

**EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN NIGERIA PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES**

**Samuel MUSA
EDU2001641**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

MARCH 2025

**EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN NIGERIA PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES**

**Samuel MUSA
EDU2001641**

**A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, EDO STATE,
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE AWARD OF (B.Sc. ED)
IN ECONOMICS**

MARCH 2025

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project work was carried out by **Samuel MUSA** with Matriculation number **EDU2001641** of the Department of Educational management, Faculty of Education, University Of Benin, Benin City in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.(Ed.)in Economics Education.

DR. (MRS.) K. O. IDEHEN
(Project Supervisor)

DR. NKECHI OBIWELUOZOR.
(Project Coordinator)

Date: _____

Date: _____

PROF.W.A. IGUODALA
(Head of Department)

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Mr. Musa Johnathan Egbunu and also to my Mum for their ending support and always believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely appreciate the guidance, support, and contributions of various individuals who made this research on "Educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities" possible.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to Almighty God for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this study.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor Dr (Mrs). K. O. IDEHEN, for her guidance and unwavering support throughout this research process. Her expertise and encouragement played a significant role in shaping the quality of this work.

I am deeply grateful for my family for their Love, support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. I thank my family for their endless sacrifices, Prayers and guidance. Their believe in me, constant encouragement, moral and financial support have been the foundation of my success.

Special thanks to Prof. W.A. Iguodala, Dr. Nkechi Obiweluzor, Dr. Mrs Mogbolu and my course advisor Dr. Phillip. I want to also extend my appreciation to the staffs of faculty education and Dr. Nosakhare the Head of department of Economics, university of Benin for their contribution towards my academic journey.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Title	i
Certification	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Table of Content	vi
Abstract	viii

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Questions	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	6
Scope and Delimitation of the study	7
Definition of Terms	8

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework	9
Concept of Educational Access and Student Enrollment	12
Concept of Student Enrollment	15
Government Policies	27
Summary of Reviewed Literature	35

CHAPTER THREE	
METHODOLOGY	
Research Design	38
Population of the Study	38
Sample Size and Sampling Procedure	39
Research Instrument	39
Validity of Instrument	39
Reliability of the Instrument	40
Method of Data Collection	40
Method of Data Analysis	40
CHAPTER FOUR	
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	
Discussion of finding	45
CHAPTER FIVE	
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Summary	48
Findings	49
Conclusion	50
Recommendations	51
REFERENCES	53
APPENDIX	55

ABSTRACT

The study investigated Educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities. The purpose of the study was to find the students seeking admission into public universities in Nigerian for the 2022/2023 academic session, to find the number of students who met the minimum admission requirements for entry into universities during the period under study, to find the number of students who successfully gained access to university education in the 2022/2023 academic session, to find the number of students who enrolled for a specific academic year, to find the impact of government policies on educational access and enrollment

Five(5) research questions were raised to guide the study. Question 1 to 5 were answered. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic like percentage, frequency count, standard deviation and mean

The sample size of 275 respondents was selected for this study. The data collection instrument was a checklist title "Educational Access and Enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities". The questionnaire content validity was assessed by the project supervisor, leading to the necessary adjustment before administration by the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was Carried out using cronbach alpha statistic and a coefficient of 0.77 was obtained

The study findings reveal that education has the highest application with 4510, this is followed by law with 600 applications, Basic medical science with 333 applicants, 153 for civil engineering and Basic medical science with 142. Therefore the study found that the highest application for admission is Education in 2022/2023 session, education had the highest number with 1005, Law 250, Basic medical science 100, Civil Engineering 90 and Medical Biochemistry 100. Therefore, the total number of student that have the minimum requirement to have access into university is 1625 in 2022/2023 session, the total number of student that have access to university education in 2023/2024 is 1475. Education have the highest access, followed by Law, Basic Medical Science, Civil Engineering and Medical Biochemistry, the reduction in enrollment could be due to many factors such as wrong choice of programme given to students, finance, parental factors among others and that government policies affect access to university as all the respondents indicated a positive respond. This implied that expansion of public universities,

quota system, catchment area, scholarship and national policy on education are some of the factors that affect access to university education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Accesses to education and student enrollment are critical determinants of educational development in any nation. Educational access refers to the opportunity and ability of individuals to participate in and benefit from educational systems. It encompasses several factors, including the availability, affordability, and inclusiveness of education at all levels. Enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities refers to the process and patterns of admitting students into higher education institutions run by the government in Nigeria. It is a critical area of study as it reflects the accessibility, capacity, and equity of the higher education system in the country. In Nigeria, public universities play a significant role in providing higher education to a large segment of the population, with these institutions serving as the primary avenue for attaining tertiary education. However, the issue of access and enrollment remains a significant challenge, with several factors influencing the ability of students to gain admission into public universities. These factors include socio-economic status, government policies, infrastructural capacity, and the quality of secondary education.

The Nigerian education system has undergone several transformations, particularly in response to the growing demand for higher education. Over the past two decades, the number of

public universities has expanded from 30 in 2000 to over 90 by 2023, reflecting the government's efforts to meet the increasing demand for tertiary education. Despite this expansion, the capacity of these universities to admit students has not kept pace with the exponential growth in the number of applicants. For instance, in 2022, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board reported that year over 1.8 million candidates registered for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, yet only about 600,000 gained admission, leaving over 1.2 million qualified candidates without access to higher education.

This disparity between the number of applicants and available university slots has exacerbated educational inequalities in Nigeria. Socio-economic status plays a significant role in determining who gains access to university education. Students from wealthy families often have better access to resources such as private tutoring, better secondary education, and the financial means to attend private universities or study abroad if they are unable to gain admission to public institutions. In contrast, students from lower-income families, particularly those in rural areas, are disproportionately affected by the limited availability of spaces in public universities, further widening the gap between different socio-economic groups.

Government interventions, such as the establishment of new universities and the expansion of existing ones, have been initiated to address this issue. For example, the Nigerian

government launched the National Open University of Nigeria, which aimed to increase access to higher education through distance learning. Similarly, the creation of new federal and state universities in underserved regions was intended to decentralize access and reduce pressure on existing institutions. However, these measures have not been sufficient to accommodate the increasing number of applicants. The total admission capacity of all public universities in Nigeria remains below one million, despite the fact that the country produces over 1.5 million secondary school graduates annually. Moreover, the introduction of policies such as the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination and the Post-UTME screening process, intended to standardize admission procedures and ensure that only qualified candidates gain entry into universities, have added layers of complexity to the enrollment process. While these policies have streamlined admissions, they have also been criticized for contributing to the exclusion of qualified candidates, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have the resources to navigate the multiple layers of testing and evaluation effectively.

