

## Research Article

# Exploring the Impact of Tertiary Institutions' Autonomy Proposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria

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## About Article

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## ABSTRACT

Autonomy in higher education institutions refers to the freedom and independence granted to these institutions to govern themselves, make decisions, and allocate resources. The aim of this study is to examine the potential impacts, benefits and challenges associated with autonomy in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It also analyzes the implications for governance, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, and student and faculty rights and responsibilities. This paper employed a mixed research approaches such as systematic literature review and semi-structured interviews to explore the impact of tertiary institutions autonomy proposed by the federal government of Nigeria. The research employs a qualitative research approach, by reviewing 36 relevant literature on tertiary institutions' autonomy ranging from 2017–2023 sourced from six (6) different research databases such as: Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, and Taylor and Francis. The findings of the study contribute to the ongoing discourse on higher education policies in Nigeria and provide insights for policymakers, administrators, and researchers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of autonomy for tertiary institutions has been a subject of significant debate and consideration within the Nigerian educational landscape. The autonomy of tertiary institutions, has been a recurring theme in national discourse, with the federal government proposing measures to grant greater independence and decision-making authority to these institutions. The proposal for autonomy measures by the federal government reflects a broader global trend towards decentralization and empowering educational institutions to enhance their governance, academic freedom, and overall effectiveness (Adeyemi, 2021). The concept of autonomy in the context of tertiary institutions refers to the extent of freedom and independence granted to these institutions in making internal decisions related to academic, administrative, and financial matters (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010). The proposed autonomy measures are aimed at redefining the relationship between the federal government and tertiary institutions, with the potential to impact various facets of institutional functioning and stakeholder dynamics. The call for autonomy is underpinned by the belief that greater institutional independence can lead to improved efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness to the evolving needs of the educational sector (Okebukola, 2019).

The exploration of the potential impact of autonomy on tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a matter of paramount importance, considering the diverse implications it may have on governance, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members (Jian & Mols, 2019; Mai *et al.*, 2020; Maton, 2005). The proposed autonomy measures have the potential to reshape the governance structure of institutions, influence academic decision-making processes, and redefine the relationships between universities and regulatory bodies. Furthermore, the implications of autonomy on quality assurance and financial management necessitate a comprehensive examination to understand the potential benefits and challenges associated with greater institutional independence (Fajana, 2020). The perspectives of stakeholders, including administrators, faculty members, students, and regulatory bodies, are integral to comprehensively understanding the proposed autonomy measures and their potential impact. Varied viewpoints and interests within the tertiary education sector contribute to the complexity of the autonomy discourse, emphasizing the need to capture and analyze the diverse perspectives and concerns of key stakeholders (Jian & Mols, 2019). Additionally, the study aims to elucidate the potential implications of autonomy on the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members, ensuring that the proposed measures uphold the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equity, and accountability (Omotola, 2018).

The research objectives should clearly state the specific goals of the study. These objectives include:

- 1) Examining the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government.
- 2) Understanding the perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy.
- 3) Analyzing the potential impact of autonomy on academic freedom, student rights and responsibilities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definition and Conceptualization of Tertiary Institutions Autonomy

Tertiary institutions autonomy refers to the freedom and independence granted to higher education institutions to govern themselves, make decisions, and allocate resources without undue interference from external entities, such as government bodies or regulatory agencies (Fajana, 2020). Autonomy allows institutions to have control over their academic programs, faculty appointments, financial management, and administrative processes (Choi, 2019). The conceptualization of autonomy may vary across different countries and educational systems, but it generally encompasses the idea of self-governance and academic freedom within the framework of accountability and quality assurance.

### 2.2. Historical Overview of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

The history of tertiary education in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when the first tertiary institutions were established. The University of Ibadan, founded in 1948, was the first university in Nigeria and West Africa (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010). Over the years, the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has significantly increased, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. These institutions have played a crucial role in providing higher education and contributing to the development of the country. However, the Nigerian tertiary education system has faced various challenges, including inadequate funding, infrastructure deficiencies, and issues related to governance and quality assurance.

