was also significant, $\chi^2(3) = 23.720$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .046$. When social justice was introduced as a moderator, the model remained significant, $\chi^2(3) = 19.849$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .059$. This shows a 2.1 percentage-point increase in explanatory power, from 3.8% to 5.9%. The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results by showing that participation, teamwork, motivation, fairness, cultural respect, transparent resource distribution, and inclusive representation strengthened belonging. However, shared leadership appeared weak because decision-making remained shaped by hierarchy and limited stakeholder involvement.The study concluded that democratic leadership contributes to cultural diversity, but its influence differs across leadership dimensions. Participative, team, and motivational leadership were more relevant than shared leadership. Social justice strengthened the relationship by creating conditions of fairness, inclusion, access, and representation. The study recommended that university leaders promote inclusive decision-making, strengthen teamwork, recognize diverse cultural identities, and institutionalize fairness in admissions, appointments, resource allocation, curriculum practices, and student participation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMOS-21	Analysis of Moment Structures, Version 21
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Confidence Interval
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CQS	Cultural Intelligence Scale
DIF	Diversity Inclusivity Framework
DLDM	Democratic Leadership for Democratic Movement
DSLSC	Democratic School Leadership Scale Characteristics
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EKSU	Ekiti State University
FUTA	Federal University of Technology, Akure
HRM	Human Resource Management
IBM	International Business Machines
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ISERC	Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LAUTECH	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
LBDQ	Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others

LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
MPQ	Multicultural Personality Questionnaire
NUC	Nigerian Universities Commission
OLR	Ordinal Logistic Regression
PAC	Pan Africa Christian
PROCESS	PROCESS Macro for Mediation and Moderation Analysis
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SACIE-R	Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education-Revised Scale
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SJBS	Social Justice Behavior Scale
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TEIP	Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNILAG	University of Lagos

UNIOSUN	Osun State University
U.S.	United States
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VSM	Values Survey Module

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Democratic Leadership: A leadership style in which leaders involve followers, staff, students, or other stakeholders in decision-making and institutional processes. It emphasizes participation, consultation, shared responsibility, deliberation, and collective ownership of decisions (Raupu et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025; Cumar et al., 2025). In this study, democratic leadership is the independent variable and refers to leadership practices in Southwest Nigerian public universities that give stakeholders opportunities to participate, contribute ideas, share responsibilities, work collaboratively, and receive motivation. It is measured through four indicators: participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership.

Participative Leadership: A leadership approach in which leaders encourage followers or stakeholders to take part in decision-making, problem-solving, planning, and institutional governance. It involves consultation, voice, inclusion, and the use of members' contributions before decisions are made (Wang et al., 2020; Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2022; Ukeje et al., 2025). In this study, participative leadership refers to the extent to which university leaders involve students, staff, and other stakeholders in decisions that affect university life, especially decisions connected with inclusion, representation, and cultural diversity.

Shared Leadership: A leadership process in which leadership responsibility, influence, and authority are distributed among members of a group rather than concentrated in one formal leader. It emphasizes mutual influence, shared responsibility, collaboration, and collective ownership of institutional goals (Nicolaides & McCallum, 2021; Nakanishi, 2025). In this study, shared leadership refers to the extent to which leadership responsibilities in universities are shared among relevant stakeholders, including administrators, lecturers, students, committees, and other institutional actors.

Team Leadership: A leadership practice that focuses on building relationships, strengthening teamwork, supporting collaboration, managing conflict, and helping members work together toward common goals. It involves creating a sense of community, trust, coordination, and joint problem-solving among group members (Kozlowski & Bell, 2021; Arfanaldy, 2025). In this study, team leadership refers to university leadership practices that promote teamwork, dialogue, cooperation, unity, and collaboration among students and staff from different cultural backgrounds.

Motivational Leadership: A leadership approach through which leaders inspire, encourage, support, recognize, and engage followers so that they can participate actively and perform effectively. It is concerned with morale, commitment, encouragement, recognition, and the ability of leaders to influence followers positively toward institutional goals (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Iddrisu & Mohammed, 2025). In this

study, motivational leadership refers to the extent to which university leaders encourage students and staff to participate meaningfully in university activities and contribute to an inclusive and culturally diverse environment.

Social Justice: A condition of fairness, equity, inclusion, access, representation, dignity, and protection from discrimination or exclusion. In education, social justice is concerned with whether students and staff have fair access to opportunities, resources, participation, and respectful treatment regardless of their background (Makateng, 2022; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Ruhana et al., 2024). In this study, social justice is the moderating variable and refers to the fairness and inclusiveness of university practices in Southwest Nigerian public universities. It is measured through equity, inclusive learning environment, access to resources, and diversity.

Cultural Diversity: The presence, recognition, and meaningful participation of people from different cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, social, and national backgrounds within the same institution or society. It goes beyond the presence of different groups to include interaction, belonging, respect, representation, and participation (Cherian et al., 2020; Lin, 2020; Ward et al., 2025). In this study, cultural diversity is the dependent variable and refers to how Southwest Nigerian public universities support intercultural interaction, inclusive curriculum practices, and student participation among culturally diverse groups.

Intercultural Competency: The ability of individuals to communicate, relate, adapt, and interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. It involves awareness of one's own cultural assumptions, openness to other cultures, respect for difference, and the ability to function effectively in multicultural settings (André-Das Dores et al., 2025; Jin & Sercu, 2025). In this study, intercultural competency refers to students' ability to engage respectfully and effectively with peers, lecturers, and other university members from different cultural backgrounds.

Curriculum Inclusivity: The extent to which academic content, teaching materials, classroom examples, assessment practices, and pedagogical approaches reflect and respect diverse cultural identities, histories, experiences, and perspectives. It ensures that students from different backgrounds can see their identities and realities represented in the learning process (Akintayo et al., 2024; Misiaszek, 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025). In this study, curriculum inclusivity refers to the extent to which university curricula in Southwest Nigeria reflect cultural diversity and promote inclusive learning.

Student Participation: The active involvement of students in academic, social, cultural, leadership, and institutional activities. It includes students' engagement in classroom discussions, student leadership, extracurricular activities, decision-making processes, and university community life (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Sinaga,

2024). In this study, student participation refers to the involvement of students from different cultural backgrounds in university activities and decision-making structures.

Coloured Students: Students from racial, ethnic, or cultural minority backgrounds who may experience marginalization, exclusion, or institutional disadvantage because of historical, social, or structural inequalities (Franco, 2020; Shu & Lin, 2019). In this study, the term is used to describe students from minority or marginalized cultural groups whose experiences may reflect issues of exclusion, discrimination, or unequal participation in higher education.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter One introduces the dissertation topic; Democratic leadership, social justice and cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The chapter begins with a background to the study which identifies the variables in the study, the context of the study and the evaluation of extant literature on the concepts related to the study. The statement of problem summarizes the gaps identified from the review of extant literature. The chapter also includes the purpose, assumptions and hypotheses. It also provides the significance, scope, rationale, limitations, and delimitation of the study.

Background to the study

Educational institutions worldwide are faced with many challenges relating to cultural diversity, leading to widespread calls for educational reforms. Universities now admit and employ people from different ethnic, linguistic, religious, national, gender, and social backgrounds (Ward et al., 2025). This diversity can improve learning, creativity, social understanding, and institutional growth when it is well managed (Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). However, it can also create exclusion, tension, poor participation, and weak belonging when universities lack clear structures for inclusion (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Morgan et al., 2025). Recent higher education studies show that multicultural policies, inclusive learning environments, and diversity-receptive norms can strengthen students' well-being and attitudes toward people from different backgrounds (Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). These concerns have made cultural diversity an important issue in higher education leadership (Bhowmik et al., 2026).

In Nigerian universities, the challenges of cultural diversity are further complicated by ethnic, religious, and political influences (Abiola & Oduol, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025).

Universities often reflect the broader societal divisions within the country; however, university administration and students' interactions are largely affected by ethnic tensions and favouritism (Abiola & Oduol, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025). In many cases, there is limited representation of other cultural groups in university environments as a result of ethnic majorities creating an imbalance in university leadership, student admissions, and faculty recruitment (Ojo et al., 2025). The prioritization of state indigenes over merit-based selection, which is widely practised through quota-based admission policies in Nigeria, further contributes to weak cultural integration in universities (Abiola & Oduol, 2021). Beyond administrative challenges, the academic curriculum in Nigerian universities does not fully incorporate cultural diversity (Obiagu et al., 2025). Course content remains largely influenced by foreign knowledge systems, while little effort is made to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into university programmes (John, 2026; Obiagu et al., 2025). This creates a disconnect between students' lived cultural experiences and their academic learning (Ramdas et al., 2025). Recent Nigerian evidence also shows that multicultural education still faces challenges in content, attitudes, teaching practices, and implementation (Obiagu et al., 2025).

Universities in other parts of the world have promoted cultural diversity through policies and initiatives that support inclusion, intercultural learning, and student participation (Campus & Thoben, 2021; Kokkinos et al., 2024; Kolster & van der Wende, 2026; Ward et al., 2025). Multicultural policies and practices in higher education have been linked with more positive attitudes toward international students and stronger student well-being (Ward et al., 2025). Inclusive classroom models also show that lecturers can create fairer learning environments when they build on students' different perspectives and experiences (Ramdas et al., 2025). Student-led initiatives, diversity offices, intercultural workshops, and inclusive pedagogies have also contributed to diversity awareness in many

institutions (Misiaszek, 2025; Tormakhova, 2023). These efforts show that cultural diversity is not only about admitting students from different backgrounds (Ward et al., 2025). It also requires deliberate university practices that support interaction, recognition, and belonging (Lebioda, 2026; Ramdas et al., 2025).

In contrast, cultural diversity efforts in African universities are often student-driven or policy-driven rather than led by university administrators (Cumar et al., 2025; Idahosa & Love, 2025). In Nigeria, student organizations such as the Arewa Students' Forum, the Yoruba Students' Union, and the Igbo Students' Association often focus on cultural identity preservation rather than full integration (Obiagu et al., 2025; Tormakhova, 2023). In South Africa and Ghana, student and academic movements have called for African histories, African philosophy, indigenous knowledge, and inclusive curricula to be taken more seriously in higher education (Amuzu, 2022; John, 2026; Moletsane, 2022). Unlike universities that actively implement diversity structures, many African universities still rely on broad government policies rather than strong institutional measures (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Cumar et al., 2025; Ikemefuna & Ezimma, 2021). Diversity efforts may be reduced to fulfilling quotas rather than encouraging meaningful interaction among students from different cultural backgrounds (Ikemefuna & Ezimma, 2021; Ward et al., 2025). Limited resources also make it difficult to implement diversity initiatives such as multicultural centres, language support programmes, and structured intercultural engagement (Abdullah, 2021; Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025). Without institutional support, cultural diversity efforts remain fragmented and inconsistent (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Madaki, 2019). These challenges show that cultural diversity and social justice in African universities are also challenges of leadership (Cumar et al., 2025; Sibanda & Majola, 2023).

Studies on educational leadership and cultural diversity have explored themes such as inclusivity, equitable student engagement, leadership style, and diversity management

(Bhowmik et al., 2026; Owusu-Agyeman, 2021; Sibanda & Majola, 2023). Recent studies in higher education show that leaders shape institutional culture, collaboration, and inclusion through their daily decisions and leadership behaviours (Cumar et al., 2025; Kelder et al., 2025). Research also indicates that many university leaders claim to support inclusive governance, but actual practice is often limited by poor training, bureaucracy, resource constraints, and political influence (Abiola et al., 2026; Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025). In African higher education, leadership has to balance global practices with local cultural realities (Alemu, 2024; Cumar et al., 2025; Muteti & Munyekenye, 2020; Sibanda & Majola, 2023). Cumar et al. (2025) showed that leadership styles significantly shape organizational culture in Somaliland higher education. This is relevant to Nigerian universities because institutional culture determines whether students and staff from diverse backgrounds are valued, heard, and represented (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Ward et al., 2025).

In Southwest Nigeria, universities reflect broader societal challenges, including ethnic discrimination, political influence in leadership appointments, and admission policies that may favour indigenes over merit (Abiola & Oduol, 2021; Nziadam, 2022; Obiagu et al., 2025). Social justice concerns include financial mismanagement, harassment, extortion, weak representation, and curricula that may not fully reflect cultural realities (Bussu & Karp, 2026; Igbafe, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025). Many university leaders identify with democratic leadership but tend to exhibit autocratic tendencies by excluding key stakeholders from decision-making (Abiola et al., 2026; Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025). The implementation of democratic leadership is further hindered by limited training, bureaucratic constraints, cultural bias, and resource-related challenges (Abdullahi, 2021; Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025). While Southwest Nigerian universities have diverse student populations, stereotypes and ethnic imbalances in leadership roles impede genuine cultural

diversity efforts (Igbafe, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025; Ojo et al., 2025). Research has focused on cultural diversity, learning outcomes, social cohesion, faculty inclusion, and institutional policies (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Okafor & Okafor, 2019; Ward et al., 2025). However, there is still a need to examine how democratic leadership influences cultural diversity in Nigerian universities, and how social justice strengthens or weakens that relationship (Abiola et al., 2026; Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025; Bhowmik et al., 2026).

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership style has been proved to positively affect many organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, productivity, organizational commitment, inclusion, and social justice due to its ability to give people the opportunity to participate and be represented in the organization (Cumar et al., 2025; Fakhri et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025). Democratic leadership, also referred to as participative leadership, is a way of running teams or organizations in an open and collaborative manner where members have opportunity to contribute to the task at hand (Raupu et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025). It is a style of leadership that allows followers or employees to participate in decision-making and other related activities (Cumar et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025). Practicing democratic leadership offers the leader the opportunity to display trust, team spirit, and willingness to learn from others. This can improve morale, motivation, and commitment to organizational values because members see those values as shared values (Abiola et al., 2026; Cumar et al., 2025; Riza et al., 2025).

Democratic leadership is suitable for universities because universities are made up of people with high levels of knowledge, technical skills, professional identities, and different areas of expertise (Cumar et al., 2025; Kelder et al., 2025). Staff and students are not passive members of the institution (Ramdas et al., 2025; Riza et al., 2025). They have experiences and ideas that can help the university respond to diversity problems (Corres-

Medrano et al., 2026; Ramdas et al., 2025). Democratic leadership helps leaders to facilitate participation by encouraging people to share their ideas before decisions are made (Cumar et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025). It is also useful where there is a need to manage change, build trust, and reduce the distance between leaders and followers (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025; Kezar et al., 2025). Recent evidence from Nigerian higher education shows that leadership change is often constrained by political, human, social, economic, and resource-related challenges (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025). This means that leadership styles that encourage participation and accountability are needed in universities that want to build inclusive cultures (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Cumar et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025).

Several other leadership styles have been linked with educational leadership and the resolution of challenges, including social justice in schools (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Bose & Haque, 2021). Such leadership styles include transformational, transactional, servant, situational, authentic, and democratic leadership. These leadership styles have components that can affect social justice in educational institutions, although their effectiveness may be limited by cultural context (Bose & Haque, 2021; Cumar et al., 2025; Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). For example, in settings with high power distance, leaders who appear too weak or too informal may not be taken seriously (Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). At the same time, very autocratic leaders may silence minority voices and reduce trust (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025; Bhowmik et al., 2026). Democratic leadership can therefore be seen as an appropriate leadership style for universities in multicultural settings because it promotes voice, teamwork, participation, and shared responsibility (Cumar et al., 2025; Riza et al., 2025). Recent African higher education evidence shows that participative and supportive leadership behaviours can shape collaborative institutional cultures (Cumar et al., 2025).

Recent leadership studies also show that inclusive institutional change requires more than individual goodwill (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Harper et al., 2025; Idahosa & Love,

2025). Leaders need structures that allow people to participate and share responsibility (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Kezar et al., 2025). In Nigerian higher education, stakeholder participation has been recommended as a way to strengthen governance and institutional reform (Ukeje et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on higher education leadership for equity, diversity, and inclusion show that leadership strategies are more effective when they are linked with institutional systems, training, and shared responsibility (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Harper et al., 2025). This is important for the present study because democratic leadership is not treated only as a general attitude. It is operationalized through participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership.

In this research, democratic leadership is used as a leadership setting which involves giving followers and employees opportunities to contribute to decision-making. It is operationalized by measurable attributes such as participation, teamwork, motivation, and collaborative decision-making. These dimensions are important because cultural diversity in universities cannot be improved only through policy statements (Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). Students and staff must be able to participate in decisions, work across cultural lines, receive encouragement, and see that leadership responsibility is not limited to a few people (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Cumar et al., 2025; Kezar et al., 2025). This makes democratic leadership central to the study.

Social Justice

Social justice is a social and institutional influence that can be used to ensure equity, equal participation, and collaboration between diverse groups in a society or organization (Makateng, 2022; Mincu & Mills, 2026). In education, social justice is concerned with fairness, inclusion, access to resources, representation, dignity, and participation (Grapin & Shriberg, 2020; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025). It requires leaders to identify and reduce practices that exclude some groups from full participation in the

institution (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Bussu & Karp, 2026; Corres-Medrano et al., 2026). Educational leaders must also adapt leadership practices that prioritize students' and staff's development through inclusion, equity, and participation (Abiola & Oduol, 2021; Bhowmik et al., 2026; John, 2026). This is important in universities where cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, and language differences can affect how people experience learning and institutional life (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Nkosi & Maphalala, 2026; Ward et al., 2025).

Social justice has become more important in higher education because diversity alone does not guarantee fairness (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025). A university may admit students from different backgrounds and still fail to create equal opportunities for participation (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Morgan et al., 2025). Some students may be present but not heard (Lebioda, 2026). Others may be represented in numbers but excluded from leadership, resources, curriculum, and decision-making (Mincu & Mills, 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025). Recent studies show that inclusion in higher education remains a major educational challenge and that students' perspectives are important for understanding how inclusion works in practice (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026). Similarly, studies on minoritized students show that belonging and institutional care are important for student thriving in postsecondary education (Lebioda, 2026; Patrón & Flores, 2026).

Makateng (2022) conceptualized social justice into principles that include equity, participation, and human rights. Equity emphasizes that reward, opportunity, and institutional support should reflect fairness and need (Mincu & Mills, 2026; Nkosi & Maphalala, 2026). Participation means that people should be involved in decisions that affect them and the organization (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Corres-Medrano et al., 2026). Human rights suggest that every person, irrespective of status or background, should have

access to basic rights such as freedom of expression, protection, and participation (Makateng, 2022; Mincu & Mills, 2026). Recent studies have also connected social justice with curriculum justice, representation, dignity, care, and governance (Mincu & Mills, 2026). This study adapts social justice indicators in a university system to include equity, inclusive learning environment, access to resources, and diversity.

Social justice is not treated in this study as the dependent variable. Rather, it is treated as a moderating variable. This means that democratic leadership may influence cultural diversity, but the strength of that influence may depend on whether the university environment is fair and inclusive (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Mincu & Mills, 2026). For example, participative leadership may not improve cultural diversity if some cultural groups are invited to meetings but their voices are ignored (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025). Team leadership may also be weak if resource allocation is unfair or if some groups are excluded from opportunities (Bussu & Karp, 2026; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Nkosi & Maphalala, 2026). Restorative justice studies in higher education show that fairness and conflict management require institutional structures, shared understanding, and leadership support (Bussu & Karp, 2026). In the same way, this study argues that social justice can strengthen the effect of democratic leadership on cultural diversity.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity plays an important role in the effectiveness of a leadership style in a cultural context, due to preconceived ideas, cultural heritage, identity, and traditional patterns (Bose & Haque, 2021; Cumar et al., 2025; Gumus et al., 2025). Cultural diversity refers to the presence of people from different cultural backgrounds and characteristics in the same work group, classroom, or organization (Cherian et al., 2020; Ward et al., 2025). It includes differences in ethnicity, religion, language, gender, social background,

nationality, ability, and worldview (Angerhausen, 2025; Ward et al., 2025). In a university, cultural diversity is not only about the presence of different groups (Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). It is also about how these groups interact, participate, learn, and feel recognized within the institution (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Fischer & Stenner, 2026; Lebioda, 2026).

Many scholars have argued that cultural diversity can improve organizational and educational outcomes because people from different backgrounds bring different experiences, ideas, skills, and perspectives (Cherian et al., 2020; Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). A culturally diverse university can become more creative and more socially responsive when diversity is well managed (Almaskari et al., 2021; Bhowmik et al., 2026; Ramdas et al., 2025). However, cultural diversity can also create tension, exclusion, and weak institutional belonging when leadership does not provide clear structures for inclusion (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Lebioda, 2026; Morgan et al., 2025). Recent studies in higher education show that multicultural norms, inclusive policies, and culturally responsive learning environments can improve student well-being and attitudes toward diverse groups (Gumus et al., 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). This means that cultural diversity should not be left to informal student interaction alone (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Obiagu et al., 2025). It should be supported through leadership, curriculum, and institutional policy (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Misiaszek, 2025; Obiagu et al., 2025).

In university settings, recent studies have conceptualized cultural diversity through indicators such as intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation (Abdul Khalek & Wong, 2026; André-Das Dores et al., 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025). Intercultural competence refers to students' ability to communicate, relate, and work with people from different cultural backgrounds (André-Das Dores et al., 2025; Jin & Sercu, 2025; Yamada, 2025). Curriculum inclusivity refers to the extent to which teaching

content, examples, learning materials, and pedagogical practices reflect different cultural perspectives (Abdul Khalek & Wong, 2026; Gumus et al., 2025; Misiaszek, 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025). Student participation refers to the active involvement of students from different cultural backgrounds in academic, social, and leadership activities (Bozbiyik et al., 2025; Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Lebioda, 2026). Recent studies have shown that inclusive learning environments can be built by drawing on students' different perspectives and encouraging meaningful participation in the classroom (Heinz et al., 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025). Intercultural learning and cultural studies pedagogy also show that active and experiential learning can improve students' engagement with cultural differences (Abdul Khalek & Wong, 2026; Binkley et al., 2025).

These cultural dimensions can influence the implementation, adaptation, and effectiveness of leadership styles (Bose & Haque, 2021; Cumar et al., 2025; Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). A leadership style that works in one cultural context may not work in the same way in another (Cumar et al., 2025; Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). In Nigeria, ethnicity, religion, language, indigeneship, gender, and political influence can affect how students and staff experience leadership (Abiola & Oduol, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025; Ojo et al., 2025). This makes democratic leadership relevant because it gives people room to participate, share ideas, and work together (Cumar et al., 2025; Riza et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025). It also makes social justice important because participation without fairness may not lead to real inclusion (Bussu & Karp, 2026; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025). This study examined the role of democratic leadership and social justice in achieving cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian public universities. Intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation were used to indicate and measure cultural diversity.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural diversity is one of the defining characteristics of Nigerian universities, especially in the Southwest region. These institutions admit students and employ staff from various ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. However, despite this diversity, many universities still struggle to create inclusive environments where everyone feels respected, valued, and involved. Poor handling of cultural differences often leads to marginalization, discrimination, weak belonging, and tension on campus (Erinosho et al., 2021; Golubeva et al., 2025; Stafford et al., 2025). In many Southwest Nigerian universities, students and staff from minority groups often face discrimination based on ethnicity, language, religion, or cultural identity (Idowu & Esuabana, 2020; Obiagu et al., 2025). This includes exclusion from student leadership roles, limited access to support systems, and biased treatment by peers or staff. For example, non-Yoruba speaking students may feel disconnected from campus life, while some female Muslim students face dress-based discrimination (Ibrahim, 2022; Uzoigwe, 2020).

Although universities promote national unity, studies have shown that policies and administrative decisions often fail to reflect or support multicultural values in practice (Edewor et al., 2020; Obiagu et al., 2025). Leadership styles that do not include the voices of students and staff from diverse backgrounds can create mistrust and increase tensions, as seen in student protests against fee hikes and exclusion from decision-making (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025; Idowu, 2020). This shows the need for more democratic leadership that encourages inclusive participation, representation, and fairness.

Similarly, the review of literature on social justice in educational institutions highlights practices that educational leaders should imbibe, such as challenging exclusionary practices, introducing culturally relevant materials, drawing on individual staff and students' strengths, and providing a conducive learning environment (Corres-

Medrano et al., 2026; Mincu & Mills, 2026; Shaked, 2019). Selected Southwest Nigerian public universities still face social justice concerns that may weaken cultural inclusion. These include lack of fairness in discipline, overcrowded lecture facilities, limited support for diverse learners, weak access to resources, and unequal student participation (Madaki, 2019; Nkosi & Maphalala, 2026). Madaki (2019) identified issues such as university management siphoning educational funds for personal interest and lecturers placing exorbitant prices on educational materials meant to be distributed freely to students as frequent issues in Nigerian universities.

Other instances of social injustice in Southwest Nigerian universities include discrimination against female Muslim students on dressing at the University of Lagos and sexual harassment of students by academic staff (Agbaje et al., 2021; Erinosho et al., 2021; Fejoh et al., 2021; Ibrahim, 2022). These concerns suggest that cultural diversity cannot be strengthened by leadership participation alone. It also requires social justice conditions such as fairness, access, protection, representation, and equitable treatment (Bussu & Karp, 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025).

Empirical gaps in the literature show that while many studies discuss cultural diversity or social justice generally, few explore how democratic leadership and social justice specifically influence cultural diversity in the context of Nigerian universities. Most available studies focus on basic education, general multicultural education, policy-level discussions, or broad leadership challenges, leaving university-level cultural diversity dynamics under-researched (Abdullahi, 2021; Obiagu et al., 2025). In addition, many Nigerian studies concentrate on leadership, ethics, access, or administrative problems but do not connect them directly to how culturally diverse groups experience university life. Recent studies on higher education inclusion, campus climate, belonging, and internationalization show that students' sense of belonging is affected by classroom

comfort, peer and faculty support, discrimination, intergroup relations, language, and institutional support systems (Brito et al., 2025; Golubeva et al., 2025; Jegede, 2026; Stafford et al., 2025). These issues are relevant to Southwest Nigerian universities because language, ethnicity, religion, curriculum, and leadership participation shape how students experience inclusion.

Many existing studies also rely heavily on qualitative approaches, opinion-based surveys, policy discussions, or limited sample sizes, which reduces the generalizability of findings (Uzoigwe, 2020). Very few studies use mixed methods to understand both the lived experiences of students and staff and the broader patterns in institutional culture. There is also limited context-specific evidence on social justice as a moderating variable in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. This creates a gap in knowledge because democratic leadership may promote cultural diversity, but its effect may be strengthened or weakened by fairness, access, representation, and inclusive institutional practices (Cumar et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025). Additionally, there is a lack of context-specific frameworks or indicators to assess cultural inclusion within Nigerian universities. This study therefore examined the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities, while testing the moderating role of social justice.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to investigate the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in Southwest Nigeria universities and to determine the moderating role of social justice in this relationship.

Study Objectives

The following specific objectives informed the study.

1. To examine the influence of participative leadership on cultural diversity within Southwest Nigerian Universities
2. To determine the influence of shared leadership on cultural diversity within the Southwest Nigerian Universities.
3. To establish the influence of motivational leadership on cultural diversity within Southwest Nigerian Universities.
4. To evaluate the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity within Southwest Nigerian Universities.
5. To determine the moderating role of social justice on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities.

Research Hypothesis

1. H_{01}: Participative leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities.
2. H_{02}: Shared leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian Universities.
3. H_{03}: Motivational leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian Universities.
4. H_{04}: Team leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian Universities.
5. H_{05}: Social justice does not moderate the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within Southwest Nigerian Universities.

Assumptions of the Study

Several assumptions were made while carrying out this research. The study assumed that the principles and concepts of democratic leadership, social justice and diversity as understood globally are applicable to the Nigerian public universities' context. The study also assumed that the participants' perceptions of social justice are valid indicators of the actual state of social justice within the universities' environment. Additionally, the study also assumed that educational leaders, including administrators and faculty members, significantly influence the implementation and success of democratic leadership practices in Nigeria universities. Concerning the reliability and validity of the study, the study assumed that participants (students and academic leaders) provided honest and transparent responses during surveys and interviews

Justification of the study

Review of extant literature indicates that no research on the relationship between leadership style, social justice and cultural diversity in Nigerian universities context has been published despite the numerous amounts of studies carried out on social justice in the country (Abdullahi, 2021; Madaki, 2019; Udefi, 2014). It was therefore important to research on social justice to shed light on social justice challenges by critically examining previously held truth in the light of culture (Mertens & Wilsson, 2019). This would help to shift research focus from merely acquiring knowledge to empowering participants (educational leaders and students) to implement social justice change in in their communities. This study is also justified by the need to ground social justice in university settings into leadership theories such as the Democratic Leadership Theory.

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study would be useful for educational leaders in multicultural universities, policy makers such as educational administrators, commissioners and

ministers of education as well as minority groups in universities. The study highlighted social justice issues from the perspective of the marginalized and outlined democratic leadership strategies useful for social justice roles leaders in higher institutions. Similarly, the study evaluated the impact of democratic leadership in performing social justice roles under different cultural circumstances hence; giving insights on how best to adapt democratic leadership to different cultural dimensions. Academic and universities leaders such as vice chancellors, deans of schools, heads of departments and lecturers are often willing to champion social justice causes in their universities but are usually not fully equipped with adequate knowledge on social justice. The study could empower university leaders across different cultural contexts to be able to identify and handle social justice challenges effectively and give insights to how they can adapt teaching methods and lecture management to create more inclusive learning environments. The study is beneficial to university communities as minority groups will be able to effectively articulate their challenges, thereby facilitating discussions on social justice among culturally diverse groups which can lead to lasting collaborations, concerted efforts and innovative solutions toward justice.

The study may also be significant to policy makers by informing the development of inclusive policies that address social injustice and promote cultural diversity. The findings of this study guide policy makers in making educational policies that prioritize diversity and social justice as well as implementation of practical measures to create inclusive and equitable higher educational institutions. Lastly, the study is useful as a starting point for further research by scholars on the integration of democratic leadership and social justice leadership.

Scope of the Study

This study examined the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria, with social justice considered as a moderating variable. The study was anchored on Democratic Leadership Theory, Social Justice Leadership Theory, and Social Identity Theory. It focused on six public universities, one from each of the six states in Southwest Nigeria. The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to provide a broader understanding of the research problem.

The quantitative aspect of the study was limited to final-year students across the six selected public universities. Data were collected from the students through structured questionnaires. The qualitative aspect was limited to educational leaders in the selected universities. These included academic leaders who held administrative responsibilities, such as heads of departments and deans of faculties. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The unit of observation comprised final-year students for the quantitative strand and educational leaders for the qualitative strand. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses were tested using ordinal logistic regression. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Due to the multicultural nature of Nigeria and the division of the country into different socio-cultural regions, the experiences, attitudes, and understanding of students and educational leaders in Southwest Nigeria may not fully represent those of students and educational leaders in other regions of the country. This means that the findings may not be generalized to all Nigerian universities without caution. To reduce this limitation, the study focused on six public universities across the six states in Southwest Nigeria, thereby ensuring that the selected institutions reflected the regional spread of the study area.

Another limitation of the study was the population coverage. There are 18 public and 36 private universities in the Southwest region of Nigeria (National Universities Commission, 2020), spread across the six states in the region. Reaching all these universities would have required more time, funds, and logistics than were available for the study. This limitation was managed by selecting public universities across the six states and by using a convergent mixed-methods design, which allowed the quantitative data from final-year students to be supported with qualitative insights from educational leaders.

The study was therefore delimited to six public universities in Southwest Nigeria. Private universities were excluded to make the study more manageable and to maintain a clear focus on public university contexts. The study was also delimited to final-year undergraduate students because they were expected to have spent enough time in the university environment to respond meaningfully to issues of leadership, cultural diversity, and social justice. Postgraduate students and students in lower academic levels were not included. This delimitation was necessary to maintain a more focused and comparable student population. Lecturers who did not hold administrative roles were also excluded from the qualitative aspect of the study, since the interviews focused on educational leaders with administrative responsibilities who could provide informed views on leadership practices, institutional fairness, and cultural diversity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study by introducing democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity within the context of selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. It presented cultural diversity as the dependent variable, democratic leadership as the independent variable, and social justice as the moderating variable. The chapter also discussed the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the aim, objectives, hypotheses, assumptions, justification, and significance of the

study. It further explained the scope, limitations, and delimitations of the research. The next chapter presents the review of related literature and the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter examines extant literature on democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity in higher education. The review is organized around the major variables of the study. Democratic leadership is treated as the independent variable, cultural diversity as the dependent variable, while social justice is treated as the moderating variable. The chapter begins with a conceptual review of the three major concepts by examining their meanings, dimensions, indicators, and relevance to university settings. It also explains how these concepts have been understood in different studies before narrowing them to the way they are applied in this research.

The chapter further reviews empirical literature in line with the objectives of the study. The empirical review examines studies on participative leadership, shared leadership, motivational leadership, team leadership, and the moderating role of social justice in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. The review moves from broader higher education studies to African and Nigerian studies in order to situate the study within the context of selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, synthesis of research gaps, and chapter summary.

Conceptual Review

This section reviews extant literature on the conceptualization of the major variables of the study. It explains democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity by examining how different scholars have defined and divided them. It also discusses the major indicators that have been used to study these concepts in educational and organizational settings. This is necessary because democratic leadership, social justice,

and cultural diversity have been explained in different ways across leadership, education, sociology, and organizational studies.

In this study, democratic leadership is reviewed as a leadership approach that allows participation, shared responsibility, teamwork, and motivation. Social justice is reviewed as a condition of fairness, equity, access, inclusion, representation, and dignity. Cultural diversity is reviewed as the presence and meaningful participation of people from different cultural backgrounds in the same institutional setting. The review compares major conceptualizations of each concept before narrowing them to the indicators adopted in the study. Democratic leadership is therefore operationalized through participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership. Social justice is used as a moderating variable and is operationalized through equity, inclusive learning environment, access to resources, and diversity. Cultural diversity is operationalized through intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership is widely understood as a form of leadership in which the leader involves followers, staff, employees, or group members in decision-making and organizational processes. It is closely related to participative leadership because both concepts stress involvement, consultation, voice, and shared responsibility (Dike & Madubueze, 2019; Raupu et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025). In democratic leadership, the leader does not make decisions in isolation. Rather, the leader creates room for members to contribute ideas, raise concerns, share expertise, and participate in decisions that affect them. This makes democratic leadership different from autocratic leadership, where power

is concentrated in the leader, and from laissez-faire leadership, where the leader gives little direction or guidance (Lewin et al., 1939; Northouse, 2019).

Scholars have explained democratic leadership in different but related ways. Some view it mainly as a decision-making style in which followers are consulted before decisions are made (Raupu et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025). Others explain it as a relational leadership style that builds teamwork, trust, shared responsibility, and commitment among members of an organization (Caillier, 2020; Cumar et al., 2025). A third view presents democratic leadership as a developmental process through which followers are empowered to take responsibility and contribute meaningfully to institutional goals (Akpa et al., 2021; Ukeje et al., 2025). These explanations are connected by their focus on participation, but they differ in emphasis. The first emphasizes consultation, the second emphasizes relationships and collaboration, while the third emphasizes empowerment and responsibility.

Democratic leadership has been linked with positive organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity, trust, innovation, and social justice because it gives members the opportunity to be heard and represented (Fakhri et al., 2021; Riza et al., 2025). In higher education, this is important because universities are knowledge-based institutions. Academic staff, students, administrators, and other stakeholders possess different forms of expertise and experience that can improve institutional decisions when properly used (Kelder et al., 2025). Democratic leadership is therefore suitable for universities because it allows diverse members of the institution to contribute to policies, teaching practices, student support, and governance issues that affect university life. In culturally diverse universities, this leadership style may also reduce the distance between formal authority and the everyday experiences of students and staff.

The earliest explanation of democratic leadership is usually associated with the leadership studies of Lewin et al., (1939), which distinguished autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership. The democratic leader was understood as one who encouraged group discussion, collective decision-making, and member participation. Lippitt and White (1943) further showed that leadership climate affects group behaviour, motivation, and member relations. Later leadership scholars expanded this idea by explaining democratic leadership as a process through which members are not only consulted but also empowered to contribute to organizational direction. This foundation remains useful in higher education because universities still need to balance formal authority with inclusive participation, especially in culturally diverse institutional environments (Cumar et al., 2025; Kezar et al., 2025).

Gastil (1994) conceptualized democratic leadership through three major functions: distributing responsibility, empowering members, and aiding deliberation. Distributing responsibility means that leadership tasks are not kept in the hands of one person or a small group. Rather, members are allowed to participate in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating group activities. In university contexts, this function is relevant because departments, faculties, student bodies, and administrative units require structures that allow members to participate in decisions that affect them (Caillier, 2020; Ukeje et al., 2025). Recent studies on shared leadership and co-governance in higher education also show that institutional change is stronger when responsibility is distributed across units and stakeholders (Kezar et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025).

The second function in Gastil's model is empowering members. This means that democratic leaders do not merely ask for opinions. They also strengthen members' ability to contribute, make decisions, and take responsibility. Empowerment may occur through

delegation, mentoring, recognition, opportunity, and support. In higher education, empowerment is important because students and staff from less represented groups may not participate fully if they are not given visible opportunities and confidence to do so (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Harper et al., 2025). This is why democratic leadership is relevant to cultural diversity. It can help members from different cultural, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds feel that they are part of the institution and not merely people who are present in it.

The third function is aiding deliberation. Democratic leaders create conditions for meaningful discussion, help members examine issues, and guide the group toward fair and reasonable decisions. Deliberation is not the same as allowing everyone to speak without direction. It requires the leader to manage discussion, reduce domination by powerful groups, encourage quieter voices, and keep the discussion connected to institutional goals (Gastil, 1994). In culturally diverse universities, deliberation is very important because students and staff may have different cultural experiences, languages, beliefs, and expectations. If leaders do not manage discussion fairly, some voices may dominate while others remain silent. Recent studies on inclusion and higher education leadership also show that institutional voice and participation are central to equity, belonging, and student success (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Kezar et al., 2025).

Sharma and Singh (2013) expanded democratic leadership into more specific organizational dimensions. Their explanation includes involvement of subordinates in decision-making, motivating followers, participation and skill sharing, mediating leader-follower and follower-follower relationships, and taking input from followers. These dimensions help translate the broad idea of democratic leadership into measurable leadership behaviours. In the present study, involvement in decision-making is linked with participative leadership. Motivation of followers is linked with motivational leadership.