, Nigeria's challenges in education access are not unique. Countries such as South Africa and Kenya have faced similar issues, where rapid population growth and increased demand for higher education have outpaced the development of university infrastructure. In South Africa, for example, only about 20% of applicants to public universities gain admission, a figure similar to authority Nigeria's. However, unlike Nigeria, authority has implemented more robust

financial aid schemes, such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, which has helped to mitigate some of the socio-economic barriers to access. In conclusion, while efforts have been made to increase access to higher education in Nigeria, significant challenges remain. The growing demand for university education, coupled with socio-economic disparities, limited infrastructural capacity, and complex admission processes, continues to hinder the ability of many qualified students to gain admission to public universities. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring equitable access to education and fostering national development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the expansion of public universities and reforms aimed at increasing access to higher education in Nigeria, a significant number of eligible students seems to face difficulties continue to gaining admission. This issue is particularly acute in rural areas and among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Scholars have highlighted various dimensions of this problem, but gaps remain in fully understanding the complexities involved and in providing effective solutions.

Backgrounds, education, income, status in the country Socio-economic disparities are a primary driver of unequal access to higher Education in Nigeria. It emphasizes that students from wealthier families have greater access to resources, such as private tutoring and better secondary

schools, which give them an edge in competitive university admissions. However, Aina's work largely overlooks the role of government policies and how they intersect with socio-economic factors to exacerbate or alleviate these disparities

The gap in the existing literature is evident: while previous studies have explored socio-economic disparities, infrastructural challenges, and the broader implications of educational inequality, there is a lack of comprehensive research that integrates these factors to provide a holistic understanding of the barriers to access and enrollment in Nigerian public universities. Furthermore, there has been insufficient attention to the specific strategies that could effectively address these interrelated challenges. This current research aims to fill these gaps by conducting a detailed examination of the factors affecting access and enrollment in Nigerian public universities, with a particular focus on the intersection of socio-economic status, infrastructural capacity, and government policies. By doing so, the study investigated educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities.

Research Questions

Five (5) research questions were raised that guided the Study. The questions are as follows:

1. How many students apply for admission into public universities in 2022/2023
2. How many of them passed the minimum requirement to have access into universities?

3. How many of them have access to university education in 2022/2023?
4. What is the student enrollment in the universities for the period under study?
5. Does government policy affect educational access and enrollment

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. To examine the application process used by students seeking admission into public universities for the 2022/2023 academic sessions.
2. To analyze the number of students who met the minimum admission requirements for entry into universities during the period under study.
3. To assess the number of students who successfully gained access to university education in the 2023/2024 academic session.
4. To evaluate the enrollment trends in public universities within the specified academic years.
5. To find the impact of government policies on educational access and enrollment

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on educational access and enrolment of Student in Nigeria public universities. The scope is limited to socio-economic factors, government policies, infrastructural

and administrative challenges, and proposed strategies for improvement. Data will be collected from selected public universities across different geopolitical zones in Nigeria to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Scope and Delimitation of the study

This study focuses on educational access and student enrollment in Nigerian public universities. Specifically, it examines how educational access is defined, the current trends in student enrollment, the alignment or gap between access and enrollment, and the resources available to support students within these institutions. By concentrating on public universities, the study does not include private universities or other tertiary institutions, as their structures, resources, and enrollment patterns may differ significantly. The geographical scope is limited to public universities limited to only University of Benin.

The variable of the study are student enrollment, educational access and public universities. The study covers university of Benin and academic program; Education, Law, Civil Engineering, humanities, applied engineers in science and medical laboratory science.

Definition of Terms

1. **Access to Education:** The ability of students to gain admission into educational institutions, particularly public universities.
2. **Enrollment:** The process of registering or being registered as a student in a university.
3. **Public Universities:** Universities that are funded and managed by the government.
4. **Socio-Economic Factors:** The social and economic conditions that influence an individual's ability to access education, including income, occupation, and family background.
5. **Government policies:** it refers to the strategic plans, laws, regulations, and actions implemented by the government to address societal issues and achieve specific national objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter focused review of related literature under the following subheadings;

- Theoretical Framework
- Concept of Educational Access and Student Enrollment
- Concept of Student Enrolment
- Government Policies
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Theoretical Framework

This study is hint on the theoretical framework Human Capital Theory propounded by Becker (1964) and equal opportunity theory by (Rawls 1971). The Human Capital Theory states that education is an essential investment in the development of human capital. By acquiring knowledge and skills, individuals increase their productivity, employability, and earning potential, which, in turn, contribute to national economic growth and development. In the Nigerian context, higher education plays a crucial role in producing skilled labor for sectors such as technology, health, education, and agriculture. However, barriers to educational access hinder the ability of many individuals to acquire these essential skills, limiting both personal and

national development outcomes. Understanding these barriers through the lens of Human Capital Theory helps policymakers identify gaps and formulate targeted interventions.

Human Capital Theory also highlights the relationship between educational quality and economic development. Merely expanding access to higher education is not sufficient if the quality of education is poor. Many Nigerian universities face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and unqualified lecturers, which limit the effectiveness of education in developing human capital. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring that students not only gain access to higher education but also receive the training and skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to economic progress. This theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes education as an investment that enhances individuals' skills and productivity, ultimately contributing to national economic growth. In the context of Nigerian public universities, this theory supports the argument that improving access to higher education leads to a more skilled workforce, which drives economic and social development. By examining factors affecting student enrollment, the study aligns with the Human Capital Theory by highlighting how barriers such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities limit the country's ability to develop a competitive workforce. Furthermore, the theory underscores the importance of government policies, scholarships, and institutional support

in ensuring that education remains accessible, allowing individuals to maximize their potential and contribute effectively to national progress.

The Equal Opportunity Theory championed by philosophers such as Rawls (1971), emphasizes that all individuals should have fair access to education, regardless of socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, or geographical location. This theory is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where significant disparities persist in access to education across different regions and social groups. For example, children from northern Nigeria, rural areas, and low-income families are less likely to attend and complete higher education compared to their urban, southern counterparts. Gender disparities also remain prevalent in some areas, with girls facing additional barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms, and limited access to sanitary facilities in schools. Equal Opportunity Theory underscores the importance of removing structural barriers to educational access. In the Nigerian context, this means ensuring that policies such as scholarships, affirmative action, and catchment area quotas are effectively implemented to promote inclusivity. However, these efforts must be balanced with merit-based considerations to avoid the perception that quality is being compromised. Additionally, investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and community awareness campaigns are essential to bridging the educational divide and ensuring that all students have an equal chance to succeed.

