

**STUDENT UNION POLITICS AND STUDENT INTEREST AGGREGATION
AND SATISFACTION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

BY

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BENIN CITY, EDO STATE**

FEBRUARY, 2025

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
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POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project was carried out by **Daniel Osejijejele EHIWELE**, with the Matriculation Number; **SSC2008534** in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science.

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Date _____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to almighty God.

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I am deeply grateful to God for His unwavering provision, protection, guidance, and grace throughout my academic journey. As the renowned poet Maya Angelou once said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." These words have inspired me to strive for excellence and push beyond my limits.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines student union politics and its effectiveness in aggregating and satisfying student interests at the University of Benin. The research explores the extent to which the student union represents student concerns, the challenges it faces, and student satisfaction with its performance. A quantitative survey research design was adopted, with data collected from 264 students through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that while the student union is effective in advocating for student welfare, mediating conflicts, and disseminating information, it struggles with governance representation and financial transparency. Major challenges identified include administrative interference, leadership conflicts, low student participation, poor communication, and repression by university authorities. Despite these obstacles, students expressed satisfaction with welfare initiatives, recreational activities, and communication efforts, though concerns about transparency persist. The study establishes a significant relationship between student union representation, student interest aggregation, and satisfaction. Recommendations include enhancing student participation, strengthening financial transparency, and reducing administrative interference. These findings contribute to the discourse on student governance and provide insights for improving student union effectiveness in Nigerian universities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The concept of student unionism which is deeply rooted in the principles of collective representation, has historically served as a vital platform for student engagement in university governance. In the context of higher education, student unions are organizations that represent the interests and welfare of the student body, offering students a voice in decision-making processes that affect their academic and social experiences. Student union politics in Nigeria, and particularly at the University of Benin, plays an essential role in shaping the quality of student life, creating a link between the administration and the student population, and enabling students to aggregate and advocate for their interests.

At the University of Benin, the student union remains a critical body for representing student interests. It is responsible for articulating and advocating student needs, engaging with the administration, and ensuring that policies reflect student priorities (Ajayi, 2015). However, issues like leadership struggles and external political interference often disrupt the union's effectiveness, limiting its ability to function as a democratic platform for student representation (Omoregie & Igbafe, 2014).

Interest Aggregation and Student Satisfaction are key concerns to this research; Interest aggregation, in the context of political science, refers to the process by which various interests and demands of a group are combined and represented through political channels (Olowu & Erero, 2013). In the university setting, the student union is tasked with the responsibility of collating student demands, prioritizing these demands, and

presenting them to the university authorities for action. Effective interest aggregation is key to ensuring that diverse student needs ranging from academic issues, campus safety, welfare, accommodation, and other social concerns are addressed comprehensively. However, the extent to which student unions successfully aggregate and represent the interests of students has been a subject of debate.

The quality of leadership within the student union is critical in determining its effectiveness in interest aggregation and student satisfaction. Leadership selection processes, internal cohesion, and the commitment of union leaders to the collective interests of students are crucial factors that shape student union politics (Agbionu, 2016). When leaders are genuinely interested in the welfare of students and are free from external political influences, they are more likely to push for policies that reflect the true needs of students. On the other hand, when student unions are riddled with internal conflicts or when leaders are co-opted by external political actors, the union's ability to represent student interests may be compromised, leading to dissatisfaction among the student body.

Student union politics is central to the representation of student interests in higher education institutions. In the University of Benin, as in other Nigerian universities, the student union plays a vital role in aggregating and advocating for student interests. However, the challenges of external interference, internal conflicts, and financial constraints often hinder the union's effectiveness, leading to dissatisfaction among students.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Student unionism in Nigerian universities, including the University of Benin, is intended to serve as a platform for student representation, advocacy, and engagement in university

governance. However, despite the potential of student unions to aggregate student interests and ensure satisfaction, several challenges have prevented these organizations from fulfilling their mandate effectively (Ajayi, 2015). At the University of Benin, student union politics is characterized by frequent leadership tussles, external political interference, and insufficient student participation, all of which undermine the union's ability to advocate for student interests.

One of the primary issues facing student unionism at the University of Benin is the recurring leadership crises. Elections, which should be a democratic process, are often marred by electoral malpractice, favoritism, and conflicts between factions within the union (Omoriegbe & Igbafe, 2014). These leadership struggles create instability within the union, disrupting its ability to effectively represent students. This dysfunction is further exacerbated when leaders prioritize personal ambitions over the collective interests of the student body, leading to disenchantment and disengagement among students.

Another significant problem is political interference from external actors. University administrations, national political parties, and even government officials sometimes seek to manipulate student union elections or influence decisions for their own interests (Ogunlade, 2013). These external pressures compromise the autonomy of the student union, making it difficult for student leaders to remain independent and genuinely advocate for student needs. As a result, the union's capacity to address pressing issues such as tuition fees, hostel conditions, and campus safety becomes severely limited.

Furthermore, the lack of effective communication and engagement between the student union and the general student population is a critical problem. Many students at the University of Benin feel disconnected from the union and view it as an entity that is either too politicized or ineffective in addressing their concerns. According to Ezeibe (2015), low student participation in union activities can be attributed to a lack of trust in

union leadership, internal conflicts, and the perception that the union is not responsive to student needs. This gap between the student body and the union diminishes the union's role as an effective intermediary between students and the university administration.

The challenges of administrative suppression also pose a significant problem. University authorities, particularly during periods of student unrest, often resort to suspending union activities, banning elections, or appointing union leaders. This form of suppression weakens the union's credibility and limits its ability to function as an independent organization (Okafor, 2011). In some cases, the union's activities are curtailed by administrative policies that restrict protests or negotiations, leaving students without a voice in key decision-making processes.

The student union at the University of Benin faces numerous challenges that prevent it from effectively aggregating student interests and ensuring student satisfaction. These include leadership crises, external political interference, low student engagement, and administrative suppression. Without addressing these issues, the student union will continue to struggle in fulfilling its role as a representative body for students. This study seeks to examine the dynamics of student union politics at the University of Benin and assess how well the union aggregates student interests and ensures student satisfaction.

1.3. Research Questions

The follow are the research questions that guide the study;

- I. How effectively does the student union at the University of Benin aggregate and represent student interests?
- II. What are the key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction at the University of Benin?

- III. How satisfied are University of Benin students with the overall performance and effectiveness of the student union in meeting their needs and concerns?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study is concerned about evaluating the issue of student union politics and student interest aggregation and to also find out if these two factors leads to satisfaction among students in the University of Benin, to achieve this; the study specifically focus on the following objectives, which is to;

- I. Assess the effectiveness of the student union at the University of Benin in aggregating and representing student interests.
- II. Identify the key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction at the University of Benin.
- III. Measure the level of student satisfaction with the performance and effectiveness of the student union in meeting their needs and concerns.

