



Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research



Journal homepage: <http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/IJOMR/>

Challenges of Undergraduate Students Attending Private Universities

*Olawale Abayomi Onikoyi**, Hamza Abubakar Usman, Rasheedat Oladunni Ajape, Bashirat Funmilayo Ibrahim, Ismaeel Saka Ajia, Raji Tinuke Ibrahim, Monsurat Iyabo Alao

Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

*Correspondence: E-mail: onikoyiolawale@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Private universities have played a crucial role in Nigeria over the last two decades. This study investigated the challenges faced by undergraduate students in these institutions. A descriptive survey design was used, with data collected from 100 respondents through a questionnaire. Four research questions guided the study, and one hypothesis was tested using t-test statistics at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed several challenges confronting students, with no significant differences between male and female students. Recommendations included exploring innovative financing methods, such as issuing bonds and adopting build-operate-transfer (BOT) arrangements for infrastructure, ICT services, and library resources. Diversifying income sources beyond tuition fees was also suggested to ease financial burdens on students, particularly those from low-income families. Furthermore, private universities were encouraged to strengthen alumni engagement in fundraising. These measures aim to address challenges, enhance accessibility, and improve the sustainability of private universities in Nigeria.

© 2024 Kantor Jurnal dan Publikasi UPI

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 08 May 2024

First Revised 10 Jun 2024

Accepted 19 Aug 2024

First Available online 20 Aug 2024

Publication Date 01 Sep 2024

Keyword:

Challenges,
Private universities,
Students,
Undergraduate.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of private higher educational institutions in Nigeria dates back to the colonial days. The institutions were established basically by Christian missionaries for religious and educational reasons among others. In the past two decades, there has been an improved endeavor to augment higher educational accessibility in essentially every country on the globe. Educational transformations over the years and the increasing demand for quality employable graduates in all sectors of the economy have greatly influenced the emergence and direction of private universities and education as a whole (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000).

One important segment of higher educational institutions is private universities which is the focus of this paper. It has been observed that the emergence of private universities in recent years has been phenomenal and widely accepted. The rapid growth in this sector is characterized by increased student enrolment in both public and private universities. There are ninety-one (91) public universities and seventy-nine private universities in Nigeria, having students' enrolment figure stands at 1, 854, 261 out of which 102,500 enrolled in private universities (Akintola *et al.*, 2021). Specifically in Ogun state, 46,005 students enrolled in the 3 public universities in the state as at the time of the study, while 21, 347 enrolled in 11 private universities in Ogun state (Akintola *et al.*, 2021).

One major area receiving less attention when examining problems facing private universities in Nigeria is those difficulties encountered by students themselves after they have been admitted into the Universities and these are compounded by the institutional challenges and difficulties that negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning, research, and community service. Universities in the 21st century are characterized by massive expansion, and wider participation to provide education because of public demand for university education, thus, giving room for the emergence of new universities. Public universities cannot meet up with the demand of people yearning for a university education. Hence, opportunities now exist for private providers to meet the growing demand for university education and this has led to rapid expansion and proliferation of private universities around the globe in general and Nigeria in particular. However, student enrolment in the newly established private universities is still very low. For instance, two of the older generation (established within the last 15-20 years) private universities in Ogun state accounted for 70.6% of the total enrolment among the nine universities. This could be attributed to the inability of the younger generation (established in the last 10 years) universities to create awareness and to project the quality-of-service delivery obtainable in their various institutions to the target prospect. The study therefore attempted to find out the challenges of undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria based on tuition fees, enrolment level, courses offered, and accrediting bodies in private universities.

The specific purposes of the study are to

- (i) Find out the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria;
- (ii) examine the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria;
- (iii) investigate the level of courses offered by students in private universities; and
- (iv) investigate the level of accrediting bodies in private universities.

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

- (i) What is the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria?

- (ii) What is the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria?
- (iii) What is the level of courses offered by students in private universities?
- (iv) What is the level of accrediting bodies in private universities?

Research Hypothesis is Ho: There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWED

2.1. Private Universities in Nigeria

The definition of private universities is in no way straightforward in situations where lots of “private” educational institutions are heavily funded and regulated by the nation. We do have a range of public and private financing and control. In a larger context, private university refers to any type of university that is outside the public university education system (non-public, non-government, quasi-public (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013).

In any case, the definition of a private university ought to be considered in the light of funding, control, and mission. The challenges of private institutions depend on the level or degree of funds of the ownership. He further identifies the following core patterns as the distinguishing ownership patterns characteristic of private universities. The patterns explored are private universities: a. operating in collaboration with foreign institutions b. established through government or public universities with foreign collaboration c. owned by religious organizations, and d. operated as private firms within the country and are owned by nationals. This last variable of ownership, in the opinion of this paper, ought to be the most important factor in deciding whether the nature or type of a university is public or private. It is expected that governments would establish enough higher institutions to meet the ever-increasing demand for higher education, but this has not been the case. Even governments have not been able to provide adequate and required funds to finance existing institutions and talk less of opening new ones as there should. There are myriad other problems with public universities and as a result, there has been a rise in the number of private higher institutions.