The integration of both Human Capital Theory and Equal Opportunity Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex factors affecting educational access and enrollment in Nigeria. While Human Capital Theory highlights the economic benefits of education, Equal Opportunity Theory stresses the moral imperative of equitable access. By examining how socio-economic status, institutional capacity, and public policies interact to shape educational outcomes, researchers and policymakers can develop more targeted strategies to address disparities. This is relevant to the study because it provides valuable insights into the factors affecting educational access and enrollment in Nigeria, more research is needed to explore the combined effects of socio-economic, institutional, and policy-related factors.

Concept of Educational Access and Student Enrollment

Educational access refers to the ability of individuals to obtain opportunities and resources needed to pursue education at various levels, including tertiary education. It encompasses not only physical proximity to educational institutions but also affordability, availability of learning materials, and inclusiveness of the education system (UNESCO, 2015). In Nigeria, educational access is influenced by socio-economic status, geographical location, and institutional capacity (Okeke, 2016).

Educational access on the other hand refers to the ability of individuals who obtain and benefit from formal learning opportunities at various levels, including primary, secondary, and

tertiary education. It encompasses the availability, affordability, and inclusivity of education, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, or location, have the opportunity to enroll, attend, and complete their studies. Access to education is a fundamental human right, recognized globally as a key driver of social and economic development.

A crucial aspect of educational access is equity and inclusivity, which ensures that marginalized groups, such as children from low-income families, persons with disabilities, and those in rural areas, receive equal opportunities to acquire quality education. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, disparities in access persist due to factors such as poverty, gender discrimination, and inadequate infrastructure. Governments and international organizations continue to implement policies aimed at bridging these gaps through scholarships, school feeding programs, and infrastructure development. Another dimension of educational access is the availability of adequate learning resources and facilities. A well-structured education system should provide schools with necessary learning materials, trained teachers, and a Conducive environment for learning. However, in many regions, the lack of essential infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and digital tools, limits students' ability to fully participate in education.

The rise of digital learning platforms has expanded access, but the digital divide remains a challenge, especially in areas with poor internet connectivity and limited access to

technological devices. Furthermore, policy and governance play a significant role in enhancing educational access. Governments and educational institutions develop policies to ensure inclusive and compulsory education for children of school age. Policies such as free and compulsory basic education in Nigeria aim to increase enrollment rates and reduce dropout rates. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and inefficient policy implementation continue to hinder full access to education. Strengthening governance in the education sector, increasing budgetary allocations, and ensuring transparency in the distribution of resources are crucial in improving access.

Educational access also extends beyond enrollment to the retention and completion of education. Many students who gain admission into schools face barriers such as financial constraints, child labor, early marriage, and insecurity, which affect their ability to complete their education. Programs such as conditional cash transfers and community-based interventions have been introduced to address these challenges and improve school retention rates.

In conclusion, educational access is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond mere enrollment to include quality learning, equity, and the ability of students to complete their education. Ensuring access to education requires a holistic approach involving government intervention, community participation, and international support to eliminate barriers and create an inclusive learning environment for all.

Concept of Student Enrolment

Student enrolment is the process by which students are formally registered or admitted into an educational institution for academic study. Enrolment rates are often used as indicators of the accessibility and effectiveness of an education system (World Bank, 2019). In Nigeria, enrolment in public universities is affected by factors such as admission policies, financial constraints, and infrastructural limitations (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2004). Technological advancements have the potential to streamline the enrolment process and improve accessibility. Online registration portals, e-learning platforms, and digital application systems can reduce the bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with traditional admission procedures. However, the effectiveness of these technological solutions is hindered by limited internet connectivity and digital literacy in many rural areas, further emphasizing the need for comprehensive digital inclusion strategies. Student enrolment in Nigerian public universities is a complex process influenced by multiple factors, including socio-economic status, infrastructural capacity, admission policies, gender disparities, and technological advancements. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring equitable access to higher education and fostering national development.

A study by Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004) examined trends in university enrolment in Nigeria and found that socio-economic status is a major determinant of access to higher education. Obasi (2007) investigated the effects of government policies on university admissions and identified limitations in the implementation of the quota system.

There are several factors that influence educational access and enrolment in Nigerian public universities such as socio-economic factor, geographical disparities, gender inequality, and admission policies. Socio-economic status plays a pivotal role in shaping student enrolment patterns. Students from higher-income families typically have better access to quality secondary education and private tutoring, which enhances their chances of gaining admission into competitive programs. Conversely, students from low-income backgrounds often face financial barriers that limit their ability to pay for entrance exams, application fees, and other associated costs of the enrolment process. These economic disparities continue to exacerbate inequities in university admissions. Socio-economic status significantly affects access to higher education in Nigeria. Students from low-income families often face financial barriers, including tuition fees, transportation costs, and the inability to afford learning materials (Obasi, 2007). According to Olanrewaju and Falola (2018), poverty and unemployment are major obstacles to university enrolment in Nigeria. Another factor is the Geographical disparities in access to higher education are a significant challenge in Nigeria, with students from rural areas facing more obstacles than

their urban counterparts. One of the main issues is the limited availability of secondary schools in rural regions. Many rural areas lack the infrastructure and resources to provide quality secondary education, which is a prerequisite for admission to higher education institutions. As a result, students from these regions often have to travel long distances to attend secondary schools in nearby towns or cities, which increases the financial burden on their families and limits their educational opportunities. This early barrier to education disproportionately affects students from low-income backgrounds, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Transportation is another major challenge faced by rural students. Poor road networks, insufficient public transportation options, and high transportation costs make it difficult for students from rural areas to commute to urban centers, where most universities are located. This issue becomes even more pronounced when students need to relocate to university campuses, which are often far from their homes. For many students, the cost of transportation and accommodation in urban areas is a significant deterrent to pursuing higher education, leading some to abandon their academic aspirations. Moreover, the time spent traveling can affect their academic performance, as it reduces the time available for study and engagement in extracurricular activities.