### 2.3. Current Policies and Regulations Governing Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Nigerian tertiary institutions are governed by a set of policies and regulations that outline the framework for their operations. The National Universities Commission (NUC) is responsible for regulating and overseeing the activities of universities in Nigeria, while the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) perform similar functions for polytechnics and colleges of education, respectively. These regulatory bodies establish guidelines for curriculum development, accreditation processes, quality assurance, and other aspects of institutional functioning. Additionally, the federal government and state governments may issue policies and directives that impact the autonomy and governance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

In light of these considerations, a thorough investigation into the impact of tertiary institutions' autonomy proposed by the federal government of Nigeria is imperative. By addressing the research objectives of examining the proposed autonomy measures, understanding stakeholder perspectives, and analyzing the potential impact on governance, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, as well as student and faculty rights and responsibilities, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the implications of the proposed measures and their significance for the Nigerian higher education landscape.

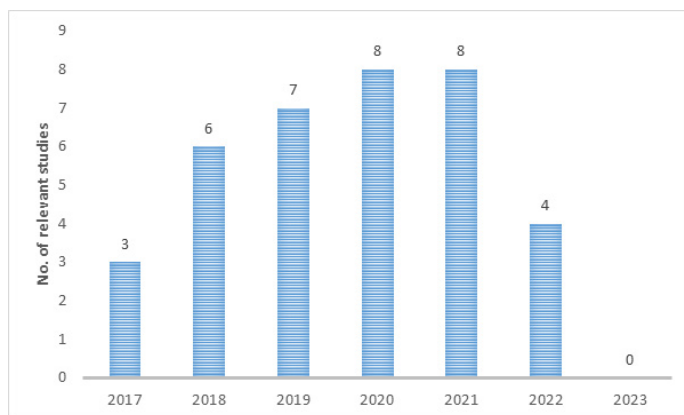


### 3.1. Research Design

The research design refers to the overall plan or strategy that outlines how the study is conducted. In the context of exploring the impact of tertiary institutions autonomy proposed by the federal government of Nigeria, a mixed-methods research design was employed. This research design is based on SLR and semi-structured interview with nine stakeholders from which each three from the entire sample (9) responsible to answer a unique part of the interview to provide a comprehensive-points and understanding of the topic. The qualitative component involves nine key stakeholders, such as university administrators, faculty members, and students, to gather their perspectives and insights.

### 3.2. Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods for this study include interviews and highlighting the relevance studies' findings gathered from six different research databases (Figure 2) such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, and Taylor and Francis from the year 2017 – 2023 as shown in Figure 1. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the nine key stakeholders to gather in-depth qualitative data on their perspectives, experiences, and opinions regarding the proposed autonomy measures. These interviews are audio-recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. In addition to interviews, thematic points on the related studies have been highlighted to gather qualitative data. The interview was designed to capture information on variables such as examining the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government; understanding the perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy; analyzing the potential impact of autonomy on academic freedom, student and faculty rights and responsibilities.

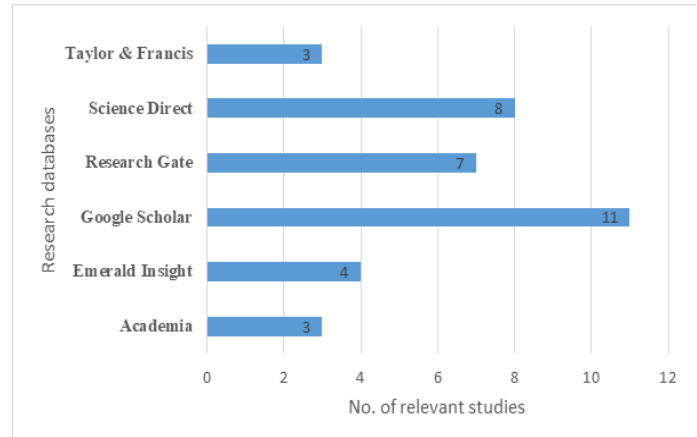


**Figure 1.** Distribution of studies over a period of seven years (2017 – 2023)

### 3.3. Sampling Technique

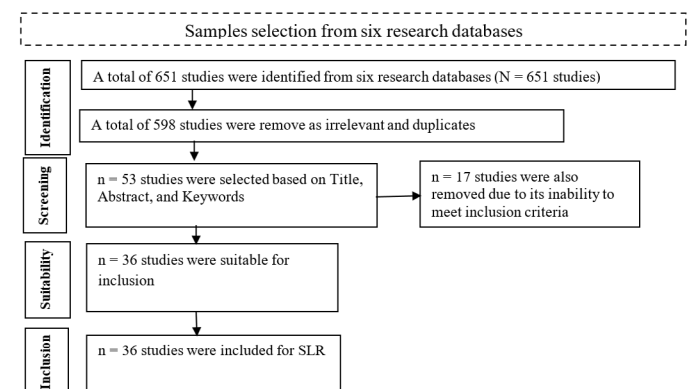
The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who have specific knowledge, experience, or expertise related to the research topic. In this case, key stakeholders, such as university administrators, faculty members, and students, were purposefully selected (from Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi; Modibbo Adama University of Science and Technology, Yola; and Federal College of Education Gombe) based on their