Participation and skill sharing are linked with team leadership. Taking input from followers and distributing responsibility are linked with shared leadership. Recent higher education studies also support this structure by showing that participation, collaboration, support, and shared responsibility are important to institutional culture and inclusive governance (Cumar et al., 2025; Riza et al., 2025; Ukeje et al., 2025).

Liggett (2020) added another useful perspective by organizing democratic leadership around collaboration, interdependence of teams, trust for building relationships, and supportive environments created through flexibility, reciprocal communication, and attention to members' voices. This view moves democratic leadership beyond voting or consultation. It presents democratic leadership as a culture of working together, trusting one another, and creating a supportive environment where members can contribute. In higher education, this is relevant because universities are complex institutions where decisions are shaped by departments, faculties, committees, student groups, and management structures. Leadership that does not build trust across these units may fail to support inclusion and diversity, even where formal consultation exists (Adewale & Ghavifekr, 2025; Harper et al., 2025; Idahosa & Love, 2025).

Democratic leadership can also be compared with other leadership styles in educational settings. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, and change. Servant leadership emphasizes service, humility, and meeting followers' needs. Transactional leadership emphasizes reward, compliance, and performance expectations. Situational leadership emphasizes adapting leadership style to the demands of the situation. These leadership styles may contribute to educational leadership, but they do not always guarantee inclusion or shared decision-making. For example, transformational leadership can inspire institutional change, but if it is too leader-centred, it may still give excessive influence to the leader. Servant leadership can support care and humility, but in high power

distance settings, followers may misinterpret it as weakness or lack of authority (Bose & Haque, 2021; Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). Democratic leadership is useful in this study because it directly stresses participation, voice, representation, and collective responsibility.

In African higher education, democratic leadership has particular relevance because universities operate within social contexts shaped by hierarchy, ethnicity, religion, political influence, and unequal access to resources. Cumar et al. (2025) showed that leadership styles shape organizational culture in Somaliland higher education. Adewale and Ghavifekr (2025) also found that academic leaders in Nigerian higher education face political, economic, human, social, and resource-related constraints when leading change. These findings suggest that democratic leadership is not only a leadership preference. It is also a practice that may either open or close space for participation, cultural inclusion, and institutional trust. In a university system where decisions affect students and staff from diverse backgrounds, democratic leadership becomes important for fairness, belonging, and shared institutional responsibility.

In this study, democratic leadership is used as a broad leadership construct that involves giving members of the university community opportunities to contribute to decision-making and institutional life. It is operationalized through four indicators: participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership. Participative leadership refers to leaders' willingness to involve students, staff, and other stakeholders in decisions that affect them. Shared leadership refers to the distribution of responsibility and authority across members rather than keeping leadership within one person or a small group. Team leadership refers to the leader's ability to promote teamwork, collaboration, conflict management, and joint problem solving. Motivational leadership

refers to the leader's ability to inspire, recognize, support, and encourage members to participate in institutional goals.

These four indicators are important because cultural diversity in universities cannot be improved by policy statements alone. A university may have students from different cultural backgrounds but still fail to achieve meaningful diversity if leadership is exclusionary. Students and staff must have opportunities to participate, work across cultural lines, share responsibility, and receive motivation. This makes democratic leadership a suitable independent variable for this study. It provides a basis for examining how leadership practices influence cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria, especially when social justice is treated as a condition that may strengthen or weaken that relationship.

Social Justice

Social justice is a broad concept that deals with fairness, equity, access, inclusion, participation, representation, dignity, and the removal of institutional barriers that disadvantage some groups in society. In education, social justice is concerned with how schools and universities treat students and staff from different social, cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, and economic backgrounds. It asks whether people have fair access to opportunities, whether their identities are respected, whether their voices are heard, and whether institutional structures allow them to participate meaningfully in learning and governance (Grapin & Shriberg, 2020; Makateng, 2022; Mincu & Mills, 2026). In higher education, the concept has become important because universities often bring together people from diverse backgrounds, yet diversity alone does not guarantee fair treatment, inclusion, or belonging (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Zare & Pathania, 2025).

Different scholars have conceptualized social justice from different perspectives. Rawls (1972, 2001) explained social justice mainly through fairness in the distribution of primary goods, rights, duties, liberties, and opportunities. From this view, a just society is one in which institutions are arranged in a way that protects equal basic liberties and gives special consideration to those who are least advantaged. This distributive understanding is useful in education because universities distribute opportunities, admissions, scholarships, facilities, leadership positions, academic support, and access to learning resources. Where these opportunities are unequally distributed, some groups may enjoy institutional advantage while others remain excluded.

Other scholars have argued that social justice should not be limited to distribution alone. Gewirtz (1998) distinguished between distributive justice and relational justice. Distributive justice focuses on fair allocation of resources, while relational justice deals with the quality of relationships, recognition, respect, and interaction among individuals and groups. This second perspective is important for university settings because students may have access to the same classrooms and still experience exclusion, ridicule, stereotyping, or non-recognition. In the same way, Young's (1990) work on oppression widened social justice beyond resource allocation by drawing attention to powerlessness, marginalization, cultural domination, exploitation, and violence. These concerns show that social injustice can exist both in material conditions and in everyday institutional relationships.

In organizational and educational studies, social justice has also been discussed through distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Distributive justice deals with the fairness of outcomes and resource allocation. Procedural justice concerns the fairness of the processes through which decisions are made. Interactional justice focuses on the dignity, respect, and quality of interpersonal treatment people receive during institutional

processes (Cabolis & Fink, 2020; Elenbaas et al., 2020; Levin, 2020). These dimensions are relevant to universities because students and staff do not only judge whether they receive resources. They also judge whether decisions are transparent, whether rules are applied fairly, and whether they are treated with respect in classrooms, departments, and administrative offices.

Makateng (2022) conceptualized social justice through three principles: equity, participation, and human rights. Equity emphasizes that institutional support, reward, and opportunity should respond to fairness and need. Participation means that people should be involved in decisions that affect them and the organization. Human rights emphasize that every person, irrespective of status or background, should have access to basic rights such as freedom of expression, protection, and participation. These principles connect well with the present study because cultural diversity in universities cannot be improved if students from different backgrounds are present but excluded from participation, resources, or protection.

Recent higher education literature has extended the discussion by linking social justice with curriculum justice, representation, dignity, care, governance, restorative practice, access, and inclusive pedagogy. Mincu and Mills (2026) discussed social justice in relation to redistribution, curriculum justice, representation, dignity, care, and governance. This is important because universities do not only distribute physical resources. They also decide what knowledge is taught, whose histories and cultures are represented, and how students are supported. Bussu and Karp (2026) also showed that restorative justice in higher education requires dialogue, accountability, conflict management, institutional support, and shared understanding. These studies suggest that social justice is both structural and relational. It concerns policies, resources, curriculum,

institutional culture, and the ways members of the university community relate to one another.

Social justice in higher education is also connected with privilege and the need to recognize hidden forms of advantage. Zare and Pathania (2025) examined how university students unlearn caste privilege and how such awareness relates to affirmative action, diversity, merit, and social justice. Although the context differs from Nigeria, the study is relevant because it shows that exclusion in universities is often maintained not only by formal policies but also by attitudes, inherited privilege, and normalized assumptions about merit. In Nigerian universities, similar concerns may appear through ethnicity, religion, language, gender, indigeneity, and social class. A student may be admitted into the university but still experience exclusion when institutional norms privilege one cultural group, language, religion, or identity over others.

In education, social justice also has a pedagogical dimension. It is not limited to administrative fairness or leadership decisions. It also includes whether teaching materials, classroom practices, assessment processes, and student support systems affirm different identities and experiences. Corres-Medrano et al. (2026) showed that inclusion in higher education remains an educational challenge and that students' perspectives are important in understanding whether inclusion is practised meaningfully. John (2026) also linked peace and justice education with pedagogies that promote deeper learning and social responsibility in a South African university context. These studies show that social justice must be reflected in the classroom, curriculum, and student experience, not only in institutional policy.

Access is another important part of social justice. Students may be formally admitted into universities but still lack fair access to resources, digital tools, learning support, mentoring, safety, and representation. Nkosi and Maphalala (2026) examined

access and inclusion in higher education through the gendered digital divide, showing that social justice also includes the practical conditions that allow students to participate fully in learning. Aposika (2026) also emphasized that equity in higher education should be assessed through access, affordability, participation, outcomes, and support. These concerns are relevant to Nigerian universities where limited facilities, overcrowded classrooms, uneven resource allocation, and weak support systems can affect students' ability to participate in university life.

Educational leaders have important social justice responsibilities because they shape the institutional conditions under which students and staff interact. Leaders make decisions about admission, discipline, appointments, representation, resource allocation, curriculum priorities, student support, and conflict management. If such decisions are unfair or exclusionary, they can weaken cultural inclusion. If they are participatory and just, they can strengthen students' sense of belonging and trust. For this reason, social justice leadership involves identifying and reducing prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and institutional inequality while creating conditions for equity, participation, and respect (Grapin & Shriberg, 2020; Makateng, 2022; Bhowmik et al., 2026).

In this study, social justice is treated as a moderating variable in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. This means that democratic leadership may influence cultural diversity, but the strength of that influence may depend on the level of fairness, access, inclusion, and representation in the university environment. For instance, participative leadership may have little effect if some cultural groups are invited to meetings but their views are ignored. Shared leadership may also be weak if authority is distributed only among already privileged groups. Team leadership may not promote diversity if resources and opportunities are unfairly allocated. Motivational

leadership may also be limited if recognition and support are not extended to students and staff from different cultural backgrounds.

Based on these conceptualizations, this study operationalizes social justice through equity, inclusive learning environment, and access to resources. Equity refers to fair treatment and fair opportunity for students and staff regardless of their cultural or social background. Inclusive learning environment refers to institutional and classroom conditions that allow different groups to feel respected, supported, and involved. Access to resources refers to fair availability of academic, social, administrative, and learning support.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to the presence of people from different cultural backgrounds, identities, values, languages, beliefs, and social experiences within the same group, institution, or society. In higher education, it describes the reality that students, lecturers, administrators, and other members of the university community may differ in ethnicity, religion, language, gender, nationality, social class, ability, worldview, and cultural practices (Cherian et al., 2020; Lin, 2020; Ward et al., 2025). Cultural diversity is therefore not limited to ethnic difference alone. It also includes the different ways people understand knowledge, relate with others, communicate, participate, and interpret institutional life. In universities, this makes cultural diversity both an opportunity and a challenge because diverse groups must learn, work, and interact within the same academic environment.

Scholars have conceptualized cultural diversity from different angles. Cox (1993) viewed cultural diversity as the representation of people with distinct group affiliations of cultural importance within one social system. This explanation is useful because it shows that cultural diversity involves both difference and coexistence. Cherian et al. (2020)

defined cultural diversity as the presence of people from different cultural backgrounds and characteristics in the same work group or organization. Lin (2020) extended this idea by describing cultural diversity as the coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities, disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, and other identities. These definitions show that cultural diversity is a broad construct that involves visible and less visible forms of difference.

Earlier cultural theorists explained cultural diversity through national and group cultural dimensions. Hofstede et al. (2010) conceptualized culture through dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term orientation. Power distance is especially useful in leadership studies because it explains how much people accept unequal distribution of power. In high power distance contexts, followers may be less likely to challenge leaders or participate openly in decision-making. This can affect democratic leadership because open participation may be restricted by respect for hierarchy or fear of disagreeing with authority. In Nigerian universities, such cultural tendencies may influence how students and staff respond to leadership, consultation, and participation.

Schwartz's cultural value framework also provides another way of understanding cultural diversity. Schwartz grouped cultural values around broad tensions such as autonomy versus embeddedness, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony (Schwartz, 1999; Witte et al., 2020). These dimensions are relevant to universities because they show how people differ in their understanding of freedom, responsibility, authority, social order, and adaptation to the environment. For example, students from more hierarchical backgrounds may expect leaders to provide direction, while those with more egalitarian orientations may expect open participation and shared decision-making. Such

differences can affect how democratic leadership is received in culturally diverse institutions.

Hall's cultural framework focused on communication and interaction. Hall distinguished between high-context and low-context cultures, showing that some groups rely heavily on indirect communication, gestures, tone, shared background, and social cues, while others prefer direct and explicit communication (Hall, 1959; Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2021). This is important in university settings because cultural differences in communication may affect classroom participation, student leadership, conflict resolution, and interaction between students and staff. A student who speaks indirectly may be misunderstood as passive, while a student who speaks directly may be seen as rude or confrontational. These differences show that cultural diversity must be managed with sensitivity and not merely assumed to be beneficial.

Other scholars have discussed cultural diversity in terms of its benefits and challenges. Many studies argue that cultural diversity can improve creativity, institutional learning, problem-solving, innovation, and social awareness because people from different backgrounds bring different experiences and perspectives (Cherian et al., 2020; Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). In a university, culturally diverse students and staff can enrich classroom discussion, broaden academic content, and improve social understanding. However, cultural diversity can also create misunderstanding, exclusion, tension, stereotyping, and weak belonging when it is poorly managed (Morgan et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). This means that cultural diversity should not be treated as automatically positive or negative. Its value depends on how it is supported by leadership, curriculum, student engagement, and institutional justice.

Recent higher education literature has moved the discussion of cultural diversity from general group differences to the quality of inclusion within universities. This shift is

important because a university may be culturally diverse in population but weak in inclusion. Students from different groups may be admitted into the same institution but still experience isolation, underrepresentation, language barriers, biased treatment, or lack of belonging. Studies on diversity-receptiveness show that multicultural norms, policies, and institutional practices are associated with students' well-being and positive attitudes toward people from different backgrounds (Ward et al., 2025). In the same way, research on equitable learning environments shows that lecturers and institutions must build on students' differences rather than treat them as problems to be ignored (Ramdas et al., 2025).

In university settings, cultural diversity has increasingly been conceptualized through intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation. Intercultural competence refers to the ability of students to communicate, relate, and work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. It includes awareness of one's own cultural assumptions, openness to other cultures, respect for difference, and the ability to interact across cultural boundaries. André-Das Dores et al. (2025) showed that intercultural competence in higher education requires deliberate curricular and institutional attention. Jin and Sercu (2025) also noted that intercultural competence research in higher education differs across methods and interventions, but it generally stresses learning, reflection, interaction, and assessment. This means that students do not become interculturally competent by mere exposure to diversity. They need structured opportunities to interact and learn across difference.

Curriculum inclusivity is another major indicator of cultural diversity in higher education. It refers to the extent to which course content, examples, teaching materials, assessment practices, and classroom activities reflect and respect different cultural perspectives. A curriculum may be formally academic but culturally narrow if it ignores the histories, languages, values, and experiences of some groups. Inclusive curriculum

practice helps students to see their identities and experiences represented in learning. It also helps lecturers draw on students' different perspectives and talents to create more meaningful learning experiences (Misiaszek, 2025; Ramdas et al., 2025). Studies on cultural studies pedagogy and internationalization of the curriculum also show that active, experiential, and intercultural learning can help students engage more deeply with cultural differences (Abdul Khalek & Wong, 2026; Binkley et al., 2025).

Student participation is the third indicator of cultural diversity adopted in this study. It refers to the active involvement of students from different cultural backgrounds in academic, social, leadership, and institutional activities. Participation is important because cultural diversity is weak when some students are present in the university but absent from decision-making, leadership roles, group learning, or campus life. Meaningful participation requires opportunities for voice, representation, interaction, and belonging. Recent studies on student inclusion and belonging show that students' engagement with university life depends on whether they experience recognition, support, classroom comfort, and fair opportunities to participate (Corres-Medrano et al., 2026; Lebioda, 2026; Stafford et al., 2025). This makes student participation a practical way of assessing whether diversity is actually experienced as inclusion.

In Nigerian universities, cultural diversity is shaped by ethnicity, religion, language, state of origin, gender, socioeconomic background, and political influence. These differences are visible in admission patterns, student associations, classroom interactions, leadership roles, curriculum content, and campus relationships. Obiagu et al. (2025) showed that multicultural education in Nigeria still faces challenges in content, attitudes, practices, and implementation. This is relevant because Nigerian universities may bring students from different groups together without giving enough attention to intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation. In Southwest Nigeria, where

Yoruba cultural dominance may shape the social and linguistic environment, students from other cultural backgrounds may need stronger institutional support to feel included and represented.

Cultural diversity also interacts with leadership. Leadership styles determine whether diversity is ignored, controlled, celebrated, or transformed into meaningful inclusion. A leadership style that works in one cultural setting may not work in the same way in another because people's expectations about power, communication, participation, and authority differ across cultural contexts (Bose & Haque, 2021; Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2021). Democratic leadership is relevant because it creates room for participation, dialogue, teamwork, and shared responsibility. However, participation without fairness may not lead to inclusion. This is why social justice is important in the present study. It provides the conditions of fairness, access, representation, and respect that can strengthen the effect of democratic leadership on cultural diversity.

In this study, cultural diversity is used as the dependent variable. It is not treated simply as the presence of students and staff from different backgrounds. Rather, it is understood as the extent to which the university environment supports intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation. These indicators are suitable because they connect cultural diversity to the actual experiences of students in learning, interaction, and institutional life. This makes it possible to examine how democratic leadership influences cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria, and how social justice may strengthen or weaken that relationship.

Empirical Literature

This section reviews empirical literature on democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity in higher education. The review is organized according to the objectives of the study. It covers studies on participative leadership, team leadership,

motivational leadership, shared leadership, and the moderating role of social justice. Attention is given to the context, purpose, methodology, sample, data analysis, findings, statistical or methodological evidence, limitations, and relevance of each study to the present research. The review also shows the gap that this study addresses by examining democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Influence of Participative Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Vitous et al. (2019) explored how participative leadership fostered through a leadership development program affected cultural diversity and inclusivity in a high-stakes academic environment using the Department of Surgery at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The study employed a qualitative design and conducted in-depth interviews with 14 surgery faculty members who were part of the first cohort of the leadership program. The interviews were analyzed with NVivo to identify themes related to leadership style and departmental culture. The findings showed increased collegiality and morale, suggesting that participative leadership can support cultural inclusivity by fostering collaboration and respect among diverse professionals. The study was limited by its inability to isolate the effect of the leadership program from other changes occurring in the department.

Almaskari et al. (2021) investigated the mediating role of cultural diversity in the relationship between leadership styles, particularly participative leadership, and employee innovation in UAE universities. The study aimed to establish how participative leadership could enhance innovation among university employees by fostering a culturally diverse environment that supports creative thinking and idea generation. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 633 employees in public and private universities in the UAE. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling with

AMOS-21. The model showed acceptable fit indices, $\chi^2/df = 2.41$, CFI = 0.93, and RMSEA = 0.047. The findings revealed that participative leadership positively influenced employee innovation, $\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$. Cultural diversity served as a partial mediator, $\beta = 0.29$, $p < .01$, and the indirect effect was statistically significant, Sobel $z = 3.87$, $p < .001$. The model explained 46% of the variance in employee innovation, $R^2 = 0.46$. The study showed that participative leadership can create space for culturally diverse employees to contribute to institutional outcomes, although its main dependent variable was employee innovation rather than cultural diversity.

Zulfqar et al. (2022) examined the impact of transformational leadership and participative decision-making on teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and job satisfaction in culturally diverse organizations, using Pakistani higher education institutions. The study used a survey design and collected data from 218 teachers across four public and private universities. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationships among the variables. The findings showed that participative leadership was positively associated with teachers' job satisfaction, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$, and self-efficacy, $\beta = 0.33$, $p < .01$. The job satisfaction model explained 52% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.52$. However, the effect on intrinsic motivation was weaker and not statistically significant, $\beta = 0.12$, $p = .084$. The study suggests that participative leadership can strengthen satisfaction and self-efficacy in culturally diverse higher education environments, although it may not fully address deeper motivational factors.

Selzer and Foley (2018) implemented a cultural audit within a university department in the United States to investigate the role of participative leadership in fostering cultural diversity and inclusion. The study assessed how a grassroots participatory approach to leadership could address issues of cultural diversity and inclusion within an academic setting. The

cultural audit was conducted in two phases. First, a quantitative survey was administered to gather baseline data on perceptions of departmental culture. The instrument demonstrated strong internal reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$, and a statistically significant mean gap between diversity values and actual implementation, mean difference = 0.74, $p < .05$. Second, a participatory action research approach was used to engage faculty and staff in qualitative discussions about the survey results. The findings showed that participants recognized the value of cultural diversity but perceived a gap between diversity values and actual institutional practice. The study concluded that participative leadership could bridge this gap through more transparent and inclusive decision-making. However, the study was limited by its focus on a single department.

Riza et al. (2025) examined participative leadership, organizational culture, innovation, organizational commitment, and organizational performance in Indonesian state universities with legal entity status. The study used a quantitative survey design and structural equation modeling to test direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The findings showed that participative leadership had a significant indirect effect on organizational performance through organizational commitment, $\beta = 0.231$, $p < .001$. Organizational culture also influenced performance through innovation, $\beta = 0.093$, $p = .001$. Although the study did not examine cultural diversity as the final dependent variable, it is relevant because participative leadership was shown to strengthen institutional commitment and performance through involvement and shared institutional culture. The study was limited by its focus on Indonesian higher education and organizational performance rather than cultural diversity outcomes.

Cumar et al. (2025) examined how leadership styles shaped organizational culture in Somaliland higher education. The study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey

involving 266 academic staff across six major universities. Data were analyzed through structural equation modeling after confirming the validity of the measurement models. The model fit was acceptable, $\chi^2(228) = 414.742$, $p < .001$, CFI = .923, TLI = .909, RMSEA = .056, and SRMR = .047. Participative leadership significantly predicted collaborate culture, $\beta = .31$, $p < .001$, create culture, $\beta = .24$, $p < .001$, and control culture, $\beta = .21$, $p < .01$, but did not significantly predict compete culture. The leadership styles jointly explained between 50% and 54% of the variance in the culture types. The study provides recent African higher education evidence that participative leadership can shape collaborative institutional culture. However, it focused on organizational culture among academic staff rather than cultural diversity among students.

Adewale and Ghavifekr (2025) studied challenges faced by academic leaders in navigating change in Nigerian higher education institutions. The study adopted an interpretivist qualitative case study design and drew data from 20 academic leaders in Lagos State higher education institutions. The findings identified economic, human, social, political, and resource-related challenges as major barriers to effective change leadership. The study is relevant because it shows that participative leadership in Nigeria is constrained by institutional conditions that affect stakeholder engagement and governance. Its limitation is that it focused on academic leaders' experiences of change rather than student-level cultural diversity outcomes.

Taken together, these studies show that participative leadership can support inclusivity, morale, institutional culture, innovation, commitment, and collaborative practice in higher education. However, many of them were conducted outside Nigeria, focused on innovation or performance rather than cultural diversity, or used single-institution samples. The present study addresses this gap by examining the influence of participative leadership on

cultural diversity among final-year students in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Influence of Team Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Urionabarrenetxea et al. (2021) examined the effect of team diversity on performance among management students enrolled in the Business Studies program at the University of the Basque Country, Spain. The study emphasized the role of teamwork in university settings and adopted an Input-Mediator-Outcome model combined with the Categorization-Elaboration Model. Quantitative data were collected from student teams using structured instruments. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the moderating effects of cohesion, leadership strength, and prior teamwork experience. The results showed that team diversity significantly improved performance when moderated by strong leadership and cohesion, $\beta = 0.27$, $p < .01$. The full model explained 38% of the variance in team performance, $R^2 = 0.38$. However, where the moderating variables were absent, diversity had a weaker and non-significant relationship with performance, $\beta = 0.09$, $p = .112$. These findings show that diversity does not automatically produce positive outcomes unless team leadership and cohesion are present.

Cherian et al. (2020) examined the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance at Abu Dhabi University. The study sought to establish whether cultural diversity within teams produced positive, negative, or mixed effects on team performance. A mixed-methods design was used, combining quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews. Regression analysis showed that cultural diversity had a positive and statistically significant effect on team creativity and problem-solving, $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$, explaining 29% of the variance in team performance, $R^2 = 0.29$. The qualitative findings, however, showed that communication barriers and interpersonal conflicts could weaken the positive effect of

cultural diversity. The study was limited by its single-university context, which may not fully represent other academic environments.

Levitt (2016) explored the challenges and opportunities associated with cross-cultural teamwork in higher education. The study focused on barriers that cultural diversity presents in international team dynamics and offered practical recommendations for improving such dynamics. It used a qualitative and literature-based analytical approach supported by case illustrations. Thematic analysis identified ethnocentrism, prejudice, communication barriers, and tension between diversity and unity as recurring issues in cross-cultural teams. Since the study was qualitative and literature-based, it did not report statistical values. The findings emphasized the need for higher education institutions to increase intercultural competence among students and to provide leadership support that helps culturally diverse teams work together.

Iskhakova and Ott (2020) examined how working in culturally diverse teams influenced the development of team-level cultural intelligence and academic performance in a university setting. The study used a quantitative longitudinal design and collected data from 23 teams over multiple time points. Structural equation modeling showed that cultural diversity significantly predicted team-level cultural intelligence, $\beta = 0.35$, $p < .01$. Team-level cultural intelligence also significantly predicted academic performance, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$. The structural model showed good fit indices, $\chi^2/df = 1.98$, CFI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.045, and explained 44% of the variance in academic performance, $R^2 = 0.44$. The findings showed that working in culturally diverse teams can develop cultural intelligence and improve performance when the teams are properly structured.

Fischer and Stenner (2026) investigated diverse cultures of belonging within management education. The study used Q methodology within a three-phase mixed-methods design involving 123 participants. The participants included 96 undergraduate students in the United Kingdom and 27 employer representatives involved in graduate recruitment. Data were collected through focus groups, Q sorting, and follow-up interpretation. Since the study used Q methodology, conventional regression values were not central to the findings. The analysis identified seven factor interpretations representing different shared viewpoints on academic and professional success and belonging. The study is relevant because it shows that students' experiences of belonging do not always align neatly with demographic categories. Its limitation is that it was conducted in a United Kingdom management education context rather than an African public university system.

Arató (2025) proposed a structural framework for plurilingual cooperative learning in higher education. The study focused on how cooperative learning can support equitable success in multilingual and culturally diverse settings. It was a conceptual and framework-oriented study rather than a statistical test, so no beta values, p-values, or R^2 values were reported. The study is relevant to team leadership because it emphasizes structured cooperation, multilingual participation, and equitable group learning. Its limitation is that it did not empirically test the proposed framework in African or Nigerian universities.

Redd and Brauer (2026) examined peer inclusion and belonging among students of color in higher education. The study used a university climate survey across three colleges in the Wisconsin Alliance for Minority Participation and collected data from 3,370 students. The sample included students from different racial, first-generation, and LGBTQ+ backgrounds. The findings showed that students who perceived higher peer inclusion reported stronger sense of belonging, and this effect was stronger among students of color.

Sense of belonging also had downstream effects on mental and physical health, confidence in success, and students' overall evaluation of the university. The study is relevant to team leadership because peer inclusion, group acceptance, and classroom interaction influence how culturally different students experience belonging. Its limitation is that it was conducted in the United States, where race-based diversity experiences differ from ethnic, religious, linguistic, and indigeneship issues in Nigerian universities.

The reviewed studies show that team leadership can help culturally diverse groups achieve creativity, performance, cultural intelligence, cooperation, and belonging when supported by cohesion, inclusion, and structured interaction. However, most studies were conducted outside Nigeria and did not directly test team leadership as a dimension of democratic leadership. The present study addresses this gap by examining the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Influence of Motivational Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Almaskari et al. (2021) examined the relationship between leadership styles, especially transformational and transactional leadership, and employee innovation in UAE universities, with attention to the mediating role of cultural diversity. The study investigated how leadership could motivate employees in culturally diverse settings to improve innovative performance. A structured questionnaire was administered to 633 university employees across public and private institutions. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling with AMOS-21. The model showed good fit, $\chi^2/df = 2.41$, CFI = 0.93, and RMSEA = 0.047. The findings showed that motivational leadership styles significantly predicted employee innovation, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$. Cultural diversity partially mediated the relationship, $\beta = 0.29$, $p < .01$, with a significant indirect effect, Sobel $z = 3.87$, $p < .001$. The model explained 46% of the variance in innovation outcomes, $R^2 =$

0.46. The study suggests that motivational leadership can leverage cultural diversity to create a more dynamic academic environment.

Holgate (2020) investigated the association between university instructors' intercultural orientations, classroom experiences, and educational outcomes, focusing on how motivational leadership could enhance cultural diversity in the classroom. The study integrated multicultural education with Self-Determination Theory and used a mixed-methods design that combined survey instruments measuring intercultural competence and student engagement with qualitative classroom reflections. Regression analysis showed that instructors' intercultural orientation significantly predicted culturally responsive teaching practices, $\beta = 0.36$, $p < .01$. Culturally responsive teaching practices also significantly predicted positive academic and intercultural outcomes, $\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$. The overall structural model accounted for 39% of the variance in student outcomes, $R^2 = 0.39$. The findings show that motivational leadership grounded in intercultural competence can create more inclusive and academically effective learning environments.

Hynds and McDonald (2010) explored factors influencing teacher motivation in a school-university professional development program aimed at improving classroom practice for culturally diverse students in New Zealand. The study used qualitative interviews and structured survey instruments administered to participating teachers. Factor analysis identified two dominant motivational clusters. The first was intrinsic commitment to social justice and improved student outcomes, with factor loadings ranging from 0.71 to 0.84. The second was extrinsic incentives such as qualifications and financial recognition, with factor loadings ranging from 0.63 to 0.77. Regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted sustained engagement in culturally responsive teaching practices, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < .01$, while extrinsic motivation had a weaker but significant effect, $\beta = 0.21$, p

< .05. The findings show that motivational leadership in culturally diverse educational settings must attend to both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation.

Kelder et al. (2025) examined authentic leader behaviours, digital capability, digital preparedness, and digital productivity in higher education through a cross-cultural structural equation model. The study surveyed 533 university employees across seven countries, with academics forming 88% of the sample. The authentic leader behaviour scale showed strong reliability, composite reliability = .94, KMO = .94, Bartlett's $p < .001$, and explained 67.14% of variance, with item loadings ranging from .77 to .86. The digital productivity scale also showed strong reliability, $\alpha = .91$, KMO = .82, Bartlett's $p < .001$, and explained 78.64% of variance. The primary SEM model showed reasonable fit on some indices, including CFI = .90 and SRMR = .06. The study is relevant because authentic leader behaviours such as transparency, support, ethical conduct, and capability building are close to the motivational dimension of leadership. Its limitation is that the outcome was digital productivity rather than cultural diversity.

Zhu et al. (2025) examined deans' transformational leadership and internationalization of higher education in 22 Chinese universities. The study used proportionate stratified random sampling and collected data from 410 academic staff. Structural equation modeling and bootstrapping were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that transformational leadership significantly influenced internationalization directly, $\beta = .517$, $p < .001$, and indirectly through adhocracy culture, $\beta = .169$, $p < .001$. Transformational leadership and adhocracy culture jointly explained 56% of the variance in internationalization. The study is relevant because transformational leadership, like motivational leadership, emphasizes vision, inspiration, support, and institutional commitment. However, the outcome was internationalization rather than cultural diversity in Nigerian universities.

Hermans et al. (2025) examined educator competence for inclusive higher education. The study presented a quasi-experimental design for assessing the effectiveness of a three-day professional development program aimed at strengthening educators' attitudes, self-efficacy, and inclusive didactics. The proposed measures included the SACIE-R scale for attitudes, the TEIP scale for self-efficacy, and an adapted Teaching Practices Questionnaire. Since the article was a preliminary design study, it did not report post-intervention regression coefficients or effect sizes. Its relevance lies in showing that inclusive higher education requires educators who are not only willing to teach inclusively but also competent and self-efficacious enough to do so. The limitation is that it did not test leadership as a direct predictor of cultural diversity.

The reviewed studies show that motivational leadership can support innovation, culturally responsive teaching, staff capability, inclusive competence, and internationalization. However, most studies focus on innovation, productivity, professional development, or internationalization rather than cultural diversity as measured through intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation. The present study extends this evidence by testing motivational leadership as a democratic leadership dimension influencing cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Influence of Shared Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Ramthun and Matkin (2012) developed a conceptual model to explore multicultural shared leadership and its impact on culturally diverse teams in higher education. The study sought to establish how shared leadership, which involves distributing leadership responsibilities among team members, could influence the effectiveness of culturally diverse teams. Through a review of literature on culture, intercultural competence, and shared leadership, the authors proposed a framework in which intercultural competence moderates the

relationship between shared leadership and team performance. Since the study was conceptual, no regression coefficients, p-values, or R^2 values were reported. The model emphasized that high intercultural competence strengthens collaborative decision-making and collective accountability in diverse teams.

Kruse et al. (2018) investigated the role of shared leadership in developing cultural competency within university settings across the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. The study aimed to show how shared leadership, characterized by collaborative decision-making and shared responsibilities, can promote cultural diversity and inclusivity in higher education institutions. It used a review of institutional initiatives and policy frameworks to synthesize cross-case evidence. The findings identified professional learning integration and distributed governance structures as enabling conditions for implementation. The study concluded that shared leadership practices were positively associated with stronger institutional cultural competency frameworks and improved inclusivity outcomes. However, because it was review-based, it did not report statistical values.

Al Muqarshi et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative case study in an English Language Teaching department in an Omani university to explore how shared leadership influenced the management of cultural diversity. The study used interviews, observations, and document analysis. Since it was qualitative, no beta values, p-values, or R^2 statistics were reported. The findings showed that shared leadership practices enhanced collaborative engagement and collective identity formation within the department. However, the overall impact was constrained by hierarchical and transactional leadership approaches at the central management level. The study shows that shared leadership may improve diversity

management at departmental level but can be weakened by centralized university governance structures.

Lauring and Selmer (2012) investigated the relationship between cultural diversity and knowledge sharing within diverse academic departments at three large universities in Denmark. The study used survey data collected from 489 academics and applied regression analysis. The findings revealed that cultural and linguistic diversity positively influenced knowledge sharing, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .01$, while demographic diversity variables such as age and gender showed weaker and non-significant effects. The overall model explained 34% of the variance in knowledge-sharing behaviour, $R^2 = 0.34$. The study concluded that shared leadership practices that encourage collaborative decision-making and responsibility distribution are important for leveraging the benefits of cultural diversity in academic settings. The limitation was its European setting, which may not fully represent African university contexts.

Kezar et al. (2025) examined shared leadership for transformational change aimed at at-promise student success in higher education. The study focused on professional learning communities that brought educators in cross-functional roles together to coordinate fragmented student support systems. The study was qualitative and developmental, so it did not report regression values or R^2 statistics. Its methodological value lies in its focus on how educators move from siloed and hierarchical leadership environments toward shared and collaborative structures. The findings showed that shared leadership can support institutional redesign, coordination, and a culture of ecological validation for low-income, racially minoritized, and first-generation students. The study is relevant to cultural diversity because diverse student populations require leadership systems that distribute responsibility across academic, administrative, and support units.

Harper et al. (2025) examined shared equity leadership in higher education, focusing on how institutions can sustain equity work under restrictive and difficult policy conditions. The study used a modified Delphi approach involving expert participants.. The study refined the shared equity leadership framework and showed that equity work becomes stronger when responsibility is distributed across many institutional actors instead of being placed only on diversity offices or individual leaders. This is relevant because cultural diversity requires shared responsibility across the university system. Its limitation is that the legal and policy context differs from Nigerian public universities.

The reviewed studies suggest that shared leadership can support cultural diversity by distributing responsibility, strengthening cultural competence, improving knowledge sharing, and building collective accountability. However, several studies are conceptual, review-based, or located outside Nigeria. The present study addresses this gap by empirically testing shared leadership as a predictor of cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.

Moderating Role of Social Justice

Harun and Ahmad (2022) investigated the role of social justice in moderating the relationship between human resource management practices and university administrators' retention in Malaysian private universities. The study used a survey methodology involving 272 administrators and analyzed the data using structural equation modeling. The measurement and structural models showed acceptable fit indices, $\chi^2/df = 2.67$, CFI = 0.91, and RMSEA = 0.058. The findings revealed that distributive justice significantly influenced retention, $\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$. Social justice also strengthened the relationship between human resource management practices and employee commitment, interaction effect $\beta = 0.24$, $p < .01$. The structural model explained 48% of the variance in retention,

$R^2 = 0.48$. The study is relevant because it shows that justice can strengthen the relationship between institutional practices and organizational outcomes. However, it focused on administrators rather than students and cultural diversity.

Karataş and Han (2022) examined the role of social justice in the relationship between cultural intelligence and attitudes toward the teaching profession among prospective teachers in Turkey. The study collected data from 404 teacher candidates and used structural equation modeling. The model showed good fit, $\chi^2/df = 2.12$, CFI = 0.94, and RMSEA = 0.052. The findings indicated that cultural intelligence significantly predicted professional attitudes, $\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$. Social justice mediated this relationship, with an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$. The model accounted for 42% of the variance in professional attitudes, $R^2 = 0.42$. Although the study treated social justice as a mediator rather than a moderator, it remains relevant because it shows that social justice can explain the pathway through which culture-related competence influences educational attitudes.

Owusu-Agyeman (2021) analyzed how a supportive campus environment influenced by social justice principles moderated the relationship between cultural diversity and students' sense of belonging in a South African university. The study used hierarchical regression analysis on data collected from 2,026 students. The findings revealed that cultural diversity significantly predicted students' sense of belonging, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .001$. The inclusion of social justice as a moderating variable significantly strengthened this relationship, interaction term $\beta = 0.22$, $p < .01$. The full model explained 37% of the variance in sense of belonging, $R^2 = 0.37$. The study concluded that social justice enhances cross-cultural interaction and strengthens belonging. However, it was conducted in a single South African university, which may limit generalization.

Denisova (2020) examined the influence of social justice on interethnic relations in universities, with attention to discrimination and cultural integration. The study used an interdisciplinary approach that combined surveys and interviews with students and faculty across multiple institutions. Regression analysis indicated that institutional commitment to social justice significantly predicted lower levels of interethnic tension, $\beta = -0.33$, $p < .01$, and higher levels of perceived inclusivity, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$. The model explained 31% of the variance in interethnic relations outcomes, $R^2 = 0.31$. The results showed that institutions that actively promote social justice experience lower discrimination and stronger cultural integration. A key limitation was the cross-sectional design, which restricted long-term causal interpretation.