The distance to university campuses is particularly problematic for students in northern Nigeria, where educational infrastructure is generally less developed compared to the southern regions. Northern Nigeria faces lower enrollment rates in higher education, a situation

exacerbated by socio-cultural factors, economic challenges, and regional disparities in educational access. For example, northern Nigeria experiences higher rates of illiteracy, particularly among women, and cultural norms sometimes prioritize early marriage or employment over education for girls. Additionally, inadequate educational infrastructure and fewer universities in the north limit opportunities for higher education. As a result, students from this region are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their southern counterparts, who often have easier access to well-established universities and a more supportive educational environment. To address these geographical disparities, there needs to be a targeted approach that focuses on improving access to education in rural and underserved areas. This can include building more secondary schools, improving the quality of education in existing rural schools, and investing in better transportation networks to make it easier for students to reach universities. Furthermore, universities should consider establishing satellite campuses or distance learning programs in rural areas to reduce the burden of relocation and provide greater access to higher education. In addition, government policies should prioritize bridging the educational divide between the northern and southern regions by offering scholarships, affirmative action, and increased funding to universities in the north, helping to ensure that all students, regardless of their geographical location, have an equal opportunity to pursue higher education. Another factor is the Cultural and societal norms in certain regions of Nigeria discourage female education, resulting in gender

imbalances in university enrolment. Early marriages, gender-based violence, and limited support for girls' education are prevalent barriers in parts of northern Nigeria (UNICEF, 2018). A study by Akinbi (2015) highlights that gender discrimination continues to hinder women's access to higher education in Nigeria. Akinbi (2015) conducted a study on gender disparities in university enrolment, highlighting the persistent challenges faced by female students in accessing higher education. Gender disparities in enrolment are another area of concern. Cultural and societal norms, particularly in certain regions of Nigeria, may discourage female education beyond the secondary level. While national efforts have been made to promote gender equality in education, female enrolment in public universities remains lower than that of their male counterparts, addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions to empower and support female students. Ige (2013) explored the relationship between funding and the quality of education in Nigerian public universities, emphasizing the negative impact of inadequate funding on enrolment and academic performance. Another factor is the Admission policies which also play a crucial role in determining student enrolment. The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and Post-UTME screening processes are key components of the admission process. While these standardized tests aim to ensure fairness and transparency, they have also been criticized for their high-stakes nature, which may disproportionately disadvantage students from underprivileged backgrounds. Additionally, the quota system, which aims to promote regional

representation, has faced challenges in achieving its intended equity goals. The competitive nature of university admissions in Nigeria limits access for many qualified candidates. The use of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and post-UTME screening processes can disadvantage students from less privileged backgrounds who lack access to quality preparatory education (Okafor, 2012). Another significant factor influencing student enrolment is the availability and adequacy of educational infrastructure. Public universities in Nigeria are often plagued by overcrowded lecture halls, insufficient student accommodations, and inadequate learning resources. These infrastructural challenges limit the ability of universities to admit more students, despite the increasing demand for higher education. Institutions with better facilities are more likely to attract higher enrolment rates, further widening the gap between different universities.

Another factor that affects school enrolment is the Institutional Factors that affects school enrollment is the Institutional factors, it significantly influence student enrollment in Nigerian public universities. Key factors include admission policies, such as the quota system and catchment area principle, which can limit merit-based access. Institutional capacity, including available infrastructure, classroom space, and hostel facilities, also affects enrollment, as overcrowding discourages students. The quality of faculty and academic programs plays a crucial role, with universities lacking qualified lecturers experiencing lower enrollment rates.

Additionally, frequent strikes and institutional instability create uncertainty, pushing students toward private or foreign institutions. To improve enrollment, universities must enhance infrastructure, faculty quality, and governance. Infrastructural challenges which are significant obstacle to the growth and development of public universities in Nigeria. One of the most pressing issues is the shortage of classrooms, which has led to overcrowding in lecture halls. Many universities have been forced to accommodate far more students than they were originally designed to serve. As a result, students often experience poor learning conditions, including limited access to classroom space, insufficient seating, and inadequate ventilation. This overcrowding hampers the effectiveness of lectures and negatively impacts student engagement and academic performance. Furthermore, the lack of appropriate space limits the ability to introduce new academic programs and increase student intake in response to growing demand. Outdated laboratories are another major issue, particularly for students in science, engineering, and medical fields. Many Nigerian public universities operate with laboratories that are poorly equipped or outdated, making it difficult for students to engage in practical learning. The absence of modern equipment and technology in laboratories also affects research capabilities, as students and lecturers are unable to conduct cutting-edge experiments or research. In some cases, students are forced to work in unsafe or inadequate condition, which compromises both the quality of education and their safety. Addressing this issue would require significant investment

in upgrading laboratory facilities, procuring modern equipment, and ensuring that both students and staff have access to the tools needed for effective learning and research.

In addition to classrooms and laboratories, inadequate hostel facilities are another significant challenge in Nigerian universities. Many students, especially those from outside the university's host city or state, rely on campus accommodations to access their education. However, public universities in Nigeria struggle to provide sufficient housing, leading to overcrowded hostels with inadequate sanitation and basic amenities. This scarcity of hostel spaces forces many students to seek off-campus accommodation, often at high costs, which exacerbates the financial burden on students and their families. Furthermore, students living off-campus may face challenges related to security, transportation, and attendance, which can affect their academic performance.

These infrastructural limitations not only affect the quality of education but also hinder the expansion of enrollment in Nigerian public universities. With growing demand for higher education, universities need to scale up both their physical infrastructure and academic resources to accommodate more students without compromising educational quality. The Nigerian government must prioritize infrastructure development in public universities, ensuring that adequate funding is allocated for the construction of new classrooms, modern laboratories, and expanded student housing. Public-private partnerships and collaboration with international

donors could also play a role in addressing the infrastructural challenges faced by these institutions. Without proper infrastructure, universities will continue to struggle with the twin challenges of overcrowding and declining educational standards. These limitations restrict the number of students that can be admitted and affect the quality of education (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008). Another factor is the frequent industrial actions, particularly those led by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), have become a major issue in Nigeria's higher education system. ASUU has frequently resorted to strikes to protest inadequate funding, poor working conditions, delayed salary payments, and the government's failure to implement agreed-upon agreements. These strikes often lead to extended closures of public universities, disrupting the academic calendar and creating uncertainty for students. This instability negatively affects students' education, causing delays in graduations and diminishing the overall learning experience.

The unpredictable nature of strikes creates significant uncertainty for prospective students, who may be hesitant to enroll in public universities due to the possibility of frequent disruptions. When students are uncertain about whether their academic year will proceed smoothly, they may opt to attend private institutions or seek opportunities abroad, thereby affecting public university enrollment rates. As a result, frequent strikes contribute to the decline in public university enrolment as students look for more stable educational alternatives. This shifting enrollment

pattern further strains the financial stability of public universities, as they lose students to private or foreign institutions.