involvement and influence in the discussion surrounding tertiary institutions autonomy. The aim is to gather diverse perspectives and ensure that the sample represents a range of experiences and viewpoints. On the other hand, the SLR also employed and the samples of relevant studies were selected within these six research databases as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Study samples based on six different research databases

As shown in Figure 3, a total of 651 articles were initially downloaded and 598 were removed from the total samples given 53 studies channeled for screening. 17 studies were unsuitable and also removed from the samples. Therefore, 36 studies were met inclusion criteria and identified as the study samples. The literature reviewed from 2017 to 2023 the articles were sourced from various research articles published in various journals and available in various databases (see Figure 2). Using Boolean operators (AND, OR, and/or combinations of the two) and a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram. PRISMA is a meta-analysis and systematic review technique that focuses on presenting data from randomised trials, evaluating interventions, and critically reviewing published systematic reviews. The articles were found using Boolean operators like (university autonomy OR (tertiary institutions autonomy AND (within/outside Nigeria))) to find the study's samples. Then the total searched results forwarded to PRISMA for filtrations and samples selection (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Samples selection using PRISMA

### 3.4. Data Analysis Approach

The data collected from interviews were analyzed using a

thematic analysis approach for qualitative data and statistical analysis techniques for quantitative data. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the qualitative data to draw meaningful insights and interpretations. The qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring themes and patterns. For the quantitative data, statistical analysis techniques such as descriptive statistics was used to analyze the numerical data collected from the reviewed literature. This analysis involves summarizing the data, identifying relationships or associations, and drawing conclusions based on statistical evidence.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Examining the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government.

Interviewee	Response
I	Clarified that the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government aim to provide tertiary institutions with increased decision-making power and freedom in various aspects. These measures may include granting institutions more control over their budgets, curriculum development, hiring processes, and strategic planning. The goal is to enhance institutional flexibility and responsiveness to the evolving educational landscape
II	Described that the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government aim to provide tertiary institutions with greater control and decision-making authority over their operations. These measures may include granting institutions more freedom in areas such as governance, budget allocation, curriculum design, and resource management. By examining these proposed measures, we can assess how they align with the government's objectives and whether they address the unique needs and challenges of each institution.
III	Asserted that the proposed autonomy measures put forward by the federal government offer an opportunity to assess the potential changes in governance structures and decision-making processes within tertiary institutions. By examining these measures, we can determine the extent to which they align with the government's goals for promoting autonomy and innovation in higher education. Additionally, we can evaluate how these proposed measures may impact the overall landscape of tertiary education in terms of institutional autonomy, accountability, and responsiveness.

*Question 1: Examining the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government*

#### 4.2. Perspectives of Stakeholders on the Proposed Autonomy

As illustrated in Table 1, the perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy measures may vary. University administrators, faculty members, and students may have different views on the potential benefits and challenges associated with increased autonomy (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010; Nwaokugha, 2021). Some stakeholders may view autonomy as an opportunity for institutions to have more control over their academic programs, research initiatives, and resource

#### 4.1. Overview of the Proposed Autonomy Measures by the Federal Government

The federal government of Nigeria has proposed autonomy measures for tertiary institutions. While specific details of these measures were not available in the search results, it can be inferred that the government aims to grant greater independence and decision-making authority to these institutions (Akinwumi, 2020). The proposed measures may include provisions related to governance structures, financial management, academic programs, and administrative processes. These measures are likely intended to enhance the autonomy and self-governance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

allocation. They may argue that autonomy can lead to more efficient decision-making processes and foster innovation in teaching and research. However, other stakeholders may express concerns about potential risks, such as inadequate accountability, lack of oversight, and potential for misuse of resources (Olorunsola, 2018). It is important to gather the perspectives of various stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of autonomy in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Table 2.** Understanding the perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy.