In Nigeria, accredited private universities grew from 3 in 1999 to 34 by August 2009, a ten-year growth of over 1133%. The percentage increase for the decade was 1733% (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013). The scenarios alone are enough to portray the alarming rate at which private universities are springing up. The same could be said about their enrolment over the years. Although private university education is rather new, it has contributed to the ever-increasing amount of enrolment in higher education in these countries.

2.2. Reasons for Establishing Private Universities

The emergence of private universities has led to the failure of Africa’s once glorious public universities. Bollag (2002) described the state of public higher institutions thus: crumbling facilities and campuses, overcrowded lecture halls and hostels, and depleted libraries and laboratories bear sad witness to chronic shortages of funding and investment. It must be emphasized that these problems are not limited to Nigeria and other African countries. It appears to be an African problem generally. An outline of reasons gleaned from answers some African Presidents gave on why they encourage the establishment of private higher institutions testifies to this truth. The reasons, according to them, are to help: i. Address the problem of who pays for higher education in the new millennium. ii. African governments offer environments that are conducive to teaching and learning needs in the higher education endeavor. iii. Bridge the gap between the small number of educated Africans and the millions who need university education. iv. Governments to act in response to the pressure on

entrance into the university by providing diversity, innovation, and autonomy in the higher education sector. v. Offer quality education to enable individuals to achieve their potential through the introduction of current teaching systems and the effective use of information technology. vi. Provide new and specialized educational programs aimed at self-employment. vii. Respond to the universal call for privatization, a free market economy, and individual ownership of establishments. Some key reasons that have contributed to the increasing participation of private universities in higher education as follows: a. The inability of the public sector to satisfy the growing social demand for access to higher education. b. The shifting political view of extensive public subvention to social sectors lessens investment possibilities in the „productive sectors“ and thus the growth potentials of the economy in general. c. Public universities“ inability to respond to the demand for changes in courses and subjects of study that have occurred in many countries. d. In some countries, the public sector is being criticized for inefficiency and as such the private sector is increasingly being promoted for its efficiency in operation. e. In many centrally planned economies.

In 1960, Nigeria had a population of 31,797,000, but by the year 2006, the population had increased to 140,003,542, and by the year 2010, that number had increased to 150,274,000 (Adedeji *et al.*, 2019). The unplanned population surge in Nigeria has put tremendous pressure on the government’s capacity to provide its citizens with more goods and services including university education. Consequently, the increase in the number of students has put pressure on the existing higher education facilities.

Furthermore, the admission policy of Nigeria, which placed the states in Nigeria as educationally advantaged, does not favor the teeming secondary school leavers seeking university education from the zone. Many of the qualified candidates from the zone are continually being denied admission every year. It was obvious that prospective candidates needed an alternative source for university education, which the public universities could not provide. It is therefore not surprising that 31 out of the 69 currently licensed private universities in Nigeria are situated in the Southwestern geo-political zone. The other reasons adduced are: (1) the inability of the state to cope with higher education funding; (2) mismanagement and wasteful spending of the allocated and granted resources; (3) incessant strike actions by the university staff; (4) constant university close down and disruption in university calendar owing to staff and student actions; (5) the nation’s brain drain of experienced staff; (6) corruption in high and low places. These constitute the major reasons for the need for the deregulation of higher education in Nigeria.

2.3. Tuition Fees in Private Universities

Generally, federal university students pay tuition below N100,000 while state university students pay tuition between N100,000 –N300,000 (Obasi, 2007). Except Edo State University which has a pretty high tuition. We’ve created a list of private universities in Nigeria and their school fees range, starting from the most expensive to the cheapest. Hope this will be useful. The most expensive private university for undergraduate programs in Nigeria is the Nile University of Nigeria. In 2019, the average annual tuition fee for bachelor programs at this private institute was 2.4 million Naira, around 5.8 thousand U.S. dollars. The Baze University followed with 2.3 million Naira, some 5.5 thousand U.S. dollars.