Furthermore, the prolonged nature of many strikes puts additional pressure on university staff and students. Staff, including lecturers and administrative personnel, often faces financial hardship during strikes, especially when their salaries are delayed or reduced. Students, on the other hand, are forced to bear the brunt of academic delays, often finding themselves struggling to complete coursework or prepare for exams after strikes are resolved. This disruption creates a fragmented academic experience, where students are forced to adjust to compressed schedules, reducing the quality of their education. The cumulative effect of frequent strikes also erodes trust in the university system. Parents, students, and other stakeholders begin to question the reliability of public universities, which can lead to a negative perception of the institutions. When students face multiple delays and disruptions in their studies, it can lead to frustration, burnout, and even a lack of motivation. Moreover, the strikes exacerbate the already existing concerns about the quality of education, as students are often left without adequate time to complete their studies or engage in critical research and practical experiences.

To mitigate the negative effects of strikes, there must be a concerted effort from both the government and university administration to address the underlying issues leading to industrial actions. Adequate funding, improved working conditions for university staff, and better

communication between the government and university unions are crucial steps toward preventing strikes and ensuring stability in the academic calendar. Additionally, there should be a legal framework to regulate strikes in the education sector, ensuring that strikes are used as a last resort and that students' education is not unduly interrupted. Long-term solutions to the strike culture could involve creating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to address grievances before they escalate into industrial actions, thus ensuring that the higher education system remains stable and conducive to learning. Another factor is public universities in Nigeria suffer from chronic underfunding, which affects their capacity to expand enrolment and maintain quality education standards. Chronic underfunding is one of the most significant challenges facing public universities in Nigeria. Despite the growing demand for higher education, government allocations to the education sector remain far below the UNESCO-recommended 15-20% of the national budget. This insufficient funding limits universities' ability to expand enrolment, improve facilities, and provide essential learning materials. As a result, public universities often operate under suboptimal conditions that hinder both teaching and learning. This persistent funding gap also affects the institutions' ability to keep up with modern educational standards, technology, and research developments. One of the direct consequences of underfunding is the deterioration of infrastructure. Many public universities in Nigeria suffer from outdated and overcrowded classrooms, poorly maintained lecture halls, inadequate libraries,

and insufficient hostel accommodations for students. In some cases, critical laboratory equipment is either outdated or entirely lacking, making it difficult for students to gain hands-on experience in technical and scientific disciplines. These poor learning environments not only reduce students' academic performance but also contribute to high dropout rates and low graduation rates.

Staff remuneration is another area heavily impacted by inadequate funding. Lecturers and other university staff often receive salaries that are not commensurate with their qualifications or workload. Poor working conditions and delayed salary payments have led to frequent industrial actions by academic unions such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). These strikes disrupt the academic calendar, delaying students' graduation and creating an atmosphere of instability. The low morale among university staff also reduces their motivation to engage in research, innovation, and mentorship, further eroding the quality of education.

Insufficient funding also limits universities' ability to provide adequate learning materials and research opportunities. Libraries are often stocked with outdated books and journals, and many institutions lack access to online academic resources or reliable internet connectivity. Research grants are scarce, making it difficult for students and lecturers to engage in meaningful research projects, the lack of adequate funding leads to deteriorating infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, and poor staff remuneration (Saint, Hartnett, & Strassner, 2003). This lack of

funding for research and innovation not only stifles intellectual development but also limits the universities' contributions to national development. To address these issues, there is a pressing need for the Nigerian government to increase its investment in higher education, improve financial accountability, and explore alternative funding sources such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and endowment funds.

Government Policies

The Nigerian government has introduced several policies aimed at improving access to higher education some of these policies are: Expansion of Public Universities: The expansion of public universities in Nigeria, driven by the establishment of new federal and state institutions, is part of the government's strategy to increase access to higher education (Obasi, 2007). This approach aims to meet the growing demand for tertiary education and reduce pressure on existing universities. Many new institutions have been set up in regions previously underserved by higher education, promoting geographical equity and creating educational opportunities for rural communities. However, while this policy has expanded access on paper, the implementation has been fraught with challenges.

One of the primary issues associated with this expansion is inadequate funding. Many newly established universities do not receive sufficient financial support to meet the requirements of infrastructure, staff recruitment, and student services. In many cases, university

budgets barely cover operational costs, let alone capital expenditures for developing lecture halls, hostels, libraries, and laboratories. Without adequate funding, these institutions struggle to offer the quality of education expected at the tertiary level, leading to poor academic outcomes and low graduation rates.

Infrastructure development has not kept pace with student enrollment in many public universities. Existing universities, let alone newly established ones, often suffer from a lack of basic facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, offices, and housing for students and staff. In some cases, students are forced to learn under makeshift structures or even outdoors due to overcrowding. This lack of proper learning environments discourages students and further deteriorates the quality of education. Additionally, universities with inadequate infrastructure cannot support advanced learning and research, which are critical to the development of human capital and innovation. Another challenge is the shortage of qualified academic and administrative staff. While the expansion of public universities has created a demand for more lecturers and administrative personnel, the supply of qualified academics has not increased proportionally. Many institutions have resorted to hiring under qualified staff or relying heavily on part-time lecturers. This overreliance on adjunct faculty reduces academic stability and continuity for students, as part-time staffs are often unavailable for mentoring and research

supervision. Furthermore, the lack of experienced leadership and management in some new universities has led to poor governance and inefficiencies in administration.

The rapid expansion has also led to issues with program accreditation and standardization. Many of the newly created universities have not gone through the rigorous process of developing fully accredited programs before admitting students. This oversight results in graduates from these institutions facing challenges in securing jobs or furthering their education, as employers and other universities question the validity of their degrees. To address these issues, the Nigerian government must not only focus on increasing the number of universities but also ensure that all institutions meet minimum standards for academic quality, infrastructure, and staff development. Comprehensive planning, increased funding, and stringent oversight are essential for ensuring that the expansion of public universities genuinely improves access to higher education while maintaining quality standards. Another policy is the quota system and catchment area policy which are key components of Nigeria's university admission framework. These policies are designed to promote regional balance and social inclusion by reserving a certain percentage of university admission slots for candidates from specific states or regions. The rationale is to ensure that educationally disadvantaged areas, particularly those in the northern regions of the country, have greater access to higher education. However, while these policies have helped increase representation for underprivileged areas, they have also been the subject of considerable

debate and criticism. One of the primary criticisms of these policies is that they limit merit-based admissions. Highly qualified candidates from states outside the designated catchment areas may be denied admission to universities despite outperforming other candidates who benefit from the policies. This situation has led to frustration among students and families, especially those from the southern regions, where competition for limited university slots is more intense due to higher educational attainment levels. As a result, many perceive the system as unfair and a barrier to excellence in higher education.

