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CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA: A SURVEY OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONS IN PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract
The relationship between citizens' perceptions of democratic governance and the propensity for political participation constitutes one of the central preoccupations of contemporary democratic theory. Whereas a substantial body of scholarship has examined this nexus in consolidated democracies, comparatively little systematic inquiry has been directed at undergraduate student populations within Nigerian state-level settings. The present study investigated the extent to which university students' perceptions of democratic governance influence their political participation, drawing on survey data collected from selected higher institutions in Plateau State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, a structured questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of 350 undergraduate students across three institutions; 327 questionnaires were returned in usable form, yielding a response rate of 93.4 per cent. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson product-moment correlation, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed that students held moderately positive perceptions of democratic governance in principle yet harboured pronounced scepticism regarding its practical realisation in Nigeria. Perceptions of institutional accountability, electoral integrity, and service delivery bore significant positive associations with reported political participation behaviours ($r = .48$, $p < .001$), and governance perceptions differed significantly across the three institutions, $F(2, 324) = 3.87$, $p = .022$. The study concludes that bridging the gap between normative democratic ideals and lived governmental experience is a prerequisite for galvanising substantive student political engagement. Recommendations are advanced for civic education reform, institutional transparency, and the entrenchment of participatory campus governance structures.

Keywords: Democratic governance, Political participation, University students, Perceptions, Plateau State, Nigeria, Civic engagement

Introduction

Democracy, as both an ideal and a mode of governance, derives its legitimacy and sustaining energy from the active participation of its citizenry (Dahl, 1989; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In post-colonial Africa, where democratic transitions have been characterised by considerable unevenness, the question of whether ordinary citizens perceive governing institutions as genuinely democratic, and whether such perceptions translate into substantive participatory behaviour, is of both theoretical and practical import. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous state and its largest democracy, presents a particularly instructive case. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999 and the subsequent institutionalisation of what is commonly styled the Fourth Republic, scholars have documented recurring tensions between the formal apparatus of democratic governance and the experiential realities of citizens who engage with it (Othman & Okpe, 2021; Ogodu, 2022).

University students occupy an analytically distinctive position in this landscape. As a numerically significant constituency of young, relatively educated citizens, they are simultaneously beneficiaries of formal educational systems that profess democratic values and witnesses to the frequently discordant conduct of political life in Nigeria (Obiagu, Machie, & Ndubuisi, 2023; Manuwa, 2023). Their perceptions of governance are accordingly shaped by a dual register: the normative frameworks acquired through formal instruction and the empirical realities encountered through media exposure, community experience, and direct civic interaction. Understanding how these perceptions form, and the degree to which they condition political participation, is therefore of considerable scholarly and policy relevance.

While this global and continental literature establishes the general theoretical stakes of the governance-participation nexus, it does not, on its own, illuminate how these dynamics play out within a specific national and sub-national institutional environment. Nigeria's own trajectory since 1999 supplies that more proximate context, and recent Nigerian scholarship sharpens the picture further. Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2026) link the erosion of electoral integrity directly to weakening democratic consolidation; Ogunbayo and Emua (2026) report a persistent gap between undergraduates' normative commitment to democratic values and their actual civic engagement in southwest Nigeria; and Olanihun et al. (2026) find that social media has become a primary, though ambivalent, channel of political socialization for Generation Z university students. Iorliam and Nkopuruk (2026) similarly argue that students occupy a strategic but underutilised position in strengthening democratic practice and governance accountability. Taken together, this emerging 2025-2026 evidence confirms that the governance-participation relationship documented in earlier Nigerian studies (Othman & Okpe, 2021; Ogu & Inyang, 2015) remains, if anything, more urgent, and it is this contemporary, sub-national gap in the evidence that the present study addresses by moving from the national literature to the specific case of Plateau State.