Khan et al. (2023) examined organizational justice as a mediating factor in the relationship between leadership styles and academics' performance in higher education. The study is relevant because it connects leadership, justice, and higher education outcomes in one model. Although its dependent variable was academics' performance rather than cultural diversity, it showed that justice can function as an intervening variable that explains how leadership affects university-level outcomes. The study supports the present research by showing that justice-related variables can clarify the relationship between leadership practices and institutional results.

Główczewski and Burdziej (2023) investigated procedural fairness, students' academic identification, and perceived legitimacy of university authorities. The study used two surveys of university students in Poland. Study 1 involved 315 students and found that fair treatment was a stronger predictor of perceived legitimacy of university authorities than fair outcomes. Study 2 involved 751 students and showed that academic identification mediated the relationship between procedural and distributive fairness and student

engagement. Academic identification also partly mediated the relationship between fairness and burnout. The study is relevant because it shows that fairness affects how students identify with the university, trust institutional authorities, and engage in academic life. However, it did not directly examine democratic leadership or cultural diversity.

Assefa et al. (2026) examined organizational justice in higher education through faculty perspectives on distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. The study used a qualitative case study design involving 48 faculty participants from four public universities in Ethiopia. Eight participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews, while 40 participants participated in four focus group discussions of 10 participants each. The sample included 37 males and 11 females, with 26 lecturers, 18 assistant professors, and four associate professors. Since the study was qualitative, no regression coefficients were reported. Thematic analysis showed that distributive justice problems appeared in inequitable resource allocation and professional development opportunities. Procedural justice issues were linked to lack of transparency, inconsistent policy application, and limited participation in governance. Interactional justice problems emerged through dismissive and disrespectful leadership behaviour. The study is relevant because it shows that justice in higher education is experienced through resource allocation, decision procedures, and interpersonal treatment by leaders.

Cho and Kwon (2026) examined the relationship between organizational justice and university staff's sense of community, with transformational leadership tested as a moderator. The study used data from 4,234 staff in Korean four-year universities and applied PROCESS Macro Model 1. Although leadership was the moderator rather than justice, the study is relevant because it shows that justice and leadership can interact to shape institutional outcomes in higher education. Its limitation is that the context was

Korean universities and the outcome was staff sense of community rather than cultural diversity.

Bussu and Karp (2026) examined restorative justice in higher education by analyzing challenges, strategies, and achievements using Normalization Process Theory. The study adopted a qualitatively driven mixed-methods approach and examined restorative justice activity across 68 higher education institutions. The analysis covered four domains: student conduct, staff and faculty engagement, teaching practices, and academic research. Since the study focused on implementation, no regression coefficients or R^2 values were reported. The findings showed that restorative justice requires shared understanding, leadership support, institutional commitment, and structures for dialogue and repair. The study is relevant because cultural diversity in universities may produce conflict or exclusion if fairness, dialogue, and institutional justice are weak.

Serin and Bozdağ (2025) examined social justice leadership against xenophobia in education, with attention to diversity climate and social contact. The study is useful because it connects social justice leadership with intergroup relations in diverse educational environments. Although the context was not Nigerian higher education, it supports the view that social justice can affect how diverse groups perceive and relate to one another within educational institutions. Its limitation is that it did not focus specifically on democratic leadership or Southwest Nigerian public universities.

Overall, the reviewed studies show that social justice can function as a moderating, mediating, or explanatory variable in education and higher education models. It has been linked with retention, professional attitudes, sense of belonging, interethnic relations, academic identification, justice perceptions, staff community, and institutional trust.

However, few studies have tested social justice as a moderator in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity in Nigerian public universities. The present study addresses this gap by examining whether social justice strengthens or weakens the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.

Synthesis of Research Gaps

Table 1: Summary of Gaps from Empirical literature

Research objectives	Authors	Summary of Methodologies	Summary of Findings	Limitations	Gaps addressed by present sstudy
Influence of participative leadership on cultural diversity	Vitous et al. (2019)	Qualitative study using in-depth interviews with 14 faculty members; data were analyzed with NVivo.	Participative leadership increased collegiality and morale and supported cultural inclusivity. The study also reported strong intercoder reliability, $\kappa = 0.82$.	The study did not isolate the effect of leadership training from other departmental changes.	The present study tests participative leadership directly in relation to cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.
	Almaskari et al. (2021)	Structured questionnaire survey of 633 university employees; data were analyzed with structural equation modeling using AMOS-21.	Participative leadership positively influenced employee innovation, $\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$. Cultural diversity partially mediated the relationship, $\beta = 0.29$, $p < .01$. The model explained 46% of the variance, $R^2 = 0.46$.	The study was limited to UAE universities and focused on innovation rather than cultural diversity as the main outcome.	The present study examines cultural diversity as the dependent variable in a Nigerian public university context.
	Zulfqar et al. (2022)	Survey-based study of 218 teachers in Pakistani higher education institutions; data were analyzed	Participative leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$, and self-efficacy, $\beta = 0.33$, $p < .01$. The model explained 52% of the	The effect on intrinsic motivation was weaker and not statistically significant, $\beta = 0.12$, $p = .084$.	The present study extends the review by focusing on students' cultural diversity outcomes rather than

		with multiple regression.	variance in job satisfaction, $R^2 = 0.52$.		teachers' job satisfaction.
	Selzer and Foley (2018)	Cultural audit using quantitative survey and participatory action research.	The study found a significant gap between diversity values and actual implementation, mean difference = 0.74, $p < .05$. The instrument had strong reliability, $\alpha = 0.88$.	It focused on one university department, limiting wider applicability.	The present study uses a broader public university sample across selected institutions in Southwest Nigeria.
	Riza et al. (2025)	Quantitative higher education study using structural equation modeling to examine participative leadership, organizational culture, innovation, commitment, and performance.	Participative leadership had a significant indirect effect on organizational performance through organizational commitment, $\beta = 0.231$, $p < .001$. Organizational culture influenced performance through innovation, $\beta = 0.093$, $p = .001$.	The study focused on Indonesian higher education and institutional performance rather than cultural diversity.	The present study applies participative leadership to cultural diversity in Nigerian public universities.
	Cumar et al. (2025)	Quantitative cross-sectional survey of 266 academic staff from six Somaliland universities; analyzed with structural equation modeling.	Participative leadership significantly predicted collaborate culture, $\beta = .31$, $p < .001$, create culture, $\beta = .24$, $p < .001$, and control culture, $\beta = .21$, $p < .01$. Model fit was acceptable, CFI = .923, TLI = .909, RMSEA = .056.	The study focused on academic staff and organizational culture, not students' cultural diversity.	The present study examines final-year students and cultural diversity outcomes in Southwest Nigerian public universities.
	Adewale and Ghavifekr (2025)	Qualitative case study of 20 academic leaders	The study found that political, economic, human,	It focused on academic leaders'	The present study links leadership practices

		in Lagos State higher education institutions.	social, and resource-related challenges constrained effective change leadership.	experiences of change rather than student-level cultural diversity outcomes.	with students' cultural diversity experiences.
Influence of team leadership on cultural diversity	Urionabarrenetxea et al. (2021)	Quantitative study using Input-Mediator-Outcome and Categorization-Elaboration models to examine team diversity and performance.	Team diversity improved performance when leadership, cohesion, and prior teamwork experience were strong, $\beta = 0.27$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.38$. Without these moderators, diversity had a weaker non-significant effect, $\beta = 0.09$, $p = .112$.	Diversity without strong leadership could lead to weaker outcomes.	The present study examines team leadership as a democratic leadership dimension influencing cultural diversity.
	Cherian et al. (2020)	Mixed-methods study at Abu Dhabi University using survey and interview data.	Cultural diversity positively affected creativity and problem-solving, $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.29$. Qualitative findings showed communication barriers and interpersonal conflicts.	The single-university context limited wider generalization.	The present study uses a multi-university Southwest Nigerian public university context.
	Levitt (2016)	Literature review and case-based analysis of cross-cultural teamwork in higher education.	The study identified ethnocentrism, prejudice, communication barriers, and weak intercultural training as challenges in diverse teams.	The study was mainly theoretical and lacked statistical testing.	The present study empirically examines how team leadership influences cultural diversity.
	Iskhakova and Ott (2020)	Longitudinal quantitative study of 23 culturally diverse	Cultural diversity predicted team-level cultural intelligence, $\beta = 0.35$, $p <$	The small number of teams limited generalizability.	The present study uses a larger student sample and examines cultural

		student teams; analyzed with structural equation modeling.	.01. Team cultural intelligence predicted academic performance, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.44$.		diversity in public universities.
	Fischer and Stenner (2026)	Three-phase mixed-methods study using Q methodology with 123 participants, including 96 undergraduate students and 27 employer representatives.	The study identified seven viewpoints on belonging and success, showing that students' sense of belonging does not follow simple demographic categories.	It was conducted in a United Kingdom management education context.	The present study examines belonging and participation within a Nigerian cultural diversity context.
	Arató (2025)	Conceptual framework study on plurilingual cooperative learning in higher education.	The study proposed cooperative learning structures for equitable success in multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms.	The framework was not empirically tested in African or Nigerian universities.	The present study empirically examines team leadership and cultural diversity in Nigerian public universities.
	Redd and Brauer (2026)	University climate survey of 3,370 students across three colleges in the Wisconsin Alliance for Minority Participation.	Higher peer inclusion was associated with stronger belonging, especially among students of color. Belonging also affected confidence, health, and university evaluation.	The study focused on race-based diversity in a United States context.	The present study examines ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian public universities.
Impact of motivational leadership on cultural diversity	Holgate (2020)	Mixed-methods study combining intercultural competence measures, student engagement	Instructors' intercultural orientation predicted culturally responsive teaching, $\beta = 0.36$, $p < .01$. Culturally responsive	The study focused mainly on classroom practice and intercultural orientation.	The present study examines motivational leadership as a leadership dimension

		data, and qualitative classroom reflections.	teaching predicted positive academic and intercultural outcomes, $\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.39$.		affecting cultural diversity.
Moderating Role of Social Justice	Hynds and McDonald (2010)	Qualitative interviews and structured surveys in a school-university professional development programme.	Intrinsic motivation predicted sustained engagement in culturally responsive teaching, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < .01$, while extrinsic motivation had a weaker but significant effect, $\beta = 0.21$, $p < .05$.	The study was limited to a specific professional development programme.	The present study examines motivational leadership at the institutional level in public universities.
	Kelder et al. (2025)	Cross-cultural structural equation model using data from 533 university employees across seven countries.	Authentic leader behaviour showed strong reliability, composite reliability = .94, KMO = .94, and explained 67.14% of variance. The digital productivity scale had $\alpha = .91$ and explained 78.64% of variance.	The outcome was digital productivity rather than cultural diversity.	The present study applies motivational leadership to cultural diversity outcomes.
	Zhu et al. (2025)	Quantitative study of 410 academic staff from 22 Chinese universities; analyzed with SEM and bootstrapping.	Transformational leadership influenced internationalization directly, $\beta = .517$, $p < .001$, and indirectly through adhocracy culture, $\beta = .169$, $p < .001$. The model explained 56% of the variance in internationalization.	The study focused on internationalization, not cultural diversity in African universities.	The present study examines motivational leadership and cultural diversity in Nigerian public universities.

	Hermans et al. (2025)	Quasi-experimental design study on educator competence for inclusive higher education.	The study proposed measures for educators' attitudes, self-efficacy, and inclusive didactics, including SACIE-R, TEIP, and an adapted Teaching Practices Questionnaire.	It was a design study and did not report post-intervention effect sizes.	The present study provides empirical testing of leadership and cultural diversity outcomes.
Influence of shared leadership on cultural diversity	Ramthun and Matkin (2012)	Conceptual study reviewing literature on shared leadership and intercultural competence.	The study proposed that intercultural competence strengthens the relationship between shared leadership and team effectiveness.	The model lacked empirical validation.	The present study empirically tests shared leadership in relation to cultural diversity.
	Kruse et al. (2018)	Literature review on shared leadership and cultural competency in higher education.	The review highlighted shared leadership as useful for fostering inclusive academic environments and cultural competency.	The study relied mainly on review-based evidence.	The present study tests the shared leadership-diversity relationship using field data.
	Al Muqarshi et al. (2020)	Qualitative case study using interviews, observations, and document analysis in an Omani university department.	Shared leadership promoted collaborative engagement and collective identity, but was constrained by centralized and hierarchical leadership.	The study focused on one department.	The present study examines shared leadership across selected public universities.
	Lauring and Selmer (2012)	Survey of 489 academics in Danish universities; analyzed with regression.	Cultural and linguistic diversity positively influenced knowledge sharing, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.34$.	The European context limits transferability to African universities.	The present study examines the relationship within Southwest Nigerian public universities.
	Kezar et al. (2025)	Qualitative and developmental study on	The study showed that shared leadership supports	The study was conducted in the	The present study tests shared leadership

		shared leadership in professional learning communities for student success.	cross-functional collaboration, collective problem-solving, and institutional redesign for at-promise students.	United States and did not report regression values.	quantitatively and qualitatively in a Nigerian university context.
	Harper et al. (2025)	Modified Delphi study refining shared equity leadership in higher education.	The study showed that equity work is stronger when responsibility is distributed across many institutional actors rather than placed only on diversity offices.	The legal and policy context differs from Nigerian higher education.	The present study links shared leadership with cultural diversity in Nigerian public universities.
	Ukeje et al. (2025)	Conceptual and policy-oriented study proposing stakeholder-driven co-governance in Nigerian higher education.	The model emphasized shared responsibility among administrators, policymakers, ICT personnel, students, and other stakeholders.	The study focused on digital transformation rather than cultural diversity.	The present study applies shared leadership to cultural diversity outcomes.
	Bergsteedt and du Plessis (2025)	Conceptual and analytical study on transformation, strategic thinking, and accountable governance in South African public universities.	The study emphasized ethical leadership, stakeholder inclusivity, participatory governance, and institutional transformation.	It focused on system-level governance, not student-level cultural diversity.	The present study examines shared leadership and cultural diversity at institutional and student levels.
Moderating role of social justice	Harun and Ahmad (2022)	Survey of 272 administrators in Malaysian private universities; analyzed with structural equation modeling.	Distributive justice influenced retention, $\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$. Social justice strengthened the relationship between HRM practices and	The study focused only on administrators.	The present study examines social justice moderation among students and educational leaders.

			employee commitment, $\beta = 0.24$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.48$.		
	Karataş and Han (2022)	Structural equation modeling using data from 404 teacher candidates.	Cultural intelligence predicted professional attitude, $\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$. Social justice mediated the relationship, indirect effect $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.42$.	The study examined mediation among pre-service teachers, not moderation in university leadership.	The present study tests social justice as a moderator in a democratic leadership-cultural diversity model.
	Owusu-Agyeman (2021)	Hierarchical regression analysis using data from 2,026 students in a South African university.	Cultural diversity predicted sense of belonging, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .001$. Social justice strengthened this relationship, $\beta = 0.22$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.37$.	Single-university context limited generalization.	The present study extends moderation testing to selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.
	Denisova (2020)	Interdisciplinary study combining surveys and interviews across universities.	Institutional commitment to social justice predicted lower interethnic tension, $\beta = -0.33$, $p < .01$, and higher inclusivity, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.31$.	Cross-sectional design limited causal claims.	The present study examines social justice within a leadership-diversity model.
	Khan et al. (2023)	Higher education study examining organizational justice as a mediating factor between leadership styles and academics' performance.	The study showed that organizational justice helps explain how leadership affects university-level outcomes.	It focused on academics' performance rather than cultural diversity.	The present study applies justice as a moderator in relation to cultural diversity.
	Główczewski and Burdziej (2023)	Two survey studies of university students in Poland; Study 1 had 315	Fair treatment predicted perceived legitimacy of university authorities.	The study did not examine democratic leadership or	The present study connects fairness,

		students and Study 2 had 751 students.	Academic identification mediated the relationship between fairness, student engagement, and burnout.	cultural diversity directly.	leadership, and cultural diversity in one model.
	Assefa et al. (2026)	Qualitative case study of 48 faculty members from four Ethiopian public universities, using eight interviews and four focus groups.	Thematic findings showed distributive, procedural, and interactional justice problems in resource allocation, transparency, participation, and interpersonal treatment.	The study focused on faculty perceptions rather than student cultural diversity outcomes.	The present study examines social justice in relation to student cultural diversity and leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Leadership Theory provides the main theoretical basis for the independent variable of this study. The theory explains leadership as a process in which group members are involved in decision-making, consultation, collaboration, and shared responsibility. Democratic leadership is characterized by leaders who seek input, feedback, and cooperation from their members in order to build consensus, ownership, and empowerment among followers (Qing & JinHua, 2023). The theory is commonly linked to Kurt Lewin's early work on group dynamics and leadership styles. Lewin distinguished democratic leadership from autocratic and laissez-faire leadership and emphasized the importance of shared decision-making in creating a positive group environment (Wang et al., 2020). He argued that leaders should create a democratic and inclusive atmosphere where the input of all members is valued, since involving followers in decisions can improve their understanding, commitment, and acceptance of the chosen course of action (Klakayan, 2022).

Rensis Likert's work on leadership styles also supports Democratic Leadership Theory. Likert emphasized that leaders who engage employees in decision-making are more likely to have satisfied and productive teams. Similarly, the Vroom-Yetton-Jago Decision Model explains that leaders should decide when and how to involve subordinates in decision-making, depending on the nature of the situation, the quality of information required, and the level of acceptance needed from followers (Cai et al., 2020). These views

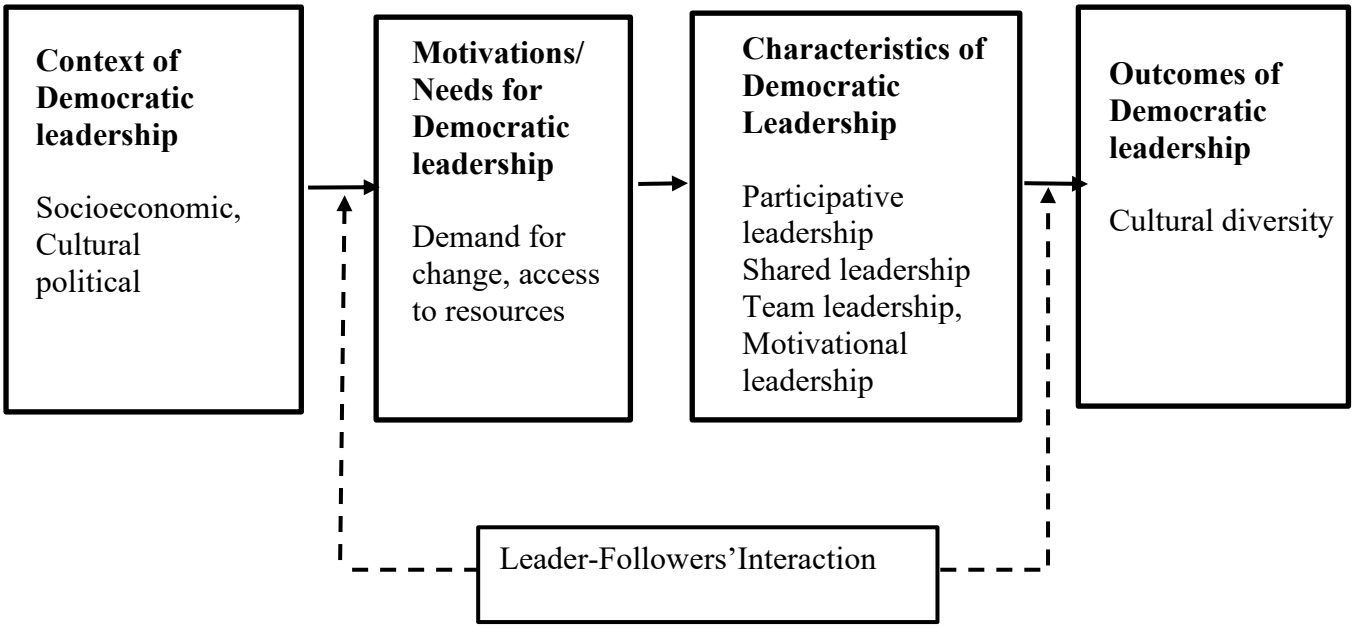
show that democratic leadership is not an uncontrolled form of leadership. Rather, it is a guided process in which the leader creates room for participation while still helping the group reach useful and responsible decisions.

Gastil's (1994) Theory of Democratic Leadership gives a more direct explanation of how democratic leadership functions in groups and organizations. Gastil identified three major roles of democratic leaders: distributing responsibility, empowering members, and aiding the group's decision-making process. Distributing responsibility means that leadership duties and organizational responsibilities are not kept in the hands of one person or a small group. Empowering members means that followers are supported to take initiative, build confidence, and contribute meaningfully to group goals. Aiding decision-making means that the leader facilitates discussion, encourages participation, reduces domination by powerful voices, and helps the group reach fair and reasonable decisions. These tenets are important to this study because universities are complex institutions where students, lecturers, administrators, and educational leaders all have roles to play in shaping institutional life.

Choi (2007) further developed this thinking by proposing a democratic leadership framework which presents democratic leadership as an interrelationship of context, motivation, leadership characteristics, leader-follower interaction, and organizational outcomes. Choi's framework is based on Gastil's (1994) Theory of Democratic Leadership, but it extends it by showing that democratic leadership does not operate in isolation. It is

shaped by political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts, as well as by the motivation for change within the organization. Democratic leadership involves sharing decision-making with members, encouraging high levels of participation, building teamwork, and empowering group members to contribute meaningfully to organizational outcomes (Wang et al., 2020). In Choi's framework, democratic leadership within small groups and organizations is expressed through group participation and member relations, with emphasis on distributing responsibility, empowering group members, and aiding group decision-making. The democratic leadership framework is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Democratic Leadership Framework



Source: Adapted from Choi's (2007) Framework of DLDM

From Figure 1, the elements of democratic leadership are connected through leader-follower interaction. Context, which may be political, cultural, social, or economic, often creates a demand for democracy or change within an organization. Such demands may include fair treatment, freedom of expression, access to resources, protection from discrimination, and participation in decisions that affect members of the organization (Kalpokaite & Radivojevic, 2020). This demand for change becomes the motivation for democratic leadership practices such as participation, teamwork, shared responsibility, empowerment, and accommodation of different views (Choi, 2007). In the university context, democratic leadership gives room for students and staff from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and social backgrounds to interact, express their views, and participate in decisions that affect them (Northouse, 2019).

Choi's framework is useful for this study because it places democratic leadership within the realities of institutional context. Southwest Nigerian public universities operate within a multicultural environment where issues of ethnicity, religion, state of origin, language, representation, fairness, and access to resources can shape how leadership is experienced. The framework therefore helps to explain why democratic leadership must be studied not only as a leadership style, but also as a process shaped by social and cultural conditions. Wang et al. (2020), for example, applied Choi's framework in the context of school leadership during COVID-19 and showed how ethical and participative leadership could foster justice and trust in crisis situations. Similarly, Javed et al. (2019) used Choi's Democratic Leadership Theory to explain how leader inclusiveness can support employee creativity through psychological empowerment. These studies show that democratic leadership practices such as participation, empowerment, and inclusion can lead to positive institutional outcomes through the interaction between leaders and followers.

One of the central tenets of Democratic Leadership Theory is inclusiveness. Inclusiveness involves bringing members into the decision-making process so that a broader range of perspectives can shape institutional decisions (Klakayan, 2022). This is reflected in participative leadership, where leaders seek stakeholders' involvement, listen to followers' input, and make decisions through consultation. In a university setting, participative leadership may be seen when students, academic staff, faculty committees, and administrative units are consulted on policies, welfare issues, curriculum matters, and institutional reforms. Empirical studies show that participative leadership enhances employees' voice behaviour, organizational commitment, and collaboration because members feel empowered to contribute ideas and influence decisions (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022; Toufighi et al., 2024). Recent higher education research also shows that

participative leadership can strengthen institutional performance and commitment when it is supported by a shared organizational culture (Riza et al., 2025).

Another important tenet of Democratic Leadership Theory is shared responsibility. Democratic leaders do not only invite opinions; they also create structures that allow members to share in authority, accountability, and ownership. This is reflected in shared leadership, where leadership influence is distributed across members rather than concentrated in one formal leader. In universities, shared leadership may operate through departments, faculty boards, committees, student representative bodies, and administrative teams. It reflects the democratic ideals of transparency and collective responsibility. Recent studies on shared equity leadership show that equity work becomes stronger when responsibility is distributed across institutional actors rather than placed only on one office or individual (Harper et al., 2025). In the Nigerian higher education context, stakeholder-driven co-governance has also been proposed as a way of strengthening institutional reform through shared authority and wider participation (Ukeje et al., 2026).

Collaboration is also central to Democratic Leadership Theory. Democratic leaders encourage teamwork, cooperation, and collective problem-solving, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for outcomes (Chang et al., 2020). Team members are empowered to contribute their skills and take responsibility for group success. This is reflected in team leadership, which focuses on team cohesion, collaborative problem-solving, and conflict management. Democratic leaders emphasize collaboration and cooperation because democratic governance requires the inclusion of diverse perspectives in decision-making and problem-solving (Mahinda et al., 2022; Mukua-Maru et al., 2023). In culturally diverse universities, team leadership is important because differences in ethnicity, religion, language, gender, and social background may influence how students and staff relate with one another. Recent studies on student belonging and

peer inclusion in higher education show that inclusion is strengthened when people experience respectful group interaction, acceptance, and support within learning communities (Fischer & Stenner, 2026; Redd & Brauer, 2026).

Empowerment and motivation are also major elements of democratic leadership. Democratic leaders do not only distribute tasks; they also encourage members to participate actively and take ownership of institutional goals. Motivational leadership is therefore reflected in recognition and support, encouragement, and commitment building. Maru et al. (2023) explain that motivational leadership helps to empower individuals and encourage active engagement, thereby promoting ownership and commitment to democratic processes. This is important in universities because students and staff may withdraw from participation when they feel ignored, undervalued, or excluded. Democratic leaders who recognize effort, encourage contribution, and support members' development can strengthen participation and belonging. Recent studies in higher education also show that supportive leadership behaviours can improve capability, commitment, and institutional engagement (Kelder et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2025).

Democratic Leadership Theory also aligns with social justice because it promotes fairness, equal participation, and inclusion. When leaders engage in democratic decision-making, they consider the diverse needs and perspectives of members, which may lead to more equitable outcomes. This reduces the likelihood of discrimination or favouritism and encourages a stronger sense of fairness within the institution (Wang et al., 2020). Democratic leadership also accommodates cultural diversity by valuing and respecting the experiences of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Leaders who embrace cultural diversity create inclusive environments where different voices are heard, which can produce more innovative and balanced decisions (Klakayan, 2022). In this study, cultural diversity is identified as an outcome of democratic leadership in leader-follower

interaction, while social justice is treated as a condition that may strengthen or weaken this relationship.

Democratic leadership therefore explains the relationship between leadership practices, social justice, and cultural diversity within organizations. Leaders who encourage participation in decision-making create an environment where individuals feel respected, valued, and fairly treated. This inclusive leadership approach promotes transparency, equality, and collaborative problem-solving, which can strengthen social justice practices within organizations. When students and staff from different cultural backgrounds are given opportunities to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, universities are more likely to improve fairness, inclusion, and the management of cultural diversity (Wang et al., 2020; Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). Democratic Leadership Theory therefore provides the theoretical basis for examining how participative, shared, team, and motivational leadership influence cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.

Social Justice Leadership Theory

Rawls (1971, 1992) is attributed as the proponent of social justice theory from which other theories of social justice are developed. Rawls postulated that Justice is fairness which is embodied in the fair distribution of primary social goods. This theory sees social justice as primarily distributive in nature. Two principles that informed Rawls theory of distributive justice are; each individual should have equal right to basic liberties without limiting or disrupting the access of other people to such liberties (Makateng, 2022). Secondly, social and economic inequalities can only be fair if they are ordered in such a way as to give advantage to the least privileged and attached to positions obtainable by everyone (Hatzichristou et al., 2019). The concept of primary goods as indicated by Rawls refer to the basic rights, freedoms, resources, opportunities and wellbeing that all

individuals need to live normally as member of a society (Erima & Maringe, 2021). Gerwitz (1998) and later, Fraser (2008) modified Rawls theory of distributive justice to achieve a more robust theory of justice which proposes that social justice cannot be administered through the distribution of resources alone because injustice goes beyond unequal access to resources to include powerlessness, violence and exploitation. This is why recognition is another principle of justice that must balance distribution of goods and this deal with treating everyone with respect and dignity irrespective of status and background. Hatzichristou et al (2019) recently proposed a theoretical framework that adapted the works of (Gerwitz, 1998; Rawls, 1972) to define social justice to include equity, inclusion, diversity and access to resources as indicators of social justice in the educational context.

Social Justice Leadership Theory explains the moderating role of social justice in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. Leaders who adopt democratic leadership practices may promote fairness, inclusiveness, and equal access to organizational opportunities. However, the extent to which these practices improve cultural diversity depends on whether the institutional environment supports equity, recognition, participation, and fair resource distribution. When employees or students perceive fairness in decision-making and resource allocation, democratic leadership is more likely to produce feelings of respect, inclusion, and belonging within the organization. Recent research emphasizes that organizational justice and inclusive leadership practices significantly influence perceptions of equality, participation, and cultural inclusiveness in organizations (Hatzichristou et al., 2019; Makateng, 2022). In this sense, social justice does not stand as an outcome of democratic leadership but as a condition that can strengthen or weaken its effect on cultural diversity. Therefore, this theory explains why democratic leadership may have a stronger influence on cultural diversity when fairness, access, recognition, and inclusion are present in the organizational environment.

Social Identity Theory

The main proponents of the Social Identity Theory (SIT) are Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979 as cited in Reznik, 2019). They developed the theory in the 1970s through a series of experiments and publications that aimed to understand the psychological processes underlying intergroup behavior and relations. Turner contributed to refining the theoretical framework and expanding its empirical scope through additional studies and publications. Tajfel, and Turner elucidated key concepts such as social categorization, social identification, and social comparison, which form the core components of Social Identity Theory (Reznik, 2019). Social Identity Theory provides a theoretical framework for investigating the impact of cultural diversity on social dynamics, including intergroup relations, identity formation, and collective behavior (Verkuyten, 2021). In this study, the social identity theory underpins cultural diversity as a dependent variable which can be influenced by leadership style and social justice

Social Identity Theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, or organizational affiliation (Peterson & Stewart, 2020). These group memberships form part of individuals' self-concept and influence their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Davis et al., 2019). According to Bochatay et al. (2019), people strive to maintain a positive social identity by enhancing the status of their in-group (the group they belong to) relative to out-groups (groups they do not belong to) through processes of social comparison. The key tenets of social identity theory include social categorization, social identification and social comparison. Individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on perceived similarities or differences (Peterson & Stewart, 2020). This categorization process is fundamental to the formation of social identity and shapes how individuals perceive themselves and others within their social environment. Once individuals

categorize themselves as members of a particular group, they tend to identify with that group and adopt its norms, values, and behaviors. This process of social identification strengthens the sense of belonging and solidarity within the group (Verkuyten, 2021). Individuals engage in social comparison processes to evaluate the relative status of their in-group compared to out-groups. They strive to enhance the positive distinctiveness of their in-group by emphasizing its superiority or uniqueness relative to other groups (Peterson & Stewart, 2020).

Social Identity Theory explains how cultural diversity within organizations can be influenced by leadership practices and social justice principles. According to the theory, individuals derive part of their identity from the social groups to which they belong, such as cultural, ethnic, or professional groups. In diverse organizational environments, these group identities may influence employees' perceptions, attitudes, and interactions with others. Democratic leadership practices that emphasize fairness, inclusion, and equal participation can reduce negative intergroup comparisons and foster a shared organizational identity. Research indicates that leadership practices that promote inclusiveness and equal participation help reduce intergroup tensions and improve cooperation among culturally diverse employees (Verkuyten, 2021; Buengeler et al., 2025). By supporting fairness and recognition, social justice practices strengthen employees' sense of belonging and reduce social divisions between groups. Therefore, Social Identity Theory helps explain how democratic leadership and social justice practices can influence cultural diversity by fostering inclusive relationships within organizations.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a tool for representing and explaining the variables and the relationship that research wants to establish between such variables (Adom et al., 2018). It is formulated in line with the research problem, objective, theories and variables

identified for the study and help to depict the assumptions and expectations and goals of the study (Shikalepo, 2020). Based on the conceptual, theoretical and empirical gaps identified in the study, the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2 explains relationship between the main variable x (independent variable) of the study, moderating variable (z) and y (dependent variable). That is, the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in educational institution of leaders. The construct democratic leadership is the independent variable – indicated by employees' participation, teamwork, collaborative decision-making and followers' motivation, the moderating variable, cultural diversity is measured by cultural dimensions like power gap, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarianism, and humane orientation and the dependent variable is social justice. The conceptual framework is based on Choi (2007) Democratic Leadership in Democratic movement theory democratic leadership theory. The proposed model links characteristics of democratic leadership from Choi's (2007) DLDM framework such as participation, collaborative decision making, teamwork and skill sharing with cultural diversity in educational institutions and the impact of social justice as shown in the Figure 2 below:

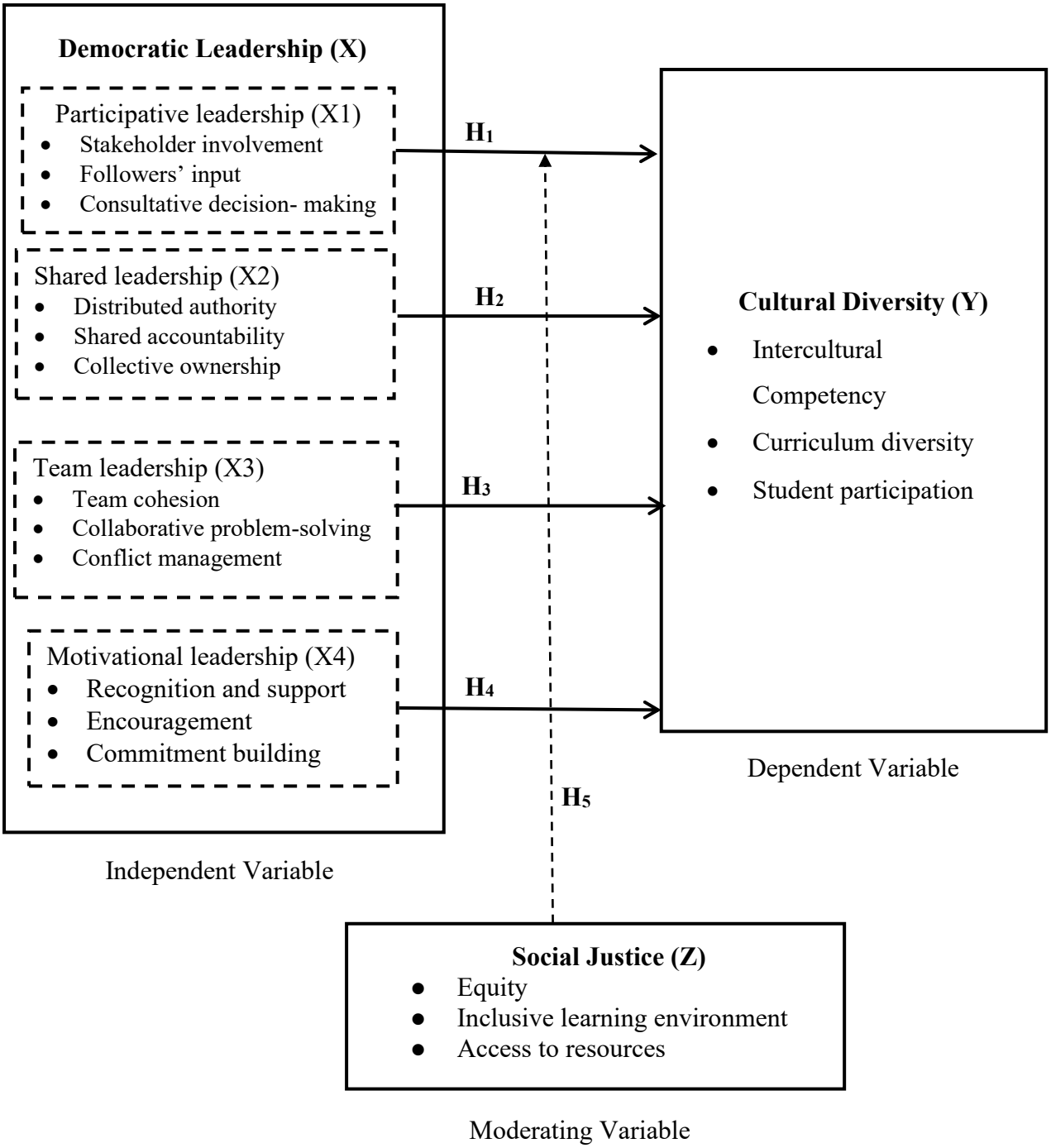


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

Participative Leadership (X1)

Participative leadership is widely recognized as a central dimension of democratic leadership because it emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders in institutional decision-making. Recent studies describe participative leadership as a leadership approach

in which leaders create structures that allow followers to contribute ideas, influence decisions, and share responsibility for outcomes (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2022; Riza et al., 2025). This approach moves leadership away from unilateral control and toward consultative decision-making that reflects democratic values. When members of an institution are invited to contribute to matters that affect them, they are more likely to perceive leadership as open, fair, and respectful (Bhatti et al., 2021; Haryanto et al., 2022). In higher education, this is important because universities depend on students, lecturers, administrators, and other stakeholders whose voices can improve institutional decisions.

In this framework, participative leadership is measured through stakeholder involvement, followers' input, and consultative decision-making. Stakeholder involvement refers to the inclusion of students, staff, faculty members, administrators, and other relevant groups in institutional processes. Followers' input reflects the extent to which leaders listen to the views, concerns, and suggestions of those who are affected by decisions. Consultative decision-making shows whether leaders seek feedback and consider different positions before final decisions are made. These indicators are suitable because democratic leadership in a university cannot be assessed only by the presence of formal leadership structures. It should also be assessed by the extent to which people from different groups are allowed to contribute to university life.