These policies also perpetuate inequality by reinforcing regional disparities in educational outcomes. Rather than encouraging investment in improving educational standards across the country, the quota system and catchment area policy sometimes mask deeper issues, such as the lack of quality secondary education in certain regions. Students from these disadvantaged regions may be admitted under preferential policies but often struggle to compete academically due to inadequate preparation. This creates a cycle of underperformance, which further undermines the goal of equal access to quality education.

Furthermore, the implementation of these policies has been criticized for lacking transparency and consistency. In many cases, universities have not provided clear guidelines or publicized the specific quotas or catchment areas they apply. This lack of transparency creates confusion and mistrust in the admission process, leading to accusations of favoritism, nepotism,

and corruption. In some cases, students and their families resort to paying bribes or using political connections to secure admission slots, further eroding trust in the system. To address these challenges, there have been calls for reforming the quota and catchment area policies. Rather than relying solely on regional preferences, many experts advocate for a more holistic admissions approach that considers both merit and socio-economic factors. Additionally, increasing investment in education across all regions—especially in underserved areas—can help bridge the gap in educational quality and reduce the need for preferential policies. Transparent and accountable admission practices are also essential to restoring public confidence in the fairness of university admissions. Ultimately, the goal should be to create a balanced system that promotes both equity and academic excellence in Nigerian higher education. Another policy is the Scholarship and financial aid which programs play a critical role in improving access to higher education in Nigeria, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government, private organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies provide various scholarships and bursaries aimed at easing the financial burden of tuition, accommodation, and study materials. These programs are designed to promote equity and ensure that talented but economically disadvantaged students are not excluded from educational opportunities. Despite their importance, however, the effectiveness of these programs remains limited. One of the key issues is the inadequacy of available scholarships and financial aid to

meet the needs of all eligible students. The demand for financial assistance far outweighs the available funding, leaving many students without support.

As Nigeria's population continues to grow, and with more students seeking admission to higher institutions, the gap between the number of scholarships and the number of applicants has widened, this inadequacy forces many students to drop out or seek alternative means of financing their education, which may include working multiple jobs or taking loans with high interest rates. In addition to the limited availability of scholarships, the distribution of financial aid is often uneven and poorly managed. In many cases, rural and underserved communities receive less information about scholarship opportunities due to inadequate communication channels. Urban students, on the other hand, have better access to information, making them more likely to benefit from these programs. This geographical imbalance in access to scholarships perpetuates the educational disparities between rural and urban areas, rather than bridging the gap.

Corruption and favoritism further undermine the fairness and transparency of scholarship distribution. There have been numerous reports of scholarships being awarded based on political connections, family ties, or bribery rather than merit or financial need. Such practices erode public trust in scholarship programs and deny deserving students the opportunity to access higher education. The lack of a standardized, transparent selection process makes it difficult for eligible students to know whether they are being considered fairly. To address these challenges, reforms

are needed to improve the efficiency and equity of scholarship and financial aid programs. The government and private organizations should increase funding for scholarships to better meet the growing demand. Additionally, more robust outreach efforts should be made to ensure that students from all regions, especially rural and disadvantaged areas, are aware of available opportunities. Implementing transparent application and selection processes, along with regular audits, can help minimize corruption and favoritism. By improving the effectiveness of scholarship and financial aid programs, Nigeria can take a significant step toward ensuring equitable access to higher education for all. Another policy is the National Policy on Education (NPE) which is a comprehensive framework that reflects the Nigerian government's commitment to providing accessible, equitable, and quality education for all citizens. First formulated in 1977 and revised periodically, the policy emphasizes free and compulsory basic education, equal educational opportunities for all, and the development of technical, vocational, and higher education to meet national development goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). It also promotes inclusivity by recognizing the importance of special education for children with disabilities and gender parity in educational access. Despite its ambitious goals, the implementation of the NPE has faced numerous challenges. One of the primary issues is the significant gap between policy intentions and actual funding allocations. The policy highlights the importance of adequately financing the education sector, but in practice, Nigeria's education

budget consistently falls short of the UNESCO-recommended allocation of 15-20% of the national budget. Insufficient funding limits the ability of schools to provide essential learning resources, pay competitive salaries to teachers, and invest in infrastructure development. This financial shortfall particularly affects public schools, which cater to a large majority of the Nigerian population.

Infrastructure deficits are another critical challenge hindering the full realization of the National Policy on Education. Many public schools and higher institutions in Nigeria lack basic facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities. In rural and underserved areas, children are often forced to study in dilapidated buildings or under makeshift shelters, which negatively impacts learning outcomes. The policy's objective of creating a conducive learning environment has not been fully achieved due to a lack of investment in modern and safe educational infrastructure. Teacher recruitment, training, and retention are also areas where implementation lags behind the policy's goals. The NPE emphasizes the need for well-trained and adequately compensated teachers to deliver quality education. However, many public schools face chronic teacher shortages, especially in rural areas. Inadequate professional development programs and poor working conditions have also led to low teacher morale and high attrition rates. This shortage of qualified teachers further widens the education gap and compromises the quality of instruction provided to students. Lastly, the policy's intention to

promote inclusivity has not been fully realized, especially in terms of access for marginalized groups. Children with disabilities, girls in certain regions, and children from low-income or nomadic families continue to face significant barriers to education. Special education programs remain underfunded, and many schools lack the resources or trained staff to support students with special needs. Similarly, the policy's goal of gender parity has seen limited success in some regions due to cultural and socio-economic factors that prioritize boys' education over girls'. Addressing these gaps requires stronger political will, increased investment, and more effective monitoring of policy implementation to ensure that the goals of the National Policy on Education are fully realized across Nigeria.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

This chapter has carefully reviewed some literature related to this study. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Human Capital Theory and Equal Opportunity Theory, which emphasize the importance of education as an investment in human capital and the need for equal access to education, respectively. The concept of educational access refers to the ability of individuals to obtain opportunities and resources needed to pursue education, including physical proximity, affordability, and availability of learning materials. In Nigeria, educational access is influenced by socio-economic status, geographical location, and institutional capacity.

Several factors influence educational access and enrolment in Nigerian public universities, including socio-economic factors, geographical disparities, gender inequality, and admission policies. Students from low-income families face financial barriers, while those from rural areas face limited secondary school infrastructure and poor transportation networks. Gender inequality and cultural norms also discourage female education, resulting in gender imbalances in university enrolment. Furthermore, the competitive nature of university admissions limits access for many qualified candidates.