It is against this contemporary backdrop that Plateau State, situated in Nigeria's North-Central geo-political zone, provides a contextually rich setting for such inquiry. The State has experienced persistent ethno-religious tensions and periodic electoral violence that have complicated the operationalisation of democratic governance (Olayinka & Ridwan, 2025). At the same time, it hosts a number of federal and state universities whose student populations represent diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity renders Plateau State an appropriate site for examining how varying governance perceptions relate to political participation across a heterogeneous student body. The present study is accordingly motivated by three intersecting concerns. First, there is a notable lacuna in the empirical literature specifically linking governance perceptions to student political participation at the sub-national level in Nigeria. Second, existing studies on youth political participation in the country tend to treat students as an undifferentiated constituency, overlooking the institutional variation that higher educational settings introduce (Aimiyekagbon & Uzamere, 2014; Ogu & Inyang, 2015). Third, the broader theoretical question of how democratic disillusionment or, conversely, democratic confidence mediates civic behaviour remains underspecified in the West African context (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017; Akinyetun, 2021). Against this backdrop, the study sets out to examine the nature of university students' perceptions of democratic governance in Plateau State; to assess the character and extent of their political participation; and to determine the nature and direction of the relationship between these two variables.

Statement of the Problem

Voter turnout and broader civic engagement among Nigerian youth have remained disquietingly low across successive electoral cycles since the return to civilian rule in 1999, notwithstanding periodic gains in voter registration and civic sensitization campaigns (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2026; Olawole, 2023). The scale of the problem is illustrated starkly by the 2023 general election, in which national voter turnout fell to 26.7 per cent, its lowest level since the return to democratic rule and a decline of more than eight percentage points from the 34.7 per cent recorded in 2019, even though citizens aged 18-34 constituted close to 40 per cent of the registered electorate (Dataphyte, 2023). Among the explanations advanced in the literature, the role of governance perceptions, that is, citizens' subjective assessments of how well governing institutions perform and adhere to democratic norms, has received comparatively little systematic empirical attention in the specifically Nigerian context. This omission is theoretically significant, since rational-choice and social-psychological accounts of participation alike predict that citizens who perceive governing institutions as unresponsive, corrupt, or fraudulent will be less motivated to engage in formal political processes (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017).

University students, as an educationally privileged cohort, might be expected to possess the informational and motivational resources that typically predict higher participation. Yet empirical evidence from Nigeria suggests that educational attainment alone is insufficient to translate into political engagement when institutional trust is absent (Othman & Okpe, 2021; Ogu & Inyang, 2015). What remains empirically underexplored, however, is the specific character of

the perception-participation linkage among university students at the sub-national level, where localised governance failures, such as those documented in Plateau State's ethno-religious and electoral history, may compound national-level disillusionment in ways that national surveys are not designed to detect. It is this gap in the sub-national, institution-level evidence base, rather than a general question about youth political apathy, that the present study is designed to address.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study's main aim was to investigate citizens' perceptions of democratic governance and their influence on political participation among university students in Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. ascertain the perceptions of university students in Plateau State regarding democratic governance in Nigeria.
2. assess the level and character of political participation among university students in the selected institutions.
3. determine the nature and significance of the relationship between students' perceptions of democratic governance and their political participation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What are the perceptions of university students in Plateau State regarding democratic governance in Nigeria?
2. What is the level of political participation among university students in the selected institutions in Plateau State?
3. What is the relationship between university students' perceptions of democratic governance and their political participation?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between university students' perceptions of democratic governance and their political participation in Plateau State.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of democratic governance among students across selected institutions in Plateau State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of democratic governance, as employed in this study, refers to a mode of public administration characterised by political accountability, popular sovereignty, the rule of law, protection of civil liberties, and responsiveness of governing institutions to citizen preferences (Dahl, 1989). It is distinct from democracy as a procedural ideal in that it encompasses the quality of governmental performance in addition to the mere existence of electoral mechanisms. Citizens' perceptions of democratic governance thus constitute their

subjective evaluations of how faithfully governing institutions adhere to these normative criteria in practice.

This normative account is not without its critics, and the literature reflects at least three competing perspectives on how democratic governance should be conceptualised and assessed. Proceduralist scholars contend that governance quality should be assessed principally by the presence and regularity of competitive elections, treating substantive outcomes such as service delivery as analytically separate from democracy proper (Othman & Okpe, 2021). Substantivist and social-capital-oriented accounts, by contrast, insist that a system which holds elections but fails to deliver accountability, the rule of law, and responsive service delivery cannot meaningfully be described as democratically governed, regardless of its procedural credentials (Putnam, 1993; Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017). A third, more sceptical strand within African political thought cautions against uncritically importing Western liberal-democratic benchmarks into post-colonial contexts, arguing that governance legitimacy in societies such as Nigeria's is also mediated by ethnic, religious, and communal considerations that formal democratic theory does not fully capture (Ogodu, 2022). The present study adopts a broadly substantivist orientation, consistent with the Eastonian and social-capital frameworks discussed below, while remaining attentive to the contextual caveats raised by the third perspective.