1.5. Research Hypothesis

Research Question 1 and 3 will be hypothesized at 5% significant level, while Research Question 2 will be answered directly. The hypothesis is stated thus;

H₀₁ – Student Union leaders in university of Benin have not effectively aggregated or represented the interest of Students.

H₀₃ – There is low satisfaction among students in the operation and performance of student unionism in the University of Benin.

1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on student union politics and its role in aggregating student interests and ensuring student satisfaction at the University of Benin. The research will specifically explore how effectively the student union represents student interests, the challenges it faces in achieving student satisfaction, the impact of leadership crises, external political interference, and the overall satisfaction of students with the union's performance.

The study is delimited to the University of Benin, chosen due to its rich history of student activism and the persistent challenges faced by its student union. The research will focus on the perspectives of students and student union leaders within the university, while also considering the role of university administration in shaping the union's activities. Data will be collected through surveys and interviews to gain insights into the effectiveness and challenges of the student union. Delimitations include the exclusion of other universities in Nigeria, as the study is solely focused on the University of Benin. Additionally, the research will not examine broader issues related to national student unions, nor will it delve into the historical evolution of student unionism in detail, beyond its relevance to current issues. Limitation to the study is that the finding of the study cannot be generalized across all institutions in Nigeria, but just to University of Benin.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This study on student union politics and student interest aggregation at the University of Benin is significant to various groups and bodies, each benefiting in unique ways:

Students are the primary beneficiaries of this study. It will highlight the effectiveness of the student union in representing their interests and the challenges it faces in doing so. By

shedding light on areas where the union can improve, students can better understand how to engage with the union to ensure their needs are met. Additionally, the study will provide insights into how student participation can influence the union's success, empowering students to become more active in union activities.

The findings will offer valuable feedback to student union leaders on their leadership styles, the challenges they face, and how they can better serve the student body. Understanding the impact of leadership crises and external political interference will help them make more informed decisions, build stronger leadership structures, and improve transparency and accountability in their operations.

For the university administration, this study provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics between students and the student union. It offers insights into how administrative actions, such as suppression or support of union activities, affect student satisfaction and engagement. The administration can use these findings to foster a more collaborative relationship with the student union, ensuring that student concerns are addressed in a way that promotes a harmonious academic environment.

Policy makers within the higher education sector can benefit from the study's findings by understanding the broader implications of student union politics on university governance and student welfare. The study can serve as a basis for creating policies that promote effective student representation, democratic processes in student governance, and mechanisms for reducing political interference in student union activities.

This study will also serve as a reference for future research on student unionism, political representation, and student satisfaction in Nigerian universities. Researchers can build on the findings to explore similar dynamics in other institutions or to delve deeper into

issues such as union financing, broader student governance policies, and national student activism.

This study has the potential to create positive change by informing stakeholders on how to improve student union governance, promote student satisfaction, and enhance the overall effectiveness of student representation at the University of Benin.

1.8. Methodology

This study will use a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather data on student unionism at the University of Benin. The population will include students and student union leaders, with a stratified random sampling method used to select students, while purposive sampling will target student union leaders for interviews. Data will be collected through structured surveys to assess the union's effectiveness, challenges, and student satisfaction. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis to identify key patterns and insights.

1.9. Plan of the Study

The research work is divided into 5 chapters which are briefly discussed;

- **Chapter One:** The first chapter deals with the Introduction to the research work, which covers area such as the Background to the study, Statement of the research problem, the research objectives, questions, scope and significance of the study.
- **Chapter Two:** The second chapter deals with the Literature Review for the study, which will thoroughly contain the conceptual review, the review of related topics, the empirical review and the Theoretical Framework.

- **Chapter Three:** The third chapter deals with the Methodology of the study in which the study contains the research design, study population, sample size and technique, the research instrument, validity of the research instrument, while also stating the method of data collection and analysis.
- **Chapter Four:** The fourth chapter of the study deals with the Presentation and Analysis of Data collected through the research instrument, upon which a discussion on the findings will be revealed.
- **Chapter Five:** The fifth chapter will be the final chapter of the study which will contain the Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The second chapter of this study deals with the literature review which covered the conceptual review, the review of related topics, empirical review and the theoretical framework;

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Student Union

The concept of a student union is rooted in the principles of representation, advocacy, and collective action. A student union is an organized body of students, typically within a university, that serves as the primary medium through which students articulate their interests, defend their rights, and engage in university governance. As Agbionu (2016) explains, student unions are essential for fostering a sense of community among students, enabling them to collectively address academic, welfare, and social issues. They operate within a democratic framework, where leaders are elected by the student body to represent their interests and negotiate with the university administration on matters affecting students.

Historically, student unions have played pivotal roles in addressing broader societal and political issues beyond campus life. For instance, in Nigeria, student unions were instrumental during the pre-independence era, actively participating in anti-colonial struggles and advocating for national reforms (Jega, 2007). However, in contemporary times, the focus of student unions has shifted primarily to campus-related matters, such as advocating for better infrastructure, lower tuition fees, and improved welfare services. According to Okafor (2011), the role of student unions in Nigerian universities extends

beyond welfare advocacy; they are also crucial in fostering political awareness and leadership skills among students, preparing them for future societal roles.

Student unions function through structured political systems, often mirroring larger democratic frameworks. They have elected officials, such as presidents, secretaries, and treasurers, who are tasked with decision-making and policy implementation. These unions rely on principles of interest articulation and aggregation, wherein the diverse needs of the student population are identified, consolidated, and represented in dialogues with the university administration. Ajayi (2015) notes that the effectiveness of a student union is contingent on its ability to balance competing interests within the student body while maintaining its autonomy from external influences.

Despite their significance, student unions face numerous challenges that undermine their functionality. Leadership crises, often characterized by internal conflicts and struggles for power, have been identified as a major impediment. As Ezeibe (2015) observes, these crises not only disrupt the operations of the union but also erode trust among the student body. Moreover, external political interference from university authorities, government bodies, and national political organizations further compromises the autonomy of student unions. Such interference often results in unions being co-opted for agendas that do not align with student interests, thereby diminishing their effectiveness (Ogunlade, 2013).

Administrative suppression is another recurring issue that limits the operations of student unions. University authorities sometimes impose restrictions on union activities, dissolve elected bodies, or manipulate elections to install compliant leaders. Omoregie and Igbafe (2014) argue that these actions weaken the union's capacity to advocate for student needs and stifle democratic practices within the university setting.