Institutional challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, frequent strikes, funding issues, and declining quality of education, also affect enrolment rates in public universities. Many Nigerian public universities face infrastructural challenges, including insufficient classrooms and outdated laboratories. Frequent strikes disrupt academic calendars, while funding issues affect the capacity to expand enrolment and maintain quality education standards. The declining quality of education, due to overcrowded classrooms and lack of qualified lecturers, discourages prospective students from enrolling.

Government policies aimed at improving access to higher education include the expansion of public universities, quota system, catchment area policy, scholarship programs, and national policy on education. However, the implementation of these policies has been criticized for limiting merit-based admissions and perpetuating inequality. Empirical studies have

highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to address the complex factors influencing educational access and enrolment in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher presents the method and procedure that were used in the study. These are under the following sub-headings research design, population of the study, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, validity of the instrument, reliability of instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this study is descriptive survey research design. According to Omoroguiwa (2019) descriptive survey research design in the use of instrumentations such as test, questionnaire and observation to gather information from a sample of a population on their characteristic, attitude and opinion on the use of interest and the conclusion reached are generalized to the population of study. This research design is suitable for this study because it allows for the collection of data from a large population, and it provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing educational access and enrollment in Nigerian public universities.

Population of the Study

The population comprises of all the public universities in Nigerian, there are 125 universities in Nigeria. Hence, the study population will involve head of department, non

academic staff from University of Benin in the selected programs (Law, Education, Basic medical science, Civic Engineering and medical biochemistry).

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample of this study covers only university of Benin and the programs selected from the programmes based on the national universities commission guidelines. These program were selected from humanities, basic medical science, engineering, the programs are four and five years program. The head of departments, non academic staff and students were the sample used. A total of 275 of them were used for the study

Research Instrument

Research instrument used for data collection in this study is a checklist titled; student application for university education, student who passed the minimum requirement to access university education, access to university education, student enrollment in the university in 2023/2024 academic session.

Validity of Instrument

The check list used as a research instrument were design and shown to the supervisor and three other experts in Department of Educational Management Faculty of Education University of Benin, Benin City to determine the content validity, their corrections and comment were effected before the final instrument was produced for the study.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a checklist therefore reliability was not required because a reliability is used to determine the consistency of an instrument question 1,2,3,4. However the reliability for the questionnaire 5 was done through test-retest methods that were not part of the study was analysed using Crohbach Alpha to analyze the data. The result showed a coefficient of 0.77 which means the instrument is reliable

Method of Data Collection

The data for the study was collected by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. The instrument was collected immediately to ensure accuracy.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the study were analysed using descriptive statistic such as percentage, frequency count, standard deviation and mean

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected with the interpretation and discussion of findings. The data obtained from the study were used to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis raised .

Research Question 1: How many students applied for admission into public universities in Nigeria between 2022/2023 in University of Benin?

Table I: Student’s application for university education in 2022/2023

S/N	Programmes	F	M	Total	%
1	Law	250	350	600	10
2	Education	2510	2000	4510	79
3	Basic medical science	100	233	333	5
4	Civil engineering	53	100	153	3
5	Medical biochemistry	42	100	142	3

Grand Total = 5738

The data in table I show a grand total of 5,738 of students that applied for university admission in university of Benin in 2022/2023 academic session. Education has the highest application with 4,510, this is followed by Law with 600 applications, Basic Medical Science 333 applicants, 153 for Civil Engineering and Basic Medical Science was 142. Therefore, the study found that the highest application for admission is Education in 2022/2023 session.

Research question 2: How many of them passed the minimum requirement to have access into Universities?

Table II: Passed the minimum requirement to access into University

S/N	Programmes	F	M	Total
1	Law	100	150	250
2	Education	805	200	1005
3	Basic medical science	50	100	150
4	Civil engineering	30	90	120
5	Medical biochemistry	27	73	100

Grand Total = 1625

The total number of students that have access to university Education is 1625 as shown in table II. Education had the highest number with 1005, Law 250, Basic medical science 100, Civil

Engineering 90 and Medical Biochemistry 100. Therefore, the total number of student that have the minimum requirement to have access into university is 1625 in 2022/2023 session.

Research question 3: How many of them have access to university education in 2022/2023?

Table III: Access to University Education

S/N	Programmes	F	M	Total
1	Education	450	550	1000
2	Basic medical science	50	70	120
3	Civil engineering	20	90	110
4	Medical biochemistry	25	70	95
5	Law	60	90	150

Grand total = 1475

The total number of student that have access to university education in 2023/2024 is 1475. Education have the highest access, followed by Law, Basic Medical Science, Civil Engineering and Medical Biochemistry.

Research question 4: what is student enrolment in the university for the period under study?

Table IV: Student Enrolment in the University

S/N	Programmes	F	M	Total
1	Law	60	85	145
2	Education	50	70	120
3	Basic Medical Science	20	90	110
4	Civil Engineering	25	70	105
5	Medical Biochemistry	20	70	90

Grand total = 570

The total number of students that enrolled in the various programme is 570 (five hundred and seventy) compared to total students that have access to the university which is 1475 (one thousand four and seventy five). The reduction in enrollment could be due to many factors such as wrong choice of programme given to students, finance, parental factors among others.

Research question 5: Does government policy affect educational access and enrolment?

Table V: Government policy and education access

S/N	Items	N	Yes	No
1	Expansion of public universities	5	√	
2	Quota system	5	√	
3	Scholarship	5	√	
4	Shortage of qualified staff	5	√	
5	National policy on education	5	√	

The data in table 5 shows that government policies affect access to university as all the respondents indicated a positive response. This implied that expansion of public universities, quota system, catchment area, scholarship and national policy on education are some of the factors that affect access to university education.

Discussion of Finding

Based on the results indicating the study of analysis of data. The following findings were made from research question one which states that how many students applied for admission into public universities in Nigeria between 2022/2023 in University of Benin, the study revealed that

education has the highest admitted students in the university than other faculties. This findings further revealed that students admitted in the public universities in nigeria is large.

From research question two which has to do with how many of them passed the minimum requirement to have access into university. The findings which revealed that minimum number of students that have access into university is low.

From research question three which state that how many of them have access to university education in 2022/2024. The study revealed that education had the highest number of students that access university other than other faculties, because of their cut off Mark's. Furthermore it revealed that cut off can reduce students access to university of education.

From research question four which state what is the student enrollment in the universities for the period under study. The study revealed that students that enrolled in university is high than student s that enrolled in other programmes due to many factors such as wrong choice of programme given to students, finances, parental factors among others.

From research question five which state does government policy affect educational access and enrollment. The study revealed that government policies affect access and enrollment in university, because of catchment, scholarship etc. Furthermore the study showed government policy that affect educational access and enrollment is average.