Participative leadership is important in culturally diverse universities because students and staff come from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Where leadership is closed, some groups may feel ignored or marginalized. However, when consultation is encouraged, diverse perspectives can be brought into discussions on curriculum, student welfare, policy, representation, and campus life. Recent higher education studies show that participative leadership can strengthen organizational

commitment, innovation, and institutional performance by giving members a sense of involvement in the institution (Riza et al., 2025). In public institutions with diverse workforces, participative leadership has also been linked with stronger inclusion climate and greater recognition of employees' voices (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2022).

In the context of Southwest Nigerian public universities, participative leadership can reduce feelings of exclusion by creating formal spaces for dialogue and representation. It may also support intercultural competence because students and staff from different cultural groups learn to engage one another through open institutional processes. By allowing stakeholders' voices to influence decisions, participative leadership can help universities design more inclusive curricula, improve student participation, and respond more fairly to the needs of diverse groups. For this reason, participative leadership is expected to influence cultural diversity through the extent to which stakeholders are involved, followers' input is respected, and decision-making is consultative.

Shared Leadership (X2)

Shared leadership refers to a leadership approach in which authority, accountability, and ownership are distributed across members of an institution rather than concentrated in one formal leader. It differs from participative leadership because participative leadership may still depend on a central leader who invites input, while shared leadership allows leadership influence to move across people, units, and levels according to expertise, responsibility, and institutional need (Nicolaides & McCallum, 2021; Ukeje et al., 2025). In universities, this is useful because academic and administrative work often takes place through departments, faculties, committees, student bodies, research groups, and management units. No single leader can fully address the range of academic, cultural, and social issues that occur in such a setting.

In this framework, shared leadership is measured through distributed authority, shared accountability, and collective ownership. Distributed authority means that decision-making power is not restricted to top management alone. It gives room for different institutional actors to exercise influence where they have knowledge, responsibility, or direct experience. Shared accountability means that members do not see institutional success or failure as the duty of one leader alone. Rather, they accept responsibility for collective outcomes. Collective ownership refers to the extent to which students, staff, and leaders see themselves as part of institutional goals, policies, and reforms. These indicators are important because shared leadership cannot be measured only by participation in meetings. It must also be seen in how authority, accountability, and ownership are spread across the university community.

Shared leadership is especially relevant to cultural diversity because inclusive universities require more than symbolic consultation. They require different groups to have visible and meaningful roles in shaping institutional life. When authority is distributed, students and staff from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to participate in policy formation, curriculum discussion, student affairs, diversity-related initiatives, and conflict resolution. Recent studies on shared equity leadership show that equity work becomes stronger when it is distributed across many institutional actors rather than left to one office, one committee, or one leader (Harper et al., 2025). This is important because cultural diversity cannot be sustained if only a few people are expected to carry the burden of inclusion.

In the Nigerian higher education context, shared leadership is also useful because many university decisions are influenced by hierarchy, bureaucracy, politics, and resource limitations. Stakeholder-driven co-governance has been proposed as one way of moving

from policy intention to strategic action in Nigerian higher education (Ukeje et al., 2025). This suggests that shared leadership can support institutional reform when students, academic staff, administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders take part in governance. In this framework, shared leadership is expected to influence cultural diversity by strengthening representation, shared responsibility, and collective ownership of inclusion. It also supports social justice because authority and accountability are not left only to dominant groups or formal office holders.

Team Leadership (X3)

Team leadership refers to the ability of leaders to build cohesion, encourage collaboration, and manage conflict among members working toward shared goals. In democratic leadership, team leadership is not limited to assigning roles or directing tasks. It involves creating relationships that allow members to work together, solve problems, respect differences, and pursue common institutional purposes. This is important in culturally diverse universities because diversity can enrich learning, creativity, and institutional decision-making, but it can also produce misunderstanding where communication and group interaction are poorly managed (Cherian et al., 2020; Iskhakova & Ott, 2020).

In this framework, team leadership is measured through team cohesion, collaborative problem-solving, and conflict management. Team cohesion refers to the level of unity, trust, and cooperation among members of a group. Collaborative problem-solving refers to the ability of members to work together in identifying problems, discussing alternatives, and finding workable solutions. Conflict management refers to how leaders help members handle disagreement without exclusion, hostility, or division. These indicators are suitable for this study because universities are both academic and social

institutions. Students and staff interact through classrooms, committees, associations, departments, religious groups, cultural groups, and administrative processes. Where team leadership is weak, these interactions can become divided along cultural, ethnic, religious, or status lines.

Team leadership is expected to influence cultural diversity by strengthening cooperation across cultural boundaries. When leaders build cohesive teams, students and staff may become more willing to work with people from different backgrounds. When collaborative problem-solving is encouraged, diverse perspectives can be used to improve institutional decisions. When conflict is managed fairly, cultural and religious tensions can be reduced before they weaken belonging and participation. Studies on culturally diverse teams show that diversity can improve creativity, problem-solving, cultural intelligence, and performance when teams are well-structured and supported by effective leadership (Cherian et al., 2020; Iskhakova & Ott, 2020; Urionabarrenetxea et al., 2021).

Recent higher education studies also show that belonging and inclusion are strengthened when students experience acceptance, peer support, and respectful group interaction (Fischer & Stenner, 2026; Redd & Brauer, 2026). This supports the view that team leadership is not only useful for staff productivity, but also for student participation and social cohesion. In Southwest Nigerian public universities, where students and staff may differ by ethnicity, language, religion, and state of origin, team leadership can help reduce in-group and out-group divisions. It can also create a learning environment where students from different backgrounds participate in academic, social, and leadership activities. Therefore, team leadership is expected to improve cultural diversity by promoting cohesion, joint problem-solving, and fair management of conflict among diverse groups.

Motivational Leadership (X4)

Motivational leadership refers to the ability of leaders to recognize, support, encourage, and build the commitment of followers toward shared institutional goals. Within democratic leadership, motivation is not based on fear, coercion, or blind obedience. It is based on support, recognition, encouragement, and the belief that members have something valuable to contribute (Chukwusa, 2019; Deci & Ryan, 2020). This makes motivational leadership important in universities because students and staff may withdraw from institutional life when they feel ignored, unsupported, or undervalued. In a culturally diverse institution, motivation is also tied to whether people feel that their identity, effort, and contribution are respected.

In this framework, motivational leadership is measured through recognition and support, encouragement, and commitment building. Recognition and support refer to the leader's effort to acknowledge members' contributions and provide the assistance needed for them to participate meaningfully. Encouragement refers to the leader's ability to inspire confidence, reduce fear, and help members believe that their participation matters. Commitment building refers to the process through which leaders help students and staff identify with institutional goals and remain engaged in university activities. These indicators are suitable because motivation is not only an internal feeling. It is shaped by the way leadership communicates value, provides support, and creates conditions for meaningful participation.

Motivational leadership can influence cultural diversity by increasing confidence, belonging, and active engagement among students and staff from different cultural groups. When leaders recognize and support diverse members, those members are more likely to participate in academic, social, and leadership activities. When encouragement is present,

students from minority or underrepresented groups may become more willing to engage in intercultural dialogue, student leadership, and curriculum-related activities. Recent studies on inclusive higher education show that educators and institutional actors need motivation, competence, and self-efficacy to support inclusive learning environments (Hermans et al., 2025; Mistry, 2026). Leadership research also shows that supportive and inspirational leadership behaviours can strengthen capability, institutional commitment, and participation in higher education settings (Kelder et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2025).

In Southwest Nigerian public universities, motivational leadership is important because students and staff may come from different cultural, religious, linguistic, and social backgrounds. Some groups may participate less if they feel that the institution does not recognize their identity or contribution. Recognition and encouragement can reduce this withdrawal by making students and staff feel seen and valued. Commitment building can also help diverse groups identify with the university beyond their separate cultural identities. In this framework, motivational leadership is therefore expected to support cultural diversity by helping students and staff move from passive presence to active participation. It strengthens the human side of democratic leadership by linking inclusion with recognition, encouragement, and commitment.

Social Justice (Z)

Social justice is the moderating variable in the conceptual framework. It refers to the fairness, inclusion, and access conditions that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. In higher education, social justice includes fair distribution of opportunities, recognition of different identities, inclusive learning conditions, and access to institutional resources (Makateng, 2022; Mincu & Mills, 2026). It is important in this study because democratic leadership may not produce

strong cultural diversity outcomes if the university environment is unfair, exclusionary, or unequal. A leader may invite participation, but if only some groups are listened to, the effect of that participation will be weak.

In this framework, social justice is measured through equity, inclusive learning environment, and access to resources. Equity refers to fair treatment and fair opportunity for students and staff, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, language, socio-economic status, or cultural background. Inclusive learning environment refers to academic and social conditions where different groups feel respected, supported, and able to participate. Access to resources refers to the fair availability of learning materials, support systems, facilities, leadership opportunities, and other institutional benefits. These indicators are suitable because social justice in universities is experienced through both formal policies and everyday practices.

The moderating role of social justice means that democratic leadership may have a stronger influence on cultural diversity when equity, inclusion, and access to resources are present. Participative leadership may be more effective where students and staff believe that their voices will be treated fairly. Shared leadership may produce better diversity outcomes where authority and opportunities are not reserved for dominant groups. Team leadership may reduce cultural tension where conflict is managed fairly. Motivational leadership may strengthen belonging where recognition and support are extended to all groups. Recent higher education literature shows that leadership for equity, diversity, and inclusion requires institutional systems, shared responsibility, and deliberate practices that go beyond policy statements (Bhowmik et al., 2026; Harper et al., 2025).

Restorative justice studies in higher education also show that fairness requires leadership support, dialogue, institutional commitment, and structures for resolving

conflict (Bussu & Karp, 2026). This is relevant because culturally diverse universities may experience tension, discrimination, or exclusion if differences are not managed through fair processes. In Southwest Nigerian public universities, social justice may determine whether democratic leadership practices produce real inclusion or remain formal procedures. In this framework, social justice is therefore not treated as an outcome of democratic leadership. It is treated as a condition that can strengthen or weaken the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity.

Cultural Diversity (Y)

Cultural diversity is the dependent variable in the framework. It refers to the presence, recognition, and meaningful participation of people from different cultural backgrounds within the university. Cultural diversity in higher education includes differences in ethnicity, religion, language, gender, social background, nationality, ability, worldview, and cultural practice (Cherian et al., 2020; Ward et al., 2025). In this study, cultural diversity is not treated only as the physical presence of different groups. It is measured by how students and staff interact, learn, participate, and feel represented within the university.

In this framework, cultural diversity is measured through intercultural competence, curriculum diversity, and student participation. Intercultural competence refers to the ability of students and staff to communicate, relate, and work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Curriculum diversity refers to the extent to which teaching content, learning materials, examples, and classroom practices reflect different cultural perspectives. Student participation refers to the active involvement of students from diverse backgrounds in academic, social, and leadership activities. These indicators are useful

because they move the idea of cultural diversity beyond numbers. They show whether diversity is reflected in learning, interaction, curriculum, and student life.

Recent higher education studies show that diversity becomes meaningful when multicultural norms, inclusive learning environments, and student engagement support belonging and respect across differences (Ramdas et al., 2025; Ward et al., 2025). Studies on inclusive university practices also show that students need supportive resources, inclusive learning materials, and a sense of belonging to feel valued within the learning community (Mistry, 2026). In the Nigerian context, cultural diversity is shaped by ethnicity, religion, language, state of origin, gender, and socio-economic background. This means that universities must do more than admit diverse students. They must also create conditions where those students can interact across differences, see their identities reflected in learning, and participate meaningfully in university life.

The framework assumes that democratic leadership can improve cultural diversity by creating opportunities for participation, shared authority, teamwork, and motivation. It also assumes that this influence may become stronger when social justice conditions are present. In Southwest Nigerian public universities, cultural diversity should therefore be reflected in intercultural competence, curriculum representation, and the participation of different groups in academic and social life. The direct arrows from participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership to cultural diversity show the direct influence of each democratic leadership dimension. The dotted arrow from social justice shows its moderating role in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. Therefore, the conceptual framework provides the basis for testing both the direct influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity and the moderating role of social justice in that relationship.

Table 2: Operationalization of variables and hypotheses testing

Variables	Variable Type	Indicators	Operationalization	Hypothesized relation	Hypothesis test	Decision criteria
Democratic leadership	Independent	Participative Leadership	The extent to which leadership decisions involve input from group members.	H01: Participative Leadership does not have influence on Cultural diversity	Logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value ≤ 0.05
		Shared Leadership	The degree to which leadership is shared among multiple individuals.	H02: Shared leadership does not have influence on cultural diversity	Logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value ≤ 0.05
		Team Leadership	The level of collaboration and teamwork fostered by leadership.	H03: Team leadership does not have influence on cultural diversity	Logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value ≤ 0.05
		Motivational Leadership	The ability of leadership to inspire and motivate followers towards achieving goals.	H04: Motivational Leadership does not have influence on cultural diversity	Logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value ≤ 0.05
Cultural Diversity	Dependent	Intercultural competency	The ability of students and faculty to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. It includes cultural awareness, respect, and communication skills .	H01 – H04	Logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value ≤ 0.05
		Curriculum inclusivity	The integration of diverse cultural perspectives, histories, and values into			

			university courses. It ensures fair representation of different cultures in learning materials			
		Student participation	The active involvement of students from diverse backgrounds in academic and extracurricular activities. It reflects inclusivity and engagement within the university environment			
Social Justice	Moderating	Equity	The fairness in distribution of resources and opportunities within the organization.	H05: Social justice diversity does not moderate the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity	Multinomial logistic regression	Null hypothesis is rejected and at p-value $\leq$ 0.05
		Inclusive learning environment	The inclusivity and accessibility of the learning environment.			
		Access to resources	The availability and equitable distribution of resources across different groups.			

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on social justice, and cultural dimensions. The chapter has discussed the gaps existing in literature by exploring the origin of the democratic leadership style and dimensions of democratic leadership. The study expanded on the social justice issue in Nigerian public universities and how democratic leadership styles of educational leaders can be employed to solve these injustices. Furthermore, an empirical review of previous works on democratic and social justice leadership is considered as well as the conceptualization of the relationship that exists between both democratic leadership style and social justice leadership style. The next chapter provides the methodology for empirically testing the conceptualized relationships between the variables.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the research. The research philosophy, research design, target population, and sample size and methods used are discussed. Furthermore, the research instruments, and measures for assuring validity and reliability are provided. The data analysis techniques and explanation are given as well as the ethical considerations for the study.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs, assumptions, and values that guide how researchers approach the process of conducting research. It is an understanding of the nature of knowledge, reality and truth and how they relate to research which involves ontology, which deals with reality or existence and epistemology, which is how reality is known or the study of human existence (Bryman, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Pradeep, 2021). Ontological assumptions begin with the researcher's belief about the nature of reality; whether there is only one verifiable reality or reality exists in multiple forms influenced by social constructs (Sargut & Sargut, 2022). The ontological assumption chosen for research informs the approach to finding knowledge about the assumed reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Epistemology is concerned about the source of knowledge or evidence backing the belief and the methods that can be used to arrive at such evidence (Pradeep, 2021). Ontology and epistemology together help the researcher to develop research problem based on certain assumptions and the methods to be used in solving the problem and arriving at conclusions (Sargut & Sargut, 2022).

Some of the research philosophical worldviews or paradigms that can underpin social justice research include positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and pragmatism. This study is based on the pragmatism research philosophy. Pragmatism is characterized

by its emphasis on practical consequences, problem-solving, and the dynamic nature of knowledge (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). It provides a framework that prioritizes the application of ideas and theories to real-world situations, focusing on outcomes and the effectiveness of solutions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In terms of ontology, pragmatism does not necessarily commit to a fixed view of reality. Instead, it views reality as an ongoing and evolving process. The emphasis is on the practical consequences of concepts and actions, rather than dwelling on abstract or metaphysical notions of (Bryman, 2016). Pragmatist epistemology centres on the practical utility of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as a tool for addressing problems and making informed decisions. This approach encourages researchers to adopt methodologies that actively engage with the subject matter and gives working solutions to the challenges being resolved (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Pragmatism allows for methodological flexibility, encouraging researchers to use a variety of methods based on their practical effectiveness in addressing the research questions. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be employed, with an emphasis on what works best in a given context (Pradeep, 2021)

Pragmatism is well-suited for studying democratic leadership due to its emphasis on practical consequences. Democratic leadership, being inherently concerned with the outcomes of participatory decision-making, aligns with pragmatism's focus on the real-world impact of leadership styles (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Democratic leadership, with its emphasis on shared decision-making and teamwork, aligns with the pragmatic notion that the effectiveness of a leadership style is contingent upon its practical outcomes. The dynamic ontology of pragmatism, viewing reality as an ongoing process, is particularly relevant when studying cultural diversity, which is not a static concept but a continuously evolving aspect of societies (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Pragmatism allows researchers to explore the practical consequences of cultural diversity, acknowledging the fluid nature of

cultural interactions and the need for adaptable strategies to foster understanding, inclusion, and cooperation among diverse cultural groups (Mayumi & Ota 2022).

Research Design

In line with the pragmatic research philosophy, the convergent mixed methods design informed the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Bryman, 2016). The convergent mixed design involves the simultaneous collection and separate analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, followed by merging the results to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaire and qualitative data was collected simultaneously through interview. They were analyzed using different methods and tools after which the results were merged for better understanding (Mertens, 2017). The convergent mixed methods design was useful for this research because it enables comparison of the results between quantitative and qualitative research for corroboration and validation (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative aspect of the research helps to fulfill the need to be objective, independent, and not interfere with the study during the development, validation, and administration of a standardized survey to educational leaders to guarantee a deductive and bias-free process (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The qualitative aspect provided an opportunity to be directly involved, interact, and collaborate with participants/ education leaders through interviews to gather contextual knowledge while seeking subjective and varying viewpoints (Lune & Berg, 2017).

The convergent mixed method was effective for measuring democratic leadership as the effectiveness of the leadership style was measured quantitatively from the perspective of the university's students while educational leaders' experience, motivations and challenges in practicing democratic leadership were observed qualitatively. Similarly,

while quantitative method of data collection was useful for measuring perception and level of social justice and cultural diversity in the universities, qualitative data such as interviews aided the understanding of social justice from the experience and challenges faced by educational leaders in ensuring social justice and cultural diversity in their institutions.

Target Population

The target population was 6 public universities across the six states in the Southwest Nigeria and included: Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti as shown in Table 3 below. For the quantitative aspect of the study, the unit of analysis was university students while the unit of observation was final year students at the individual university level. The choice of final year students was predicated on the fact that they have been in the university system for a longer period of time and are understood to be closer to the educational leaders than students in other levels. Final year students at postgraduate (Masters and PhD) level were not included in the study because postgraduate courses in most Nigerian universities are usually by research, without taught classes and postgraduate students are not readily available in university premises. For the qualitative aspect, university leaders were the unit of analysis.

Each of the universities has up to 12 faculties. For example, University of Lagos has twelve faculties namely: Arts, Basic Medical Sciences, Business Administration, Clinical Sciences, Dental Sciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Pure Sciences, and social Sciences. There are sixty-two departments distributed across the 19 faculties in the institution (University of Lagos, 2026). Other public universities in Southwest Nigeria have similar composition of faculties and departments. Final year students have had several years of experience within the university environment. They have witnessed and participated in various leadership structures, social justice movements, and cultural diversity initiatives throughout their university tenure. In Southwest Nigerian

Universities, final year students with their extended exposure, can provide well-informed opinions and insights into the effectiveness and challenges of democratic leadership and social justice efforts within their institutions. Students typically exhibit advanced critical thinking and analytical skills, enabling them to provide more thoughtful responses to research inquiries by the time they are in the final year. Similarly, many final year students have engaged in coursework and projects that require critical analysis of social and cultural issues, making them more adept at understanding and articulating these concepts.

Table 3: Population Size

University	**Ownership**	**Population size (Final year students)**	**Percentage from total School population (%)**
University of Lagos	Federal Government	4,678	26 %
Federal University of Technology, Akure	Federal Government	3,000	20%
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Federal Government	3,574	24%
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	State Government	4,864	20%
University of Osun State, Osogbo	State government	1,898	26%
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti	State Government	7023	25%
Total		**31, 817**	

Sources: (NUC, 2025 University of Lagos, 2026; FUTA, 2025)

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling technique for the quantitative aspect of the study was stratified random sampling. This is a type of probability sampling that allows the division of the entire population into strata based on similar characteristics such as age group, departments or

educational status (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This technique allowed the researcher to select a sample size that was representative of all departments in each university using the statistical formula proposed by Yamane (1967), which is reported as the most suitable for getting sample size out of a finite population (Adam, 2020),

The formula is presented as $n = N/ \{1+N (e^2)\}$,

where, n denotes the sample size,

N is the target population and e represents the margin of error of 10% (0.1).

The calculated sample size is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Sample Size

University	State	Sample Calculation	Population size	Sample size (%)	Percentage
University of Lagos	Federal Government	$\frac{7419}{1+7419(0.1)^2}$	7419	99	16.84%
Federal University of Technology, Akure	Federal Government	$\frac{7606}{1+7606(0.1)^2}$	7,606	99	16.84%
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Federal Government	$\frac{3007}{1+3007(0.1)^2}$	3007	98	16.67%
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	State Government	$\frac{4864}{1+4864(0.1)^2}$	4,864	98	16.67%%
University of Osun State, Osogbo	State government	$\frac{1898}{1+1898(0.1)^2}$	1,898	95	16.16%
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti	State Government	$\frac{7023}{1+7419(0.1)^2}$	7023	99 (1.4%)	16.84%
Total			**31, 817**	**588**	**100%**

For the qualitative aspect of the study, purposive expert sampling technique was used to select participants. This involved selecting participants who can give expert knowledge on a subject due to their level of experience, skills or position (Bhardwaj, 2019; Campbell et al., 2020). The purposive expert sampling is the most suitable sampling method for qualitative research whose goal is not to generalize findings to a larger population, but rather to gain deep understanding of a particular phenomenon or experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, the need to select participants who can provide rich and diverse perspectives on the research question (Campbell et al., 2020). Also, the sample size in purposive sampling was determined by data saturation which is the point when no

new information or insights are gained from additional data (Mertens, 2017). Therefore, 12 participants, who comprised of senior lecturers and administrative staff, were initially selected across the six universities. The choice of the senior lecturers ensured that the needed level of leadership experience was obtainable in the study. The need for further data collection from more participants was examined during data analysis by checking for saturation, and 2 more interviews were conducted. It was then established that no new themes or theoretical insights emerged after analyzing new data sets (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Types of Data

Quantitative data was in the form of a structured survey consisting of items covering aspects such as the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and the research variables: democratic leadership, social justice and cultural diversity. The questions were designed to elicit responses on a 4-point Likert scale (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data was in the form of semi-structured interviews designed to elicit rich information from participants' experience and knowledge on democratic leadership, social justice and cultural diversity

Research Instruments

The quantitative data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire adapted from existing instruments. The Democratic School Leadership Scale Characteristics (DSLSC) developed by Pažur (2020) was adapted to measure democratic leadership. The scale highlights different dimensions of democratic leadership and was considered suitable for this study because it was developed and validated within an academic environment. The original items were modified to measure final-year students' perceptions of university leaders' adherence to democratic leadership practices. The items were structured on a 4-point Likert scale.

Flood's (2019) Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS) was adapted and modified to measure social justice practices. The SJBS is a multidimensional instrument designed to assess commitment, awareness, and actions related to social justice in educational and organizational contexts. It measures behaviours such as advocacy for equity, inclusion, fairness in decision-making, fair distribution of resources, and challenging systemic inequalities. The instrument was suitable for this study because it aligns with the goal of assessing social justice practices within university settings.

The indicators of cultural diversity, namely intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation, were measured by adapting items from the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) developed by Ang et al. (2007), the Diversity Inclusivity Framework (DIF), and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) developed by Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2001). The CQS measures an individual's ability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings through metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural cultural intelligence. The DIF provides a structure for assessing how institutions promote diversity and inclusion through policies, curriculum, and institutional practices. The MPQ assesses personal traits that support effective interaction in multicultural environments, including open-mindedness, cultural empathy, emotional stability, and flexibility.

Permission to adapt and use the DSLSC and SJBS instruments was obtained from the original authors through email correspondence. The authors granted approval for the instruments to be adapted for the present study, and copies of the email permissions are included in the appendix. The CQS, DIF, and MPQ were treated as publicly available instruments and were adapted in line with the needs of the study. All adapted items were reviewed to ensure that they reflected the variables and indicators in the study.

For the qualitative strand, data were collected through a semi-structured interview guide. The guide contained open-ended questions developed around the research objectives and the major variables of the study. It explored educational leaders' experiences of democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity in their institutions. The semi-structured format was suitable because it allowed consistency across interviews while giving participants room to explain their experiences in detail (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection Procedure

Before the commencement of data collection, an approval letter and a letter of introduction were obtained from PAC University after the Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISERC) had granted permission to conduct the study. Ethical approval was also obtained from the Federal Ministry of Education, which served as the research approval authority in Nigeria. The research plan was discussed with the supervisors before the main study to identify possible challenges and confirm the feasibility of the study within the available time.

Quantitative data were collected from final-year students selected from different departments across the six public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered in printed form with the assistance of two trained research assistants. The questionnaire was used to collect data on students' perceptions of university leaders' democratic leadership practices, social justice conditions, and cultural diversity within their institutions.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with educational leaders. The initial target was two educational leaders from each of the six universities, making a total of 12 participants. These participants included senior lecturers, heads of department, deans, and administrative heads with relevant leadership experience. The semi-structured interview allowed flexibility, rapport, and deeper communication, which made

it suitable for exploring participants' views and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During data analysis, the need for additional interviews was assessed, and two more participants were interviewed to confirm data saturation.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and recorded with a phone recorder after obtaining participants' consent. The recordings were later transcribed for thematic analysis. The use of both questionnaires and interviews allowed the study to collect quantitative evidence from students and qualitative insights from educational leaders, thereby supporting the convergent mixed-methods design of the study.

Instrument pre-testing

All the instruments used for data collection for the quantitative study were tested for validity and reliability through a pilot study. This helped determine that the research was feasible to conduct with the intended population by giving insights into the logistics of recruiting respondents, administering measures, and analyzing data (In, 2017). Expert validation and instrument structure validation of the adapted questionnaire were also tested.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted for all instruments using final year students from Obafemi Awolowo University, a public university that was not part of the main sample. The pilot study is necessary to ascertain the feasibility of the study as well as the validity and reliability of the research instruments. According to NUC (2025), there are 5, 852 final year students across all the faculties in the university. Using a similar population and sampling technique for the pilot study helps to reduce bias that may arise from using a different sample as the results of the pilot study is representative of the intended population (Bryman, 2016). A sample size of 98 respondents was selected using Yamane (1967) sampling formula for a finite population, $n = N/ \{1+N (e^2)\}$. The data from the pilot study

were not included in the main data collection. The pilot studied was analysed as shown in 5 below

Table 5: Analysis Plan for Pilot Study

Aspect	Analysis	Statistical	Interpretation	Rejection Criteria
Feasibility	Monitor participants/ respondents' recruitment rates, completion rates and other logistical challenges (Lobe et al., 2020)	Simple percentage	Determine whether the study procedures and data collection methods are practical and can be executed smoothly (Martin et al., 2020)	Recruitment or completion rates < 70%; logistical challenges affecting > 30% of participants (Vlahovic et al., 2022)
Clarity	Calculate response rates, examine areas of confusion or misinterpretation from respondents' feedback (Jansen et al., 2018)	Simple percentage	Evaluate the clarity of research instruments (Jiang et al., 2020)	Response rates < 80%; > 20% of respondents report confusion or misinterpretation (Jansen et al., 2018)
Reliability	Cronbach alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability (Helmer et al., 2021)	Cronbach alpha coefficient	Assess the consistency and stability of measurements overtime (Martin et al., 2020)	Cronbach's alpha < 0.70 (Karagöl et al., 2021)
Validity	Assess participants feedback for relevance, appropriateness and understanding of the measurement tools (Van de Mortel & Bird, 2021)	Factor analysis	Determine whether the research instruments appear to measure what they intend to measure (Osburn et al., 2018)	Factor loadings < 0.40; > 20% of participants find items irrelevant or inappropriate (Bolarinwa, 2021)
Modifications	Review the findings from pilot study		Determine if any adjustment to the research instruments is necessary to improve validity and	Unresolved issues in feasibility, clarity, reliability, or validity based on above criteria (Bele et al., 2020)

			reliability (Ibrahim et al., 2020)	

Instrument reliability

Quantitative Study

The internal consistency reliability of the quantitative instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each construct. As shown in Table 6, all constructs recorded alpha values above the 0.70 threshold, which indicates acceptable to excellent reliability (Karagöl et al., 2021). Specifically, Participative Leadership ($\alpha = 0.748$), Shared Leadership ($\alpha = 0.906$), Team Leadership ($\alpha = 0.933$), Motivational Leadership ($\alpha = 0.905$), Social Justice ($\alpha = 0.871$), and Cultural Diversity ($\alpha = 0.865$) all demonstrated strong internal consistency. These results confirmed that the items within each construct reliably measured the intended dimensions and could be retained for the main study.

Qualitative Study

The reliability of the qualitative data was strengthened through careful design and rigorous procedures. The interview guide was developed from an extensive review of relevant literature and underwent multiple layers of expert evaluation. It was first reviewed and refined during the proposal defense by PAC University examiners and committee members, and further examined by the researcher's supervisors before final adoption. To ensure consistency in data collection, all interview sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recordings were then transcribed, and transcripts were returned to participants for review to confirm accuracy and allow them to provide additional input where necessary. This process ensured that the responses reflected participants' intended meanings. Throughout transcription and analysis, emphasis was placed on maintaining data integrity, thereby enhancing the dependability of the findings. These measures confirm that the

interview guide is capable of producing consistent and trustworthy results if applied in future research (Denscombe, 2014; Hallihan & Shu, 2013).

Table 6 Reliability of Quantitative Instruments

Study Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Decision
Participative Leadership	10	0.748	Reliable
Shared Leadership	10	0.906	Reliable
Team Leadership	10	0.933	Reliable
Motivational Leadership	10	0.905	Reliable
Social Justice	5	0.871	Reliable
Cultural Diversity	15	0.865	Reliable

Instrument validity

The construct validity of the research instruments was examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring with Oblimin rotation. Across all six scales, the results produced clear and interpretable factor structures. For example, items in the *Participative Leadership* scale loaded strongly on two factors, with loadings ranging from .431 to .810, reflecting sub-dimensions of inclusivity and shared decision-making. Similarly, the *Shared Leadership* scale revealed two distinct but uncorrelated factors (r = –0.088), with loadings between .474 and .826, capturing distribution of authority and collaborative peer influence. Other constructs, including *Team Leadership, Motivational Leadership, Social Justice,* and *Cultural Diversity,* showed comparable patterns, with items clustering along meaningful sub-dimensions and all loadings exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of .40.

These results confirm that the scales possess strong content validity. The observed multidimensionality within some constructs highlights the richness and complexity of

leadership and cultural diversity, but without compromising their theoretical coherence. The fact that all items recorded acceptable factor loadings supports their retention for the main study. Overall, the EFA findings, with factor loadings spanning approximately .43 to .83, provide robust evidence that the research instruments are valid and well-suited to measure the intended constructs in the context of higher education.

Data Analysis

In this study, quantitative data was analyzed first and followed by qualitative data analysis. Before data analysis, missing data were addressed through imputation, where missing values are estimated based on other available data. Preliminary checks and data cleaning processes like calculation of response rate, identifying and correcting errors, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies within the dataset were performed.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential tools. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and describe the main features of the dataset such as central tendency, variability and distribution of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was necessary to measure respondents' understanding, perception and disposition to democratic leadership and social justice. Mean was used as the measurement of central tendency in this research and was derived by the average of all responses to a particular question in the survey (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The variability is the measure of discrepancy or variation in respondents' opinions for a question in the survey. The measure of discrepancy gives a further explanation on the general opinion by showing how much all participants agree with the leading opinion (Bryman, 2016). This was measured by calculating the standard deviation from the mean (Apuke, 2017). Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the data, to, predict outcomes and establish relationships between variables (Bryman, 2016).

To assess the influence of the independent variable (Democratic leaders, X) on the dependent variable (Cultural diversity, Y) ordinal logistic regression analysis was used to test the relationship between the variables

Ordinal Logistic Regression

The study used Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR) to examine the relationship between the independent variable (participative leadership) and the dependent variable (cultural diversity) in Southwest Nigerian Universities. In line with the recommendations of Kuss et al. (2022), the ordinal regression approach was selected because it is suitable for explaining relationships involving one ordinal dependent variable that has multiple ordered response categories and one or more continuous or categorical independent variables. This makes it appropriate for predicting the probability of different levels of cultural diversity perceptions among students, based on variations in participative leadership styles. Prior research confirms that OLR provides a robust and interpretable framework for modeling ordered responses in social science data (Liu, 2016).

Before performing the regression analysis, several assumptions and preliminary tests were conducted to ensure that the model was appropriate for the data. First, it was confirmed that the dependent variable; cultural diversity, was ordinal in nature, derived from Likert-scale responses with four ordered categories, consistent with recommendations by (Liu). Next, the proportional odds assumption (also called the parallel lines assumption) was tested to verify that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was consistent across all response thresholds. This assumption was evaluated using the Test of Parallel Lines, and a non-significant result ($p > 0.05$) indicated that the assumption was met (Zhang & Liu, 2021).

The study also tested for multicollinearity among the independent variables to ensure that they were not highly correlated with one another, as high multicollinearity can

distort regression estimates. This was assessed through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and values below 5 were considered acceptable (Shrestha et al., 2020).

The mathematical representation of the OLR model is given as follows:

$$P(Y \leq j \mid X_1 = x_1, \ldots, X_p = x_p) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j - (\beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_p X_p))}{1 + \exp(\alpha_j - (\beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_p X_p))}$$

where $j = 1,2, \ldots, J - 1$.

For an ordinal dependent variable $Y$with ordered levels $\{1, 2, \ldots, J\}$, given the predictors $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_p$, the model estimates the cumulative probability that Yfalls within category $j$or below.

The corresponding logit (log-odds) transformation of the cumulative probability is expressed as:

$$\log\left(\frac{P(Y \leq j)}{P(Y > j)}\right) = \alpha_j - \beta_1 X_1 - \beta_2 X_2 - \cdots - \beta_p X_p$$

where:

- $\alpha_j$represents the threshold (intercept) for category j;
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_p$are the regression coefficients for the predictor variables;
- $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_p$denote the independent variables.

In this study, the dependent variable (Y) is *Cultural Diversity*, measured at three ordinal levels:

$Y = \{1 = \text{Intercultural Competency}, 2 = \text{Curriculum Inclusivity}, 3 =$

Student Participation}.

The independent variable (X_1) is Democratic Leadership, with four dimensions:

$X_1 = \{l1 = \text{Participative Leadership}, l2 = \text{Shared Leadership}, l3 =$

Motivational Leadership, $l4 =$ Team Leadership}.

Hence, the ordinal logistic regression model can be expressed as:

$$\log\left(\frac{P(Y\leq j)}{P(Y>j)}\right) = \alpha_j - \beta_1(X_1 = l1) - \beta_2(X_1 = l2) - \beta_3(X_1 = l3) - \beta_4(X_1 = l4)$$

for $j = 1,2$.

Test for Moderating Variable

To determine the moderating effect of the third variable; social justice, which consists of three components (equity, access to resources, and inclusive learning environment), the variable was introduced into the model as an additional predictor X_2.

The extended model becomes:

$$\log\left(\frac{P(Y \leq j)}{P(Y > j)}\right) = \alpha_j - \beta_1(X_1 = l1) - \beta_2(X_1 = l2) - \beta_3(X_1 = l3) - \beta_4(X_1 = l4) - \gamma_1(X_2 = m1) - \gamma_2(X_2 = m2) - \gamma_3(X_2 = m3)$$

where:

- X_2= Social Justice (moderating variable);
- $m1, m2, m3$correspond to the three dimensions of social justice (equity, access to resources, and inclusive learning environment);
- $\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3$are coefficients associated with X_2.

The ordinal logistic regression was carried out using IBM SPSS Version 27.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis which is a systematic method of identifying, organizing and interpreting textual or visual data to uncover recurring themes or patterns of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to gain insights into participants' experiences, perspectives and meaning associated with the phenomenon of study (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). It was suitable for analyzing perspectives of democratic leadership and social justice in the culturally diverse universities in Nigeria. The approach aided the study in understanding social meanings and insights behind the assertions made from the statistical data and the experiences and

expertise from university leaders (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021). Braun and Clarke's (2019) steps for thematic analysis were used.

Subsequently, in the first step, the researcher sought to become familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the data several times in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the data and identifying important features and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In the next step, the researcher identified and labeled important features and patterns in the data using initial codes. These codes were descriptive, interpretive, or both, and were based on the research questions or objectives (Nowell et al., 2017). The third step entailed grouping the initial codes into themes or categories that captured the main ideas or concepts in the data after reviewing and revising the codes to ensure that they accurately reflected the data. In the next step, the researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that they were meaningful, coherent, and consistent with the research questions or objectives. Further refining or merging themes was carried out as necessary (Nowell et al., 2017). The next step involved defining and naming the themes based on their content and meaning because it helps to create a clear and concise summary of the data and the main findings of the study (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Lastly, the researcher made a report that described the research methodology, presented the findings, and discussed the implications of the research based on the emergent themes and their relevance to the research questions or objectives (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

The findings from qualitative study were used to triangulate i.e., seek convergence and corroboration with the results of the quantitative study to get a comprehensive picture of the research issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Terrel, 2016). The transcription of the interview audio and the thematic analysis were carried out using Nvivo 11, a qualitative analysis tool. Thematic analysis was carried out concurrently with data collection process where the participants had a chance to contribute to the refining of the data collection

process (Braun & Clarke, 2019) as well after data collection (post-hoc analysis) (Nowell et al., 2017). This allowed them to confirm the accuracy of their quotes to ascertain the accuracy of the data to establish trust and transparency between the researcher and participants (Mertens, 2017). The interviews were transcribed and endorsed by participants and the transcribed data was then subjected to thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

This study involved human participants, and thus, it was imperative to follow the ethical guidelines and ensure that the participants' rights and privacy were protected (Opel et al., 2021).