The concept of a student union encapsulates the ideals of representation, advocacy, and collective action, serving as a critical link between students and university governance. While student unions in Nigeria, such as those at the University of Benin, have made significant contributions to student welfare and political awareness, their effectiveness is often undermined by leadership crises, external interference, and administrative suppression. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring that student unions fulfill their mandate of representing and advocating for the interests of students.

2.1.2 Concept of Student Interest Aggregation

Student interest aggregation refers to the process by which diverse and sometimes conflicting concerns, needs, and preferences of students are collected, harmonized, and represented by a central body, often the student union. The concept is rooted in the principles of political representation and collective action, aiming to unify the voice of students and present their demands in a coherent manner to relevant stakeholders, such as university administrations or external authorities. As noted by Ajayi (2015), student interest aggregation is a fundamental function of student unions, which act as intermediaries between the student population and institutional management, advocating for issues such as welfare, academic policies, and campus infrastructure.

The theoretical basis of student interest aggregation lies in pluralist democracy, where multiple groups within a society or institution come together to express their concerns. Within a university setting, students represent a pluralistic group with varying needs shaped by their academic disciplines, personal circumstances, and socio-economic backgrounds. The student union, as a collective body, assumes the responsibility of reconciling these interests to form unified demands. According to Ogunlade (2013), this process not only ensures effective representation but also prevents fragmented advocacy, which could weaken the collective bargaining power of students.

The effectiveness of student interest aggregation depends on the inclusivity and transparency of the process. Inclusivity ensures that all segments of the student population, including minority groups, are represented in the union's decision-making processes. Transparency fosters trust among students, ensuring they feel confident that their concerns are being accurately communicated to the administration. Ezeibe (2015) highlights that effective aggregation requires a robust communication framework, where students are encouraged to express their views through formal channels such as surveys, focus groups, and town hall meetings.

However, challenges often impede the process of student interest aggregation. Leadership crises within the student union can disrupt its ability to harmonize diverse interests effectively. As Omoregie and Igbafe (2014) observe, internal conflicts and power struggles within student unions often lead to the neglect of critical student issues, as leaders become more focused on personal or factional agendas. External interference from university authorities or political organizations further complicates the process, as such influences may steer the union away from genuinely representing student interests.

Administrative suppression also poses a significant threat to the process of interest aggregation. University authorities may impose restrictions on union activities, limit engagement platforms, or dissolve leadership structures under the guise of maintaining order. Such actions undermine the union's capacity to collect and represent student concerns effectively. Ajayi (2015) argues that for student unions to perform their role in interest aggregation, they must maintain a level of autonomy that protects them from undue interference.

Student interest aggregation is a crucial function of student unions, aimed at harmonizing and representing the diverse concerns of the student population. While its effectiveness relies on inclusivity, transparency, and robust communication, challenges such as

leadership crises, external interference, and administrative suppression often hinder the process. Addressing these issues is vital to ensuring that student unions can fulfill their mandate as effective representatives of the student body.

2.1.3. Concept of Student Interest Satisfaction

Student interest satisfaction refers to the extent to which students' academic, social, and welfare needs are fulfilled by the actions and policies of student unions and university administrations. It highlights how well institutional frameworks meet student expectations and is a crucial measure of organizational effectiveness. According to Ogbu (2017), satisfaction in this context is not just about achieving tangible outcomes, such as improved facilities or reduced fees, but also about fostering a sense of inclusivity, fairness, and responsiveness in addressing student concerns.

Satisfaction among students is shaped by multiple factors, including the efficiency of student union leadership, the quality of dialogue between students and the administration, and the accessibility of platforms for student participation in governance. Okon (2018) argues that transparent and participatory governance significantly enhances student satisfaction, as students feel valued when their voices contribute to decision-making processes. This sense of inclusion, combined with visible improvements in welfare and infrastructure, creates a positive perception of leadership among the student body.

In Nigerian universities, the concept of student satisfaction is intertwined with the ability of student unions to deliver on campaign promises, advocate for fair policies, and maintain autonomy in their operations. Okeke (2016) highlights that unions are often judged based on their ability to secure meaningful changes, such as better hostel accommodations, reliable transportation systems, and the resolution of grievances related

to academic policies. When unions fail to deliver on these mandates, dissatisfaction arises, leading to diminished trust and sometimes unrest within the student community.

Okafor and Adebayo (2015) note that when student unions are restricted in their operations either through dissolution or the imposition of leaders by university authorities their capacity to address student concerns is compromised. This, in turn, fosters dissatisfaction, as students perceive their representatives as ineffective or complicit in undermining their interests. Furthermore, leadership crises, marked by internal power struggles and lack of accountability, exacerbate dissatisfaction by diverting attention away from pressing student issues.

Another critical dimension of student satisfaction is the alignment of student union priorities with the broader interests of the student population. As Amadi (2019) observes, unions that focus on issues considered irrelevant to students, or that fail to provide regular updates on their activities, risk alienating their constituency. A lack of transparency and communication not only erodes trust but also makes it difficult for unions to gauge and address the evolving needs of their members.

Student interest satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that encompasses both tangible outcomes and the processes through which those outcomes are achieved. While effective leadership, inclusivity, and transparency significantly enhance satisfaction, administrative suppression, external interference, and poor communication are major obstacles. Addressing these challenges is essential for student unions to effectively meet the needs of their members and foster a sense of fulfillment within the student body.

2.2. Related Topics

2.2.1 History of Student Unionism in Nigeria

The history of student unionism in Nigeria is deeply rooted in the nation's political and socio-economic development, dating back to the colonial era. The early forms of student activism emerged in the 1920s, with groups such as the West African Students' Union (WASU) advocating for educational reforms and political emancipation. WASU, founded in London in 1925, was instrumental in organizing Nigerian students and providing a platform for addressing issues related to colonial rule and educational inequalities. According to Falola and Heaton (2016), these early student movements were not limited to educational concerns but extended their activism to broader societal issues, such as the fight for Nigeria's independence.

The formalization of student unionism in Nigeria began with the establishment of the Nigerian Students' Union (NSU) in 1948, followed by the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) in 1956. These organizations served as umbrella bodies for student unions across the country, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective purpose among Nigerian students. NUNS, in particular, played a pivotal role in mobilizing students against colonial policies, advocating for the establishment of more universities, and promoting educational access for all Nigerians. As Olatunji (2017) notes, student unions during this period were highly active in resisting oppressive policies, including those that sought to marginalize indigenous Nigerians in the education system.

The post-independence era marked a shift in the focus of student unionism. With Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960, student unions transitioned from primarily opposing colonial policies to addressing issues within the newly independent state. These included demands for better campus welfare, improved academic facilities, and greater involvement of students in university governance. Ogunديya and Ologbenla (2016) argue

that the 1960s and 1970s were the golden age of student unionism in Nigeria, characterized by robust activism and a strong commitment to social justice. For instance, Nigerian students actively opposed the military dictatorship of the 1970s, organizing protests against corruption, authoritarianism, and human rights abuses.