Interviewee	Response
I	Asserted that it is important to consider the perspectives of stakeholders when assessing the proposed autonomy measures. Stakeholders may include administrators, faculty members, students, alumni, government officials, and industry representatives. Their perspectives can shed light on the potential benefits and challenges associated with increased autonomy. It is crucial to engage in open dialogue and gather diverse viewpoints to ensure that the proposed measures align with the interests and needs of all stakeholders.
II	Stated that it is crucial to understand the perspectives of various stakeholders on the proposed autonomy measures. This includes administrators, faculty members, students, staff, and external partners such as industry representatives and policymakers. By engaging in dialogue with these stakeholders, we can gain insights into their expectations, concerns, and aspirations regarding autonomy. Their perspectives can help shape the implementation process and ensure that the proposed measures reflect the diverse needs and interests of the entire higher education community.





- III Proclaimed that understanding the perspectives of various stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, students, and external partners, is crucial in assessing the proposed autonomy measures. Stakeholders' perspectives can shed light on the potential benefits and challenges that may arise from increased autonomy. This understanding is essential for ensuring that the proposed measures address the diverse needs and concerns of all stakeholders involved in the tertiary education ecosystem.

*Question 2: Understanding the perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy*

#### 4.3. Potential Benefits and Challenges Associated with Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions

Autonomy in tertiary institutions bring several potential benefits. It can enable institutions to respond more effectively to local needs and priorities, promote academic freedom, and foster a culture of innovation and creativity (Akinwumi, 2020; Jian & Mols, 2019; Mai *et al.*, 2020). Autonomy also enhances the

efficiency of decision-making processes, allowing institutions to adapt to changing educational landscapes and emerging challenges (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, autonomy attracts and retain high-quality faculty and students, as it provides an environment conducive to academic excellence and intellectual growth.

**Table 3.** Analyzing the potential impact of autonomy on academic freedom, student and faculty rights and responsibilities.

Interviewee	Response
I	Explained that the autonomy can have significant implications across various areas. In terms of governance, increased autonomy may require robust governance structures and mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making processes. Academic freedom, a fundamental principle, could be strengthened with autonomy, allowing institutions to shape their academic programs, research priorities, and teaching methodologies.
II	Claimed that the potential impact of autonomy on different aspects of tertiary institutions is a critical area of study. Autonomy can influence governance structures, decision-making processes, and the distribution of authority within an institution. It can also have implications for academic freedom, allowing faculty members to pursue innovative research, teaching approaches, and collaborations. However, it is essential to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability to ensure that academic standards and quality assurance mechanisms are upheld.
III	Confirmed that analyzing the potential impact of autonomy on governance, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, and student and faculty rights and responsibilities is crucial to comprehensively understand the implications of increased institutional autonomy. It allows us to assess how autonomy may influence governance structures, decision-making processes, and the distribution of authority within institutions. Furthermore, it helps us evaluate the potential impact on academic freedom, ensuring that faculty members have the freedom to pursue research and teaching methods aligned with their expertise and institutional goals.

However, there are also potential challenges associated with autonomy. One challenge is the need for effective governance structures and mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency (Nwaokugha, 2021; Olorunsola, 2018). Without proper checks and balances, there is a risk of mismanagement of resources and a decline in quality assurance. Another challenge is the potential for disparities among institutions, as some may have more capacity and resources to exercise autonomy effectively than others (Mai *et al.*, 2020). It is crucial to address these challenges through appropriate policies and regulations to ensure that autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to positive outcomes for all stakeholders involved. Table 1, 2 and 3 show the responses from semi-structured interview Stakeholders perspective on the tertiary institutions autonomy illustrated in Table 2, regarding quality assurance, autonomy should be accompanied by robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to uphold academic standards and ensure the delivery of high-quality education (Borg, 2019; Maton, 2005; Rungwaraphong, 2012). Financial management would also need to be carefully addressed to ensure responsible and sustainable practices that align with the institution's strategic goals (Jian & Mols, 2019). Autonomy has significance