2.4. Enrolment in Private Universities in Nigeria

In Nigeria, private sector participation has brought about an increase in several educational institutions to serve the growing populace, program quality, and general innovation in modern educational practices. The rapid growth in this sector is characterized by increased

student enrolment in both public and private universities. There are ninety-one (91) public universities and seventy-nine private universities in Nigeria, having students' enrolment figure stands at 1, 854, 261 out of which 102,500 enrolled in private universities. Specifically in Ogun state, 46,005 students enrolled in the 3 public universities in the state as at the time of the study, while 21, 347 enrolled in 11 private universities in Ogun state. The level of student subscription to any university, particularly, private universities seems to depend largely on the image of such a university. However, in the 21st century, competition among institutions of higher learning on how to attract good students from home-based and international levels is growing exponentially (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998). Amid this competition, universities and other higher education institutions have moved toward a business-like, competitive model of operation and embraced it as a service that could be marketed beyond national borders (Bunzel, 2007). However, universities with a unique corporate image and promotional appeal are likely to survive the growing competition in the education sector particularly in Nigeria (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998). Universities, particularly private ones in Nigeria are competing with one another for the enrolment of the best students in their programs but student intention to attend a university seems to depend largely on the reputation of such a university (Smaiziene & Jucevicius, 2013). The rivalry becomes very intense among the universities because they all go to the same source to attract good students from national and international platforms for possible enrolment (Weiwei, 2017). A very unique corporate image of a university makes it easier for students, parents, and guardians to identify and remember the quality of service of a particular university.

2.5. Accrediting Body

Accreditation bodies are the governing authorities, either government-owned or under agreement with the government, that establish the suitability of any participating certification body in that country to carry out BRCGS audits. This is done by assessing systems and procedures and monitoring performance.

3. METHODS

The appropriate research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey. This was because the study tried to examine the opinions of private students going to private universities on the challenges facing them. The study population of this study comprised some private university students using a simple random sampling technique in which 100 were accessed to seek their opinions on the challenges faced in their schools. An instrument was used for the study titled: Questionnaire on Challenges of Undergraduate Students Attending Private Universities in Nigeria which was used to collect data for this study from the respondents. The data collected was subjected to descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic Data Analysis of the Respondents

This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency and percentages.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents based on gender and departmental level of education. The table reveals that 56% of the respondents were female while 44% of the respondents were male. This indicates that female respondents constituted the majority in the study. 5% of the respondents were 100-level students, 47% were 200-level students, 31%

were 300-level students, 13% were 400-level students and the remaining 4% of the respondents were 500-level students. This indicates that 200-level students constituted the majority of the study.

Table 1. Demographic data of the respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	56	56.0
Male	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0
Level	Frequency	Percentage
100	5	5.0
200	47	47.0
300	31	31.0
400	13	13.0
500	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

4.2. Research Question 1: What is the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria?

Table 2 shows the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria. Ninety-five of the respondents which represents 95% agreed that the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities was high in Nigeria, 5% agreed that it was moderate while no one agreed that it was low. Thus, 95% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities was high in Nigeria.

Table 2. Level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	95	95.0
Moderate	5	5.0
Low	0	0.0
Total	100	100.0

4.3. Research Question 2: What is the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria?

Table 3 shows the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria. Sixteen of the respondents which represents 16% agreed that the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria was high, 31% agreed that it was moderate while the remaining 53% agreed that it was low. Thus, 53% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria was low.

Table 3. Level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	16	16.0
Moderate	31	31.0
Low	53	53.0
Total	100	100.0

4.4. Research Question 3: What is the level of courses offered by students in private universities?

Table 4 shows the level of courses offered by students in private universities. Twenty-two of the respondents which represents 22% agreed that the level of courses offered by students in private universities was high, 29% agreed that it was moderate while the remaining 49% agreed that it was low. Thus, 49% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of courses offered by students in private universities was low.

Table 4. Level of courses offered by students in private universities.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	22	22.0
Moderate	29	29.0
Low	49	49.0
Total	100	100.0

4.5. Research Question 4: What is the level of accrediting bodies in private universities?

Table 5 shows the level of accrediting bodies in private universities. Thirty-five of the respondents agreed that the level of accrediting bodies in private universities was high, 48% agreed that it was moderate while the remaining 17% agreed that it was low. Thus, 48% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of accrediting bodies in private universities was moderate.

Table 5. Level of accrediting bodies in private universities.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	35	35.0
Moderate	48	48.0
Low	17	17.0
Total	100	100.0

4.6. Hypothesis Testing: Ho: There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria.

Table 6 shows the significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria. The p-value (.062) was greater than the significant level at (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges attending private universities in Nigeria was accepted. This implies that there was no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria. This means that both the male and female students attending private universities in Nigeria are facing the same challenges in the areas of the high rate of tuition fees, low level of student enrolment, and delay in accreditation of courses among other challenges.

Table 6. T-test on the significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges attending private universities.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	44	4.15	2.18	98	1.05	0.062	Ho Rejected
Female	56	8.75	3.51				

Note: $P < 0.05$

4.7. Discussion

The findings of research question one indicated that 95% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of tuition fees among undergraduate students attending private universities was high in Nigeria. That is the reason why most Nigerian students prefer public universities to private ones as a result of high tuition fees. This is because most of the parents cannot afford to finance the education of their children in private universities. The problem of private universities who pay for higher education in the new millennium.