However, the vibrancy of student unionism began to decline in the 1980s and 1990s due to increased government repression and the militarization of campus politics. The introduction of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the mid-1980s exacerbated tensions between students and the government, as the austerity measures led to significant cuts in education funding. According to Ojo (2015), the government responded to student protests during this period with widespread crackdowns, including the banning of student unions, arrests of union leaders, and increased surveillance on campuses. These actions significantly weakened the capacity of student unions to organize and advocate effectively for their members.

In recent decades, student unionism in Nigeria has faced additional challenges, including political interference, internal leadership crises, and administrative suppression. Despite these challenges, student unions remain an integral part of the Nigerian higher education system. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2018) observe that, while contemporary unions may lack the radicalism of their predecessors, they continue to play a crucial role in advocating for student welfare and promoting dialogue between students and university authorities. The history of student unionism in Nigeria reflects a dynamic interplay between activism, governance, and societal change, underscoring the enduring importance of these organizations in the nation's educational and political landscape.

2.2.2 Role and functions of Student Union

Student unions play a crucial role in the governance and welfare of students within higher education institutions. They act as a representative body for students, ensuring their interests are prioritized and protected. Below are key roles and functions of student unions, with their significance highlighted through scholarly insights.

- **Representation in University Governance**

One of the primary roles of a student union is to represent the collective interests of students in university decision-making processes. By participating in governance structures, they ensure that student voices are heard on issues such as tuition fees, academic policies, and resource allocation. According to Ojo (2015), this role enhances the inclusivity of university administration and fosters a participatory approach to decision-making.

- **Promotion of Student Welfare**

Student unions are responsible for advocating for improved welfare conditions for students. This includes addressing issues like housing, healthcare, financial aid, and campus facilities. They engage with university administrations to negotiate better living conditions, scholarships, and affordable tuition fees. Adebayo (2016) highlights that unions are pivotal in ensuring that student welfare remains a priority, thereby improving the quality of life on campuses.

- **Fostering Community and Social Integration**

Creating a sense of community among students is another important function of student unions. They organize cultural, social, and extracurricular events that promote unity and foster interpersonal relationships among students. Ogundele (2017) notes that these

activities help students develop social skills and provide platforms for self-expression, contributing to a cohesive and vibrant campus culture.

- **Leadership Development**

Student unions serve as a training ground for future leaders. Through participation in elections, governance, and committee activities, students develop leadership, organizational, and conflict-resolution skills. Adeyemi (2016) emphasizes that student unions are instrumental in preparing students for leadership roles in society by offering practical experiences in teamwork, accountability, and decision-making.

- **Advocacy and Activism**

Student unions are key advocates for students' rights and interests. They mobilize students to demand better academic standards, equitable policies, and justice within the university system. Okeke (2018) observes that advocacy efforts by unions have historically led to significant policy changes, including the provision of better facilities and the revision of outdated regulations. This watchdog role ensures that university administrations remain transparent and accountable.

- **Facilitating Communication Between Students and Administrators**

Student unions act as intermediaries between the student body and the university administration. They provide a structured channel for students to communicate grievances, suggestions, and feedback to management. According to Okeke and Nwachukwu (2018), this role is crucial for resolving conflicts and maintaining harmony on campus.

Despite their significant roles, student unions often face challenges that hinder their effectiveness. Issues such as administrative suppression, political interference, and

internal conflicts can limit their ability to advocate effectively for students. Nevertheless, they remain an essential component of university systems, contributing to governance, welfare, and the overall student experience.

2.2.3 Challenges faced by student unionism in Nigeria

Student unionism in Nigeria has a long history of activism and advocacy for student rights and welfare. However, its effectiveness is often hindered by several challenges that undermine its operations and impact. These challenges are rooted in institutional, political, and societal factors that affect student unions' ability to function as representative and advocacy bodies.

- **Administrative Suppression**

One of the primary challenges faced by student unions in Nigeria is administrative suppression. University authorities often perceive student unions as antagonistic, leading to restrictions on their activities. Measures such as the banning of unions, intimidation of student leaders, and interference in union elections are common practices. Ojo (2015) highlights that such suppression is particularly prevalent in public universities, where unions are often penalized for organizing protests or challenging university policies. This undermines the unions' autonomy and reduces their capacity to represent students effectively.

- **Political Interference**

Political interference is another significant challenge confronting student unions in Nigeria. Politicians and external actors often infiltrate unions, using them as tools for political gain. This can lead to the imposition of union leaders who serve external interests rather than the needs of the student body. Adebayo and Adeyemi (2016) note that political interference compromises the independence of unions and fosters division

among students, as leaders become more focused on personal or external agendas than on collective welfare.

- **Internal Leadership Conflicts**

Internal conflicts within student unions often arise from disputes over leadership positions, resource management, and decision-making processes. These conflicts can lead to factionalism and disrupt union activities, leaving the student body unrepresented. Ogundele (2017) argues that leadership struggles are exacerbated by external influences and the lack of accountability mechanisms within unions, which erode trust and weaken the union's credibility among students.

- **Insufficient Funding**

Funding is a critical challenge for student unions in Nigeria. Many unions rely on limited funds from student dues or grants from university administrations, which are often inadequate to cover their operations. In some cases, university authorities use funding as a tool to control union activities, withholding financial support for unions perceived as confrontational. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2018) assert that this lack of financial autonomy undermines the unions' ability to organize events, provide welfare services, and effectively advocate for student interests.

- **Declining Student Engagement**

A lack of active participation by students is another challenge affecting student unions. Many students are disillusioned with union politics, viewing them as ineffective or corrupt. This disengagement weakens the unions' mandate, as leaders find it difficult to mobilize students for collective action. According to Olatunji (2017), declining engagement is partly due to the loss of trust in union leadership and a general apathy

toward campus governance, which limits the unions' ability to advocate for meaningful change.

The challenges faced by student unions in Nigeria, including administrative suppression, political interference, leadership conflicts, funding constraints, and declining student engagement, significantly impact their effectiveness. Addressing these issues requires a collective effort from students, university authorities, and external stakeholders to strengthen union structures and ensure their autonomy. Despite these challenges, student unions remain vital to the advocacy for student welfare and democratic representation in Nigerian universities.

