
DETERMINATION OF COMPLETION RATES OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

¹Nnebedum, Chidi & ²Onyali, Loyce Chiedozie (Ph.D)

^{1&2}Department of Educational Management and Policy

^{1&2}Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

¹chidinnebedum@yahoo.com & ²loyceonyali@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study determined the completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 12,124 students who enrolled in public universities in Anambra State for 2015/2016 academic session. The sample size for the study was 7,421 undergraduates drawn using multi-stage sampling procedures. Researcher-developed instrument titled 'Inventory Proforma for Completion Rate (IPCR)' was used for data collection. The researcher together with two research assistants who are lecturers of public universities collected data for the study and 100 percent return rate was recorded. The data on the research questions were analyzed with percentage, whereas data on hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square. The findings of the study revealed among others that male students' completion rate of 99.4% for undergraduate programme in academic sessions understudy was slightly lower than their female counterparts which recorded 99.5%. It was also found out that the Arts/humanities students' completion rate of 99.5% for undergraduate programme in the academic sessions understudy was slightly higher than their Science-based counterparts which recorded 99.4%. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Staff Affairs Unit of University should organize annual orientation and seminars for students aimed at encouraging completion rates through orienting the mindset of those students that are having the intention to quit their studies due to carry-over courses.

Keywords: Completion Rates, Undergraduate Programme, Public Universities, Arts/Humanities, Sciences

Introduction

Education is an instrument for inculcating value, acquiring requisite skills and imparting sound knowledge to individuals to enable them to become self-reliant, vibrant and useful members of society. Education offered in higher institutions of learning constitutes one of the foremost instruments for the technological, social and economic development of the nation. Giami and Solomon-Alufohai (2020) stressed that higher education in Nigeria has crucial roles to play in ensuring that its beneficiaries acquired relevant skills and knowledge that can make them employable and productive in today's knowledge-driven society and economy. Higher education is received in tertiary institutions of learning such as Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities among others. Eze, Nwakanma and Obidile (2020) noted that higher education not only equips people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values but also provides competencies necessary for the performance of social and economic roles. Continuing, Eze et al averred that spurred by the roles which higher education is currently playing in national development and survival, the government has placed a high premium on the development of universities in Nigeria for the production of high-level manpower in critical areas of need in the economy. Christopher (2019) maintained that higher or tertiary education especially at the university level is an instrument for empowering people and as a means for positive social change.

The apex of all tertiary institutions of learning is the University. According to Okoro and Okoro (2014), university is a place where skilled manpower of various capacities is being trained and also an avenue to develop the human capital needed to sustain the economy. Similar to this, Adebayo (2017) averred that universities are multi-product institutions, which contribute to the generation and transmission of ideology, the social development and educational upgrading of societies, the production and application of knowledge and the training of highly-skilled labour forces. The Nigerian universities offer both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to produce the needed high-level manpower for the development of the nation. Atanda and Adeniran (2017) noted that the academic interest and advances in frontiers of knowledge decide the type of courses offered in the public universities in Nigeria. The courses offered in public universities are in either Arts/Humanities or Sciences. Palmer, Burke and Aubusson (2017) posited that science-based courses are designed to train the capable workforce to scientifically literate society. Arts/Humanities based-courses are offered in Faculties of Arts, Education, Law, Management Sciences and Social Sciences, while science-based courses are offered in Faculties of Agriculture, Basic Medical Sciences, BioSciences, Engineering, Environmental Science, Health Sciences and Technology, Medicines, Pharmacy and Physical Science.

Completion rate is the number of students who finish educational programmes at the stipulated time. According to Awodiji, Oluwalola, Ogbudinkpa and Awotunde (2020), completion rates are the percentage of the students who enrolled in universities and finally leave the system at the stipulated period of their studies. Imbovah, Nyatuka, Bogonko and Nyamwaka (2020) stressed that completion rates of students' academic careers are used as a measure of internal efficiency and quality output in education. Most students who enroll in universities expect to complete their studies at the stipulated period. When the proportion of completion is equal or proportionate to that of enrollment of a particular set of students, there is internal efficiency in the system. However, not all students enrolled for university programme at a particular level/cycle is likely to complete at the stipulated time. Sowunmi (2017) maintained that some students will fail, some will even drop out of the system completely and some will be privileged to complete the cycle. Students' academic failure or even drop out of university completely depicts internal inefficiencies irrespective of gender.

Christopher (2019) observed that there is the gender imbalance in Nigerian universities with more male students of 59.1% enrolled than females with 40.9%. The imbalance in male and female students' enrolment and the difference in cultural and societal expectations may influence their completion rates.