Prior to conducting this study, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee, ISERC) at Pan African Christian (PAC) University. An introduction letter was obtained from the university. Additionally, permission was obtained from the six universities involved in the study to conduct the research in their institutions. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set forth by the Federal Ministry of Education, the body responsible for regulating research standards in Nigeria. Letter from the Ministry was presented to the institutional review boards of the universities participating in the study. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided with a consent form with details and procedures, and any potential risks or benefits (Thomas et al., 2021). Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (Beaudoin et al., 2022; Loeb et al., 2017). Participants were also informed that their privacy and rights were protected and personal information kept confidential and would only be used for research purposes. Participants' responses were stored securely, and only the researcher had access to the data All identifying

information was removed from the data before analysis to ensure that the participants remained anonymous (Opel et al., 2021).

The study-maintained research integrity by using validated research methods to ensure that the data collected was accurate and reliable. The study used established methods, tools, and protocols to collect and analyze data (Schiebinger & Tarkowski, 2021). Finally, findings were reported accurately and honestly, including any limitations or potential biases in the research design. Data were presented in a clear and concise manner, avoiding the manipulation of data (Beaudoin et al., 2022)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology or approach employed in this research study. It discusses in detail the philosophy behind the research and the paradigm used. Furthermore, the research design, target population, gathering of data, data analysis and data presentation are discussed in detail. The next chapter presents the results and discussions from the analyzed data.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study examined the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities and the moderating role of social justice. It was guided by five specific objectives and hypotheses. The study assessed how different dimensions of democratic leadership, including participative, shared, motivational, and team leadership, shaped students' experiences of cultural diversity. In addition, it tested whether social justice moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. The research adopted a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately

before the results were brought together. This chapter presents the findings in two main sections: the quantitative results; which include descriptive and inferential statistics used to test the hypotheses, and the qualitative findings; which are organized into themes and sub-themes supported by participants' views. The chapter concludes with a triangulation of results that integrates both strands, highlighting areas where the findings converge, reinforce, or diverge from each other.

Response Rate

Table 7 below presents the response rate of participants across the six selected public universities. An adjusted sample size for each institution was obtained by adding five extra questionnaires to the initially calculated sample size in order to cater for possible non-responses. This brought the overall sample size to 618. Out of this number, 592 questionnaires were duly completed and returned, giving an overall response rate of 95.9 percent. This indicates a very high level of participation, which strengthens the reliability of the study findings (Akinyonde and Khan, 2018). A closer look at the distribution across institutions shows some variation in the response rates. Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) recorded the highest level of participation, with all 103 questionnaires returned (100 percent). This suggests strong cooperation from the respondents in that institution. Similarly, the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) also achieved a very high response rate of 98.1 percent, while the University of Lagos (UNILAG) recorded 97.1 percent. These figures reflect excellent response levels that are well above the 90 percent threshold generally considered acceptable in survey research. On the other hand, Ekiti State University (EKSU) and Osun State University (UNIOSUN) had the lowest response rates, at 93.3 percent and 91.0 percent respectively. Although these are slightly lower than those of the other universities, they are still within an acceptable range and did not pose a serious

limitation to the study. The lower figures may have been due to challenges such as respondents' availability or willingness to return the questionnaires

Table 7 Respondents' Response Rate

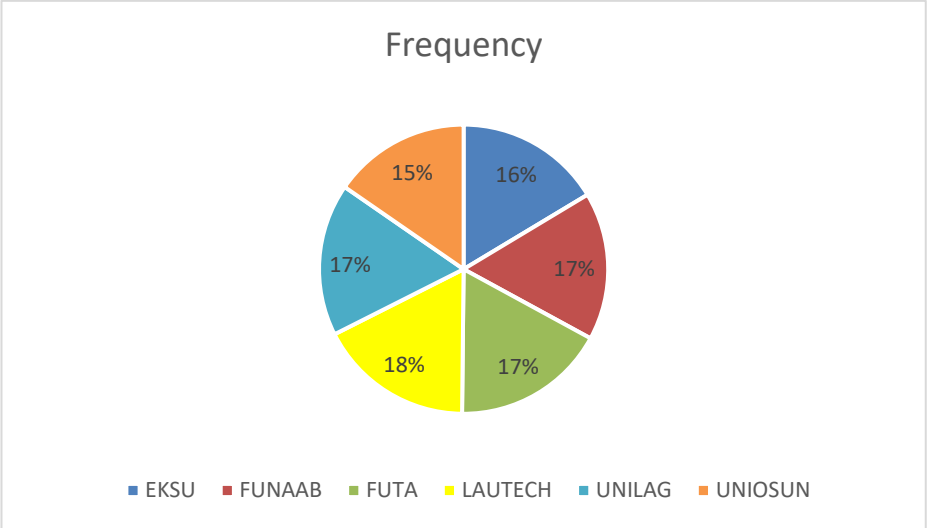
University	Original planned sample	Adjusted sample (original + 5)	Actual respondents	Response rate (%)
EKSU	99	104	97	93.27%
FUNAAB	98	103	98	95.15%
FUTA	99	104	102	98.08%
LAUTECH	98	103	103	100.00%
UNILAG	99	104	101	97.12%
UNIOSUN	95	100	91	91.00%
Total	588	618	592	95.86%

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographics were important for this study as it was an indicator of the characteristics of the respondents and also helped the research gauge whether the sample was representative of the population studied.

Figure 3: Respondents Distribution across Universities

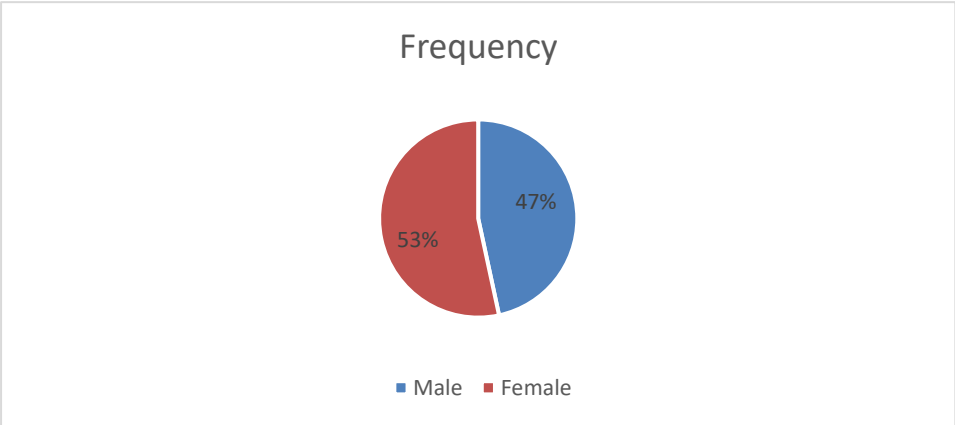


Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 3 above shows the distribution of respondents across the six universities under study. A total of 592 participants formed the sample, and the distribution across the institutions was fairly even, showing a deliberate effort to ensure broad representation. The highest number of respondents came from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, with 103 participants, which accounts for 17.4 percent of the total sample. This was closely followed by the Federal University of Technology, Akure, which had 102 respondents, representing 17.2 percent. The University of Lagos contributed 101 participants, making up 17.1 percent of the total. The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, recorded 98 respondents, which amounts to 16.6 percent, while Ekiti State

University contributed 97 participants, representing 16.4 percent. Osun State University had the smallest representation with 91 respondents, which translates to 15.4 percent of the sample. The near balance in the number of respondents across the six institutions is important because it gives the study credibility and minimizes the risk of one university dominating the results

Figure 4: Distribution across Gender



Source: Field Survey, 2025

The gender distribution of respondents in Figure 5 shows a slightly higher representation of females compared to males. Out of the 592 participants who took part in the study, 316 were female, which accounts for 53.4 percent of the total sample. Male respondents were 276 in number, representing 46.6 percent. This distribution demonstrates a near balance between both genders, even though the female population is marginally higher. Such a spread is meaningful because it indicates that both male and female voices were well represented in the study, which is essential for research focusing on leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity. Leadership practices and experiences are often shaped by gender perspectives, so having contributions from both groups allows

the findings to be richer and more reflective of the student population in Southwest Nigerian Universities.

Table 8: Age Group of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
16 to 19 years	166	28.0
20 to 24 years	360	60.8
25 to 30 years	62	10.5
Above 30 years	4	.7
Total	592	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 8 shows the age distribution of respondents which highlights that the majority of participants fall within the youthful categories typical of university populations. Out of the 592 students surveyed, the largest group was those between the ages of 20 and 24 years, which accounted for 360 respondents or 60.8 percent of the total. This age range represents the peak of undergraduate enrollment in Nigerian universities, where most students are in their early twenties and actively involved in both academic and social life. Following this group, 166 respondents, representing 28 percent of the sample, were between 16 and 19 years old. This shows that some students gained admission earlier or are enrolled in courses that last for 3 to 4 years. A smaller proportion, 62 respondents or 10.5 percent, were between 25 and 30 years old, while only four participants, accounting for 0.7 percent, were above 30 years of age.

The dominance of students in the 20 to 24 age group is expected in the context of Nigerian universities, where the average entry age is often between 16 and 18 years, and most students graduate in their early or mid-twenties. The limited number of respondents above 30 years suggests that mature students or those pursuing further studies at undergraduate level are relatively rare in these institutions.

Table 9: Ethnic Distribution of Respondents

Ethnic Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Hausa	2	.3
Igbo	29	4.9
Yoruba	539	91.0
Others	22	3.7
Total	592	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The ethnic distribution of respondents in Table 9 shows a strong dominance of the Yoruba ethnic group, which is not unexpected given the location of the universities in the Southwest region of Nigeria. Out of the 592 participants surveyed, 539 identified as Yoruba, representing 91 percent of the total sample. This overwhelming majority reflects the demographic reality of the host region, where the Yoruba people form the indigenous population and make up the largest ethnic group. While this dominance might limit the variety of perspectives from other groups, it provides a clear picture of how the cultural background of the majority influences leadership, diversity, and social justice issues within the universities. The Yoruba students' strong presence in the data also highlights the cultural environment in which the universities operate and shows the importance of understanding leadership within a context shaped by regional identity.

Beyond the majority group, other ethnic identities were also represented, though in much smaller proportions. The Igbo respondents were 29 in number, which accounted for 4.9 percent of the total. This is followed by 22 participants, or 3.7 percent, who belonged to other minority ethnic groups outside the three major Nigerian ethnicities. Only two respondents, representing 0.3 percent of the sample, identified as Hausa. Although these groups form a small percentage of the total, their inclusion is valuable because it introduces alternative cultural perspectives into the study. The presence of students from minority

backgrounds, even in small numbers, emphasizes that cultural diversity exists within these universities despite the dominance of the Yoruba group.

The ethnic distribution of respondents also presented a limitation in the interpretation of cultural diversity. Although the study was conducted across six public universities in Southwest Nigeria, the respondent profile was dominated by Yoruba students, which reflects the regional and demographic character of the study area. This may have limited the extent to which the findings captured the experiences of students from other ethnic groups. To reduce the effect of this limitation, the study did not interpret cultural diversity only in terms of ethnic distribution, but also through broader indicators such as intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, and student participation. The qualitative interviews with educational leaders also provided additional insight into cultural diversity issues beyond the ethnic profile of the student respondents. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence from selected Southwest Nigerian public universities rather than as a full representation of ethnic diversity across Nigerian universities.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative component of this study was designed to provide deeper insight into how democratic leadership practices influence cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian public universities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with educational leaders who occupied strategic positions within their institutions, such as heads of department, deans, and other senior administrators. The interview guide was developed around the study objectives and variables. It explored participants' leadership experiences and how their practices shaped inclusion, participation, social justice, and cultural diversity within the university environment.

The first section of the interview sought background information about participants' current roles, leadership responsibilities, and years of experience in administrative positions. This introductory section provided context for understanding participants' responses and allowed them to reflect on how leadership is practised within their departments or faculties. The other sections of the interview guide were organized around the major constructs of the study. Questions on participative leadership focused on how leaders involve staff and students in decision-making and how such participation affects cultural diversity. Questions on shared leadership examined how authority, accountability, and ownership are distributed within departments and faculties. The team leadership section focused on how leaders promote teamwork, collaboration, and conflict management among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The motivational leadership section explored how leaders recognize, encourage, and support staff and students from different backgrounds to participate actively in academic and administrative activities. The interview guide also explored how social justice conditions

such as fairness, equity, inclusive learning environment, and access to resources shape the relationship between leadership practices and cultural diversity.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method was suitable because it enabled the researcher to identify patterns, meanings, and repeated ideas across participants' responses. The process began with the transcription of all recorded interviews to produce detailed textual data for analysis. Each transcript was read several times to ensure familiarity with the data and to understand the context of participants' experiences. A hybrid coding approach was used. Initial coding was guided by the research objectives and study variables, while additional codes were allowed to emerge from participants' responses. This approach made it possible to connect the qualitative findings to the research questions while still allowing unexpected ideas, such as authoritarian leadership tendencies, leadership by example, and conflict management, to emerge from the data.

During the first stage of coding, meaningful statements were identified and labelled. These statements related to leadership practices, participation, distributed authority, teamwork, motivation, fairness, cultural diversity, conflict, and inclusion. The codes were applied systematically across the transcripts to identify similar and contrasting ideas. In the second stage, related codes were grouped into broader categories that reflected recurring patterns in the data. For example, statements on consultation, open dialogue, and representation were grouped under participative leadership, while comments on collaboration, collective responsibility, and shared authority were categorized under shared leadership. In the third stage, the categories were reviewed and developed into themes that represented the main ideas emerging from the interviews. The themes were refined to ensure that they were meaningful, coherent, and aligned with the objectives of the study.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through careful data handling and transparent analysis procedures. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed carefully. The transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to reduce errors and to ensure that participants' meanings were preserved. Direct quotations were retained to support the themes and to allow participants' voices to be reflected in the findings. The use of a semi-structured interview guide also helped to maintain consistency across the interviews while still allowing participants to explain their experiences freely. In addition, the coding process followed the same procedure across all transcripts, and themes were checked against the original data to ensure that they reflected participants' responses. These steps helped to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative findings.

The qualitative findings were used to support and deepen the quantitative results. They provided contextual explanations for how democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity are experienced by educational leaders in the selected universities. The themes also helped to explain areas where democratic leadership practices were strengthened or weakened by institutional culture, fairness, authority structures, and resource-related constraints. The summary of themes and sub-themes is presented in Table 10.

Summary of Themes from Interviews

Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Main ideas/codes**	**Short relevant quotes**
Participative Leadership as Inclusion	Voice and participation; consultation; representation; open dialogue	Involving staff and students, listening before decisions, creating room for different views, explaining decisions	"Before making any decision, you have to sample the opinions of others." (P4); "If I make a decision, I explain the reasons behind it." (P14)

Shared Leadership and Collaborative Governance	Distributed authority; shared accountability; collective ownership; committee involvement	Sharing leadership roles, involving departments and committees, joint responsibility, collective decision-making	"Staff and students can suggest changes, but policy formation must follow university regulations." (P8); "We involve lecturers and student representatives in meetings where issues concerning them are discussed." (P5)
Team Leadership, Collaboration, and Conflict Management	Team cohesion; collaborative problem-solving; unity in diversity; conflict prevention and resolution	Group work, cooperation, respectful interaction, neutrality, dialogue, managing cultural and religious tension	"We give them a general theme, and they work in a team." (P14); "A leader should allow unity in diversity." (P11); "Conflicts arise from differing interests." (P10)
Motivational Leadership, Recognition, and Support	Recognition of effort; encouragement; empathy; commitment building; support for participation	Rewarding effort, encouraging students and staff, reaching out to inactive students, valuing contributions	"Sometimes I actually give them tokens." (P12); "I reach out to students who are not showing up." (P9); "If tribalism is not managed well, there is no motivation." (P11)
Social Justice and Fairness	Equity; fair treatment; merit-based promotion; equal opportunities; protection of vulnerable groups	Fair promotion, equal workload, unbiased grading, protection of minorities, fairness in institutional processes	"If you are due for promotion, they promote you, no matter where you come from." (P11); "Everyone takes an equal number of courses." (P9); "Social justice means protecting the vulnerable." (P12)

Cultural Diversity as Strength and Challenge	Multicultural identity; ethnic and religious diversity; language differences; tribalism; neutral leadership	Diversity as enrichment, cultural associations, language barriers, tribal bias, need for neutrality and respect	"We have different people from different tribes and cultures." (P8); "If tribalism is not managed well, there won't be efficiency." (P11); "In my office, there is no religion and no culture." (P13)
Authoritarian Leadership as a Barrier to Democratic Practice	Top-down decisions; micromanagement; resistance to participation; control justified as efficiency	Exclusion of voices, leader-centred decisions, weak consultation, resistance to democratic ideas	"Sometimes, as a leader, one has to be… a little autocratic." (P12); "There are still leaders who believe democracy is a weakness." (P4); "The system is set in a way that the leader's word is final." (P7)
Leadership by Example and Ethical Conduct	Integrity; transparency; fairness in action; humility; consistency	Modelling fairness, practising what is preached, leading through conduct, building trust through example	"I try to lead by example so others can emulate me." (P9); "A leader should do what he expects from others." (P12); "If you preach fairness, you must practice it." (P14)

Theme 1: Participative Leadership as Inclusion

Participative leadership emerged from the findings primarily as a practice of inclusion. Participants described leadership not simply as shared decision-making, but as the deliberate inclusion of staff and students in discussions that affect them. Inclusion was framed as giving people access to leadership spaces and ensuring that their voices are heard. As one participant explained, "In our faculty, we make it a point to involve

lecturers and student representatives in meetings where issues concerning them are discussed. Even if the final approval comes from management, their opinions are considered before decisions are made" (P5). This reflects a model where participation begins with consultation and representation.

Leaders also described inclusion as creating open platforms for dialogue. One participant stated, "I encourage open meetings where members can speak freely about departmental matters. When people contribute ideas, they feel that they belong to the system" (P3). However, participants acknowledged that inclusion does not always extend to full authority in policy drafting. As P8 noted, "Staff and students can suggest changes, but policy formation must follow university regulations, so leadership still has to guide the final process." This shows that while inclusion is practised, it operates within formal institutional boundaries.

Another important dimension of inclusion was respect for diverse opinions and backgrounds. Participants linked participative leadership with valuing different perspectives. "Good decisions come from listening to people with different experiences and cultural backgrounds," one leader remarked (P10). Overall, this theme shows that participative leadership in these universities is strongly associated with inclusion through consultation, open dialogue, and representation. While final decision-making may remain centralized, leaders view inclusive engagement as essential for building trust, cooperation, and cultural sensitivity within the institution.

Theme 2: Shared Leadership and Collaborative Governance

Shared leadership emerged from the findings as a form of collaborative governance in which leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability are not limited to one person alone. Participants explained that effective university leadership often requires consultation with committees, departments, faculty members, student

representatives, and other administrative units. This suggests that leadership is more effective when decisions are not treated as the sole responsibility of one office holder, but as a shared process involving different institutional actors.

Participants noted that shared leadership creates room for collective ownership, even when final approval still rests with formal authorities. As one participant explained, “Staff and students can suggest changes, but policy formation must follow university regulations, so leadership still has to guide the final process” (P8). This indicates that shared leadership in the universities does not always mean full transfer of authority, but it allows members to contribute to institutional decisions before final approval is made. Another participant stated, “We involve lecturers and student representatives in meetings where issues concerning them are discussed” (P5). This shows that collaborative governance can strengthen representation and accountability by giving those affected by decisions some level of involvement in the process.

The findings suggest that shared leadership supports cultural diversity by allowing different voices and experiences to shape institutional life. When leadership is shared through committees, consultations, and representative structures, students and staff from different backgrounds are more likely to feel that they have a stake in the university community. Shared leadership also helps reduce overdependence on a single leader and encourages collective responsibility for inclusion, fairness, and student participation. In this study, shared leadership is therefore seen as a practical way of promoting democratic governance and strengthening cultural inclusion within the university environment.

Theme 3: Team Leadership, Collaboration, and Conflict Management

Teamwork was described as both a leadership strategy and a cultural necessity for promoting unity in diversity. Participants highlighted that committees, group projects, and collective assignments build cooperation and shared responsibility. “We give them a

general theme, and they work in a team" (P14) illustrates how collaboration is used as a learning tool and as a model of democratic engagement. Unity in diversity was also expressed through institutional recognition of cultural associations and events, which promote belonging among students from different backgrounds. As one participant emphasized, "A leader should allow unity in diversity" (P11).

Collaboration also meant deliberately involving all voices, especially those who are usually silent or marginalized. One participant stated, "Call everyone by name, politely" (P13), showing that small acts of recognition can support inclusion and group belonging. However, participants also noted that favouritism and lack of transparency can weaken team spirit. This was reflected in the warning, "If tribalism is not managed well, there won't be efficiency" (P11). Effective teamwork therefore requires leaders to build trust, promote fair participation, and create an environment where members can work together despite cultural, religious, or ethnic differences.

Conflict management was also seen as part of team leadership. Conflicts were recognized as inevitable in diverse academic settings, but participants viewed them as opportunities for learning and improvement when managed constructively. Participants attributed conflicts to limited resources, favouritism, cultural or religious misunderstanding, and communication gaps. One leader explained, "Conflicts arise from differing interests" (P10), while others stressed that simple acts of disrespect, such as ignoring cultural dress, could create deeper divisions. Managing conflict required open dialogue and negotiation. One participant stated, "When introducing new ideas, engage with cultural leaders" (P10). Failure to manage conflict fairly could lead to distrust and resistance, as reflected in the warning, "Once you start doing that 'we against them' thing, you will spark a lot of issues" (P14). Overall, this theme shows that team leadership

supports cultural diversity through cooperation, conflict management, and unity across different groups.

Theme 4: Motivational Leadership, Recognition, and Support

Motivation and recognition were viewed as essential drivers of inclusion and productivity. Participants described fairness, acknowledgment of effort, encouragement, and empathy as key motivational tools. “If you are due for promotion, they promote you” (P11) reflects how fairness itself can motivate staff. Recognition of effort, whether symbolic or material, also emerged as significant. One lecturer explained, “Sometimes I actually give them tokens… when somebody comes first in class, I give them money” (P12). This shows that recognition can be used to encourage participation and strengthen morale.

Support and encouragement were also expressed through personal care for students. One participant stated, “I reach out to students who are not showing up” (P9), showing that empathy can strengthen belonging and reduce withdrawal. Recognition was also tied to inclusion, as leaders were urged to value every contribution, even when such contributions were not finally adopted. Conversely, favouritism and bias were described as demotivating. As one participant warned, “If tribalism is not managed well… then there is no motivation” (P11). The theme shows that effective motivation goes beyond rewards. It rests on fairness, recognition, emotional support, and the ability of leaders to make people feel valued. When leaders recognize contributions and treat people with respect, they foster morale, commitment, and stronger participation in the institution.

Theme 5: Social Justice and Fairness

Social justice and fairness were perceived by participants as the ethical foundation of good leadership. The findings reveal that fairness extended beyond intentions to practical action, especially in promotion, grading, workload distribution, and access to

opportunities. As one participant put it, “If you are due for promotion, they promote you, no matter where you come from” (P11). This statement reflects the expectation that justice should override tribal, political, or personal considerations. Similarly, fairness in course distribution was described as a mark of leadership integrity: “Everyone takes an equal number of courses” (P9).

Participants also emphasized fairness in treating students equally and creating safe spaces for expression. This reinforces the idea that justice involves both institutional structure and leadership attitude. Protection of vulnerable groups, such as women or students facing discrimination, was highlighted as part of social justice. The quote “Social justice means protecting the vulnerable” (P12) captures this moral dimension of leadership. Overall, the theme shows that fairness strengthens inclusion, motivates staff and students, and prevents suspicion or resentment. Where justice is visible and consistent, leadership is perceived as credible and culturally sensitive. In relation to the study model, social justice helps explain why democratic leadership may have a stronger influence on cultural diversity when fairness, equity, and protection of vulnerable groups are present.

Theme 6: Cultural Diversity as a Strength and Challenge

Participants viewed cultural diversity as both a valuable resource and a complex challenge in university life. They described campuses as multicultural spaces composed of many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. “We have different people from different tribes and cultures” (P8) demonstrates this diversity. Many respondents regarded diversity as enriching because it brings fresh perspectives and encourages inclusiveness through cultural events, associations, and everyday interaction.

However, tribalism and favouritism were recognized as major threats to fairness and motivation. “If tribalism is not managed well, there won’t be efficiency” (P11) was a recurring warning. Leaders who remained neutral and human-centred were praised for promoting harmony. As one participant stated, “In my office, there is no religion and no culture” (P13). Language differences were also identified as barriers, especially for students struggling with English, prompting lecturers to simplify explanations and encourage peer support (P14). The theme therefore portrays diversity as both a source of unity and division, depending on how it is managed. When leaders act with fairness, neutrality, and respect, diversity becomes a strength that enriches learning and institutional culture.

Theme 7: Authoritarian Leadership as a Barrier to Democratic Practice

Despite efforts to promote democratic leadership, many participants identified authoritarianism as a continuing challenge within Nigerian universities. Leaders were described as sometimes imposing decisions without consultation or disregarding collective input. Statements like “Sometimes, as a leader, one has to be… a little autocratic” (P12) reveal the persistence of command-and-control attitudes. Younger staff and students were sometimes seen as impulsive or inexperienced, leading some leaders to justify strict control as necessary.

Another respondent observed that “There are still leaders who believe democracy is a weakness” (P4), illustrating how authoritarianism is sometimes embedded in institutional culture. Participants also spoke of micromanagement, where leaders dominated discussions and silenced opposing voices. Resistance to change was a recurring concern, with the system described as one “where the leader’s word is final” (P7). These accounts suggest that hierarchical traditions remain strong and may limit the

effect of participatory leadership. Authoritarian practices weaken inclusivity, discourage innovation, and create fear rather than commitment. This theme therefore serves as a contextual barrier that may reduce the positive influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity.

Theme 8: Leadership by Example and Ethical Conduct

Participants repeatedly emphasized that leadership is demonstrated through personal conduct. Leaders gain trust not by authority alone, but by modelling the values they promote, such as fairness, humility, discipline, and transparency. As one stated, "I try to lead by example so others can emulate me" (P9). Leadership by example was seen as a practical expression of integrity, where actions align with words. Participants also stated that "A leader should do what he expects from others" (P12), reinforcing the idea that consistency builds credibility.

Punctuality, honesty, and diligence were highlighted as ways leaders inspire followers without coercion. Another participant noted, "If you preach fairness, you must practice it" (P14), linking integrity directly to inclusion. Servant leadership ideals were evident throughout, portraying leaders as caretakers who serve rather than command. The phrase "Integrity speaks louder than authority" (P8) captures the belief that ethical behaviour is a strong foundation for respect and cooperation. This theme suggests that democratic and social justice values must not only be stated in policies or meetings. They must also be demonstrated through the daily conduct of leaders.

Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the descriptive and inferential statistics on each of the variables and objectives of the study. Respondents' reported democratic leadership as indicated by participative, shared, team and motivational leadership styles were presented in frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation tables. The dependent variable;

cultural diversity, and the moderating variable; social justice, were reported in the same manner. Inferential statistics were presented using ordinal logistic regression tables.

Descriptive Statistics

Democratic Leadership. The study examined democratic leadership as the independent variable. Democratic leadership was operationalized through the following elements: participative leadership; shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership. Participative leadership involves leaders including others in decision-making and valuing their contributions before actions are taken. Shared leadership occurs when leadership responsibilities are distributed among members rather than concentrated in one person. Team leadership focuses on encouraging collaboration, open communication, and collective problem-solving within a group. Motivational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and support others through encouragement, recognition, and creating a positive working or learning atmosphere. The study sought to examine how these factors influence cultural diversity. The results of the descriptive analysis are given in the next section.

The respondents; final year students across the six selected universities, were asked to rate their educational leaders practice of participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership and motivational leadership which are indicators of democratic leadership. The results are presented in table 11 to 16

Participative Leadership.

A dimension of democratic leadership that emphasizes the inclusion of all stakeholders in decision-making processes was assessed using ten items designed to evaluate how frequently university leaders engage staff, students, and other members of the academic community in making important decisions that affect them. The indicators for

participative leadership were analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 11 as follows:

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Participative Leadership

Participative Leadership	N	Mean	Std. dev
1. The leader includes all school members (experts, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrative staff) in the decision-making processes that are relevant for them.	592	3.48	0.7215
2. When possible, while decisions are made, the leader values a student's voice equally as the voice of a grown-up.	592	3.24	0.7260
3. When sharing school tasks, the leader offers everyone an opportunity to get involved	592	2.89	1.0054
4. The leader seeks that all the important decisions are made by a consensus	592	3.03	0.7375
5. The leader accepts initiatives (ideas, suggestions, innovations) recommended by lecturers or students.	592	3.04	0.9346
6. The leader encourages open meetings where everyone can suggest solutions to school problems.	592	2.92	0.9725
7. Staff and students are regularly asked for input before changes are made in school policies.	592	2.63	0.9193
8. The leader believes that good decisions come from including different perspectives.	592	3.01	0.8917
9. The leader gives feedback to all contributors and explains how their suggestions are used.	592	2.89	0.9483
10. The leader allows students and staff to take part in drafting school rules and procedures.	592	2.44	0.9782
Sub -variable Aggregate score	592	2.96	0.9669

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The data in Table 11 presents the results for the sub-variable; Participative Leadership, which was measured using ten items. The overall aggregate mean score was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.9669, showing that respondents generally agreed that their university leaders demonstrate participative leadership behaviors with high

discrepancy in their opinions. For the item on whether leaders include all school members such as experts, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrative staff in decision-making processes that concern them, the mean score was 3.48 (SD = 0.72). This indicates that most respondents agreed that their leaders are inclusive in the decision-making process. On the other hand, the statement about leaders allowing students and staff to take part in drafting school rules and procedures received the lowest mean score of 2.44 (SD = 0.98). This suggests that respondents felt that their leaders are less likely to involve them in the development of formal school policies. The question on whether the leader offers everyone an opportunity to get involved when sharing school tasks had a moderate mean score of 2.89, with a relatively high SD of 1.01, showing that respondents' views on this behavior varied widely.

From the responses, it appears that participative leadership practices are more common in areas such as inclusive decision-making and valuing diverse opinions but are weaker when it comes to giving staff and students a real voice in rule-making or institutional policy formation. This finding supports earlier research which observed that educational leaders often express support for participative practices but do not always integrate them into formal governance systems (Meng et al., 2024; Ndjama & Van der Westhuizen, 2023).

Other studies also show that participative leadership improves engagement and motivation but is sometimes limited by hierarchical structures in academic institutions (Ahmad et al., 2020). The relatively high score for inclusiveness in decision-making supports the growing emphasis on shared governance as an essential aspect of democratic leadership in education (Pazur, 2020).

However, the low level of involvement in policy development indicates that while leaders may listen to different voices, they may still retain control over key institutional

decisions. This outcome aligns with findings that democratic and participative ideals in higher education leadership are often applied unevenly, especially in developing contexts (Zulfqar et al., 2022). In general, the results suggest that respondents see their leaders as fairly participatory, though with room for improvement in creating opportunities for genuine collaboration and shared authority in university management.

The qualitative data from educational leaders provides strong support for the quantitative finding that participative leadership is visible mainly in consultative processes. Several participants described structured opportunities where different groups are invited to share their opinions before decisions are finalized. One participant explained in detail:

"In our university, before any major decision is taken, especially those that will affect students or staff welfare, we hold consultations at different levels. We meet with heads of department, faculty representatives, non-teaching staff, and student union executives. Everyone is allowed to speak freely and present their concerns. We believe that leadership should not be imposed but discussed, so we create platforms where people can contribute their ideas before management reaches a conclusion." (P1)

Another participant noted that "faculty board meetings and senate sessions are open for debate, and members are encouraged to express divergent views" (P3). These narratives align with the relatively high mean score of 3.48, where students agreed that leaders include relevant members in decision making. From the leaders' perspective, participative leadership is demonstrated through meetings, consultations, and open discussions. This suggests that consultative inclusion is a deliberate leadership strategy within these universities.

However, when leaders discussed the role of students in decision making, their explanations helped clarify why the quantitative data showed only moderate agreement

regarding equal valuation of student voice. While leaders affirmed that students are consulted, they also emphasized institutional hierarchy and experience. One participant explained:

> Students are important stakeholders and we always invite their representatives when issues concern them. But leadership requires balancing emotions with institutional stability. There are technical, financial, and regulatory matters that students may not fully understand. So while we listen to their views carefully, final decisions must be guided by experience, statutory provisions, and long term institutional interests. (P4)

Another participant stated that "student leaders are consulted regularly, but management still has the constitutional responsibility to make final decisions" (P6). These statements suggest that participation exists, but within defined limits. This helps explain why students agreed that they are heard, yet did not strongly agree that their voices carry equal weight in all situations.

The qualitative findings also strongly reinforce the low mean score of 2.44 regarding involvement in drafting school rules and procedures. Leaders openly acknowledged that policy formulation is usually handled by formal committees and statutory bodies. One participant gave a detailed explanation:

> Policy drafting is not something we can open to everyone. It follows a clear administrative and regulatory process. Committees are constituted by management and council, and they are made up of senior academics and administrators who understand accreditation requirements, national guidelines, and legal implications. We may receive memoranda or suggestions from staff and students, but the drafting and final approval remains within established governance structures. (P7)

Similarly, another participant stated that "most policies are prepared at management level and later communicated to the wider university community for awareness and implementation" (P9). These accounts directly support the students' perception that while consultation may occur, direct involvement in drafting formal

policies is limited. Leaders appear to view centralized control in policy formulation as necessary for compliance and stability.

Finally, the variation reflected in the quantitative standard deviations is also evident in the leaders' accounts. Some participants described highly inclusive practices, while others acknowledged structural constraints. One participant stated:

"I operate what I call an open door approach. Any staff or student can approach management with ideas, and we also organize periodic town hall meetings where issues are discussed openly and transparently. In my view, participation builds trust and reduces conflict." (P10)

In contrast, another participant explained that "in public universities, bureaucratic procedures and government regulations sometimes limit how quickly or widely we can involve everyone in decision processes" (P12). These contrasting perspectives show that participative leadership practices vary across institutions. Overall, the qualitative data confirms that leaders perceive themselves as consultative and inclusive in discussions, but they maintain structured control over formal rule making and final authority, which mirrors the patterns observed in the quantitative findings.

Shared Leadership.

A dimension for democratic leadership. Shared leadership was assessed using ten items designed to evaluate the extent to which leadership responsibilities, decision making and authority and are distributed among faculty and students. The indicators for shared leadership were analyzed and the outcome is illustrated in table 12 as follows:

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for Shared Leadership

Shared Leadership	N	Mean	Std. dev

1. The leader delegates responsibility and authority to other members of the faculty by allowing them to represent him/her in crucial meetings and conferences.	592	2.95	0.8404
2. The leader has successfully created an atmosphere where everyone sees themselves as stakeholders in the department.	592	2.95	0.8234
3. The leader rewards initiatives from students and faculty which improves the cultural diversity of the department or faculty.	592	2.91	0.8674
4. The leader is willing to take responsibility for a decision made from a student's initiative.	592	2.89	0.8902
5. The leader encourages staff and students to take part in facilitating the discussions on culture in the department.	592	3.00	0.7934
6.The leader shares leadership roles to allow both staff and students to lead projects.	592	3.01	0.8460
7. Decision-making teams in the school include a balance of students, faculty, and administrative staff.	592	2.99	0.8530
8. The leader supports team leaders who were chosen by their peers.	592	3.17	0.7795
9. The leader encourages shared goals and group accountability in decision outcomes.	592	3.15	0.7160
10. The leader promotes partnerships between students and faculty in planning school activities.	592	3.08	0.8252
Su-Variable Aggregate	592	3.01	0.8248

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 12 presents the descriptive statistics for Shared Leadership, showing the responses of 592 participants. The sub-variable aggregate reveals a moderate level of shared leadership practices (M = 3.01, SD = 0.8248), indicating that while leaders demonstrate a fair degree of collaboration and delegation, there remains room for improvement in empowering others to take on leadership responsibilities. Among the individual items, the highest mean was recorded for "the leader supports team leaders who were chosen by their peers" (M = 3.17, SD = 0.78) and "the leader encourages shared goals and group accountability in decision outcomes" (M = 3.15, SD = 0.72). These findings suggest that leaders value shared responsibility and peer-recognized

leadership, which are central components of distributed decision-making within educational contexts. Similarly, “the leader promotes partnerships between students and faculty in planning school activities” (M = 3.08, SD = 0.83) highlights a reasonable degree of collaboration between faculty and students in planning processes. However, comparatively lower means were observed for items such as “the leader is willing to take responsibility for a decision made from a student’s initiative” (M = 2.89, SD = 0.89) and “the leader delegates responsibility and authority to other members of the faculty by allowing them to represent him/her in crucial meetings” (M = 2.95, SD = 0.84). These scores point to a cautious approach to power-sharing, where leaders may still centralize key decision-making roles, potentially limiting full autonomy and empowerment of subordinates and students.

Overall, the findings indicate that the principles of shared leadership: mutual accountability, participatory governance, and distributed influence are present to a moderate extent in the institutions. This aligns with Hussein et al. (2025), who found that knowledge-sharing cultures significantly enhance decision-making effectiveness in universities, emphasizing the importance of collaborative environments and participation culture in achieving institutional goals. Similarly, Meng et al. (2024) reported that participative decision-making positively influences innovation and teacher performance in higher education, reinforcing the idea that distributed leadership contributes to academic creativity and institutional resilience. In light of these studies, the current results suggest that while shared leadership practices are emerging, they are yet to be fully institutionalized. Developing more systematic mechanisms for delegation, shared accountability, and student involvement may further enhance the culture of collective leadership and improve educational outcomes, as supported by Shoib and Talip’s (2025)

findings on the role of inclusive, data-driven decision-making in effective educational leadership.

The qualitative findings from educational leaders provide strong support for the moderate aggregate mean of 3.01 recorded for shared leadership. Many participants described deliberate efforts to distribute responsibilities and create a sense of collective ownership within their institutions. One participant explained:

> In our institution, leadership is not concentrated in one office. We deliberately assign responsibilities to heads of units, coordinators, and even committee chairpersons. When there are important conferences or external meetings, I sometimes nominate a colleague to represent the university. This is done to build their leadership capacity and also to show that authority is shared. We want staff and even student leaders to see themselves as partners in progress, not just followers. (P2)

Another participant noted that "we try to create an atmosphere where everyone feels they are stakeholders in the department because when people feel ownership, they are more committed" (P5). These statements align with the moderate mean scores for delegation of authority and the creation of a stakeholder atmosphere. Leaders clearly perceive shared leadership as a strategy for strengthening commitment and institutional development.