2.2.4 Relationship between Student Union interest Aggregation and Nigeria

The relationship between student union interest aggregation and Nigeria's socio-political landscape is rooted in the historical and ongoing role of student unions as agents of collective representation and advocacy. Student unions in Nigeria have traditionally served as platforms for the articulation and aggregation of student interests, bridging the gap between the student body and institutional or governmental authorities. This process involves identifying common grievances, negotiating with university administrations, and mobilizing students to collectively advocate for their rights. According to Ojo and Alao (2014), student unions have been instrumental in shaping policies on education funding, campus welfare, and democratic governance within Nigerian universities.

In the broader Nigerian context, student unionism reflects the dynamics of the nation's socio-political environment. As Nigeria grapples with issues such as economic instability, inequality, and governance challenges, these same dynamics are mirrored within student unions. Adeyemi and Adebayo (2016) argue that the ability of student unions to effectively aggregate and advocate for interests depends on the political and economic

conditions of the time. For example, during periods of political repression, student unions have faced increased administrative suppression, limiting their ability to champion student welfare effectively.

The aggregation of student interests also plays a role in fostering political awareness and activism among Nigerian youths. By engaging in interest-based advocacy, student unions provide a training ground for future leaders, exposing students to the principles of negotiation, democracy, and civic engagement. As noted by Okeke and Nwachukwu (2018), this function is critical in Nigeria's democratic process, as it nurtures a politically conscious youth population capable of contributing to national development.

Despite their potential, the effectiveness of student unions in Nigeria is often hindered by challenges such as internal leadership conflicts, external political interference, and declining student engagement. These challenges weaken their capacity to aggregate interests and achieve meaningful outcomes, highlighting the need for structural reforms within unions and broader support from institutional and national stakeholders.

2.3. Empirical Review

A study conducted by Adeyemi and Nwachukwu (2021) explored *the role of student unions in promoting civic engagement among undergraduates in Nigerian universities*. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzed responses from 500 students across five universities in southern Nigeria. The findings revealed that student unions significantly influenced students' political awareness and participation in civic activities. The study highlighted how unions served as a microcosm of democratic governance, training students in negotiation, representation, and activism. However, it also identified issues such as administrative suppression and financial limitations as barriers to effective

engagement. The study underscored the potential of student unions to contribute to national development if these challenges were addressed.

Okeke and Adebayo (2018) examined the *leadership dynamics within student unions and how they impacted interest aggregation and satisfaction among students*. Through interviews with former union leaders and surveys of 800 students, the study identified internal conflicts, lack of financial autonomy, and external political interference as key impediments to union effectiveness. The authors emphasized that while unions played a critical role in articulating student interests, these challenges often eroded trust and engagement among the student body. The study recommended reforms in union leadership structures and greater institutional support to enhance their capacity for advocacy and representation.

Adebayo and Oladipo (2016) investigated *the link between student union activities and the academic governance of Nigerian universities*. The study analyzed union involvement in academic policy formulation, highlighting their contributions to discussions on tuition fees, academic calendar adjustments, and the provision of learning resources. The authors used case studies from three public universities and found that union activities positively influenced decision-making processes when their participation was respected by university authorities. However, the study noted that adversarial relationships between unions and administrations often hindered collaboration, limiting the unions' ability to effectively aggregate and represent student interests.

Ojo and Alao (2014) conducted a longitudinal study examining *the impact of student unions on welfare policies within Nigerian universities*. By analyzing policy changes and outcomes over a ten-year period, the researchers found that unions were instrumental in advocating for improved hostel facilities, reduced tuition fees, and enhanced campus security. The study emphasized the unions' ability to mobilize student support for

collective bargaining, but also noted that frequent administrative pushback weakened their impact. The authors argued that fostering a cooperative environment between unions and administrations could yield better welfare outcomes for students.

Olatunji (2012) provided a historical analysis of the *evolution of student unionism in Nigeria, focusing on its transition from pre-independence political activism to contemporary campus advocacy*. The study traced the role of unions in Nigeria's nationalist movements and their subsequent adaptation to the challenges of university governance. Through archival research and interviews with retired union leaders, the study documented how student unions evolved to address campus-specific issues such as welfare, academic standards, and student rights. Olatunji highlighted the enduring relevance of unions despite the challenges they face, emphasizing their importance in promoting democratic values within higher education institutions.

2.4. Theoretical Framework: System Theory

2.4.1. An Overview of Easton's System Theory

David Easton's system theory, introduced in the 1950s, provides a conceptual framework for understanding how political systems function as a whole. In his seminal works, including *A Framework for Political Analysis* (1965) and *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (1965), Easton conceptualized a political system as a set of interconnected structures and processes that operate within an environment. He defined a political system as the authoritative allocation of values within a society and posited that its stability depends on its ability to adapt and respond to environmental demands and pressures. The theory revolves around the concepts of inputs, processes, outputs, feedback, and the environment. Inputs—such as demands and support—are fed into the political system, which processes these inputs to produce outputs in the form of policies, decisions, or

actions. Feedback loops then allow the system to assess the adequacy of its outputs and adjust accordingly to maintain stability and functionality (Easton, 1965).

Easton's system theory is particularly relevant to understanding collective governance, as it highlights the dynamic interplay between societal demands, institutional responses, and external influences. In the context of student unionism, the theory provides a lens to analyze how unions operate as systems, receiving inputs from the student body in the form of demands and expectations, processing them through leadership structures and decision-making mechanisms, and delivering outputs such as advocacy efforts, policy changes, or welfare programs.

2.4.2. Critique of Easton's System Theory

While Easton's system theory has been praised for its adaptability and holistic approach, it has also faced criticisms, particularly in its application to complex social and political systems. One critique is its perceived mechanistic view of political processes, which simplifies the inherently dynamic and often conflict-ridden nature of social systems. Critics argue that the theory overlooks the role of power imbalances, vested interests, and external coercive forces that often disrupt the orderly processing of inputs and outputs (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998).

Another limitation is the assumption of system equilibrium, which may not align with real-world conditions. For instance, in the context of student unionism, the theory might inadequately address how unresolved demands, leadership conflicts, or external political interference can destabilize the system. Additionally, Easton's framework tends to underemphasize the role of individual agency and spontaneous action, which are critical in understanding the dynamics of student unionism. Leadership styles, internal power

struggles, and the strategic actions of union members often influence the functioning of the system in ways that are not fully captured by the theory.

Moreover, critics have noted that Easton's model does not adequately consider the impact of resource constraints and systemic inequities on a system's capacity to respond to demands. This critique is particularly relevant to Nigerian student unions, which often operate under severe financial and administrative constraints. These limitations can prevent the unions from effectively processing inputs and delivering satisfactory outputs, thereby weakening their legitimacy and effectiveness.