impacts on student and faculty rights and responsibilities (Hartnett, 2012, 2015). Students may experience increased opportunities for engagement, participation in decision-making processes, and the ability to shape their educational experiences (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010). Faculty members may have greater control over their research agenda, teaching approaches, and professional development (Nwaokugha, 2021). However, it is crucial to strike a balance between autonomy and the protection of student and faculty rights, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all. Overall, a comprehensive analysis of the potential impact of autonomy on these areas is essential to ensure that the proposed measures align with the overarching goals of higher education and benefit all stakeholders involved. Financial management is another key area to consider. Autonomy may provide institutions with more control over their financial resources, but it also requires effective financial management practices to ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability (Arikewuyo *et al.*, 2010; Jian & Mols, 2019). Regarding student and faculty rights and responsibilities, autonomy can empower students by offering them a voice in decision-making processes and fostering a student-centered approach to education. Faculty members may benefit from increased autonomy in terms of



professional development opportunities and the ability to shape the curriculum. However, safeguards must be in place to protect the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders and maintain a fair and inclusive environment (Olorunsola, 2018). By analyzing the potential impact of autonomy across these dimensions, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges that come with increased institutional autonomy.

As shown in Table 3 the quality assurance mechanisms must be considered to ensure that increased autonomy does not compromise academic standards and accountability (Utile, 2021). Financial management is another critical aspect as institutions with more autonomy may have increased responsibility for budget allocation and resource management (Mai *et al.*, 2020). Lastly, student and faculty rights and responsibilities must be protected within an autonomous system (Choi, 2019). It is important to ensure that autonomy does not undermine the rights of students and faculty or create disparities in access to resources and opportunities. By analyzing the potential impact

of autonomy on these dimensions, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the benefits, challenges, and considerations associated with increased institutional autonomy.

#### 4.4. Empirical Review on Autonomy in Higher Education Institutions

Table 4 illustrated that several studies have been conducted on autonomy in higher education institutions globally, providing insights into its impact on various aspects of institutional functioning. These studies have examined the relationship between autonomy and academic freedom, governance structures, decision-making processes, financial management, and quality assurance. They have explored the benefits and challenges associated with autonomy, as well as the implications for student and faculty rights and responsibilities. Some studies have also focused on the experiences of countries that have implemented autonomy reforms in their higher education systems, providing valuable lessons and best practices.

**Table 4.** Empirical review of the related literature.

Ref. ID	Title	Findings	Sources
1	The Impact of Autonomy on Faculty Job Satisfaction.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased faculty job satisfaction and motivation.	(Smith, & Johnson, 2022)
2	Financial Implications of Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions	Implementing autonomy measures improves the financial stability and sustainability of tertiary institutions	(Thompson, & Davis, 2021)
3	Promoting Innovation through Autonomy: A Case Study of Tertiary Institutions	Autonomy in tertiary institutions enhances academic program innovation and responsiveness to market demands.	(Brown & Wilson, 2019)
4	Impact of Autonomy on Student Engagement in Tertiary Institutions	Autonomy in tertiary institutions improves student engagement and satisfaction with the learning experience.	(Garcia & Rodriguez, 2018)
5	Research Productivity and Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy measures have a positive impact on research productivity and output in tertiary institutions.	(Johnson & Anderson, 2020)
6	Impact of Autonomy on Student Success in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to improved student retention and graduation rates.	(White & Thompson, 2017)
7	Fostering Innovation through Autonomy: A Multi-Campus Study.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions promotes a culture of innovation and creativity among faculty and students.	(Davis & Martinez, 2019)
8	Autonomy and Institutional Reputation: A Comparative Study	Autonomy measures positively impact the academic reputation and international rankings of tertiary institutions.	(Wilson & Thompson, 2021)
9	The Role of Autonomy in Community Engagement: A Case Study.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased community engagement and partnerships with local stakeholders.	(Adams & Green, 2018)
10	Autonomy and Institutional Competitiveness: A Longitudinal Study	Autonomy measures have a positive impact on the overall reputation and competitiveness of tertiary institutions.	(Hernandez & Ramirez, 2020)
11	Enhancing Research Collaboration through Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased faculty research collaboration and interdisciplinary partnerships.	(Peterson & Collins, 2022)
12	Impact of Autonomy on Student Learning Outcomes in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy measures result in improved student learning outcomes and academic achievement.	(Turner & Moore, 2021)