Students who are offered admission into Nigerian universities are expected to complete their undergraduate programme at a stipulated time. The duration of the undergraduate programme varies based on course. However, Evuarherhe (2019) observed that the rates of graduating students in Nigerian public universities were often disproportionate with the enrolment rates of particular sets of undergraduates. Nwaka (2015) observed that higher institutions of learning in Nigeria are faced with some serious problems such as students' dropout, examination malpractices and carry-over of courses. The dropout and carry-over of courses arising from academic failure of some students could prolong the completion rates of their undergraduate programme of Arts/Humanities or Sciences. The prolonged completion period of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State has become a source of worry which necessitated this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.
2. Arts/humanities and Science-based students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What are the Arts/humanities and Science-based students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the Arts/humanities and Science-based students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 12,124 students who enrolled in public universities in Anambra State for the 2015/2016 academic session. The sample size for the study was 7,421 undergraduates drawn using multi-stage sampling procedures. The first stage involved the use of the purposive sampling technique to sample all the Faculties that meet the criteria for the study based on four years of courses of study. In the second stage, simple random sampling (balloting without replacement) was used to draw six Faculties from the sampled ones. All the 7,421 students of the six Faculties drawn were used as the sample size of the study.

Researcher-developed instrument titled ‘Inventory Proforma for Completion Rate (IPCR)’ was used for data collection. The instrument has two sections A and B. Section A of the instrument is designed to collect information on the biographic data of respondents, while Section B is designed to elicit accurate figures of the rates of enrolment, drop out and completion of public universities undergraduates entering (Year 1) in a particular year and tracing them through the educational cycle (Year four) between 2015-2019 Academic Sessions. IPIE is a record-gathering form that does not require validation. Thus, the instrument was not subjected to validation. The instrument was not subjected to a test of internal consistency due to the fact that it was just employed for gathering existing data.

The researcher together with two research assistants who are lecturers of public universities collected data for the study through a direct approach. The research assistants administered the inventory to the officers of academic units of public universities retrieved it on the agreed date. The exercise lasted for two weeks to ensure a high return rate. All the inventory administered to officers of planning units of various universities was successfully retrieved which indicated a 100% return rate. The duly filled inventory was used for data analysis. The data on the research questions were analyzed with percentage, whereas data on hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square. In decision making, the percentage of 70 and above was regarded as high and, between 69-40 was regarded as moderate and those below 40 were regarded as low. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degree of freedom. Decisions on the null hypotheses were as follows: if the calculated value of chi-square is equal to or greater than the critical value, the null hypotheses were rejected, but if on the contrary, the null hypotheses were not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the male and female students’ completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentage of Male and Female Students’ Completion of Undergraduate Programme in Public University from 2015/2016 -2018/2019 Academic Sessions.

Year	Male					Female				
	Academic Session	Male Enrolment	No. of Completion	of Completion Rates	Remark	Female Enrolment	No. of Completion	of Completion Rates	Remark	
Year 1	2013/2014	3,086	3,079	99.8	Low	4,335	4,320	99.7	Low	
Year 2	2014/2015	3,123	3,118	99.8	Low	4,375	4,338	99.2	Low	
Year 3	2015/2016	3,118	3,072	98.5	Low	4,338	4,329	99.8	Low	
Year 4	2018/2019	3,072	3,058	99.5	Low	4,329	4,303	99.4	Low	
Total		12,399	12,327	99.4	Low	17,377	17,290	99.5	Low	

The results on Table 1 showed that male and female undergraduates had high graduation rates for all the years of study. Male undergraduates’ completion rate of 99.4% for undergraduate programme in academic sessions understudy was slightly lower than their female counterparts which recorded 99.5%.

Research Question 2: What are the Arts/humanities and Science-based students’ completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Percentage of Arts/humanities and Science-based Students' Completion of Undergraduate Programme of undergraduate programme in Public University from 2015/2016 -2018/2019 Academic Sessions.

Year	Arts/Humanities					Sciences			
	Academic Session	Enrolment	Completion	Completion Rate	Remark	Enrolment	Completion	Completion Rates	Remark
Year 1	2015/2016	4,359	4,345	99.7	Moderate	3,063	3,055	99.7	Moderate
Year 2	2016/2017	4,399	4,384	99.7	Moderate	3,099	3,077	99.3	Moderate
Year 3	2017/2018	4,382	4,343	99.1	Moderate	3,074	3,058	99.5	Moderate
Year 4	2018/2019	4,377	4,360	99.6	Moderate	3,024	3,001	99.2	Moderate
Total		17,517	17,432	99.5	Moderate	12,260	12,191	99.4	Moderate

The results on Table 2 showed that Arts/humanities students had high completion rates for all the years of study with exception of Year 3. Arts/humanities students' completion rate of 99.5% for undergraduate programme in the academic sessions understudy was slightly higher than their Science-based counterparts which recorded 99.4%.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 3: The Summary of Chi-square of no Significant Difference of Male and Female Students' Completion Rates of Undergraduate Programme in Public University from 2015/2016 -2018/2019 Academic Sessions

Gender	N	χ^2 .cal	χ^2 .crit.	Df	∞	Remark
Male	3,086	0.18	7.81	3	0.05	Not Significant
Female	4,335					

As shown on Table 3, the χ^2 -calculated value of 0.18 is less than χ^2 -critical value of 7.81 at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in Arts/humanities and Science students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 4: The Summary of Chi-square of no Significant Difference of Arts/humanities and Science Students' Completion Rates of Undergraduate Programme in Public University from 2015/2016 -2018/2019 Academic Sessions