The relatively higher mean scores for supporting peer chosen team leaders and encouraging shared goals are also strongly reflected in the qualitative responses. One participant described how peer recognition is respected within their governance structure:

> When staff or students select their representatives, we respect that choice. For example, if students elect a project coordinator or if lecturers nominate a team leader for a faculty assignment, management supports that person. We provide guidance, but we do not impose our own candidates. This helps to build trust and ensures that leadership emerges from within the group. (P8)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that "we always stress group accountability. When a decision is taken collectively, everyone must stand by it and work towards its success" (P11). These accounts help explain why students perceived relatively strong

encouragement of shared goals and group responsibility. Leaders appear to value collective accountability and peer supported leadership, which are central features of shared leadership.

However, the qualitative data also explains the slightly lower mean scores related to taking responsibility for student-initiated decisions and delegating authority in crucial matters. Some leaders expressed caution in transferring full decision-making power. One participant stated:

> We encourage students to bring initiatives, and many good ideas have come from them. But as the head of the institution, I must ensure that any initiative aligns with regulations and long term plans. If a student proposes something, we evaluate it carefully before implementation. At the end of the day, the responsibility rests with management because we are accountable to external bodies and government agencies. (P4)

Another participant added that "delegation does not mean abandoning oversight. There are sensitive meetings and statutory decisions that require the presence of principal officers" (P6). These responses suggest that while shared leadership is practiced, it operates within structured boundaries. Leaders support collaboration and distributed roles, but they retain ultimate accountability for high level decisions. The promotion of partnerships between students and faculty, which recorded a mean of 3.08, is clearly reflected in leaders' narratives about joint planning and collaborative activities. One participant described:

> In planning cultural week, orientation programs, and departmental seminars, we form joint committees that include lecturers and student representatives. They sit together, design the program, allocate responsibilities, and execute the plans. This approach has improved harmony and mutual respect within the university. (P9)

Another participant remarked that "shared leadership helps to reduce tension because people feel involved in shaping outcomes" (P12). These accounts confirm that collaborative planning structures are present and functional. Overall, the qualitative

evidence supports the quantitative findings by showing that shared leadership practices such as delegation, peer supported leadership, collective accountability, and student faculty partnerships are evident, though still guided by formal authority structures that limit full decentralization of power.

Team leadership. The study examined team leadership, another key dimension of democratic leadership that focuses on collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility among members of the academic community. Team leadership was assessed using ten items designed to evaluate how leaders promote teamwork, communication, and collective problem-solving within their departments. The indicators for team leadership were analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 13 as follows:

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics for Team Leadership

Team Leadership	N	Mean	Std. dev
21. The HOD creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation among people from different backgrounds.	592	3.13	0.7834
22. In the case of conflict, the leader enables dialogue with all members included in it.	592	3.10	0.8259
23. The leader creates an atmosphere where people from other cultures different from the leader's culture share their thoughts and opinions without fear of consequences.	592	3.12	0.8211
24. The leader takes into consideration knowledge and skills of members, and awards important school tasks (such as leading projects, leading out-of-school activities) regarding them.	592	3.09	0.8389
25. The leader provides opportunities for professional development and growth for students, faculty and other staff members.	592	3.21	0.7489
26. The leader supports collaboration through team-building events and group tasks.	592	3.27	0.7027

27. All team members are encouraged to contribute ideas during meetings and planning sessions.	592	3.20	0.7632
28. The leader checks in regularly with teams to provide support and guidance.	592	3.13	0.8201
29. The leader respects the roles and contributions of every team member equally.	592	3.14	0.8310
30. The leader actively works to resolve team conflicts in fair and respectful ways	592	3.17	0.7773
Sub-Variable aggregate	592	3.16	0.7924

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 13 presents the descriptive statistics for Team Leadership. The overall aggregate mean score was 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.7924. This relatively high mean indicates that respondents generally agreed that their leaders exhibit behaviors consistent with strong team leadership, particularly in promoting collaboration and mutual respect. Among the individual indicators, the highest mean score was recorded for "the leader supports collaboration through team-building events and group tasks" (M = 3.27, SD = 0.70), followed by "the leader provides opportunities for professional development and growth for students, faculty, and other staff members" (M = 3.21, SD = 0.75). These results suggest that leaders are seen as facilitators of teamwork and professional growth, ensuring that collaboration remains a core value within the department. Similarly, the statement "all team members are encouraged to contribute ideas during meetings and planning sessions" (M = 3.20, SD = 0.76) reinforces this perception of inclusivity and open communication. However, slightly lower mean values were observed in areas such as "the leader takes into consideration knowledge and skills of members, and awards important school tasks regarding them" (M = 3.09, SD = 0.84) and "the leader enables dialogue with all members involved in conflicts" (M = 3.10, SD = 0.83). These results suggest that while team collaboration is generally strong, there may

be limitations in ensuring that skill-based task delegation and conflict management fully align with inclusive leadership ideals.

Overall, the data indicate a positive perception of team leadership among respondents, emphasizing the value placed on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility. These findings are consistent with recent studies highlighting the importance of team-based leadership in higher education. According to Hussein et al. (2025), team-oriented leadership improves decision-making quality and promotes collective problem-solving in universities by leveraging the strengths of diverse team members.

Okoko (2023) also observed that effective team leadership in Nigerian universities fosters organizational commitment and enhances cultural inclusivity, especially when leaders encourage open dialogue and equitable participation among team members. Furthermore, Wekullo and Simiyu (2022) reported that collaborative leadership practices are essential for sustaining institutional growth and improving academic quality through shared responsibility.

In general, the results from this study suggest that team leadership is a well-developed aspect of democratic leadership in the universities studied. Leaders appear to prioritize cooperation, respect, and communication, although there remains some room for improvement in individualized task assignment and conflict resolution. These findings align with global trends emphasizing the shift from hierarchical management to team-based, participatory leadership as a means of fostering innovation and inclusivity in higher education (Hussein et al., 2025; Okoko, 2023; Wekullo & Simiyu, 2022).

The qualitative findings from educational leaders strongly support the relatively high aggregate mean of 3.16 for team leadership. Many participants described conscious

efforts to create environments built on mutual respect, especially in culturally diverse departments. One participant explained:

> As a Head of Department, I am very intentional about building unity among staff and students from different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. In our meetings, I emphasize that every member deserves respect regardless of seniority or background. We do not tolerate discrimination or exclusion. I constantly remind my team that diversity is our strength, and that cooperation across cultures improves our academic output. (P3)

Another participant stated that "we make it clear that no one should feel inferior because of their background or discipline" (P7). These accounts align with the high mean score of 3.13 on creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. Leaders clearly view cultural inclusion and respect as central to effective team functioning within their universities. The strong mean score for supporting collaboration through team building events and group tasks is also reflected in detailed narratives from participants. One leader described how collaboration is structured:

> We organize regular retreats, workshops, and departmental seminars where staff and students work together in groups. These are not just academic activities but platforms for bonding. For example, during accreditation preparation, we form committees that include lecturers, technologists, and administrative staff. Everyone contributes according to their expertise, and we meet regularly to review progress. This approach has strengthened teamwork and reduced unnecessary rivalry. (P8)

Similarly, another participant noted that "team-based assignments and joint committees have helped us build trust and improve productivity" (P10). These statements support the highest mean score of 3.27 for collaboration through team building and group tasks. Leaders appear to actively promote structured collaboration rather than leaving teamwork to chance. The qualitative data also explains the positive perception of open dialogue and inclusive meetings. Participants consistently described encouraging contributions during planning sessions. One participant stated:

"In my department, I ensure that during meetings, everyone has the opportunity to speak. Even junior lecturers and student representatives are invited to share their views. I usually go round the table and ask for input so that no one feels ignored. When people express different opinions, we discuss them openly before arriving at a collective position." (P5)

Another leader explained that "conflict is handled through dialogue; we call the parties involved and allow them to explain their perspectives before any conclusion is drawn" (P11). These accounts align with the mean scores above 3.10 for dialogue in conflict situations and encouraging idea contributions. Leaders present themselves as facilitators of communication and fair resolution processes, which supports students' positive perceptions.

However, the slightly lower mean scores for skill-based task delegation and conflict management are also reflected in the interviews. Some leaders acknowledged practical limitations. One participant explained:

> While we try to assign tasks based on competence and interest, sometimes institutional demands or urgent timelines require us to appoint those who are readily available or already experienced in certain roles. Ideally, everyone should be given equal opportunity, but operational realities sometimes influence these decisions. (P12)

Another participant stated that "conflict resolution can be sensitive because some issues are influenced by personal interests and power dynamics" (P6). These reflections suggest that although leaders aim to respect contributions and resolve conflicts fairly, implementation may not always fully reflect inclusive ideals. Overall, the qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by showing that team leadership, characterized by respect, collaboration, professional development, and open communication, is well established, though not without structural constraints in practice.

Motivational leadership. The study examined Motivational Leadership, another component of democratic leadership which assessed how university leaders inspire, support, and encourage others within their academic communities. The indicators were analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 14 as follows:

Table 14 Motivational Leadership Descriptive statistics

Motivational Leadership	N	Mean	Std. dev
31. All students and staff feel free to talk to the HOD/Dean when they need his/her help.	592	3.05	0.8151
32. The HOD/Dean has publicly address some of the challenges facing members of the department.	592	3.11	0.7916
33. The leader helps teaching staffs to find their "professional passion" and practice what they are good at.	592	3.13	0.8058
34. The leader seeks to know and encourage others to know more about the students' lives outside the classroom.	592	3.00	0.8965
35. The HOD has effectively communicate the importance of embracing cultural diversity.	592	3.02	0.8468
36. The leader gives praise to students and staff when they do well	592	3.20	0.7654
37. The leader inspires others by setting a good personal example.	592	3.23	0.7431
38. The leader shows care for the emotional and personal well-being of others.	592	3.15	0.8195
39. The leader provides encouraging feedback that helps people improve.	592	3.20	0.7996
40. The leader motivates staff and students to take on challenges with confidence.	592	3.19	0.7799
Sub-variable aggregate	592	3.13	0.8063

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 14 shows the results for the sub-variable Motivational Leadership. The aggregate mean score was 3.13 with a standard deviation of 0.8063, suggesting that respondents generally agreed that their leaders demonstrate motivational leadership behaviors to a moderate-to-high extent. The analysis shows that respondents perceived their leaders as

approachable and encouraging, as indicated by the high mean scores for statements such as “the leader inspires others by setting a good personal example” (Mean = 3.23, SD = 0.74) and “the leader gives praise to students and staff when they do well” (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.77). These results suggest that most leaders provide emotional and professional support to their team members. On the other hand, the slightly lower mean for “the leader seeks to know and encourage others to know more about students’ lives outside the classroom” (Mean = 3.00, SD = 0.90) indicates that while motivational behaviors are evident, personal engagement with students beyond academics may be less consistent. Overall, the data suggests that university leaders in the study area display motivational leadership practices that encourage teamwork, confidence, and inclusivity among staff and students. This finding aligns with studies such as (Ali & Anwar, 2021) and (Rafiq et al., 2020), which found that motivational leadership fosters job satisfaction and engagement among employees in higher education. Similarly, (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019) reported that motivational behaviors, including positive feedback and role modeling, improve organizational performance and morale. These findings corroborate the pattern observed in this study, indicating that motivational leadership remains an essential driver of commitment and productivity within academic environments.

The qualitative findings from educational leaders strongly support the aggregate mean of 3.13 for motivational leadership. Many participants described themselves as accessible and supportive to both staff and students. One participant explained:

> I make myself approachable to everyone in the department. My office is open to staff and students who need guidance, whether it is academic, professional, or even personal matters affecting their studies. I believe leadership is not only about administration but about being available when people need support. When people know they can talk to you freely, it builds trust and confidence within the department. (P2)

Another participant stated that “I encourage lecturers and students to come forward with their concerns without fear of intimidation” (P6). These statements align with the mean score of 3.05 for approachability and 3.11 for publicly addressing departmental challenges. Leaders clearly see open communication and accessibility as central components of motivating their teams.

The high mean scores for inspiring others by personal example and giving praise are also strongly reflected in the qualitative accounts. One participant described how role modeling shapes motivation:

> As a leader, I cannot demand commitment if I do not demonstrate it myself. I arrive early for meetings, meet deadlines, and show dedication to academic excellence. When staff see that you are disciplined and hardworking, they are naturally encouraged to follow. I also make it a point to publicly acknowledge achievements during meetings. When a lecturer publishes in a reputable journal or when students win competitions, we celebrate them openly. Recognition boosts morale. (P9)

Similarly, another participant noted that “simple words of appreciation can change someone’s attitude towards work” (P11). These accounts strongly reinforce the quantitative findings that leaders inspire by example and provide praise and encouraging feedback. Motivational leadership, in this context, appears closely tied to visible commitment and recognition of effort. The qualitative data also confirms that leaders make deliberate efforts to nurture professional growth and confidence. One participant stated:

> I try to help lecturers discover their strengths. Some are good researchers, others are excellent teachers, and some are strong in community engagement. I assign responsibilities based on these strengths so they can grow in areas they are passionate about. When people practice what they are good at, they perform better and feel fulfilled. (P4)

Another participant added that “we encourage staff to attend conferences and workshops because professional development is part of motivation” (P7). These narratives support the mean score of 3.13 regarding helping staff find their professional passion and the 3.19

mean for motivating staff and students to take on challenges confidently. Leaders perceive professional support as a motivational tool that strengthens institutional performance.

However, the slightly lower mean regarding engagement with students' lives outside the classroom is also reflected in the interviews. Some leaders acknowledged practical limitations. One participant explained:

> We try to understand students beyond academics, especially through mentorship programs and student advisory systems. But because of large class sizes and administrative workload, it is not always possible to know every student personally. We rely on course advisers and counselors to provide more direct support. (P12)

Another participant stated that "while we emphasize cultural diversity and inclusivity during orientations and seminars, sustaining personal interaction with every student can be challenging" (P5). These reflections show that although leaders value emotional wellbeing and cultural inclusivity, consistent personal engagement may be constrained by structural realities. Overall, the qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by demonstrating that motivational leadership is characterized by accessibility, role modeling, recognition, and professional encouragement, even though deeper personal engagement with students may vary across contexts.

Social Justice. The moderating variable of the study was Social Justice which assesses how school leadership practices promote fairness, inclusion, and equity within the learning environment. The items capture leaders' commitment to dismantling barriers to learning, empowering marginalized groups, and ensuring that both students and teachers are treated with integrity and equality. The indicators were analyzed and the results presented in table 5 below:

Table 15 Social Justice Descriptive statistics

Social Justice	N	Mean	Std. dev

41. The leader frowns against the extortion of students from sale of handouts, manuals, and other fees.	592	2.94	0.9231
42. The leader provides students with greater access to their culture	592	3.01	0.8081
43. The leader dismantles barriers that hinder certain groups from effective learning (such as giving consideration to the disabled)	592	2.98	0.8754
44. The leader empowers marginalized student groups through collaborative strategies such as awarding funding/scholarship to students gifted in different areas.	592	2.99	0.8627
45. The leader nurtures socially conscientious teacher-leaders by ensuring they are not above the rules	592	3.04	0.7997
Sub-variable aggregate	592	2.99	0.8538

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 15presents respondents' opinions on leaders' practice of social justice in their universities. The overall mean score was 2.99 with a standard deviation of 0.8538 indicating a moderate level of agreement among respondents that their leaders demonstrate social justice-oriented behaviors within their institutions. Among the individual items, the highest mean was recorded for the statement, *"The leader nurtures socially conscientious teacher-leaders by ensuring they are not above the rules"* (M = 3.04, SD = 0.80). This suggests that respondents generally perceive their leaders as maintaining accountability and fairness among staff. The item *"The leader provides students with greater access to their culture"* also scored relatively high (M = 3.01, SD = 0.81), implying that leaders make some effort to promote cultural inclusivity and identity expression among students.

On the other hand, the item "The leader frowns against the extortion of students from sale of handouts, manuals, and other fees" had a slightly lower mean (M = 2.94, SD = 0.92), suggesting that while respondents recognize some level of ethical leadership, this practice may not be consistently enforced across departments. Similarly, the mean for

"The leader dismantles barriers that hinder certain groups from effective learning" (M = 2.98, SD = 0.88) indicates only moderate agreement, reflecting that efforts toward accessibility and accommodation for disadvantaged or disabled students may require further improvement.

Overall, these findings indicate that while university leaders exhibit moderate levels of social justice leadership, there are aspects of equity enforcement and inclusivity that could be strengthened. This outcome aligns with previous research such as (León-Moreno et al., 2023) who found that institutional commitment to fairness and ethical accountability remains uneven in many higher education contexts. Similarly, (Ezzani & Brooks, 2022) emphasized that leaders who intentionally integrate social justice principles into policy and practice tend to build more inclusive and equitable learning environments. The findings also correspond with (Gube & Arat, 2024), who argued that authentic social justice leadership requires systemic accountability and not just individual good intentions. Therefore, the moderate mean observed here suggests that while the foundations for social justice leadership exist, Nigerian universities may still be transitioning from rhetorical commitment to consistent, institution-wide practices.

The responses on social justice present a picture of leadership that is aware of fairness concerns but still working toward deeper institutional consistency. Educational leaders spoke extensively about integrity, accountability, and the need to protect students from exploitation. One participant explained:

> In this faculty, I have made it very clear that the sale of handouts for personal gain is unacceptable. Education should not become a business transaction between lecturers and students. Whenever such complaints arise, we investigate them thoroughly. I constantly remind my staff that leadership is about service, not about taking advantage of students who may already be struggling financially. (P3)

Another participant stated that “we discourage any hidden charges that are not officially approved by the university management” (P8). These statements reflect the moderate mean score of 2.94 regarding frowning against extortion. While leaders express strong ethical positions, the quantitative results suggest that enforcement may not always be uniform across departments. On the issue of cultural access and inclusion, participants described deliberate attempts to create space for identity expression within the university environment. One participant shared:

> Our students come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and we try to respect that diversity. During orientation and faculty programs, we encourage cultural displays, language expression, and inclusive participation. We also make sure that no cultural group feels sidelined in academic or social activities. This promotes unity and mutual understanding among students. (P5)

Another leader noted that “we allow student associations to celebrate their cultural days as long as they follow university guidelines” (P9). These reflections correspond with the mean score of 3.01 for providing students greater access to their culture. The qualitative evidence suggests that leaders recognize cultural visibility as part of social justice, even if implementation varies across units.

Efforts to dismantle learning barriers were also discussed, though often with acknowledgment of structural limitations. A participant stated:

> We try to support students with disabilities by making special arrangements during examinations and lectures. For example, we provide seating arrangements and extended time where necessary. However, infrastructural challenges sometimes limit what we can fully implement. The intention is there, but resources can be a constraint. (P12)

Another participant explained that “we encourage lecturers to be sensitive to students who may face economic or social disadvantages” (P6). These accounts align with the moderate mean of 2.98 for dismantling barriers. Leaders appear conscious of equity concerns but operate within financial and institutional boundaries that may slow

progress. Regarding accountability and ensuring that no one is above the rules, participants emphasized fairness in governance. One leader remarked:

> In my administration, rules apply to everyone, including senior professors and unit heads. If there is misconduct, it is addressed through proper procedures. We cannot talk about social justice if leadership protects certain individuals because of status. Accountability must be consistent. (P1)

Another participant stated that "we discipline staff when necessary, even if they are influential" (P7). These views reflect the highest mean score of 3.04 on nurturing socially conscientious teacher leaders who are not above the rules. Overall, the qualitative data suggests that social justice principles are acknowledged and verbally reinforced by leaders, but their consistent translation into structural and systemic practice remains gradual rather than fully institutionalized.

Cultural Diversity. The dependent variable of the study, Cultural Diversity is measured through three indicators which are operationalized as follow:

Intercultural competency: The ability of students and faculty to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. It includes cultural awareness, respect, and communication skills

Curriculum diversity: the integration of diverse cultural perspectives, histories, and values into university courses. It ensures fair representation of different cultures in learning materials.

Student participation: The active involvement of students from diverse backgrounds in academic and extracurricular activities. It reflects inclusivity and engagement within the university environment. The descriptive results are provided in table 16 below

Table 16: Cultural Diversity Descriptive Statistics

Cultural Diversity	N	Mean	Std. dev
46. I feel confident when interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds.	592	3.28	0.6979
47. I adjust my communication style based on the cultural background of the person I am speaking to.	592	3.32	0.6924
48. I actively seek opportunities to learn about different cultural traditions and customs.	592	3.11	0.7502
49. I find it easy to adapt to new cultural environments within the university.	592	2.96	0.8247
50. I try to understand the perspectives of people from different cultures before making decisions.	592	3.36	0.6434
51. This encompasses the extent to which academic content, materials, and teaching practices reflect, respect, and represent diverse cultural perspectives and identities.	592	3.07	0.8917
52. My university curriculum includes topics that reflect diverse cultural perspectives.	592	3.28	0.8228
53. My courses include materials written by scholars from different cultural backgrounds.	592	2.97	0.8170
54. My professors encourage open discussions on cultural diversity and inclusivity.	592	2.89	0.8969
55. The course materials I use challenge stereotypes and promote cultural understanding.	592	2.98	0.7910
56. My university provides learning resources that represent diverse cultural identities.	592	3.24	0.7679
57. This focuses on the active engagement of students from various cultural backgrounds in academic, social, and leadership activities within the university.	592	3.10	0.7526
58. I feel comfortable participating in university events that involve students from different cultural backgrounds.	592	3.06	0.8488
59. I frequently collaborate with students from different cultures on group projects and assignments.	592	3.33	0.7098

60. My university promotes student clubs and activities that encourage cultural diversity and inclusion.	592	3.42	0.7265
Sub-variable aggregate	592	3.16	0.7756

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The data in Table 16 presents the results for the sub-variable Cultural Diversity, which was measured using fifteen items. The overall aggregate mean score was 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.7756, showing that respondents generally agreed that their universities demonstrate moderate cultural diversity and inclusion in academic and social environments. Regarding the statement on whether respondents adjust their communication style based on the cultural background of the person they are speaking to, the results indicated a relatively high mean score of 3.32 (SD = 0.69), suggesting that respondents frequently adapt to cultural differences during interactions. Similarly, the statement “I try to understand the perspectives of people from different cultures before making decisions” had the highest mean of 3.36 (SD = 0.64), indicating a strong tendency toward intercultural empathy and understanding.

In contrast, the lowest mean score of 2.89 (SD = 0.89) was recorded for the item “My professors encourage open discussions on cultural diversity and inclusivity.” This finding shows that while students are personally open to intercultural engagement, institutional practices that promote open dialogue on diversity may still be limited. The mean score of 2.97 (SD = 0.82) for “My courses include materials written by scholars from different cultural backgrounds” further suggests that curriculum diversity remains uneven. Interestingly, the statement “My university promotes student clubs and activities that encourage cultural diversity and inclusion” had a high mean of 3.42 (SD = 0.73),

reflecting that extracurricular and co-curricular initiatives are the strongest avenue for diversity expression.

From the observed trend, respondents seem to value and practice cultural sensitivity in interpersonal relations, but institutional structures like curriculum design and faculty engagement lag behind. This suggests that personal intercultural competence among students is stronger than the systemic inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives in teaching and learning.

These findings both corroborate existing research. For instance, Sierra-Huedo and Nevado-Llopis (2022) found that structured intercultural learning interventions, such as study-abroad programs and dedicated courses, significantly improve students' intercultural competence. (Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis, 2022) This aligns with the data showing strong personal intercultural skills among students. On the institutional side, Kuffuor et al. (2024) applied Kotter's eight-step change model in a U.S. university to develop intercultural competence among faculty and staff. They showed that structured change initiatives can embed intercultural values into an institution's culture over time. The finding of weak encouragement for open discussions by professors may reflect that such high-level change is not yet widespread in this research context.

Moreover, research on curriculum internationalization supports the observation about curriculum gaps. For example, Yang and Zhong (2024) found that when teacher education programs incorporate service-learning and internationalized curriculum, cross-cultural competence improves, but only if there is institutional support. (Yang & Zhong, 2024) This resonates with the lower scores on course materials by culturally diverse scholars.

The results on cultural diversity suggest that intercultural interaction among students is relatively strong, while institutional support structures show moderate

development. Educational leaders described a university environment where daily interaction across cultures is common and often encouraged. One participant explained:

> In our university, students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds work together naturally. Group assignments, laboratory work, and departmental projects are deliberately structured to mix students from different backgrounds. We believe that when students collaborate academically, they learn to respect and understand each other beyond stereotypes. (P4)

Another participant stated that "we encourage students to listen carefully to perspectives different from their own before forming conclusions" (P9). These accounts reflect the high mean scores for trying to understand different cultural perspectives (3.36) and adjusting communication styles (3.32). Leaders perceive intercultural competence as something that grows through daily academic interaction rather than through isolated programs alone. However, when discussing curriculum diversity, participants acknowledged that integration of diverse cultural materials is still evolving. One leader noted:

> Although we recognize the importance of including diverse scholars and perspectives in our curriculum, many programs still rely heavily on traditional textbooks. Curriculum review is ongoing, but change takes time because it must pass through several academic committees and regulatory bodies. (P2)

Another participant explained that "individual lecturers sometimes introduce materials from different cultural backgrounds based on personal interest, but it is not yet uniform across all courses" (P7). These statements correspond with the lower mean scores for inclusion of materials written by scholars from different cultural backgrounds (2.97) and encouragement of open discussions on diversity by professors (2.89). The qualitative data suggests that curriculum diversification depends largely on individual initiative rather than a fully coordinated institutional policy. In contrast, leaders spoke

more confidently about extracurricular spaces as platforms for cultural expression and inclusion. One participant described:

> We actively support cultural clubs, student associations, and intercultural events. During cultural week, different groups showcase their traditions, food, music, and attire. These programs are funded and supervised by the university to ensure inclusivity and respect. Through these activities, students gain confidence in their identities while appreciating others. (P10)

Another leader stated that "student union activities and faculty associations are structured to ensure representation from different cultural groups" (P6). These accounts align with the highest mean score of 3.42 for promoting clubs and activities that encourage cultural diversity and inclusion. The evidence suggests that while classroom practices and curriculum reform are still progressing, extra-curricular activities provide a strong foundation for cultural participation and engagement.

Overall, the qualitative findings indicate that interpersonal intercultural competence among students is reinforced through structured collaboration and social interaction. However, curriculum transformation and consistent faculty led dialogue on diversity remain areas that require more systematic institutional commitment. Leaders appear aware of these gaps and acknowledge that embedding cultural diversity deeply into teaching practices demands policy level support, curriculum review, and sustained monitoring beyond individual effort.

Diagnostic Tests for Ordinal Logistic Regression

Before interpreting the ordinal logistic regression results, diagnostic and assumption tests were conducted to determine the suitability of the models for hypothesis testing. Since the study used ordinal logistic regression, the Test of Parallel Lines was performed to assess the proportional odds assumption, which determines whether the relationship between the predictors and the ordinal dependent variable is consistent across outcome categories. In addition, multicollinearity was assessed to determine whether the predictor variables were

excessively correlated with one another. These tests were necessary to ensure that the regression estimates were reliable and that the assumptions underlying the ordinal logistic regression models were reasonably satisfied.

Table 17: Test of Parallel Lines Results

Model	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Decision
Participative Leadership → Cultural Diversity	0.860	2	.650	Assumption met
Shared Leadership → Cultural Diversity	4.541	2	.103	Assumption met
Team Leadership → Cultural Diversity	8.672	2	.013	Assumption violated
Motivational Leadership → Cultural Diversity	3.807	2	.149	Assumption met
Social Justice → Cultural Diversity	2.217	2	.330	Assumption met

The Test of Parallel Lines was conducted to assess the proportional odds assumption for the ordinal logistic regression models. This was necessary because the dependent variable, **cultural diversity**, was treated as an ordinal outcome, while participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, motivational leadership, and social justice were tested as predictors. Recent methodological studies emphasize that ordinal logistic regression should be accompanied by an assessment of the proportional odds assumption because the model depends on the assumption that predictor effects are consistent across the ordered categories of the dependent variable (Liu et al., 2023; Gambarota & Altoè, 2024).

The results in Table 17 showed that the proportional odds assumption was satisfied for participative leadership, shared leadership, motivational leadership, and social justice,

since their significance values were greater than .05. This means that the ordinal logistic regression models for these variables met the assumption required for the proportional odds model. This is consistent with the position of Lelisho et al. (2022), who applied ordinal logistic regression and interpreted a non-significant Test of Parallel Lines as evidence that the proportional odds assumption was not violated. Similarly, Mathew et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of testing this assumption when applying proportional odds ordinal logistic regression to ordered outcome variables.

However, the result for team leadership was significant, $\chi^2(2) = 8.672$, $p = .013$, indicating that the proportional odds assumption was not satisfied for this model. This suggests that the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity may not be uniform across the response categories of the dependent variable. Liu et al. (2023) noted that the proportional odds assumption may not always hold in practice and that assumption testing is necessary to determine whether a single common odds estimate adequately represents the relationship across ordinal thresholds.

The violation observed for team leadership does not nullify the regression result. Rather, it indicates that the result should be interpreted with caution. Uddin et al. (2024) observed that proportional odds models remain useful for ordinal outcomes, but the common odds ratio may be less straightforward to interpret when proportionality is not fully satisfied. Gambarota and Altoè (2024) also explained that ordinal regression models are useful for ordered data, but careful attention should be given to model assumptions and interpretation. Therefore, the significant influence of team leadership on cultural diversity was retained, but the interpretation acknowledges that the effect may vary across different levels of cultural diversity.

In summary, the Test of Parallel Lines confirmed that most of the ordinal logistic regression models met the proportional odds assumption. The assumption was satisfied

for participative leadership, shared leadership, motivational leadership, and social justice, while team leadership violated the assumption. Consequently, the ordinal logistic regression result for team leadership was interpreted cautiously, rather than rejected.

Table 18: Multicollinearity Test Results

Predictor variable	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Participative Leadership	.409	2.444	Acceptable
Shared Leadership	.184	5.434	Moderate multicollinearity
Team Leadership	.175	5.718	Moderate multicollinearity
Motivational Leadership	.165	6.067	Moderate multicollinearity
Social Justice	.366	2.730	Acceptable

Multicollinearity was assessed using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. This was necessary because the regression models included conceptually related predictors: participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, motivational leadership, and social justice. Multicollinearity occurs when predictor variables are highly related, making it difficult to estimate the separate contribution of each predictor in a regression model. Recent statistical literature explains that multicollinearity can inflate standard errors and weaken the stability of regression coefficients, especially where predictors measure closely related constructs (Kim, 2019; Salmerón-Gómez et al., 2024). The results in Table 18 showed that the Tolerance values ranged from .165 to .409, while the VIF values ranged from 2.444 to 6.067. Participative leadership had a tolerance value of .409 and VIF of 2.444, while social justice had a tolerance value of .366 and VIF of 2.730. These results indicate acceptable levels of multicollinearity. According to Marcoulides and Raykov (2019), tolerance is the inverse of VIF, and lower tolerance values indicate stronger linear association between a predictor and the other predictors in

the model. A tolerance value below .10 is usually regarded as evidence of serious multicollinearity, while a VIF value of 10 is commonly treated as a critical threshold (Marcoulides & Raykov, 2019; Kim, 2019).

Shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership recorded VIF values of 5.434, 5.718, and 6.067, respectively. These values suggest moderate multicollinearity, especially when the stricter VIF threshold of 5 is applied. However, they do not indicate severe multicollinearity because all the VIF values were below 10, and all tolerance values were above .10. This interpretation is consistent with Kim (2019), who noted that VIF values between 5 and 10 may indicate the presence of multicollinearity, while values above 10 are usually more problematic. Similarly, James et al. (2021) explained that VIF is commonly used to assess how much the variance of a regression coefficient is inflated because of correlation among predictors.

The moderate multicollinearity observed among shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership is understandable because these variables are dimensions of the broader construct of democratic leadership. Therefore, conceptual overlap among them is expected. Salmerón-Gómez et al. (2024) also observed that VIF remains one of the most widely used tools for diagnosing multicollinearity, but its interpretation should consider the context and structure of the predictors rather than relying mechanically on a single cut-off point. In this study, the moderate VIF values reflect the relatedness of democratic leadership dimensions, not a level of multicollinearity severe enough to justify removing any predictor from the model.

Overall, the multicollinearity test showed that the predictor variables did not suffer from severe multicollinearity. Although shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership showed moderate VIF values, all predictors were retained because their tolerance values were above the minimum acceptable threshold and their VIF values were

below the critical threshold of 10. Therefore, the regression models were considered acceptable for further analysis, with the interpretation acknowledging the expected conceptual relationship among the democratic leadership indicators.

Inferential Statistics

Ordinal regression analysis was used to investigate the influence of participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership and motivational leadership on cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities.

Test of hypothesis one

The study sought to determine the influence of participative leadership on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities by testing the null hypothesis, H_{01}: participative leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities

The findings of the ordinal logistic regression are illustrated below

Table 19: Ordinal Regression Analysis of Participative Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Model Fit Statistics	**Value**	**Df**	**Sig.**
-2 Log Likelihood (Final)	29.129	–	–
Chi-Square	7.469	2	.024
Pseudo R-Square	**Value**		
Nagelkerke	.015		
Parameter Estimates	**Estimate**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval**
Participative = 2	0.749	.028	[0.080, 1.418]
Participative = 3	-0.117	.487	[-0.446, 0.212]
Reference Category	Level 4	–	–

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The first objective examined the influence of participative leadership on cultural diversity within selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The ordinal logistic regression results in Table 19 show that the overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 7.469$, $p = .024$. This indicates that participative leadership made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of cultural diversity when compared with a model without the predictor (Field, 2018; Hosmer et al., 2013). However, the Nagelkerke R^2 value of .015 shows that participative leadership explained only about 1.5% of the variance in cultural diversity. This represents a very small effect size based on the common benchmarks of .02 for small, .13 for moderate, and .26 for large effects (Cohen, 1988; Peng et al., 2002). The result therefore suggests that participative leadership has a statistically significant but weak practical influence on cultural diversity. Other institutional and contextual factors, such as social justice practices, university policies, governance culture, and staff-student relations, may account for a larger proportion of the differences in cultural diversity perceptions.

At Level 2, participative leadership had a positive and significant coefficient (B = 0.749, p = .028, CI [0.080, 1.418]), showing that respondents at this level differed significantly from the reference category in their perceptions of cultural diversity. However, at Level 3, the coefficient was negative but not statistically significant (B = -0.117, p = .487), which means that no firm conclusion can be drawn about its effect at that level. The pattern suggests that participative leadership may be most useful when it is practised in a balanced and consultative manner, but the evidence does not support a strong claim that higher levels of participation reduce cultural diversity outcomes. This interpretation is consistent with leadership perspectives that emphasize the need to balance consultation with clarity, direction, and timely decision-making.

Consistent with Vitous et al. (2019), Selzer and Foley (2018), Almaskari et al. (2021), and Zulfqar et al. (2022), participative leadership was found to have a statistically significant influence on diversity-related outcomes, as the overall model was significant, $\chi^2(2) = 7.469$, $p = .024$, and participative leadership at Level 2 had a positive and significant coefficient, $B = 0.749$, $p = .028$. This supports earlier studies which report that participative leadership enhances inclusion, collegiality, job satisfaction, and innovation in culturally diverse university settings. However, there is divergence in the strength of the relationship. While previous quantitative studies reported stronger explanatory power, this study recorded a much smaller Nagelkerke R^2 of .015, indicating that participative leadership explains only 1.5 percent of the variance in cultural diversity within Southwest Nigerian universities. Furthermore, unlike Almaskari et al. (2021) and Zulfqar et al. (2022), which found consistently positive effects, this study showed that Level 3 participative leadership was not statistically significant, $B = -0.117$, $p = .487$. This suggests that higher levels of participative leadership did not add significant explanatory value in this context. Overall, the study shows agreement in direction but difference in magnitude and consistency of effect.

The descriptive data in Table 11 provides further support for these inferential findings. The overall mean score for participative leadership, $M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.9669$, shows that respondents generally agreed that their leaders demonstrate participative behaviour. However, while items on inclusiveness in decision-making recorded high means, such as $M = 3.48$ for involving different groups in decisions, items on allowing staff and students to take part in drafting school rules had much lower means, $M = 2.44$. This indicates that leaders are more open in consultative or operational decisions but less participative in formal governance. Such results correspond with the regression pattern, where Level 2 participative leadership had a significant positive coefficient, while Level

3 was not significant. The descriptive and inferential findings together suggest that balanced consultation may support inclusion, although participation in formal governance remains limited.

The qualitative data also supports this interpretation. Respondents agreed that inclusion is valuable but that leaders must maintain direction. One lecturer stated, “Before making any decision, you have to sample the opinions of others” (P4), while another explained, “When I work with students on a project, I ask for their ideas first… we discuss the pros and cons, and together we decide on the best option” (P13). These examples show that participative leadership builds ownership through fairness and open communication. Others, however, warned that constant consultation can slow decisions and make leaders seem weak. As one respondent noted, “It’s not every time you will please everybody, but decisions have to be made” (P12). This variation in responses reflects Lewin’s Democratic Leadership Theory, which proposes that participative leaders encourage inclusion and commitment, while still requiring direction and timely decision-making. P8 observed that “when leaders act unilaterally, universities begin to resemble a military arrangement,” yet also pointed out that too many meetings “can delay simple matters.” These insights help explain the variation observed in the regression results.

Themes from the qualitative data such as inclusion, transparency, and recognition further show how participative leadership enhances cultural diversity. P11 emphasized fairness, saying, “A leader should treat everybody equally… if I have to collect an assignment late, I must collect it from all of them.” P13 added, “If I make a decision, I explain the reasons behind it so everyone understands the rationale.” Such practices promote trust and understanding across ethnic and cultural lines. P8 also mentioned that cultural recognition is essential: “We have various student associations for different

cultures, and during cultural week, they are allowed to display their cultures." These actions strengthen belonging and reduce bias in multicultural settings.