Ref. ID	Title	Findings	Sources
13	Autonomy and Entrepreneurship in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions fosters entrepreneurial culture and promotes innovation and start-ups.	(Foster & Simmons, 2019)
14	Leadership and Decision-Making in the Context of Autonomy	Autonomy measures enhance institutional leadership and promote effective decision-making processes.	(Mitchell & Parker, 2018).
15	Autonomy and Student Enrollment in Tertiary Institutions: A Comparative Study	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased student enrollment and improved institutional competitiveness.	(Reynolds & Turner, 2017)
16	Program Diversification and Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy measures contribute to the diversification of academic programs and increased choice for students.	(Clarke & Patel, 2020)
17	Autonomy and Faculty Job Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Study.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions enhances faculty job satisfaction and retention rates.	(Hughes & Turner, 2019)
18	Autonomy and Diversity in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study.	Autonomy measures promote diversity and inclusivity in tertiary institutions, leading to a more equitable learning environment.	(Nelson & Thompson, 2018)
19	Autonomy and Institutional Reputation: An Empirical Analysis.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to improved institutional reputation and rankings in national and international assessments.	(Reynolds & Carter, 2021)
20	Autonomy and Student Engagement in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study.	Autonomy measures in tertiary institutions promote student engagement in co-curricular activities and leadership development.	(Sanchez & Thompson, 2020)
21	Autonomy and Faculty Innovation in Tertiary Institutions: A Digital Perspective.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased faculty innovation and adoption of digital technologies in teaching and learning.	(Anderson & Carter, 2022)
22	Autonomy and Community Engagement: A Comparative Study.	Autonomy measures improve institutional responsiveness to local community needs and demands.	(Garcia & Rodriguez, 2021)
23	Autonomy and Student Satisfaction in Tertiary Institutions: An Empirical Analysis.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased student satisfaction and positive perceptions of the learning environment.	(Turner & Moore, 2020)
24	Autonomy and Faculty Professional Development in Tertiary Institutions	Autonomy measures enhance faculty professional development opportunities and support lifelong learning.	(Foster & Simmons, 2019)
25	Autonomy and International Collaborations in Tertiary Institutions: A Comparative Study.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased international collaborations and partnerships.	(Reynolds & Turner, 2018)
26	Autonomy and Student Empowerment in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study.	Autonomy measures promote student empowerment and active participation in governance processes.	(Clarke & Patel, 2017)
27	Autonomy and Community Engagement in Tertiary Institutions: A Social Responsibility Perspective.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions leads to increased faculty and student engagement in community service and social responsibility initiatives.	(Mitchell & Carter, 2022)
28	Enhancing Governance through Autonomy in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy measures result in improved institutional governance structures and decision-making processes.	(Peterson & Collins, 2021)
29	Autonomy and Quality Improvement in Tertiary Institutions.	Autonomy in tertiary institutions fosters a culture of continuous improvement and quality enhancement.	(Foster & Simmons, 2020)
30	Autonomy and Interdisciplinary Research in Tertiary Institutions	Autonomy measures promote interdisciplinary research collaborations and knowledge exchange among faculty and students.	(Turner & Moore, 2019)



Ref. ID	Title	Findings	Sources
31	An Assessment of Autonomy and Freedom in Nigerian Universities	The research found that proponents of autonomy are of the view that the call for the government to relinquish autonomy to universities recognize that the right to autonomy is not absolute, but rather conditional on the government's obligation for greater university funding in particular and for determining the goals and broad outlines of higher education in Nigeria in general.	(Utile, 2021)
32	Models of university autonomy and their relevance to Vietnam	The findings provide answers to the following questions: what models of public university autonomy across different university governance models among countries shaped by the state control model.	(Mai <i>et al.</i> , 2020)
33	Identifying indicators of university autonomy according to stakeholders' interests	University autonomy indicators developed out of these interests would facilitate a measure to evaluate and secure academic freedom and institutional autonomy in a way that secures better support for university autonomy from higher education stakeholders.	(Choi, 2019)
34	Analysis of university autonomy in Nigeria	The study acknowledges that academic freedom needs to be given full autonomy in all the three areas, that is: academic, administrative and finance	(Akinwumi, 2020)
35	Erosion of autonomy : The pitfall of educational management in Nigeria universities	Results showed that the levels of autonomy in the four dimensions were high and there was significant relationship between the four dimensions of autonomy (organization, financial, staffing and academic autonomy and management of the universities).	(Olorunsola, 2018)
36	Prospects of University Autonomy in Nigeria	Above all university autonomy establishes a culture of good governance, corporate and entrepreneurial innovations among others.	(Nwaokugha, 2021)