Results of research question two revealed that 53% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of enrolment among undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria was low. This implies that because majority of the students prefer public to private as a result of high school fees yet the number of students applying to private universities is always low. Only children from rich parents could wish to go to private schools. This conforms to National Population Commission, the need for private universities in Nigeria has been attributed to several factors, such as the rise in population of young people, which led to an increase in demand for higher education.

The findings of research question three revealed that 49% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of courses offered by students in private universities was low. This implies that the courses offered in private universities are very low compared to courses offered in public universities. Most private universities focus on science and social science courses even majority do not have a faculty of education. Onyemaechi agrees that private sector participation has brought about an increase in the number of educational institutions to serve the growing populace, program quality, and general innovation in modern educational practices.

Results of research question four showed that 48% constituted the majority of the respondents who agreed that the level of accrediting bodies in private universities was moderate. This means that because the courses offered in the private universities cannot be compared to that of public universities then the level of accrediting bodies in private universities was insufficient because the requirements for course accreditation are very tremendous. Even, some public universities still do window-dressing when it comes to accreditation. This is in line with the findings of NUC stated that the accredited private universities grew from 3 in 1999 to 34 by August 2009, a ten-year growth of over 1133%.

The research hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria. This means that both the male and female students attending private universities in Nigeria are facing the same challenges in the areas of high rate of tuition fees, low level of students' enrolment, and delay in accreditation of courses among other challenges. This agrees with the findings of James who observed that the challenges of private institutions depend on the level or degree of funds of the ownership. [Bollag \(2002\)](#) found that the state of public higher institutions thus, crumbling facilities and campuses, overcrowded lecture halls and hostels, and depleted libraries and laboratories bear sad witness to chronic shortages of funding and investment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have shown that there are challenges facing undergraduate students attending private universities in Nigeria. Findings also revealed that there was no

significant difference between male and female undergraduate students on the challenges of attending private universities in Nigeria. Private universities are fast fast-expanding segment of the Nigerian University educational system. In terms of number, private universities outnumbered the federal government universities in Nigeria and in terms of enrolment, they enrolled small size and offered courses that are market friendly and in limited disciplines. The tuition fees of private universities in Nigeria are higher and they are profit-oriented in nature which is why they levied high school and other fees.

The following recommendations are made to address the findings of the study.

- (i) Private universities in Nigeria could approach the financing body through multiple solutions such as the issuance of bonds and acquisition of essential infrastructures through the build-operate-transfer (BOT) contractual arrangements for estate developments, ICT services, library resources, etc. There is a strong need for private universities in Nigeria to explore a variety of internally generated funds besides school fees which make the school fees higher for students from poor backgrounds.
- (ii) The management of private universities in Nigeria should seek to engage their alumni maximally as a strong partnership arm for fundraising. Thus, the burden of generating funds could be reduced for the benefit of students.
- (iii) Private universities in Nigeria should intensify their drive for best practices and ensure they keep up the uninterrupted academic calendar fame to improve the level of students enrolment.
- (iv) The academic planning offices of private universities should ensure that existing and new programs incorporate economic viability to ensure that the programs run beyond the level of subsistence and that each program is fully accredited by NUC before being introduced to students.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

7. REFERENCES

- Adedeji, S. O., Okotoni, C. A., and Ogunleye, A. O. (2019). Access and quality of private university education in Southwestern Nigeria. *US-China Education Review B*, 9(1), 21-33.
- Akintola, O., Abosede, S., and Itiola, M. (2021). Students' enrolment in Nigerian private Universities: The Pull effect of corporate image and promotional appeal. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 4(2), 146-155.
- Amponsah, E. B., and Onuoha, L. N. (2013). The performance and challenges of private universities in Ghana and Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 4(5), 256-263.
- Bloemer, J., and De Ruyter, K. (1998). On the relationship between store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(5/6), 499-513.
- Bollag, B. (2002). Nigerian Universities start to recover from years of violence, corruption and neglect. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2(1), A40-A42.

- Bunzel, D. (2007). Universities sell their brands. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 16(2), 152-153.
- Chatterton, P., and Goddard, J. (2000). The response of higher education institutions to regional needs. *European Journal of Education*, 35(4), 475-496.
- Obasi, I. N. (2007). Analysis of the emergence and development of private universities in Nigeria (1999–2006). *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, 5(2-3), 39-66.
- Smaiziene, I., and Jucevicius R. (2013). Structural composition of corporate reputation portfolio (sustainable development perspective). *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(1), 107-113
- Weiwei, T., (2017). Impact of corporate image and corporate reputation on customer loyalty: a review. *Management Science and Engineering*, 1(2), 57-62.