Recent studies also support these results. Toufighi et al. (2024) found that participative leadership promotes knowledge sharing and inclusion when trust and communication are prioritized. Kokkoz and Ozgit (2025) observed that the success of participative leadership in diverse universities depends on the leader's ability to balance inclusivity with decisiveness. Similarly, Gómez-Hurtado et al. (2021) reported that democratic leadership fosters equity and respect but must be adapted to institutional context and culture. Overall, both the regression and qualitative data show that participative leadership influences cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities, although its practical effect is small and context-dependent. Leadership must balance inclusion with authority and fairness. Leaders who encourage participation, explain decisions, and recognize cultural identities are more likely to build trust and harmony. The findings therefore support rejecting the null hypothesis (H_{01}).

Test of Hypothesis Two

The study sought to determine the influence of shared leadership on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities by testing the null hypothesis shared leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities The findings of the ordinal logistic regression are illustrated below.

Table 20: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Shared Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Model Fit Statistics	**Value**	**Df**	**Sig.**
-2 Log Likelihood (Final)	30.837	–	–
Chi-Square	5.421	3	.143

Pseudo R-Square	**Value**		
Nagelkerke	.011		
Parameter Estimates	**Estimate**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval**
Shared Leadership = 1	1.065	.064	[-0.062, 2.191]
Shared Leadership = 2	-0.249	.605	[-1.190, 0.693]
Shared Leadership = 3	0.196	.241	[-0.132, 0.523]
Reference Category	Level 4	–	–

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The second objective was to determine whether shared leadership influences cultural diversity within selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The ordinal logistic regression results in Table 20 show that the overall model was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 5.421$, $p = .143$. This means that adding shared leadership as a predictor did not significantly improve the model compared with one with no predictors (Field, 2018; Hosmer et al., 2013). Therefore, shared leadership did not make a statistically significant contribution to explaining variations in respondents' perceptions of cultural diversity.

The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .011 indicates that shared leadership explained about 1.1% of the variance in cultural diversity. Based on accepted benchmarks where .02 represents a small effect, .13 a moderate effect, and .26 a large effect (Cohen, 1988; Peng et al., 2002), this represents a very small effect size. This suggests that the influence of shared leadership on cultural diversity in the sampled universities is minimal. Other institutional and contextual factors, such as leadership hierarchy, governance culture, social justice practices, or policy implementation, may have stronger influence on cultural diversity outcomes.

Further examination of the parameter estimates shows that none of the levels of shared leadership was statistically significant. At Level 1, the coefficient was positive and close to significance (B = 1.065, p = .064), but it did not meet the .05 significance level. At Level 2, the coefficient was negative and not significant (B = -0.249, p = .605), while Level 3 was positive but also not significant (B = 0.196, p = .241). These inconsistent and non-significant results suggest that shared leadership practices in the sampled universities were not strong enough to predict cultural diversity outcomes in a reliable manner.

The findings of this study differ from many previous studies on shared leadership and cultural diversity. While the present study recorded a non-significant overall model, $\chi^2(3) = 5.421$, $p = .143$, with a very small Nagelkerke R^2 of .011, earlier studies generally reported positive relationships between shared leadership and diversity-related outcomes. For example, Lauring and Selmer (2012) found that cultural and linguistic diversity positively influenced knowledge sharing, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .34$, indicating moderate explanatory power. Similarly, Iskhakova and Ott (2020) reported that team-level cultural intelligence significantly predicted academic performance, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .44$, showing stronger effects in diverse team settings. Ramthun and Matkin (2012) and Kruse et al. (2018) also proposed that shared leadership enhances collaboration and inclusivity when supported by intercultural competence and institutional structures. In contrast, the current results show weak and inconsistent parameter estimates, with only Level 1 approaching significance, B = 1.065, p = .064. This difference may suggest that shared leadership practices in Southwest Nigerian public universities are not yet fully institutionalized or supported by strong intercultural systems. It may also reflect hierarchical governance structures that limit collective decision-making, thereby reducing the possible effect of shared leadership on cultural diversity.

Theoretically, these findings can be explained by shared leadership and contingency leadership perspectives. Shared leadership theory emphasizes that effective leadership occurs when influence and responsibility are distributed among members of a group (Pearce & Conger, 2003). However, Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967) stresses that the success of a leadership style depends on how well it fits the organizational context. In many universities within the study area, hierarchical structures may still dominate, making it difficult for shared leadership to move beyond nominal delegation or committee-based participation.

Qualitative insights support this interpretation. Some respondents observed that although leadership responsibilities are sometimes shared, decision-making remains concentrated at the top. One respondent stated, “We share responsibilities among colleagues, but approval always goes through management before implementation” (P10). Another added, “We coordinate programs, but the dean or provost must endorse everything” (P14). These accounts reveal that shared leadership exists, but often within tightly controlled administrative structures. Another respondent noted, “Sometimes leaders encourage teamwork, but they don’t let go of authority when it matters most” (P6). This pattern suggests symbolic collaboration rather than genuine power-sharing.

The descriptive results in Table 12 correspond with these findings. The aggregate mean score for shared leadership, $M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.8248$, indicates a moderate level of practice. Respondents agreed that leaders encourage teamwork and shared goals, $M = 3.15$, and support peer-selected team leaders, $M = 3.17$, which reflects emerging collaborative practices. However, lower means were found for items such as delegating authority to faculty members, $M = 2.95$, and taking responsibility for decisions initiated by students, $M = 2.89$. This suggests that leaders are cautious about fully distributing authority. These descriptive results help explain the low predictive power found in the regression. Shared

leadership appears present in principle but limited in practice, and such partial empowerment may not be sufficient to influence perceptions of cultural diversity meaningfully.

The results align with several recent studies emphasizing the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing in university leadership. Hussein et al. (2025) found that knowledge-sharing cultures enhance decision-making effectiveness in universities, particularly where collective participation is encouraged. Similarly, Łużniak-Piecha et al. (2023) reported that student collaboration and shared governance strengthen institutional inclusivity and knowledge exchange. In addition, Budur et al. (2023) observed that shared leadership and organizational learning cultures enhance innovation through collective responsibility. These findings indicate that shared leadership can promote inclusivity and engagement when it operates within a genuinely collaborative structure. However, Sharma and Makhija (2024) noted that implementing shared or participative systems requires supportive institutional frameworks, without which leadership may remain centralized and symbolic.

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative results indicate that shared leadership has no statistically significant influence on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. Although some collaborative practices are visible, they are often bounded by administrative control. As a result, shared leadership appears to function more as cooperative management than as distributed authority. These findings support retaining the null hypothesis (H_{02}), indicating that shared leadership does not significantly influence cultural diversity in the sampled universities. Strengthening shared leadership would require institutional reforms that promote genuine power-sharing, accountability, and trust across leadership levels.

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Test of Hypothesis Three

The third independent sub-variable of interest in this study was the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity in Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities. The hypothesis "team leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities" was tested. The findings are presented in table 21

Table 21: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Team Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Model Fit Statistics	**Value**	**Df**	**Sig.**
-2 Log Likelihood (Final)	28.393	–	–
Chi-Square	19.252	3	.000
Pseudo R-Square	**Value**		
Nagelkerke	.037		
Parameter Estimates	**Estimate**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval**
Team Leadership = 1	20.783	–	[20.783, 20.783]
Team Leadership = 2	-0.681	.072	[-1.424, 0.062]
Team Leadership = 3	-0.030	.859	[-0.358, 0.299]
Reference Category	Level 4	–	–

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The third objective examined the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The ordinal logistic regression results in Table 21 show that the overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 19.252$, $p < .001$. This indicates that team leadership made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of cultural diversity when compared with a model without the predictor. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .037 suggests that team

leadership explained about 3.7% of the variance in cultural diversity. Although this represents a small effect size, it shows that team leadership has a statistically significant but modest influence on cultural diversity outcomes in the sampled universities. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

From the parameter estimates, Level 1 produced an unusually high coefficient, B = 20.783. This value is likely due to sparse data or separation in that response category and should not be given substantive interpretation. At Level 2, the coefficient was negative and marginally non-significant, B = -0.681, p = .072, while Level 3 showed a very small and non-significant coefficient, B = -0.030, p = .859. These results show that although the overall model was significant, the individual category estimates were not strong enough to support detailed claims about how each level of team leadership affects cultural diversity. The safest interpretation is that team leadership, as a broad construct, contributes to cultural diversity, but its effect is modest and may depend on how teamwork, collaboration, and conflict management are practised within each university.

The findings of this study largely converge with previous research, although the strength of the relationship differs. The present study found a statistically significant overall model, $\chi^2(3) = 19.252$, $p < .001$, indicating that team leadership influences cultural diversity. This aligns with Urionabarrenetxea et al. (2021), who reported that effective team leadership strengthened the positive effect of diversity on performance, $\beta = 0.27$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .38$. It is also consistent with Cherian et al. (2020), who found that cultural diversity positively predicted team performance, $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .29$, and with Iskhakova and Ott (2020), who showed that culturally diverse teams improved academic outcomes through team-level cultural intelligence, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .44$. However, the Nagelkerke R^2 of .037 in the current study indicates much smaller explanatory power compared with those earlier studies. In addition, the marginal and negative coefficient at

Level 2, B = -0.681, p = .072, suggests that the effect of team leadership may not be uniform across all levels. This supports Levitt's (2016) observation that diversity can create tension when intercultural competence and strong leadership are weak. Overall, there is agreement that team leadership matters, but the effect is weaker and more context-dependent in Southwest Nigerian public universities.

These quantitative findings align with the descriptive statistics in Table 13, where the aggregate mean score, M = 3.16, SD = 0.79, indicated that respondents generally perceived their leaders as fostering mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility. High means for items such as "the leader supports collaboration through team-building events and group tasks," M = 3.27, SD = 0.70, and "the leader provides opportunities for professional development," M = 3.21, SD = 0.75, suggest that team-oriented practices are visible within the universities. However, slightly lower means in conflict-related areas, such as "the leader enables dialogue with all members in conflict," M = 3.10, SD = 0.83, indicate that inclusive conflict management still requires improvement. This may help explain why team leadership was statistically significant but explained only a small proportion of the variance in cultural diversity.

The qualitative evidence reinforces these observations. Participants described teamwork as a major part of democratic leadership that promotes unity in diversity and strengthens institutional harmony. One participant emphasized fairness as central to teamwork, saying, "A leader should allow unity in diversity; he should treat everybody with fairness and equally" (P11). Another participant stressed inclusive participation: "When you call for contributions, you must deliberately give everyone the opportunity to speak, not only the majority voices" (P13). These accounts show that effective team leadership goes beyond coordinating activities. It also requires leaders to create safe and fair spaces where minority voices can participate. Collaboration was also described as a

tool for learning and inclusion, as some lecturers intentionally paired students from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds to foster mutual understanding and empathy (P14).

The qualitative perspectives also revealed that barriers to teamwork, such as tribalism, favouritism, and authoritarian leadership tendencies, can weaken cooperation and reduce cultural inclusivity. As one respondent noted, “If tribalism is not managed well, there won’t be efficiency in the work we do… I may try to reduce my efforts” (P11). Such responses show the importance of fairness, transparency, and equal recognition in sustaining effective team dynamics within multicultural settings. In terms of conflict management, participants stressed that leadership must combine dialogue, neutrality, and respect for cultural identities to sustain team cohesion. This aligns with the quantitative finding that conflict-related leadership behaviours, although present, were rated slightly lower than other teamwork dimensions. Constructive conflict resolution through inclusive dialogue and joint decision-making was viewed as a key feature of team leadership that can turn diversity from a source of tension into a basis for cooperation and unity.

These findings resonate with the broader literature. Hussein et al. (2025) observed that team-oriented leadership enhances decision-making and institutional cohesion by integrating diverse perspectives. Okoko (2023) emphasized that team leadership in Nigerian universities nurtures organizational commitment and collective trust, while Wekullo and Simiyu (2022) linked collaborative leadership with improved academic quality and social cohesion. The current study’s results also support the argument by Morales-Huamán et al. (2023) that teamwork promotes innovation and inclusion only when collaboration is practised fairly and not symbolically. Overall, the findings show that team leadership significantly influences cultural diversity in selected Southwest

Nigerian public universities, although the effect is modest. This means that team leadership is useful for promoting cooperation and cultural inclusion, but it must be supported by fairness, dialogue, and effective conflict management.

Test of Hypothesis Four

The fourth independent sub-variable of interest in this study was the influence of motivational leadership on cultural diversity in Selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The null hypothesis, H03: Team leadership has no significant effect on cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities was tested. The results are presented in table 22

Table 22: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Motivational Leadership on Cultural Diversity

Model Fit Statistics	**Value**	**Df**	**Sig.**
-2 Log Likelihood (Final)	36.682	–	–
Chi-Square	23.720	3	.000
Pseudo R-Square	**Value**		
Nagelkerke	.046		
Parameter Estimates	**Estimate**	**Sig.**	**95% CI**
Motivational Leadership = 1	1.068	.062	[-0.053, 2.189]
Motivational Leadership = 2	-1.871	.001	[-2.983, -0.759]
Motivational Leadership = 3	0.330	.048	[0.003, 0.656]
Reference Category	Level 4	–	–

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The fourth objective examined the influence of motivational leadership on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The null hypothesis tested

was: H_{04}: motivational leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The ordinal logistic regression results in Table 22 show that the overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 23.720$, $p < .001$. This indicates that motivational leadership made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of cultural diversity when compared with a model without the predictor (Field, 2018; Hosmer et al., 2013).

The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .046 suggests that motivational leadership explained about 4.6% of the variance in cultural diversity. Using Cohen's (1988) guideline, where .02 represents a small effect, .13 a moderate effect, and .26 a large effect, this finding represents a small effect size. Although the explanatory power is limited, motivational leadership recorded a stronger predictive value than participative, shared, and team leadership in this study. This suggests that recognition, encouragement, support, and commitment building may play a useful role in shaping respondents' perceptions of cultural diversity, even though other institutional and contextual factors still account for most of the variance.

Looking at the parameter estimates, motivational leadership at Level 1 showed a positive but non-significant coefficient, B = 1.068, p = .062. At Level 2, the coefficient was negative and statistically significant, B = -1.871, p = .001, while Level 3 showed a positive and significant coefficient, B = 0.330, p = .048. These results suggest that the effect of motivational leadership on cultural diversity was not uniform across all levels. The negative coefficient at Level 2 should be interpreted with caution, as it may reflect uneven or inconsistent motivational practices rather than evidence that motivation itself reduces cultural diversity. The positive and significant coefficient at Level 3 suggests that stronger and more consistent motivational leadership may support more favourable perceptions of cultural inclusion.

The findings of this study are largely consistent with previous studies, although the strength and pattern of effects differ. The significant overall model, $\chi^2(3) = 23.720$, $p < .001$, supports earlier findings by Almaskari et al. (2021), who reported that motivational leadership significantly predicted innovation, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .46$, and by Holgate (2020), who found that intercultural and motivational orientation predicted positive academic outcomes, $\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .39$. Similarly, Hynds and McDonald (2010) showed that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted engagement in culturally responsive practices, $\beta = 0.44$, $p < .01$. However, the Nagelkerke R^2 of .046 in the present study indicates much smaller explanatory power than the R^2 values reported in earlier studies. In addition, the mixed pattern of coefficients, especially the negative and significant coefficient at Level 2, $B = -1.871$, $p = .001$, suggests that motivational leadership may operate differently across levels of practice. This may reflect contextual differences where limited or uneven motivation is perceived as selective support, while stronger and more consistent motivation supports inclusion and cultural harmony.

The descriptive results reinforce this interpretation. Table 14 showed that motivational leadership had an overall mean score of 3.13, SD = 0.8063, indicating that respondents generally agreed that their leaders use motivational strategies. Higher means were recorded for items such as “the leader inspires me to give my best effort” and “the leader recognizes the achievements of staff and students.” This pattern aligns with the regression results, which suggest that stronger motivational leadership is associated with more positive diversity perceptions. However, items suggesting selective or uneven recognition had lower means, which may help explain the negative coefficient at Level 2. This suggests that motivation may support cultural diversity when it is fair, consistent, and inclusive, but may be less effective when it appears selective or focused only on some groups.

Theoretically, these results are supported by Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), which emphasizes inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation as ways of motivating diverse teams. They also align with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, which shows that recognition and meaningful engagement can strengthen intrinsic motivation and a positive organizational climate. From the expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964), leaders who clearly connect effort, recognition, and reward can strengthen commitment and participation, especially in multicultural contexts.

Qualitative evidence provides depth to these interpretations. Several respondents described motivation as a driver of unity and inclusion. P3 stated, "Our head always encourages us to work as a family regardless of where we come from." Another respondent noted, "When you appreciate people's work, they become committed and forget about tribal or religious differences" (P9). P6 also shared, "My leader recognizes effort in small ways, and it makes us all feel seen, no matter who we are." These narratives show how motivational leadership can foster belonging and reduce cultural tension. However, not all experiences were positive. P11 cautioned, "Sometimes the leader praises a few and ignores others, and that discourages participation." Such mixed responses align with the statistical pattern, where motivation supported inclusivity when it was applied fairly, but uneven recognition could discourage participation.

The pattern in this study is further supported by empirical research. Bratianu and Paiuc (2023) found that motivational and multicultural leadership jointly improve organizational adaptability and inclusion. Croitoru et al. (2022) also showed that motivation-driven diversity initiatives strengthen collaboration and creativity in diverse environments. Similarly, Syaharuddin and Fitriani (2024) demonstrated that motivational

and multicultural leadership practices increase students' intercultural understanding and engagement.

Both quantitative and qualitative evidence show that motivational leadership significantly influences cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. This supports the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{04}). The findings emphasize that motivational leadership is more effective when it recognizes diversity, supports participation, and builds emotional connection across cultural lines. However, the small effect size shows that motivational leadership alone cannot fully explain cultural diversity outcomes and should be supported by fairness, institutional inclusion, and consistent leadership practices.

Test of Hypothesis Five

The study sought to determine the moderating role of social justice on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The tested hypothesis was that social justice has no significant moderating role on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within the Selected Southwest Nigerian public universities.

The results from the ordinal logistic regression test are presented in Table 23

Table 23: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Social Justice Moderation on Cultural Diversity

Model Fit Statistics	**Value**	**Df**	**Sig.**
-2 Log Likelihood (Final)	16.501	–	–
Chi-Square	19.849	3	.000
Pseudo R-Square	**Value**		
Nagelkerke	.059		

Parameter Estimates	Estimate	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval
Democratic Leadership * Social Justice = 1	17.570	.999	[17.570, 17.570]
Democratic Leadership * Social Justice = 2	-1.491	.009	[-2.609, -0.373]
Democratic Leadership * Social Justice = 3	-0.205	.439	[-0.727, 0.318]
Reference Category	Level 4	–	–

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The fifth objective examined the moderating role of social justice in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The tested null hypothesis was: H_{05}: social justice has no significant moderating role in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The test was carried out using ordinal logistic regression, with democratic leadership as the independent variable, cultural diversity as the dependent variable, and social justice as the moderating variable.

The moderation analysis followed a two-step procedure. First, a baseline model was estimated to examine the direct influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity. Second, an interaction term, Democratic Leadership × Social Justice, was computed and entered into the model to determine whether social justice changed the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. This approach is consistent with moderation analysis, where the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is examined at different levels of a third variable (Aiken & West, 1991; Field, 2018; Hosmer et al., 2013).

The results in Table 23 show that the overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 19.849$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the interaction between democratic leadership and social justice made a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of cultural diversity. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .059 suggests that the model explained about 5.9% of the variance in cultural diversity. Based on Cohen's (1988) guideline, this represents a small effect size. Although the effect is statistically significant, the explanatory power remains limited, which means that other institutional and contextual factors may also contribute to cultural diversity outcomes.

The parameter estimates show that the moderation effect was not uniform across all levels. At Level 1, the coefficient was unusually large, B = 17.570, p = .999, which suggests sparse data or instability in that category and should not be given substantive interpretation. At Level 2, the interaction term was negative and statistically significant, B = -1.491, p = .009, CI [-2.609, -0.373]. At Level 3, the coefficient was also negative but not statistically significant, B = -0.205, p = .439. These results show that social justice significantly moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level, but the direction of the interaction was not consistently positive. The negative coefficient suggests that social justice may interact with democratic leadership in a more complex way than simple strengthening, possibly because fairness expectations, policy implementation gaps, or unequal experiences of justice affect how leadership practices are perceived.

The findings of this study show partial agreement with earlier studies on social justice and inclusive institutional outcomes. The significant overall model, $\chi^2(3) = 19.849$, $p < .001$, supports previous evidence that justice-related conditions can shape the effect of leadership and institutional practices. Harun and Ahmad (2022) found that social justice strengthened the relationship between human resource management practices and

employee retention, $\beta = 0.24$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .48$. Karataş and Han (2022) reported that social justice mediated the relationship between cultural intelligence and professional attitudes, $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .42$, while Owusu-Agyeman (2021) found that social justice strengthened the link between diversity and sense of belonging, $\beta = 0.22$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .37$. Denisova (2020) also reported that institutional commitment to social justice reduced interethnic tension, $\beta = -0.33$, $p < .01$, and improved inclusivity, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < .001$. However, unlike these studies, the present study recorded a negative and significant interaction at Level 2, B = -1.491, p = .009, with a smaller Nagelkerke R^2 of .059. This suggests that in Southwest Nigerian public universities, social justice may not automatically strengthen democratic leadership outcomes unless fairness, access, and inclusion are consistently practised across institutional processes.

The descriptive data in Table 15 help explain this pattern. Respondents rated social justice practices at a moderate level, M = 2.99, SD = 0.85. Higher means were recorded for fairness-related items, such as “The leader nurtures socially conscientious teacher-leaders by ensuring they are not above the rules,” M = 3.04, SD = 0.80, and “The leader provides students with greater access to their culture,” M = 3.01, SD = 0.81. Lower means were observed for some ethics- and equity-related items, such as “The leader frowns against extortion of students,” M = 2.94, SD = 0.92. This moderate and uneven pattern suggests that social justice practices are present, but may not be strong or consistent enough to produce a clear positive strengthening effect across all levels of democratic leadership.

Theoretically, these results align with Social Justice Leadership Theory and Organizational Justice Theory, which argue that fairness, equity, inclusion, and access influence how members experience leadership and institutional life (Greenberg, 1987; Theoharis, 2007). The findings also support the view that leadership practices are more

effective when they are supported by fairness and moral consistency. However, the negative coefficient at Level 2 suggests that where social justice is unevenly applied or where expectations of fairness are not fully met, democratic leadership practices may be interpreted with caution by students and staff. This means that social justice must be institutionalized rather than treated as an individual leader's personal attitude.

Qualitative data further explain these findings. Respondents described fairness and equality as important for cultural cohesion. P7 stated, "A good leader is one who treats every student the same way, regardless of tribe or background." P10 added, "Our dean ensures no group feels left behind; when opportunities come, they are shared fairly." However, other participants noted that fairness was sometimes inconsistent. P5 remarked, "Sometimes leaders talk about fairness, but when decisions are made, it still favors some people." These observations show why the moderation effect was significant but not straightforward. When fairness and accountability are visible, democratic leadership may support trust and belonging. When fairness is inconsistent, the positive effect of democratic leadership may be weakened.

The findings align with recent empirical studies showing that social justice leadership is most effective when embedded in institutional culture. Chaaban and Badwan (2025) observed that educational leadership grounded in social justice enhances inclusion when it is institutionalized rather than practised only by individual leaders. Karakose et al. (2023) reported that integrating social justice into leadership frameworks supports equitable participation in educational contexts. Rodriguez et al. (2022) found that collaborative justice-based initiatives improve cultural engagement and institutional climate, while Gube and Arat (2024) showed that social justice leadership supports resilience and inclusive participation in diverse educational settings.

A further analysis was conducted to determine whether social justice moderated the influence of each democratic leadership dimension on cultural diversity. The results in Table 24 show that none of the interaction terms was statistically significant. Participative Leadership × Social Justice had a negative but non-significant coefficient, B = -0.536, p = .166. Shared Leadership × Social Justice was also non-significant, B = 0.030, p = .954. Team Leadership × Social Justice was negative but non-significant, B = -0.610, p = .224, while Motivational Leadership × Social Justice was almost zero and non-significant, B = 0.003, p = .997. These results indicate that social justice did not significantly moderate the relationship between any single leadership dimension and cultural diversity when the dimensions were examined separately.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected when democratic leadership is treated as a composite construct because the interaction between democratic leadership and social justice was statistically significant. However, when democratic leadership was separated into participative, shared, team, and motivational leadership, the moderation effect of social justice was not statistically significant for any single dimension. This suggests that social justice operates more as a broad institutional condition than as a factor that affects each leadership dimension separately. The implication is that fairness, equity, inclusion, and access may have stronger relevance when democratic leadership is viewed as a combined leadership orientation rather than as isolated leadership behaviours.

Table 24: Ordinal Regression of Moderating Role of Social Justice on the Indicators of Democratic Leadership.

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
Threshold	[Cultural diversity = 2]	-21.236	13.980	2.307	1	0.129

	[Cultural diversity = 3]	-18.073	13.978	1.672	1	0.196
Location	Participative Leadership x Social Justice	-0.536	0.387	1.919	1	0.166
	Shared Leadership x Social Justice	0.030	0.523	0.003	1	0.954
	Team Leadership x Social Justice	-0.610	0.502	1.476	1	0.224
	Motivational Leadership x Social Justice	0.003	0.762	0.000	1	0.997
Link function: Logit.						
a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.						

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The results in Tables 23 and 24, which explore the moderating role of social justice on democratic leadership and cultural diversity, reinforce evidence that social justice leadership frameworks are essential for creating inclusive educational environments. Research shows that embedding social justice into leadership practices strengthens equity, fairness, and cultural responsiveness in schools and universities (Forde, 2014). Studies also highlight that culturally responsive and social justice leadership must converge to empower leaders to address systemic inequities in diverse learning contexts (Lopez, 2016). Furthermore, leadership preparation that explicitly integrates diversity, equity, and social justice is shown to increase leaders' capacity to foster inclusive practices (Watson, 2018). Recent findings also confirm that social justice praxis in higher education can drive equity and inclusion, transforming leadership into a tool for cultural democracy and fairness (Chang, 2023; Ramlackhan & Catania, 2022).

Table 25: Summary of the Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	**Findings**	**Decision**	**Conclusion**
H01: Participative leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity	Model significant $\chi^2(2) = 7.469$, $p = .024$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .015$; moderate level positive and significant B = 0.749, p = .028	Rejected	Participative leadership has a significant but small influence on cultural diversity

H02: Shared leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity	Model not significant $\chi^2(3) = 5.421$, $p = .143$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .011$; coefficients inconsistent and not significant	Not Rejected	Shared leadership does not significantly influence cultural diversity
H03: Team leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity	Model significant $\chi^2(3) = 19.252$, $p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .037$	Rejected	Team leadership significantly influences cultural diversity, though effect size is modest
H04: Motivational leadership has no significant influence on cultural diversity	Model significant $\chi^2(3) = 23.720$, $p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .046$; nonlinear pattern observed	Rejected	Motivational leadership significantly influences cultural diversity with small to moderate effect
H05: Social justice has no significant moderating role on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity	Model significant $\chi^2(3) = 19.849$, $p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .059$; interaction significant at Level 2 $B = -1.491$, $p = .009$	Rejected	Social justice significantly moderates the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the final part of the study. It brings together the major findings, conclusions, recommendations, contributions to knowledge, and suggestions for further research. The chapter is organized around the objectives and hypotheses of the study. It first summarizes the findings on the influence of participative, shared, team, and motivational leadership on cultural diversity. It also presents the finding on the moderating role of social justice in the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. The chapter then draws conclusions from the findings, provides recommendations for university leaders, policymakers, faculty members, and students, and identifies areas for further research.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria, with social justice tested as a moderating variable. The study focused on four dimensions of democratic leadership: participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership. A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected from final-year students and analyzed using descriptive statistics and ordinal logistic regression, while qualitative data were collected from educational leaders and analyzed thematically. Out of 618 questionnaires distributed, 592 were returned, giving a response rate of 95.9%. The findings showed that participative leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership had statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, although their explanatory power was generally small. Shared leadership did not have a

statistically significant influence. Social justice significantly moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level, but the moderation effect was not significant when the democratic leadership dimensions were examined separately.

Influence of Participative Leadership on Cultural Diversity

The first objective examined the influence of participative leadership on cultural diversity. The descriptive results showed that respondents generally perceived some level of participative leadership in the selected universities, especially in relation to consultation, open communication, and involvement of different groups in decision-making. However, participation appeared stronger in consultative and operational matters than in formal governance processes.

The ordinal logistic regression result showed that participative leadership had a statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, $\chi^2(2) = 7.469$, $p = .024$. However, the Nagelkerke R^2 value of .015 showed that participative leadership explained only about 1.5% of the variance in cultural diversity. This means that although participative leadership was statistically significant, its practical explanatory power was weak. The result suggests that participative leadership contributes to cultural diversity, but it is not enough on its own to explain students' experiences of cultural inclusion in the selected universities.

The qualitative findings supported this interpretation. Educational leaders described participative leadership as a practice of inclusion through consultation, open dialogue, and representation. Participants explained that involving staff and students in discussions created a sense of belonging and trust. However, they also noted that final decision-making often remained within formal institutional authority. The finding

therefore suggests that participative leadership can promote cultural inclusion when it gives genuine voice to diverse groups, but its effect may remain limited where participation is mainly consultative and does not extend strongly into formal governance.

Influence of Shared Leadership on Cultural Diversity

The second objective examined the influence of shared leadership on cultural diversity. The descriptive findings showed that shared leadership practices were present to some extent in the selected universities. Respondents indicated that leaders encouraged teamwork, shared goals, and some forms of collective responsibility. However, responses also suggested that authority was not always fully distributed, especially in decisions that required formal approval.

The ordinal logistic regression result showed that shared leadership did not have a statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, $\chi^2(3) = 5.421$, $p = .143$. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .011 indicated that shared leadership explained only about 1.1% of the variance in cultural diversity. Since the model was not statistically significant, the null hypothesis was retained. This means that shared leadership did not significantly predict cultural diversity in the sampled universities.

The qualitative findings helped to explain this result. Educational leaders noted that leadership responsibilities were sometimes shared through committees, departmental structures, and consultation. However, they also observed that major decisions often remained centralized. This suggests that shared leadership exists more as cooperative management than as full distribution of authority. The finding implies that shared leadership may need stronger institutional support before it can make a measurable contribution to cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian public universities.

Influence of Team Leadership on Cultural Diversity

The third objective examined the influence of team leadership on cultural diversity. The descriptive results showed that respondents generally agreed that leaders encouraged teamwork, collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Team leadership was visible in group tasks, committees, professional interaction, and efforts to manage differences among members of the university community.

The ordinal logistic regression result showed that team leadership had a statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, $\chi^2(3) = 19.252$, $p < .001$. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .037 showed that team leadership explained about 3.7% of the variance in cultural diversity. This indicates a statistically significant but modest practical effect. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The result suggests that team leadership contributes to cultural diversity, but the small explanatory power shows that it is only one of several factors shaping cultural inclusion in the selected universities.

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative result. Participants described teamwork as a way of promoting unity in diversity, reducing cultural tension, and encouraging cooperation among students and staff from different backgrounds. They also emphasized that teamwork is effective when leaders manage conflict fairly, avoid tribalism, and create safe spaces for all groups to participate. The finding therefore suggests that team leadership can support cultural diversity when it is linked with collaboration, fairness, and effective conflict management.

Influence of Motivational Leadership on Cultural Diversity

The fourth objective examined the influence of motivational leadership on cultural diversity. The descriptive results showed that respondents generally perceived motivational leadership practices in the selected universities. Leaders were reported to

encourage effort, recognize contributions, and support participation. However, some responses suggested that motivation could be uneven when recognition or support appeared selective.

The ordinal logistic regression result showed that motivational leadership had a statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, $\chi^2(3) = 23.720$, $p < .001$. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .046 showed that motivational leadership explained about 4.6% of the variance in cultural diversity. This represents a small effect size, although it was the strongest among the four democratic leadership dimensions examined in this study. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The finding suggests that motivational leadership contributes to cultural diversity, especially where recognition, encouragement, and support are fairly applied.

The qualitative findings provided further explanation. Participants described motivation as important for building confidence, belonging, and participation among students and staff. They explained that people are more willing to participate when their efforts are recognized and when leaders show concern for their welfare. However, they also noted that selective praise or unfair recognition may discourage participation. The finding therefore suggests that motivational leadership supports cultural diversity when it is consistent, fair, and inclusive.

Moderating Effect of Social Justice on Democratic Leadership and Cultural Diversity

The fifth objective examined whether social justice moderates the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity. The ordinal logistic regression result showed that the interaction between democratic leadership and social justice was statistically significant at the composite level, $\chi^2(3) = 19.849$, $p < .001$. The Nagelkerke

R^2 value of .059 showed that the model explained about 5.9% of the variance in cultural diversity. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at the composite level.

However, the pattern of the moderation effect was not uniformly positive. The interaction coefficient at Level 2 was negative and statistically significant, while the other levels were not consistently significant. This means that social justice significantly moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity, but the effect was complex. It should not be interpreted simply as evidence that social justice always strengthens the relationship. Rather, the finding suggests that social justice shapes how democratic leadership affects cultural diversity, and this influence may depend on how fairness, equity, and access are practised within the institution.

A further analysis examined whether social justice moderated the relationship between each democratic leadership dimension and cultural diversity. The results showed that none of the interaction terms for participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership was statistically significant. This means that social justice did not significantly moderate any single leadership dimension when the dimensions were examined separately. The finding suggests that social justice functions more as a broad institutional condition that affects democratic leadership as a combined construct rather than as a factor that operates strongly through each individual leadership dimension.

The qualitative findings supported this interpretation by showing that fairness, equal treatment, merit-based opportunities, and protection of vulnerable groups are important for cultural inclusion. Participants explained that leadership becomes more credible when rules are applied fairly and when opportunities are not restricted by ethnicity, religion, status, or personal connections. They also noted that inconsistency in

fairness can weaken trust. This shows that social justice is important, but its effect depends on how consistently it is institutionalized.

Conclusions

This study set out to examine the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity and the moderating role of social justice in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. Based on the findings, several conclusions are drawn. First, participative leadership has a statistically significant but weak practical influence on cultural diversity. This means that consultation, voice, and stakeholder involvement are useful for promoting cultural inclusion, but they do not fully explain cultural diversity outcomes. Participation must move beyond occasional consultation into more genuine engagement if it is to produce stronger effects.

Second, shared leadership does not significantly influence cultural diversity in the sampled universities. Although collaborative practices exist, they appear to be limited by hierarchy and centralized authority. This suggests that shared leadership may not yet be sufficiently institutionalized to produce measurable influence on cultural diversity.

Third, team leadership has a statistically significant but modest influence on cultural diversity. Teamwork, collaboration, and conflict management can support cultural inclusion when leaders promote fairness and cooperation. However, the small effect size shows that team leadership alone cannot address the broader institutional conditions that shape cultural diversity.

Fourth, motivational leadership has a statistically significant influence on cultural diversity, although its explanatory power remains small. Recognition, encouragement, and support can improve participation and belonging when applied fairly. However, selective or inconsistent motivation may weaken inclusion.

Fifth, social justice significantly moderates the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level. This means that fairness, equity, inclusive learning environment, and access to resources affect how democratic leadership relates to cultural diversity. However, the moderation effect was not uniformly positive and was not significant when the democratic leadership dimensions were tested separately. This suggests that social justice operates more as a broad institutional condition than as a factor attached to only one leadership dimension.

Overall, the study concludes that democratic leadership can support cultural diversity in public universities, but its effect is generally limited unless it is supported by strong institutional fairness, inclusive structures, and consistent social justice practices. Cultural diversity in universities cannot be achieved by leadership style alone. It requires fair systems, inclusive governance, intercultural learning, and institutional commitment to equity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for university leaders, policymakers, faculty members, students, and future institutional practice. University leaders should strengthen participative decision-making by creating regular and formal spaces for staff and students to express their views. These may include staff-student forums, departmental consultations, faculty dialogue sessions, and student representative platforms. Such structures should not only collect opinions but also show how contributions are considered in final decisions. This will help move participation beyond consultation and make it more meaningful.

Universities should strengthen shared leadership through clearer delegation of authority and accountability. Although shared leadership was not statistically significant

in this study, the qualitative findings showed that collaborative governance exists but remains limited by centralized decision-making. University management should therefore encourage committees, departments, and student leadership structures to participate more actively in institutional decisions. Shared leadership should be supported by clear roles, transparent responsibility, and trust across leadership levels.

University leaders should promote team leadership by encouraging collaboration across ethnic, religious, linguistic, and social groups. Group assignments, interdisciplinary projects, mixed committees, and team-based student activities should be designed to encourage interaction among students and staff from different backgrounds. Since conflict management was identified as important, universities should also provide training in dialogue, mediation, and culturally sensitive conflict resolution.

Motivational leadership should be practised in a fair and inclusive manner. Leaders should recognize the contributions of students and staff without favouritism. Encouragement, rewards, support, and opportunities should not be limited to dominant or highly visible groups. When motivation is applied fairly, it can strengthen belonging and participation among students and staff from different cultural backgrounds. Universities should institutionalize social justice practices. Since social justice moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level, fairness should not depend only on individual leaders. Universities should establish clear policies on equity, fair treatment, representation, access to resources, and protection from discrimination. These policies should be monitored and applied consistently across departments, faculties, and student affairs units.

The National Universities Commission and other relevant policymakers should develop clear equity and diversity standards for public universities. These standards

should go beyond quota-based representation and focus on fair participation, inclusive learning environments, access to support services, and protection of minority groups. Universities should be encouraged to report their diversity and inclusion practices regularly.

University curricula should be reviewed to reflect cultural inclusivity. Academic content should integrate African knowledge systems, local cultural perspectives, and global viewpoints. Faculty members should also receive training on inclusive pedagogy, intercultural sensitivity, and fairness in classroom interaction and assessment. This will help students from diverse backgrounds see their identities and experiences reflected in learning. Student engagement should be strengthened through intercultural programmes, cultural exhibitions, debates, mentoring schemes, and student-led inclusion initiatives. Student associations should be encouraged to promote integration rather than cultural separation. Peer mentoring programmes can also help new students adjust to the university environment and interact with students from other backgrounds.