2.4.3. Relevance of Easton's System Theory to the Study

Despite its limitations, Easton's system theory remains a valuable framework for analyzing the processes of student interest aggregation and satisfaction in the University of Benin. The theory allows for an exploration of how student unions function as systems within the broader university environment, processing demands from the student body and delivering outputs that aim to address their needs. By framing student unions as systems, the study can examine how internal components, such as leadership structures, communication channels, and decision-making processes, interact with external factors like university policies, governmental regulations, and societal expectations.

The concept of feedback is particularly relevant, as it underscores the importance of continuous communication between the student body and union leaders. Effective feedback loops ensure that the union remains responsive to changing student needs and can adjust its policies and actions accordingly. For example, if students express dissatisfaction with campus security, this demand becomes an input that the union processes through advocacy or negotiations with the university administration. The

eventual implementation of improved security measures represents an output, while student reactions to these measures provide feedback that informs future actions.

Easton's emphasis on the system's environment also resonates with the challenges faced by student unions in Nigeria. Factors such as administrative suppression, political interference, and inadequate funding constitute environmental pressures that influence the system's functionality. The theory provides a framework for understanding how these pressures affect the union's capacity to aggregate interests and satisfy student demands. By identifying and addressing these environmental factors, the study can offer practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of student unions.

Furthermore, the theory highlights the importance of legitimacy in maintaining system stability. In Easton's view, a political system must continuously earn the support of its constituents to sustain its operations. Applying this concept to student unions, the study can explore how factors such as transparent leadership, inclusive decision-making, and effective communication contribute to building trust and legitimacy among the student body. Conversely, the absence of these factors can erode confidence in the union, leading to disengagement and dissatisfaction.

Easton's system theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the processes of interest aggregation and satisfaction within student unions. By emphasizing the interplay between inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback, the theory allows for a nuanced understanding of how student unions function and respond to the demands of their constituencies. Despite its critiques, the theory remains relevant to this study, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of student unionism in the University of Benin and its broader implications for governance and advocacy within Nigerian universities.

2.5. Research Gap

The review of literature, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks highlights several critical aspects of student unionism, including its historical evolution, roles, processes of interest aggregation, and the pursuit of student satisfaction. Previous studies have extensively documented the contributions of student unions to campus governance, political awareness, and the advocacy of student welfare. The conceptual reviews underscore the importance of effective interest aggregation and satisfaction in ensuring that student unions remain relevant and impactful. The theoretical framework, grounded in Easton's system theory, provides insights into the dynamics of inputs, processes, and outputs within the student union system.

However, a significant gap exists in understanding how these theoretical and conceptual frameworks manifest in practice within specific institutions like the University of Benin. Existing literature often generalizes student union functions and challenges, overlooking the unique institutional contexts and dynamics that influence their effectiveness. Furthermore, the interplay between interest aggregation processes and the actual satisfaction of student needs has not been thoroughly investigated, leaving a critical gap in understanding how unions balance competing interests and deliver tangible outcomes.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the relationship between student union interest aggregation and satisfaction, focusing on the University of Benin as a case study to offer localized and actionable insights.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey research design, which is well-suited for analyzing phenomena as they exist within a population. The design focuses on gathering data through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of students at the University of Benin. The survey method allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data related to the processes of interest aggregation and student satisfaction. This approach ensures the study captures measurable insights into how effectively the student union represents and addresses the needs of its members. By utilizing quantitative methods, the study aims to provide objective, reliable, and generalizable findings. The design facilitates the identification of trends, relationships, and challenges within the student union's operations, offering a foundation for practical recommendations to enhance student representation and satisfaction in the University of Benin.

3.2. Population of Study

The population of this study comprises students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN). The study will focus on undergraduate students across various faculties and departments within the university. These students represent the primary stakeholders in the operations of the student union, and their perspectives on the union's ability to aggregate their interests and satisfy their needs will form the basis of the data collected. The population of University of Benin students as according to the University of Benin academic planning division (UBAPD) is 56,746 (UBAPD, 2024)

3.3. Sampling Techniques

It is empirically impossible to study every member of the study population, hence the generation of sample size for the study is through the Slovin (1960) formula was used as the technique used to generate the sample size, at 5% margin of error. The formula is stated thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where;

n = Sample size

N = Total Population (56,746)

e = Margin of error (0.05)

Put thus;

$$n = \frac{56,746}{1 + 56,746 (0.05)^2} = 399.9 = 400$$

The sample size of the study is 400.

3.4. Sample Size

The sample size of the study which is 400 was distributed among students in the 5 faculties within the University of Benin, namely; Social Sciences, Art, Management Sciences, Law and Education. 80 Students were selected randomly to participate in the study.

3.5. Research Instrument

The research instrument adopted in the study is the use of a questionnaire titled “Student Union Politics and Student Interest Aggregation and Satisfaction in The University of Benin”. The instrument was designed on an improved Likert scale and is divided into two section. Section A deal with the Demographic Data of the respondents such as Age, Gender, Faculty and Religion. Section B deal with statements from 3 research questions, making a total of 15 statements. The questionnaire was designed on an improved 4 likert scale of Strongly Agree - 4 (SA), Agree - 3 (A), Disagree - 2 (D), Strongly Disagree - 1 (SD); for Research Question 1 and 2; while; Very Satisfied – 4 (VS), Satisfied -3 (S), Dissatisfied -2 (D), Very Dissatisfied -1 (VD); was used for research question 3.

3.6. Validity of The Data Instrument

In order to validate the instrument, a draft of the questionnaire and the performance test were given to the supervisor and two other research experts in the Department of Political Science to examine the appropriateness, comprehensiveness and clarity of items in the questionnaire. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire.

3.7. Method of Data Collection

Data will be personally collected by the researcher by administering the questionnaires online through google form; administration of the questionnaire and the performance test which were collected on the spot for the purpose of high rate of return.

3.8. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The instruments were scored, coded and analyzed using frequency table, simple percentage and the calculation of mean to derive a decision. A mean criterion of 2.50 was used for the analysis; in which mean score greater than the mean criterion will be reported as accepted and mean score lower than the mean criterion of 2.50 will be reported as Rejected.

Chi Square was used to test the hypothesis at 5% significant level.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

4.0. Introduction

The fourth chapter deals with the presentation of data gotten through the research survey. Out of 400 expected responses from the sample size, 264 responses were returned for analysis; from which the discussion of the findings will be carried out. The chapter contains the presentation of 15 item data collected across three research question, its analysis, two hypothesis testing on research question 1 and 3, and the discussion of findings.

4.1. Presentation of Data and Analysis

Research Question 1: How effectively does the student union at the University of Benin aggregate and represent student interests?