From research question which state that there's no significant relationship educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian universities. The study revealed that regardless whether s educational access or enrollment of students in Nigerian universities is high or not. Both will be same, which means it is average.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the study findings the conclusions drawn and the recommendations

Summary

This study investigated the Educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities. The purpose of the study was to:

1. Find the students seeking admission into public universities in Nigeria for the 2022/2023 academic session
2. Find the number of students who met the minimum admission requirements for entry into universities during the period under study
3. Find the number of students who successfully gained access to university education in the 2022/2023 academic session
4. Find the number of students who enrolled for a specified academic years
5. Find the impact of government policies on educational access and enrollment

To attain the study's goal, five(5) research question were raised. Question one (1) to (5) were answered. The research question are as follows

1. How many students apply for admission into public universities in 2022/2023?

2. How many of them passed the minimum requirements to have access into universities?
3. How many of them have access to university education in 2022/2023?
4. What is the student enrollment in the universities for the period under study?
5. Does government policy affect educational access and enrollment?

The sample size of 275 respondents was selected for this study. The data collection instrument was a checklist titled "Educational Access and Enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities". The questionnaire content validity was assessed by the project supervisor, leading to the necessary adjustment before administration by the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using Cronbach alpha statistic and a coefficient of 0.77 was obtained.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics like percentage, frequency count, standard deviation and mean.

Findings

The study findings reveal that

Educational has the highest application with 4510, this is followed by law with 600 applications, Basic medical science with 333 applicants, 153 for civil engineering and Basic medical science with 142. Therefore, the study found that the highest application for admission is Education in 2022/2023 session.

Education had the highest number with 1005, Law 250, Basic medical science 100, Civil Engineering 90 and Medical Biochemistry 100. Therefore, the total number of student that have the minimum requirement to have access into university is 1625 in 2022/2023 session.

The total number of student that have access to university education in 2023/2024 is 1475. Education have the highest access, followed by Law, Basic Medical Science, Civil Engineering and Medical Biochemistry.

The reduction in enrollment could be due to many factors such as wrong choice of programme given to students, finance, parental factors among others.

That government polices affect access to university as all the respondents indicated a positive respond. This implied that expansion of public universities, quota system, catchment area, scholarship and national policy on education are some of the factors that affect access to university education.

Conclusion

The research examined" Educational access and enrollment of students in Nigerian public universities". The study therefore concluded that Government policies have great influence in Educational access and enrollment of students, Educational access and students who applied into the university for the 2022/2023 session, Resources available to support students and different enrollment patterns

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve access to university education and increase student enrollment:

The university should consider revising its admission policies, particularly cut-off marks, to ensure that a greater number of qualified students can gain admission.

The government should increase scholarship opportunities and financial aid programs to support students from low-income backgrounds who struggle to afford tuition and other expenses.

The federal and state governments should invest in the expansion of public universities to accommodate more students and reduce competition for limited admission slots.

Secondary school students should be provided with career guidance and counseling to help them make informed decisions about their chosen fields of study, reducing cases of students being admitted into programs they are not interested in.

The government should reassess policies such as the quota system and catchment area policies to ensure that they promote merit-based access while still addressing regional educational disparities.

Universities should recruit and train more academic staff to ensure that an increase in student enrollment is matched with sufficient faculty members to maintain academic quality.

The government should encourage private sector investment in education to increase the number of available institutions and reduce pressure on public universities. By implementing these recommendations, access to university education in Nigeria can be improved, and more students can successfully transition from admission to enrollment, contributing to the overall development of the higher education sector.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, K., & Akpotu, N. (2004). Gender analysis of student enrolment in Nigerian universities. *Higher Education*, 48(3), 361–378.
- Ajayi, I. A., & Ekundayo, H. T. (2008). The deregulation of university education in Nigeria: Implications for quality assurance. *Nebula*, 5(4), 212-224.
- Altbach, P. G. (2016). *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cloete, N. (2016). For sustainable funding and fees, the undergraduate system in South Africa must be restructured. *South African Journal of Science*, 112(3), 1–5.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National Policy on Education (6th Edition)*. NERDC Press, Abuja.
- Ige, A. M. (2013). Provision of secondary education in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 5(1), 1–9.

- Obasi, I. N. (2007). Analysis of the emergence and development of private universities in Nigeria (1999–2006). *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 5(2 & 3), 39–66.
- Obasi, I. N., Akuchie, R. C., & Obasi, S. N. (2014). Public policy and enhancement of access in private universities in Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(4), 1–10.
- Okafor, E. E. (2012). The status and roles of private universities in the development of higher education in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(12), 1–16.
- Olanrewaju, A. (2019). Socio-economic disparities and access to higher education in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Development*, 45(2), 123-135.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Saint, W., Hartnett, T. A., & Strassner, E. (2003). Higher Education in Nigeria: A Status Report. *Higher Education Policy*, 16(3), 259-281.
- UNICEF. (2018). *Education: Gender equality*. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

REQUEST FOR THE VALIDATION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Dear Sir/Ma,

I am an undergraduate student in the above named institution presently conducting a survey on “Educational Access and Enrolment of Students in Nigerian Public Universities.” And this is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor’s degree in Education.

The purpose of this study is to carry out an assessment on the Educational Access and Enrolment of Students in Nigerian Public Universities (University of Benin). The findings will help identify Educational Access and Enrolment of Students in Nigerian Public Universities (University of Benin).

I look forward to my request been granted. Thank you.

SAMUEL MUSA

EDU2001641

Q1. Students Application for University Education

S/N	PROGRAMMES	F	M	APPLICATION
1	Law			
2	Education			
3	Basic medical science			
4	Civic Engineering			
5	medical biochemistry			

Q2. Students who passed a Minimum Requirement to Access University Education

S/N	PROGRAMMES	F	M	TOTAL
1	Law			
2	Education			
3	Basic medical science			
4	Civic Engineering			
5	medical biochemistry			

Q3. Access to University Education

S/N	PROGRAMMES	F	M	ADMISSION
1	Education			
2	Basic medical science			
3	Civic Engineering			
4	medical biochemistry			
5	Law			

Q4. Student Enrolment in the Universities in 2023/2024

S/N	PROGRAMMES	F	M	TOTAL
1	Law			
2	Education			
3	Basic medical science			
4	Civic Engineering			
5	medical biochemistry			

Government policy and Education Access

S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO
1	Does Expansion of public universities affect educational access?		
2	Does Quota system and catchment area policy affect educational access?		
3	Does Scholarship and financial aid programs affect educational access?		
4	Does Shortage of qualified academic staffs affect educational access?		
5	Does National policy on education affect educational access?		