Each university should consider establishing an Equity and Diversity Office or strengthening existing student support structures to address discrimination, exclusion, and unfair treatment. Such an office can monitor inclusion practices, support marginalized students, advise university management, and provide a safe channel for reporting concerns.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. It adds context-specific data from Nigerian higher

education, where empirical studies linking democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity remain limited.

The study also contributes by showing that not all dimensions of democratic leadership influence cultural diversity in the same way. Participative leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership had statistically significant effects, but their explanatory power was small. Shared leadership did not have a statistically significant effect. This provides a more careful understanding of democratic leadership by showing that its dimensions may operate differently in public university contexts.

The study further contributes by testing social justice as a moderating variable. The findings show that social justice significantly moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level, but not at the level of individual democratic leadership dimensions. This suggests that social justice may function more as a broad institutional condition than as a direct support for each leadership behaviour. This finding adds to leadership and social justice literature by showing the importance of examining both composite and dimension-specific effects.

The study also makes a methodological contribution by using a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative findings provided statistical evidence on the relationships among the variables, while qualitative findings explained how leadership, fairness, and cultural diversity are experienced by educational leaders. This combination gave a fuller understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone would have provided.

Finally, the study contributes to African higher education research by drawing attention to cultural diversity as more than ethnic representation. It shows that cultural diversity also involves intercultural competence, curriculum inclusivity, student

participation, fairness, and belonging. This provides a useful basis for future studies and institutional policies on inclusive university leadership.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should examine the relationship among democratic leadership, social justice, and cultural diversity in other regions of Nigeria. This will help determine whether the findings from Southwest Nigerian public universities are similar to or different from those in other socio-cultural regions.

Further studies should include private universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. This will provide a broader understanding of how democratic leadership and social justice operate across different types of higher education institutions.

Future research should also use more ethnically balanced samples where possible. Since the present study was conducted in Southwest Nigeria, the ethnic distribution of respondents reflected the regional character of the area. A more balanced national sample may provide deeper insight into cultural diversity across Nigeria.

Longitudinal studies should also be conducted to examine how democratic leadership and social justice influence cultural diversity over time. This would help explain whether leadership practices have stronger effects when they are sustained over several academic sessions.

Future studies may also examine other institutional factors that could explain cultural diversity more strongly. These may include university policy, student support systems, resource allocation, curriculum structure, institutional climate, language practices, and conflict management systems.

Researchers may also examine other leadership models such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, or inclusive leadership to determine how they interact with democratic leadership in promoting cultural diversity. This can help develop a broader leadership model for inclusion in Nigerian higher education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, contributions to knowledge, and suggestions for further research. The findings showed that participative leadership, team leadership, and motivational leadership significantly influenced cultural diversity, although their practical explanatory power was small. Shared leadership did not significantly influence cultural diversity. Social justice significantly moderated the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity at the composite level, but not at the level of individual leadership dimensions. The chapter concluded that democratic leadership can support cultural diversity, but its effect depends on stronger institutional fairness, inclusive structures, and consistent social justice practices. Recommendations were made for university leaders, policymakers, faculty members, students, and future researchers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research Respondent Consent Form

Research Title: Democratic Leadership and Social Justice in Selected Southwest Nigerian Public Universities

Researcher: Oluwatayomi Abiola

Institution: Pan Africa Christian University

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the influence of democratic leadership and social justice on cultural diversity in selected Southwest Nigerian public universities. The study seeks to understand how leadership practices and fairness within universities influence inclusion and cultural diversity.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview that will last approximately 30–45 minutes. The interview will focus on leadership practices, issues of social justice, and experiences related to cultural diversity within the university. The interview may be audio recorded for accuracy.

Risks and Discomforts

This study involves minimal risk. Some questions may relate to institutional experiences that may cause mild discomfort. You may skip any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Benefits

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the findings of this study may contribute to improved leadership practices and stronger cultural inclusion within Nigerian universities.

Confidentiality

All information provided will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will not appear in the dissertation or any publications arising from this study. Interview recordings and consent forms will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and the PAC examination board.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decline participation or withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Consent Statement

I have read and understood the information above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Yes ( )

No ( )

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Researcher: Oluwatayomi Abiola

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix II: Debrief Letter

Democratic Leadership and Social Justice in Selected Southwest Nigerian public Universities

Name of Researcher: Oluwatayomi Abiola

Thank you for taking part in this study. The sheet will provide you will full details of the study in which you participated.

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of democratic leadership and cultural diversity on social justice in Southwest Nigerian Universities. The study was motivated by the need to understand how democratic leadership style influenced by cultural dimensions contributes to promoting social justice in the Nigerian University System. The research tests a model which proposes a causal-effect relationship between democratic leadership and social justice which can be moderated by the cultural context of the organization or institution.

You are part of a semi-structured interview which seeks to understand participants (educational leaders) disposition to democratic leadership and how this help in promoting social justice in their school. The goal of the research is to understand the experience of the participant; hence the use of semi-structured interviews which means you may be asked questions which are not the same for all participants based on your responses to previous questions. The research finding is expected to show that leaders who practice democratic leadership promote social justice better than those who do not practice social justice. The cultural context is also expected to moderate the relationship between democratic leadership and social justice n universities.

Thank you again for taking part. If there is anything you would like to discuss in relation to this study, please feel free to do so by contacting the researchers. If you would like to withdraw your data, please speak to the researcher now or contact him/her later.

Oluwatayomi Abiola

Email: oluwatayomi.abiola@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Appendix III: Letter of Introduction (should read different; who is being introduced here?) introduce yourself then the study)

Dear participant

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Oluwatayomi Abiola, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Organizational Leadership at the Pan African Christian University (PAC), Kenya. The purpose of the research is to find out the impact of democratic leadership style and social justice on cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities. You will participate in an interview session and a focus group interaction which would not take more than 30 minutes each.

The transcript of the interview will not include any identifiable information and no one will be able to connect your responses to you. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at +2348064385817

Email: oluwatayomi.abiola@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix IV: Research Questionnaires

Dear Respondent

I am a postgraduate student at the Kenya Pan-Africa University where I am researching the INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. This questionnaire collects information on the influence of democratic leadership on cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Public Universities. Your responses from this study are only useful if you supply honest and sincere responses to the questionnaire items. All information you supply shall be treated strictly as confidential and used only for academic purpose.

Thank you

Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

School	✓	**Faculty**	**Department**	**Gender**	✓	**Age Range**	✓	**Ethnic Group**	✓
UNILAG				Male		16-19		Yoruba	
FUTA				Female		20-24		Hausa	
LAUTECH						25-30		Igbo	
FUNAAB						Above 30		Others	
UNIOSUN									
EKSU									

SECTION B: DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLES

Democratic leadership style as used in the study refers to leadership approach in which the leader actively involves team members in the decision-making process. Instead of making

decisions alone, a democratic leader encourages input, feedback, and collaboration from the group. Democratic leadership will be measured using four indicators: participative leadership, shared leadership, team leadership and motivational leadership.

This section measures democratic leadership styles practice in Southwest Nigerian Public Universities.

Research Objective: To examine the role of democratic leadership on Cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Public Universities.

The variable response format is: 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree

S/N		**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
A.	**Participative Leadership:** This involves leaders empowering employees to actively engage in decision-making processes and share governance responsibilities.				
1	The leader includes all school members (experts, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrative staff) in the decision-making processes that are relevant for them.				
2	When possible, while decisions are made, the leader values a student's voice equally as the voice of a grown-up.				
3	When sharing school tasks, the leader offers everyone an opportunity to get involved				
4	The leader seeks that all the important decisions are made by a consensus				
5	The leader accepts initiatives (ideas, suggestions, innovations) recommended by lecturers or students.				
6	The leader encourages open meetings where everyone can suggest solutions to school problems.				

7	Staff and students are regularly asked for input before changes are made in school policies.				
8	The leader believes that good decisions come from including different perspectives.				
9	The leader gives feedback to all contributors and explains how their suggestions are used.				
10	The leader allows students and staff to take part in drafting school rules and procedures.				
B.	**Shared Leadership:** This emphasizes collaborative decision-making by seeking and valuing input from various stakeholders, promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility among team members.				
11	The leader delegates responsibility and authority to other members of the faculty by allowing them to represent him/her in crucial meetings and conferences.				
12	The leader has successfully created an atmosphere where everyone sees themselves as stakeholders in the department.				
13	The leader rewards initiatives from students and faculty which improves the cultural diversity of the department or faculty.				
14	The leader is willing to take responsibility for a decision made from a student's initiative.				
15	The leader encourages staff and students to take part in facilitating the discussions on culture in the department.				
16	The leader shares leadership roles to allow both staff and students to lead projects.				
17	Decision-making teams in the school include a balance of students, faculty, and administrative staff.				
18	The leader supports team leaders who were chosen by their peers.				

19	The leader encourages shared goals and group accountability in decision outcomes.				
20	The leader promotes partnerships between students and faculty in planning school activities.				
C.	**Team Leadership:** This focuses on building relationships and fostering a sense of community, encouraging team members to collaborate and contribute their ideas and expertise.				
21	The HOD creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation among people from different backgrounds.				
22	In the case of conflict, the leader enables dialogue with all members included in it.				
23	The leader creates an atmosphere where people from other cultures different from the leader's culture share their thoughts and opinions without fear of consequences.				
24	The leader takes into consideration knowledge and skills of members, and awards important school tasks (such as leading projects, leading out-of-school activities) regarding them.				
25	The leader provides opportunities for professional development and growth for students, faculty and other staff members.				
26	The leader supports collaboration through team-building events and group tasks.				
27	All team members are encouraged to contribute ideas during meetings and planning sessions.				
28	The leader checks in regularly with teams to provide support and guidance.				
29	The leader respects the roles and contributions of every team member equally.				
30	The leader actively works to resolve team conflicts in fair and respectful ways				

D.	**Motivational Leadership:** This aims to inspire and engage followers, recognizing and supporting their motivations to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and performance.				
31	All students and staff feel free to talk to the HOD/Dean when they need his/her help.				
32	The HOD/Dean has publicly address some of the challenges facing members of the department.				
33	The leader helps teaching staffs to find their "professional passion" and practice what they are good at.				
34	The leader seeks to know and encourage others to know more about the students' lives outside the classroom.				
35	The HOD has effectively communicate the importance of embracing cultural diversity.				
36	The leader gives praise to students and staff when they do well				
37	The leader inspires others by setting a good personal example.				
38	The leader shows care for the emotional and personal well-being of others.				
39	The leader provides encouraging feedback that helps people improve.				
40	The leader motivates staff and students to take on challenges with confidence.				

SECTION C: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice in this study refers to the concept of creating a fair and equal society where all individuals have equal access to rights, opportunities, and resources. It emphasizes fairness in how wealth, opportunities, and privileges are distributed within a society. This section measures the adherence of university leaders to social justice.

Research Objective: To determine the moderating role of social justice on the relationship between democratic leadership and cultural diversity within the Southwest Nigerian Public Universities.

The variable response format is: 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree

S/N	**Social Justice:** This involves ensuring fair and equitable treatment, opportunities, and access to resources for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
41	The leader frowns against the extortion of students from sale of handouts, manuals, and other fees.				
42	The leader provides students with greater access to their culture				
43	The leader dismantles barriers that hinder certain groups from effective learning (such as giving consideration to the disabled)				
44	The leader empowers marginalized student groups through collaborative strategies such as awarding funding/scholarship to students gifted in different areas.				
45	The leader nurtures socially conscientious teacher-leaders by ensuring they are not above the rules				

SECTION D: CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity in this study refers to the presence of a variety of cultural groups within a society or organization. It means recognizing, respecting, and valuing the differences in ethnicity, language, religion, traditions, and ways of life among people. This section measures cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Public Universities using intercultural competency, curriculum inclusivity and student participation as indicators

Research Objective: To examine the role of democratic leadership on Cultural diversity in Southwest Nigerian Public Universities.

The variable response format is: 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree

S/N		4	3	2	1
A.	**Intercultural competency:** This involves student's ability to effectively communicate, adapt, and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds within the university setting.				
46	I feel confident when interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds.				
47	I adjust my communication style based on the cultural background of the person I am speaking to.				
48	I actively seek opportunities to learn about different cultural traditions and customs.				
49	I find it easy to adapt to new cultural environments within the university.				
50	I try to understand the perspectives of people from different cultures before making decisions.				
B.	**Curriculum inclusivity:** This encompasses the extent to which academic content, materials, and teaching practices reflect, respect, and represent diverse cultural perspectives and identities.				
51	My university curriculum includes topics that reflect diverse cultural perspectives.				
52	My courses include materials written by scholars from different cultural backgrounds.				
53	My professors encourage open discussions on cultural diversity and inclusivity.				

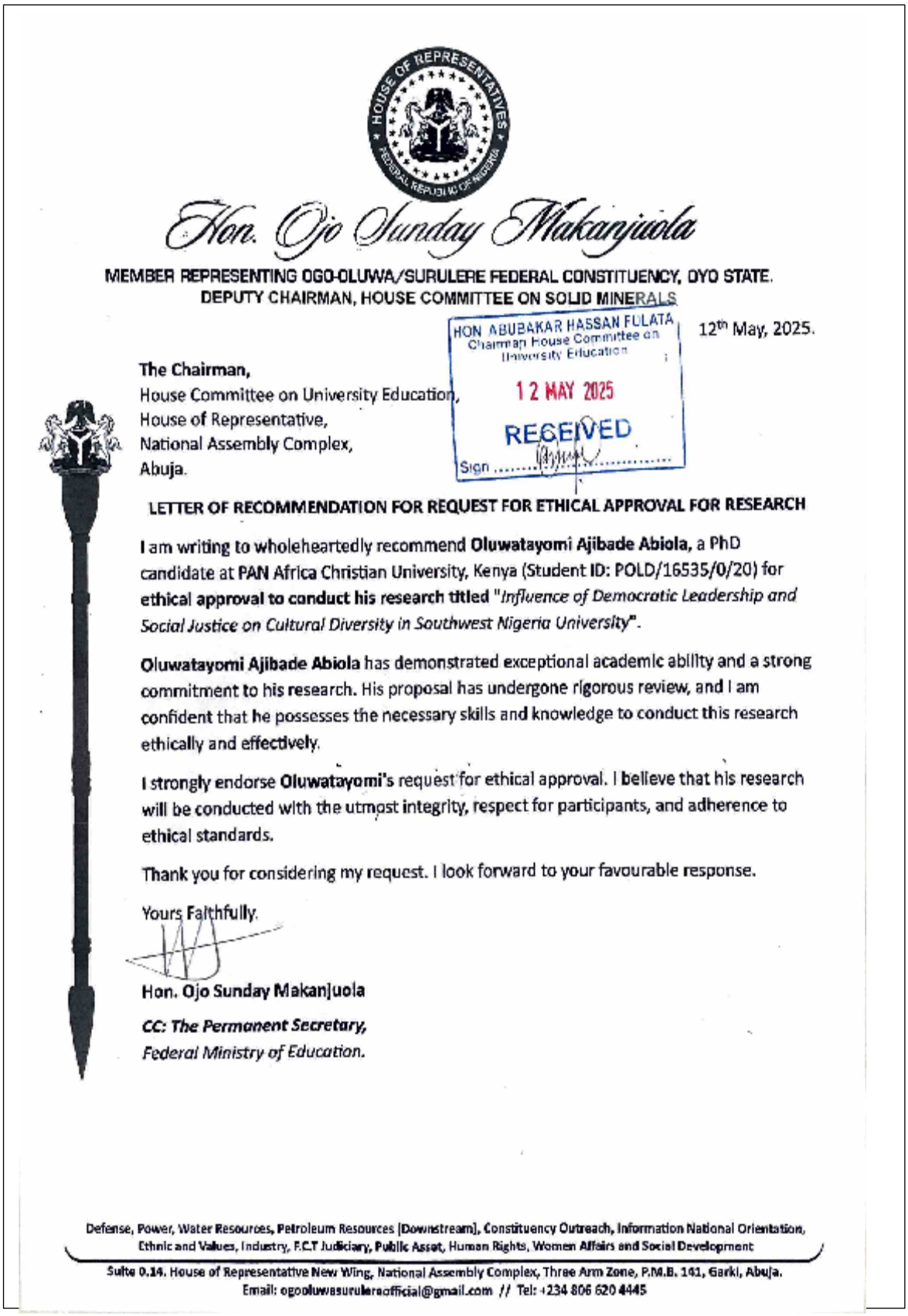
54	The course materials I use challenge stereotypes and promote cultural understanding.				
55	My university provides learning resources that represent diverse cultural identities.				
C.	**Student participation:** This focuses on the active engagement of students from various cultural backgrounds in academic, social, and leadership activities within the university.				
56	I feel comfortable participating in university events that involve students from different cultural backgrounds.				
57	I frequently collaborate with students from different cultures on group projects and assignments.				
58	My university promotes student clubs and activities that encourage cultural diversity and inclusion.				
59	I feel confident expressing my cultural identity in academic and social settings.				
60	My university provides equal opportunities for students of all cultural backgrounds to take on leadership roles.				

Appendix V: List of Public Universities in Southwest Nigeria

S/N	University	State	University Ownership
1	University of Ibadan	Oyo	Federal
2	Ladoke Akintola University of technology	Oyo	State
3	Oyo State Technical University	Oyo	State
4	University of Lagos	Lagos	Federal
5	National Open university	Lagos	Federal
6	Lagos State Univeristy (LASU)	Lagos	State
7	Lagos State university of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH)	Lagos	State
8	Lagos State University of Education (LASUED)	Lagos	State
9	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Ogun	Federal
10	Olabisi Onabanjo University	Ogun	State
11	Tai Solarin University of Education	Ogun	State
12	Moshood Abiola University of Science and Technology Abeokuta	Ogun	State
13	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	Osun	Osun
14	Osun State University, Osogbo	Osun	State
15	Federal University of Technology, Akure	Ondo	Federal
16	Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa	Ondo	State

17	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	Ondo	State
18	Ondo State University of Medical Sciences	Ondo	State
19	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti	Ekiti	Federal
20	Ekiti State University	Ekiti	State
21	Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and technology	Ekiti	State

Appendix VI: Letter of Recommendation



Hon. Ojo Sunday Makanjuola

MEMBER REPRESENTING OGO-OLUWA/SURULERE FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY, OYO STATE.
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SOLID MINERALS

HON ABUBAKAR HASSAN FULATA
Chairman House Committee on
University Education
12 MAY 2025
RECEIVED
Sign .....

12th May, 2025.

The Chairman,
House Committee on University Education,
House of Representative,
National Assembly Complex,
Abuja.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend **Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola,** a PhD candidate at **PAN** Africa Christian University, Kenya (Student **ID:** POLD/16535/0/20) for **ethical approval to conduct his research titled** "*Influence of Democratic Leadership and Social Justice on Cultural Diversity in Southwest Nigeria University*".

Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola has demonstrated exceptional academic ability and a strong commitment to his research. His proposal has undergone rigorous review, and I am confident that he possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct this research ethically and effectively.

I strongly endorse **Oluwatayomi's** request for ethical approval. I believe that his research will be conducted with the utmost integrity, respect for participants, and adherence to ethical standards.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your favourable response.

Yours Faithfully.

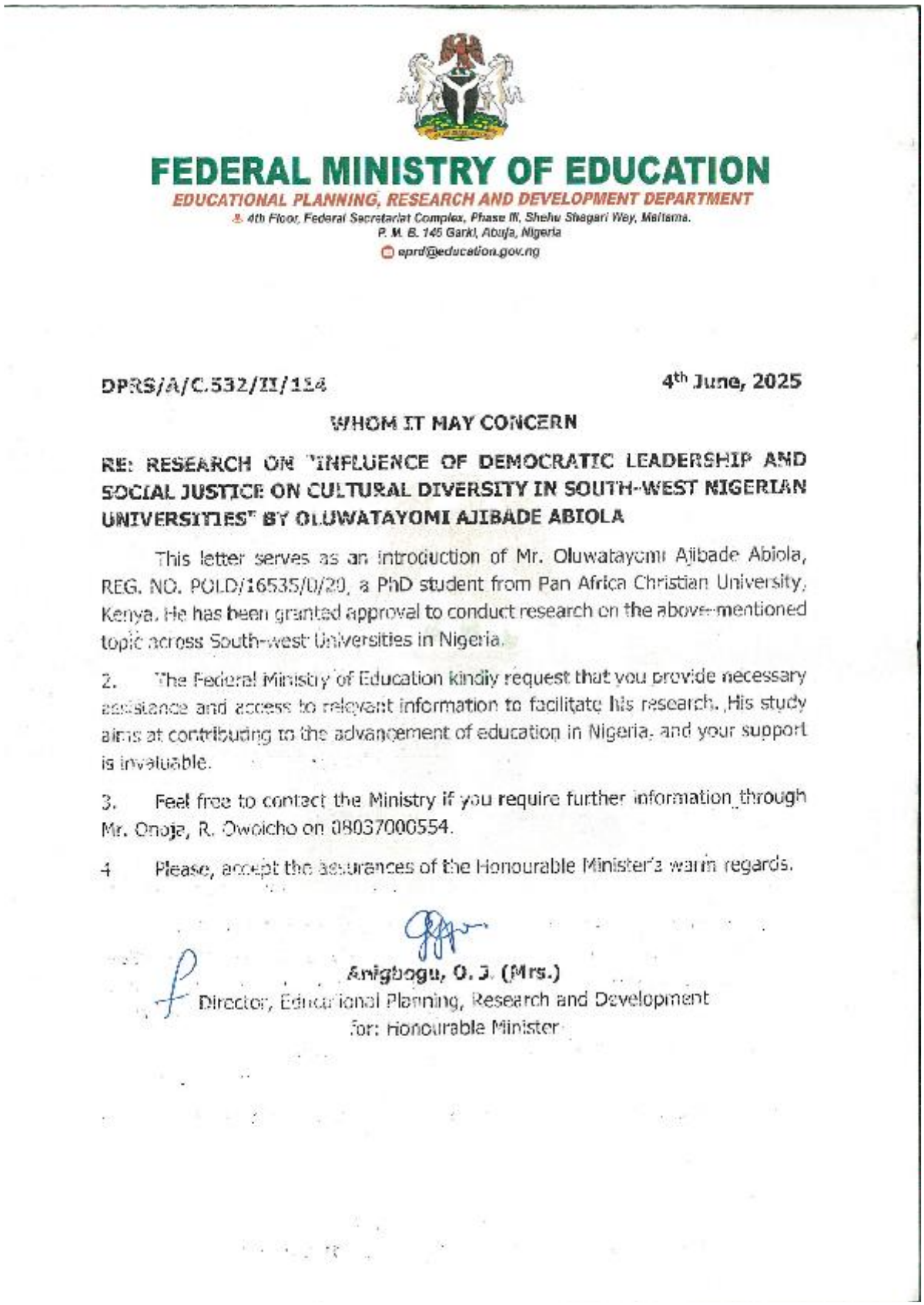
Hon. Ojo Sunday Makanjuola

CC: The Permanent Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Education.

Defense, Power, Water Resources, Petroleum Resources [Downstream], Constituency Outreach, Information National Orientation, Ethnic and Values, Industry, F.C.T Judiciary, Public Asset, Human Rights, Women Affairs and Social Development

Suite 0.14, House of Representative New Wing, National Assembly Complex, Three Arm Zone, P.M.B. 141, Garki, Abuja.
Email: ogooluwasurulereofficial@gmail.com // Tel: +234 806 620 4445

Appendix VII: Federal Ministry of Education Research Approval



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

4th Floor, Federal Secretariat Complex, Phase III, Shehu Shagari Way, Maitama.
P. M. B. 145 Garki, Abuja, Nigeria
eprd@education.gov.ng

DPRS/A/C.532/II/114 **4th June, 2025**

WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH ON "INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES" BY OLUWATAYOMI AJIBADE ABIOLA

This letter serves as an introduction of Mr. Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola, REG. NO. POLD/16535/0/20, a PhD student from Pan Africa Christian University, Kenya. He has been granted approval to conduct research on the above-mentioned topic across South-west Universities in Nigeria.

2. The Federal Ministry of Education kindly request that you provide necessary assistance and access to relevant information to facilitate his research. His study aims at contributing to the advancement of education in Nigeria, and your support is invaluable.

3. Feel free to contact the Ministry if you require further information through Mr. Onoja, R. Owoicho on 08037000554.

4 Please, accept the assurances of the Honourable Minister's warm regards.

Anigbogu, O. J. (Mrs.)
Director, Educational Planning, Research and Development
for: Honourable Minister

Appendix VIII: Letter of Authorization, PAC University

Pan Africa
Christian University

Thika Road Campus Valley Road Campus
P.O. BOX 56875 - 00200 +254 730955000 +254 730955501/2
enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Office of the Registrar Academic Affairs

24th June 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION & ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR OLUWATAYOMI AJIBADE ABIOLA REG. NO: POLD/16535/0/20

Greetings! This is an introduction letter for the above named person a final year student at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC University), pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership (Phd).

He is at the final stage of the programme and he is preparing to collect data to enable him finalize on the dissertation. The dissertation title is ***"Influence of Democratic Leadership and Social Justice on Cultural Diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities"***

We kindly request that you allow him obtain a research permit so as to proceed and collect data to inform his research from selected Southwest Nigerian Universities.

Warm Regards,

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR
P. O. Box 56875 – 00200
TEL. 0721 332053 0734 400632
NAIROBI KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru
Registrar Academic Affairs
Pan Africa Christian University
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
P.O Box 56875-00200, Nairobi, Kenya
Email: registrar.raa@pacuniversity.ac.ke
Website: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Appendix IX: Research clearance letter, LAUTECH

LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA
Office of the Registrar

Registrar
Olayinka O. Balogun (Mrs)
B.Sc. (Hons.), M.I.L.R., M.Sc. (Ibadan)
MANUPA, AUA (UK)

Tel: 08067624952, 07031946987
P.M.B. 4000, Ogbomoso, Nigeria
Telegram: LAUTECH, Ogbomoso
Email: registrar@lautech.edu.ng
Website: www.lautech.edu.ng

Our Ref: REG/ADM.188 **Your Ref:** **Date:** 30th June, 2025

PAN Africa Christian University
Thika Road Campus Valley Road Campus
P. O. Box 56875
Nairobi, Kenya

Attention: **Dr. Lilian Vikiru**
Registrar Academic Affairs

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION & ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR OLUWATAYOMI AJIBADE REG. NO. POLD/16535/0/20

Your letter dated 24th June, 2025 on the above, refers.

I am directed by the Registrar to convey the approval of your request to allow Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola conduct research on "*Influence of Democratic Leadership and Social Justice on Cultural Diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities*".

Accept the warmest regard of the Registrar, Olayinka O. Balogun (Mrs).

Thank you.

Mr. S. O. Olaosebikan
Principal Assistant Registrar
Registrar's Office
For Registrar

Appendix X: Research Clearance Letter, UNIOSUN

OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

P.M.B. 4494, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.
Tel: +234 (0) 803 404 2174 +234 (0) 803 404 2198
www.uniosun.edu.ng
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aoguntunde@gmail.com

Ref: REG/ADM/MISC/12/VOL. II/149

July 16, 2025

Oluwatayomi Ajibade Abiola
University Baptist Church
LAUTECH Area, Ogbomoso
Oyo State

Re- Application for Research Authorization

Your letter on the above subject matter dated July 7, 2025 refers, please.

At the behest of the Registrar, I write to convey the Vice-Chancellor's approval to your request for permission to collect data from the students of Osun State University for your PhD research. It is noted that the title of your dissertation is **'Influence of Democratic Leadership and Social Justice on Cultural Diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities'**.

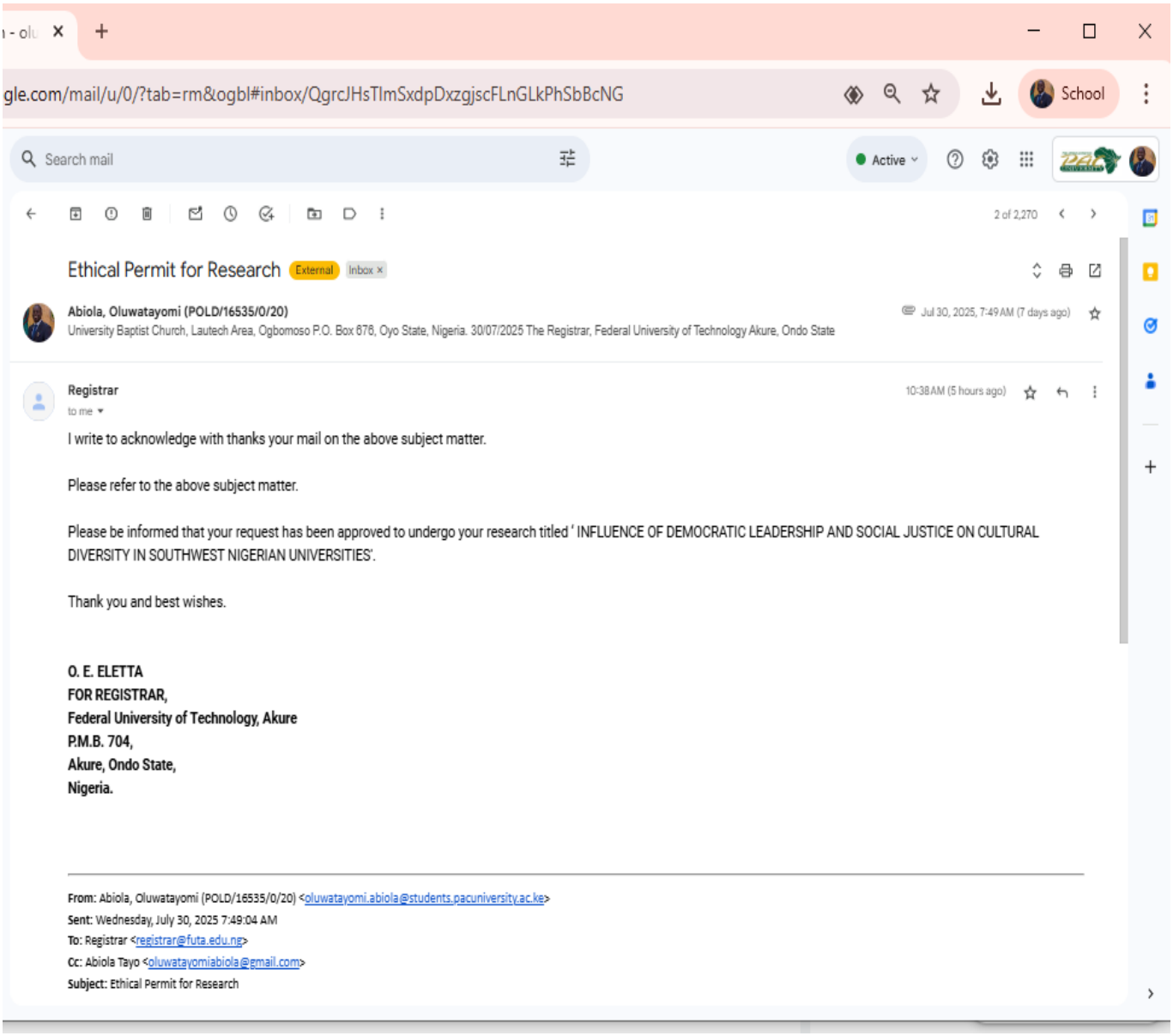
Please note that students' participation in the Research is voluntary and that you are to ensure all ethical considerations, including confidentiality and informed consent. To this end, you are to ensure that each student fills the attached consent form before their participation in the Research.

Thank you.

Simeon A. Akintaro
AR, Registrar's Office
For: Registrar

OGUNTUNDE ATINUKE A. (MRS.) B.A Ec, MA. FICA, MANUPA, AHEP, ASAP
Registrar and Secretary to Council

Appendix XI: Research Clearance, FUTA



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School

Search mail

Active

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Ethical Permit for Research External Inbox ×

Abiola, Oluwatayomi (POLD/16535/0/20)
University Baptist Church, Lautech Area, Ogbomoso P.O. Box 676, Oyo State, Nigeria. 30/07/2025 The Registrar, Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State

Jul 30, 2025, 7:49 AM (7 days ago)

Registrar
to me

10:38 AM (5 hours ago)

I write to acknowledge with thanks your mail on the above subject matter.

Please refer to the above subject matter.

Please be informed that your request has been approved to undergo your research titled ' INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES'.

Thank you and best wishes.

O. E. ELETTA
FOR REGISTRAR,
Federal University of Technology, Akure
P.M.B. 704,
Akure, Ondo State,
Nigeria.

From: Abiola, Oluwatayomi (POLD/16535/0/20) <oluwatayomi.abiola@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke>
Sent: Wednesday, July 30, 2025 7:49:04 AM
To: Registrar <registrar@futa.edu.ng>
Cc: Abiola Tayo <oluwatayomiabiola@gmail.com>
Subject: Ethical Permit for Research

Appendix XII: Research Clearance, UNILAG

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UNILAGREC)
UNILAGREC Registration Number: NHREC/07/02/2022A
Office Address: Research Management Office
University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos

E-mail: unilagrec@unilag.edu.ng, **Phone No:** 08088016075, 08023063129, 08066117865
Website:unilagrec.unilag.edu.ng

Chairman
Prof. Oluwole B. Familoni, FAS
BSc, MPhil, Ph.D (Lagos)
C. Chem, FRSC, FCSN, FICCON
FIPAN, Public Analyst

Vice Chairman
Prof. Kolawole S. Oyedeji
BSc (Uniport) MSc (Ife), (Unilag)
MSocSci-HRE (South Africa), FMLSCN (Nig)
FWAPCMLS

Date: 29/09/2025
Title of Study: ***Influence of Democratic Leadership and Social Justice on Cultural Diversity in Southwest Nigerian Universities***

UNILAGREC Number: UNILAGREC/25/08/007

Name of Principal Investigator: **Reverend ABIOLA OLUWATAYOMI**

Date of receipt of valid application: 07/08/2025

Date of Approval: **29/09/2025**

APPROVAL LETTER

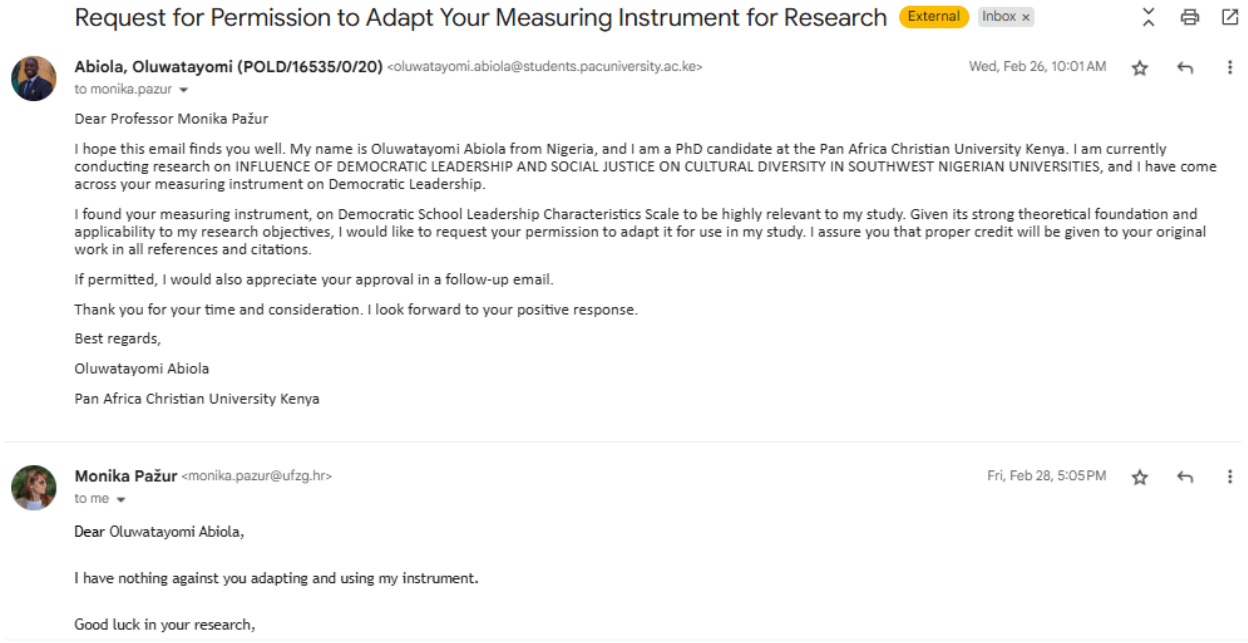
The above-named proposal has been adequately reviewed; the protocol and safety guidelines satisfy the conditions of **UNILAGREC** policies regarding experiments involving human and or animal participants.

Therefore, the study under its reviewed state is hereby **approved by the University of Lagos Research Ethics committee (UNILAGREC).**

Professor Oluwole Familoni — **3/10/2025**
Name of UNILAGREC Chairman — *Signature & Date*

---Prof Kola Oyedeji---- — 3.10.25
Name of UNILAGREC Member — *Signature & Date*

Appendix XIII: Permission Letter for Democratic Leadership Instrument



Request for Permission to Adapt Your Measuring Instrument for Research External Inbox ×

Abiola, Oluwatayomi (POLD/16535/0/20) <oluwatayomi.abiola@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke> Wed, Feb 26, 10:01 AM

to monika.pazur

Dear Professor Monika Pažur

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Oluwatayomi Abiola from Nigeria, and I am a PhD candidate at the Pan Africa Christian University Kenya. I am currently conducting research on INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES, and I have come across your measuring instrument on Democratic Leadership.

I found your measuring instrument, on Democratic School Leadership Characteristics Scale to be highly relevant to my study. Given its strong theoretical foundation and applicability to my research objectives, I would like to request your permission to adapt it for use in my study. I assure you that proper credit will be given to your original work in all references and citations.

If permitted, I would also appreciate your approval in a follow-up email.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your positive response.

Best regards,

Oluwatayomi Abiola

Pan Africa Christian University Kenya

Monika Pažur <monika.pazur@ufzg.hr> Fri, Feb 28, 5:05 PM

to me

Dear Oluwatayomi Abiola,

I have nothing against you adapting and using my instrument.

Good luck in your research,