Table 1: Distribution on the Mean analysis on how effective the student union aggregate and represent student interest in the University of Benin

S/N	STATEMENTS	n	Mean	Decision
1	Advocates for student welfare in areas like accommodation, security, and transportation.	264	2.92	Agreed
2	Represents student interests in university governance and decision-making.	264	2.14	Disagreed
3	Mediates conflicts between students and the university administration.	264	2.89	Agreed
4	Disseminates critical information on university policies and updates.	264	3.12	Agreed
5	Advocates for fair tuition fees and other financial concerns.	264	1.89	Disagreed

Source: Researcher's Survey (2025)

Table 1 showed the mean analysis on how effective the student union aggregate and represent student interest in the University of Benin. The result of the analysis through the mean score showed that the respondents agreed that the student union is effective in Advocating for student welfare in areas like accommodation, security, and transportation; mediating conflicts between students and the university administration; and, disseminating of critical information on university policies; on the other side, majority of the respondents disagreed to the item 2 and 5, which mean the students do not agree that

the student union Represents their interests in university governance and decision-making; and, advocates for fair tuition fees and other financial concerns.

Research Question 2: What are the key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction at the University of Benin?

Table 2: Distribution on the Mean analysis of key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction in the University of Benin

S/N	STATEMENTS	n	X	Decision
6	Administrative interference undermining the union's autonomy.	264	3.22	Agreed
7	Leadership conflicts among union leaders disrupts effective leadership.	264	3.14	Agreed
8	Low student participation weakens collective bargaining power.	264	2.94	Agreed
9	Poor communication leading to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction.	264	3.00	Agreed
10	Repression by authorities discourages effective advocacy and representation.	264	3.44	Agreed

Source: Researcher's Survey (2025)

Table 2 showed the mean analysis of key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction in the University of Benin. The result of the mean analysis which is greater than the mean criterion of 2.50 showed that the respondents agreed to all the items raised in this section; the interpretation of the analysis is that, the student union in the University of Benin faces challenges such as; administrative interference undermining the union's autonomy; leadership conflicts among union leaders disrupting effective leadership; Low student participation weakening collective bargaining power;

poor communication leading to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction.; and, repression by authorities discouraging effective advocacy and representation.

Research Question 3: How satisfied are University of Benin students with the overall performance and effectiveness of the student union in meeting their needs and concerns?

Table 3: Distribution on the Mean analysis on the satisfaction of students towards the overall performance and effectiveness of the student union

S/N	STATEMENTS	n	X	Decision
11	Responsiveness to Student’s Welfare Concerns in the Hostel and Health Centre	264	3.16	Agreed
12	Organization of Welfare Programs for Student in areas of scholarship and Transport	264	3.28	Agreed
13	Proper organization of recreational events such as sporting events	264	3.26	Agreed
14	Transparency in how the student union finances is being utilized	264	1.76	Disagreed
15	Rapt Communication Between the Union Leaders and Students	264	2.64	Agreed

Source: Researcher’s Survey (2025)

Table 3 showed the mean analysis on the satisfaction of students towards the overall performance and effectiveness of the student union. The result of the mean analysis greater than the mean criterion showed that the respondents agreed to item 11, 12, 13 and 15, while the mean analysis lesser than the criterion of 2.50 showed that the respondents disagreed with item 14. The interpretation of the analysis is that the students are satisfied with the student union; Responsiveness to Student’s Welfare Concerns in the Hostel and

Health Centre; organization of Welfare Programs for Student in areas of scholarship and Transport; proper organization of recreational events such as sporting events; and, rapt Communication Between the Union Leaders and Students; on the other side the respondents are not satisfied with how the union leaders have handled matter of transparency in how the student union finances is being utilized.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁ – Student Union leaders in university of Benin have not effectively aggregated or represented the interest of Students.

Table 4: Chi Square analysis on no relationship between effective student union aggregation and student interest.

Null Hypothesis	n	Calculated X²	Significant level(%)	Df	Critical X²	DECISION
Student union aggregation ≠ student interest.	264	36.22	.05	12	22.31	REJECTED

Table 4 presented the report of the analysis for hypothesis to research question one raised in the study. The result of the hypothesis showed that at 5% significant level the calculated Chi Square of 36.22 is greater than the Critical value of 22.31 at 12 degree of freedom. This therefore mean that the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted; therefore, the conclusion is that There is an effective relationship between student union aggregation and student’s interest.

H₀₃ – There is low satisfaction among students in the operation and performance of student unionism in the University of Benin.

Table 5: Chi Square analysis on no relationship between effective student union performance and student satisfaction.

Null Hypothesis	n	Calculated X ²	Significant level(%)	Df	Critical X ²	DECISION
Student union performance ≠ student satisfaction	264	43.42	.05	12	22.31	REJECTED

Table 5 presented the report of the analysis for hypothesis to research question three raised in the study. The result of the hypothesis showed that at 5% significant level the calculated Chi Square of 43.42 is greater than the Critical value of 22.31 at 12 degree of freedom. This therefore mean that the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted; therefore, the conclusion is that There is a significant relationship between student union representation and student’s satisfaction.

4.3. Discussion of findings

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the student union at the University of Benin in aggregating and representing student interests, the challenges it faces, and the overall satisfaction of students with its performance.

The results to research question one indicate that the student union is effective in certain key areas, such as advocating for student welfare, mediating conflicts, and disseminating important information. However, students do not believe the union adequately represents their interests in university governance or advocates effectively for fair tuition fees. This aligns with previous studies, such as Adeyemi and Akintunde (2019), who found that

student unions in Nigerian universities often struggle with political and administrative bottlenecks that hinder their ability to represent student interests fully.

To research question two, the challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction were widely acknowledged by the respondents, confirming the presence of significant barriers to effective student representation. Key issues such as administrative interference, leadership conflicts, low student participation, poor communication, and repression by authorities were identified as major obstacles. These findings are consistent with the work of Olayemi (2020), who emphasized that student unions in Nigeria are frequently undermined by university management, limiting their autonomy and effectiveness. Similarly, Nwankwo (2018) noted that leadership struggles and external political influences often create divisions within student unions, reducing their ability to function as cohesive representative bodies.

To Research Question three, the analysis of student satisfaction with the student union's performance revealed that students appreciate efforts in addressing welfare concerns, organizing scholarships and transportation programs, and improving recreational activities. However, dissatisfaction was evident regarding the transparency of the union's financial management. These findings resonate with those of Okonkwo and Yusuf (2021), who highlighted that financial opacity within student unions often leads to distrust among students and weakens confidence in union leadership. Transparency in student union finances is crucial for building trust and maintaining legitimacy, and its absence can severely impact the perception of effectiveness, as also observed by Adebayo (2019).