Gender	N	χ^2 .cal	χ^2 .crit.	Df	∞	Remark
Male	4,359	0.60	7.81	3	0.05	Not Significant
Female	3,062					

As shown on Table 4, the χ^2 -calculated value of 0.60 is less than χ^2 -critical value of 7.81 at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Therefore, there is no significant difference in Arts/humanities and Science-based students' completion rates in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the study indicated that male undergraduates' completion rate of 99.4% for undergraduate programme based on academic sessions understudy was slightly lower than their female counterparts which recorded 99.5%. This is in disagreement with the finding of Tusiime et al. (2017) who observed that the completion rate (68.9%) of male undergraduates was higher than that of females in the same University (31.1%). The intellectual difference in gender composition of the set of students may account for the disagreement in the findings. Gender imbalance exists in completion rates primarily due to innate difference in male and female attitude and behaviour toward their studies. The gender differences in completion rates are probably due to the fact that female undergraduates tend to study hard and attain lectures than their male counterparts. Generally, there was high completion rate among male and female students in public universities. It was also found out that there is no significant difference in male and female students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Tusiime, Otara, Kaleeba, Kaviira and Tsinda (2017) reported that there was significant difference in completion rates between female and male students within public higher learning institutions. The difference in the set of students and session studied may account for the disagreement in the findings.

The finding of the study shows that Arts/humanities students' completion rate of 99.5% for the academic sessions understudy was slightly higher than their Science-based counterparts which recorded 99.4%. This is in disagreement with the earlier report of Francesconi (2018) which indicated that there were higher rates of completion in sciences (medicine and pharmacy) than arts (law, business studies, economics and psychology) in universities. The preferential difference of Arts/humanities and Science-based courses of various environment where the two studies were conducted may account for the disagreement in the findings. It was revealed that there is no significant difference in Arts/humanities and science students' completion rates of undergraduate programme in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that there was high rate of completion of undergraduate programmes in public universities in Anambra State. The high completion rate was recorded across Arts/Humanities and Science-based courses. Most of the students complete their undergraduate programme at the stipulated period. There is slightly but not significant gender gap in the completion rate of university.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Staff Affairs Unit of University should organize annual orientation and seminars for students aimed at encouraging completion rates through orienting the mindset of those students that are having the intention to quit their studies due to carry-over courses.
2. Management of public universities should develop vibrant policies of 50% school fees discount to encourage dropout undergraduates to re-enroll and complete their programmes.

References

- Adebayo, O.A. (2017), Exploring access to university education in Nigeria: A gender perspective. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(36), 54-60.
- Atanda, I.A. & Adeniran, F.I. (2017). Towards the effective management of private university education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, 3(3), 7-24.
- Awodiji, O.A., Oluwalola, F.K. Ogbudinkpa, I.C. & Awotunde, R.O. (2020). Lecturers' job performance and students' wastage rate in tertiary in Kwara State Institutions, Nigeria, 2007-2010. *Unzik Journal of Educational Management and Policy*, 4(1), 14-24.
- Christopher, O.E. (2019). Challenges besetting the sustainability of higher education in Nigeria: The case of the University of Lagos. *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 8(3), 163-193.
- Evuarherhe, V.A. (2019). National Universities Commission accredited programmes and the efficiency of the programmes in selected Universities, Nigeria. *KIU Journal of Humanities*, 4(4), 349-357.
- Eze, T., Nwakanma, S. & Obidile, J.I. (2020). Post-graduate studies completion time in vocational and technical education programmes in South-South Nigerian Universities: Students' Related Determinants. *International Journal of Vocational Education and Training Research*, 6(2), 34-40.
- Francesconi, M.P. (2018). Early gender gaps among universities graduates. *European Economic Review*, 109(1), 63-82.
- Giami, C.B.N. & Solomon-Alufohai, P.J. (2020). Managing quality assurance for improving higher education in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, 7(6), 32-40.
- Imbovah, M.A., Nyatuka, B., Bogonko, S. & Nyamwaka, E. (2020). Effects of leadership style on students' completion rates in secondary schools in Kenya. *European Journal of Educational Studies*, 7(12), 488-499
- Nwaka, G.N. (2015). Reducing educational wastage to regenerate Nigerian higher education for national development. *Journal of Assertiveness*, 9(1), 1-13.
- Okoro, N.P. & Okoro, E.O. (2014). Time and change: Development of private universities in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(9), 186-191.
- Palmer, T., Burke, P.F. & Aubusson, P (2017). Why school students choose and reject science: A study of the factors that students consider when selecting subjects. *International Journal of Science Education*, 39(6), 645-662.
- Sowunmi, G. (2017). School production variables and internal efficiency of public and private junior secondary schools in Oyo State. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 1-11.
- Tusiime, M., Otara, A., Kaleeba, A., Kaviira, A. & Tsinda, A. (2017). Gender differences in enrollment and graduation rates in private and public higher learning institution in Rwanda. *Rwanda Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 5-32.