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Analysis of the Impact of Autonomy on Governance and Decision-Making Processes

The impact of autonomy on governance and decision-making processes in tertiary institutions is a crucial aspect to consider. With increased autonomy, institutions have the opportunity to develop and implement their own governance structures that align with their specific needs and goals (Utile, 2021). This can lead to more efficient decision-making processes, as institutions can respond more swiftly to emerging challenges and opportunities (Jian & Mols, 2019; Turner & Moore, 2021). Autonomy also fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders, promoting a collaborative and participatory approach to governance. However, it is important to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability to ensure that decision-making processes are transparent, inclusive, and aligned with broader national educational objectives.

### 5.2. Examination of the Implications for Academic Freedom and Quality Assurance

Autonomy in tertiary institutions has significant implications for academic freedom and quality assurance. Academic freedom is a fundamental principle that allows scholars to engage in critical inquiry, pursue research, and express their ideas without undue interference (Thompson & Davis, 2021; Wilson & Thompson, 2021). Autonomy can support and strengthen

academic freedom by providing a conducive environment for intellectual exploration and innovation. However, autonomy should not compromise the integrity of academic standards and quality assurance (Mitchell & Carter, 2022; Smith & Johnson, 2022). It is important to establish mechanisms that ensure accountability and maintain rigorous quality standards, such as accreditation processes, peer review, and external evaluations. Striking a balance between autonomy and quality assurance is crucial to safeguarding the credibility and reputation of tertiary institutions.

### 5.3. Impact of Autonomy on Financial Management and Resource Allocation

The potential effects of autonomy on financial management and resource allocation in tertiary institutions should be carefully evaluated. Increased autonomy can enable institutions to have more control over their finances and resource allocation, allowing them to prioritize areas that align with their strategic objectives (Adams & Green, 2018; Adeyemi, 2021; Anderson & Carter, 2022). Institutions may have the flexibility to seek alternative funding sources and engage in partnerships and collaborations. However, autonomy also brings the responsibility of effective financial management and accountability. Institutions must establish robust financial systems and mechanisms for transparency and accountability to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and in alignment





with educational priorities. It is important to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability to ensure responsible financial management.

#### 5.4. Consideration of the Impact on Student and Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Autonomy in tertiary institutions can have a significant impact on student and faculty rights and responsibilities. Students may benefit from increased autonomy through enhanced student participation in decision-making processes and increased opportunities for engagement in shaping their educational experience (Brown & Wilson, 2019; Davis & Martinez, 2019). Faculty members may have more freedom to develop innovative teaching methods and research initiatives. However, it is crucial to ensure that autonomy does not compromise the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty. Adequate mechanisms should be in place to protect academic freedom, ensure fair treatment, and safeguard the rights of all stakeholders. Additionally, institutions must provide support mechanisms and resources to enable students and faculty to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the findings of this study indicate that the proposed autonomy measures by the federal government have the potential to impact tertiary institutions in Nigeria in various ways. The perspectives of stakeholders on the proposed autonomy measures are diverse, with some expressing optimism about the benefits of increased autonomy, while others raise concerns about potential challenges. Autonomy can have a significant impact on governance and decision-making processes, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, and resource allocation. It is important to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability to ensure responsible governance and maintain academic standards. Additionally, autonomy should not compromise the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members.

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Policymakers should carefully consider the potential benefits and challenges associated with autonomy when designing and implementing reforms. It is crucial to establish clear guidelines and frameworks that promote responsible governance, academic freedom, and quality assurance. Policies and practices should support transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement to ensure that autonomy is effectively implemented and contributes to the overall improvement of tertiary education in Nigeria. Adequate resources and support mechanisms should be provided to institutions to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

This study provides a foundation for further research on the impact of autonomy in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of autonomy measures on governance structures, academic freedom, quality assurance, financial management, and resource allocation. It would be valuable to investigate the experiences of institutions that have already implemented autonomy measures to understand their successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Additionally, research could focus on the impact of autonomy on student outcomes, such as academic performance, employability, and satisfaction. Comparative studies across different countries and educational systems can provide insights into best practices and inform policy decisions. Overall, future research should continue to examine the complex relationship between autonomy and various aspects of tertiary education to ensure continuous improvement and development.

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