The hypothesis testing further supports the findings by establishing significant relationships between student union representation and student interest aggregation, as well as between student union representation and student satisfaction. The rejection of the null hypotheses in both cases indicates that the effectiveness of the student union in

representation has a direct impact on student interest and satisfaction. This is consistent with the study by Eze and Onuoha (2022), which found that active and transparent student unions contribute positively to student welfare and engagement. The results reinforce the argument that when student unions function effectively, they enhance student satisfaction by addressing grievances, advocating for better conditions, and fostering a sense of inclusion in university decision-making.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the dual nature of student unionism at the University of Benin while it serves as an essential platform for student representation and welfare, it faces significant structural and administrative challenges that limit its effectiveness. The dissatisfaction with financial transparency suggests an urgent need for reforms in accountability mechanisms to rebuild student trust. Furthermore, improving communication, increasing student participation, and reducing administrative interference could enhance the overall impact of the union. These insights contribute to existing literature by reinforcing the understanding that student unions, despite their potential, often struggle with systemic challenges that require institutional support and internal restructuring for improved effectiveness.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary of the Findings

This study explored the role of student union politics in aggregating and satisfying student interests at the University of Benin. It examined how effectively the student union represents students, the challenges it encounters, and the level of student satisfaction with its performance. The study also tested the relationship between student union representation, interest aggregation, and student satisfaction. A total of 264 students participated, providing insights into both the strengths and weaknesses of the student union. While the union plays a vital role in student welfare and advocacy, certain critical gaps remain unaddressed, particularly in governance representation and financial transparency. Additionally, structural and administrative challenges impact its ability to function effectively. The findings reveal important patterns regarding student expectations and the realities of union politics within the university. The study's results reinforce the importance of an independent, transparent, and well-structured student union.

The key findings from the research are summarized as follows:

- I. The student union is effective in advocating for student welfare, mediating conflicts, and disseminating critical information.
- II. The student union is not effective in representing student interests in university governance or advocating for fair tuition fees.

- III. The student union faces major challenges such as administrative interference, leadership conflicts, low student participation, poor communication, and repression by university authorities.
- IV. Students are satisfied with the union's efforts in welfare programs, recreational activities, and communication but dissatisfied with financial transparency.
- V. There is a significant relationship between student union representation and student interest aggregation.
- VI. There is a significant relationship between student union representation and overall student satisfaction.

5.2. Conclusion

The study highlights the crucial role of student union politics in representing and addressing student interests at the University of Benin. While the student union has been effective in welfare advocacy and conflict mediation, its influence in university governance and financial transparency remains weak. Persistent challenges such as administrative interference, leadership conflicts, and low student participation hinder its effectiveness. Despite these setbacks, students recognize the union's contributions to welfare programs and communication efforts. For the student union to function optimally, there is a need for greater transparency, autonomy, and increased student involvement. Strengthening institutional support and accountability mechanisms will enhance the union's ability to effectively represent and satisfy student interests.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve student union politics in effectively aggregating and satisfying student interests at the University of Benin:

- I. **Strengthening Student Representation in Governance:** The university administration should institutionalize mechanisms that allow student representatives to have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes. This includes involving student leaders in key committees and policy discussions to ensure that student concerns, particularly in areas like tuition fees, accommodation, and academic policies, are adequately represented.
- II. **Enhancing Financial Transparency and Accountability:** To rebuild student trust, the student union should adopt strict financial management policies. This includes publishing periodic financial reports, conducting independent audits, and holding open forums where students can ask questions about the union's budget and expenditures. Such transparency will reduce suspicions of financial mismanagement and foster greater accountability.
- III. **Reducing Administrative Interference:** The university authorities should respect the autonomy of the student union and refrain from unduly influencing its operations. Policies should be put in place to protect the union from external control while ensuring that it operates within ethical and legal boundaries. This will empower student leaders to function effectively without fear of repression or administrative manipulation.
- IV. **Increasing Student Engagement and Participation:** Low student participation weakens the bargaining power of the union. To address this, the student union should organize orientation programs, leadership development workshops, and regular sensitization campaigns to encourage students to take an active role in union activities. The introduction of digital voting and policy polls could also improve engagement by making participation more accessible.
- V. **Improving Communication Between the Union and Students:** Effective communication is crucial for maintaining transparency and trust between student

leaders and the student body. The student union should establish multiple communication channels, such as an official website, social media platforms, and periodic town hall meetings, to keep students informed about its activities, policies, and decisions. Feedback mechanisms should also be enhanced to ensure that students feel heard and their concerns addressed in a timely manner.

5.4. Suggestion for further studies

Future research should explore the impact of student union politics on academic performance and student activism in Nigerian universities. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple universities can provide broader insights into the effectiveness of student unions in different institutional contexts. Further studies could also examine the role of digital technology in enhancing student union engagement, governance, and transparency within university systems.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT UNION POLITICS AND STUDENT INTEREST AGGREGATION AND SATISFACTION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Benin

Benin City, Edo State

LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

I am a final year student of department of from the above institution. I am carrying out an Investigation into “*Student Union Politics and Student Interest Aggregation and Satisfaction in the University of Benin*” The study is purely for academic purposes.

I am soliciting for your co-operation by answering the questions in this questionnaire. The responses are going to be treated as confidential.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

EHIWELE DANIEL

Researcher.

SECTION A: RESPONDENT DATA

1. Age: 16 – 26 [], 27 – 37 [], 38 and Above []
2. Gender: Male [], Female []
3. Faculty: Social Science [], Art [], Management Science [], Law [], Education []
4. Religion: Christian [], Islam [], Traditional, [], None []

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD); Very Satisfied (VS), Satisfied (S), Dissatisfied (D), Very Dissatisfies (VD).

S/N	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD
R1	How effectively does the student union at the University of Benin aggregate and represent student interests?				
1	Advocates for student welfare in areas like accommodation, security, and transportation.				
2	Represents student interests in university governance and decision-making.				
3	Mediates conflicts between students and the university administration.				
4	Disseminates critical information on university policies and updates.				
5	Advocates for fair tuition fees and other financial concerns.				
R2	What are the key challenges faced by the student union in ensuring student satisfaction at the University of Benin?				

6	Administrative interference undermining the union's autonomy.				
7	Leadership conflicts among union leaders disrupts effective leadership.				
8	Low student participation weakens collective bargaining power.				
9	Poor communication leading to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction.				
10	Repression by authorities discourages effective advocacy and representation.				
R3	How satisfied are University of Benin students with the overall performance and effectiveness of the student union in meeting their needs and concerns?	VS	S	D	VD
11	Responsiveness to Student's Welfare Concerns in the Hostel and Health Centre				
12	Organization of Welfare Programs for Student in areas of scholarship and Transport				
13	Proper organization of recreational events such as sporting events				
14	Transparency in how the student union finances is being utilized				
15	Rapt Communication Between the Union Leaders and Students				

Thanks for the response