Political participation, on the other hand, is understood broadly to encompass the range of voluntary activities through which citizens seek to influence governmental processes and outcomes. This includes electoral behaviour (voting, campaign involvement), civic engagement (community organisation, petitioning), contentious action (protest, demonstration), and institutional participation (membership of political parties and student unions). Verba et al. (1995) remain seminal in establishing the multidimensional character of participation, a framework that subsequent scholars have adapted to developing-country contexts (Akinyetun, 2021; Iorliam & Nkopuruk, 2026).

Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical work has examined the relationship between governance perceptions and political participation, both within and outside Nigeria, though this literature remains fragmented across disciplinary and geographical lines. At the continental level, Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman (2017), drawing on Afrobarometer data across several West African states, found that citizens' assessments of local governance performance significantly predicted civic engagement, a finding that anchors the theoretical expectation tested in the present study. Within Nigeria specifically, Othman and Okpe (2021) documented that political participation and democratic governance under the Fourth Republic have consistently fallen short of popular expectations, while Akinyetun (2021), studying 1,208 Nigerian youth, reported a significant positive relationship between perceived governance quality and political participation in the aftermath of the 2020 #EndSARS protests. These continental and national studies converge on a positive perception-participation relationship, but they largely sample the general youth population rather than university students specifically.

A second cluster of studies has focused more narrowly on student populations. Ogu and Inyang (2015) and Obiagu, Machie, and Ndubuisi (2023) both report that Nigerian undergraduates hold generally favourable attitudes toward democratic values in principle, yet exhibit reluctance to translate these attitudes into contentious or rights-protective forms of participation, a pattern consistent with the electoral-over-contentious asymmetry anticipated in the present study. Outside Nigeria, Dolipas (2021) found that Philippine university students combined negative perceptions of politics, shaped substantially by media portrayal, with generally low participation, while Yang and Kinchin (2022) demonstrated that university environments in the United Kingdom can function as sites of citizenship learning that positively condition students' civic orientations. Collectively, these studies suggest that the institutional environment of the university itself, and not perceptions of national governance alone, conditions participatory outcomes, a theme returned to in the discussion of institutional differences below.

Where the literature diverges is in its treatment of contentious versus electoral participation. Some studies, such as Akinyetun (2021) and Olanihun et al. (2026), report substantial youth willingness to engage in digitally-mediated or protest-based participation, particularly in the post-#EndSARS period, while others, including Ogu and Inyang (2015) and Manuwa (2023), find Nigerian students comparatively risk-averse toward contentious action, preferring conventional and electoral channels. This contradiction is not fully resolved in the existing literature, and it is plausible that state-specific factors, such as the history of electoral violence in Plateau State, account for some of the variation. Similarly, while most studies agree that governance perceptions and participation are positively associated, the strength of this association varies considerably, from moderate correlations in general national samples (Othman & Okpe, 2021) to much stronger associations in issue-specific youth samples mobilised around a single triggering event (Akinyetun, 2021). This inconsistency, combined with the near-total absence of sub-national, multi-institutional survey evidence from Plateau State, constitutes the specific empirical gap that the present study addresses.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in two complementary theoretical traditions. The first is Easton's (1965) systems theory of political support, which distinguishes between specific and diffuse support for political institutions. Specific support is contingent upon the satisfactory performance of governing institutions in meeting citizen demands; diffuse support, conversely, represents a reservoir of goodwill that sustains the political system even when specific outputs fall short of expectations. Where specific support is consistently eroded by poor governance, as manifest in corruption, electoral fraud, and deficient service delivery, diffuse support may eventually be depleted, culminating in civic withdrawal and political disengagement (Olawole, 2023). The second theoretical anchor is the social capital perspective associated with Putnam (1993), which holds that civic engagement is embedded in networks of social trust and norms of reciprocity. Where governing institutions fail to cultivate institutional trust, the social capital necessary for political participation is correspondingly diminished. This perspective is particularly germane to

the Nigerian context, where ethnically and religiously heterogeneous communities have historically developed varying degrees of trust in political institutions (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017; Ogodu, 2022).

These two frameworks directly informed both the construction and the interpretation of the survey instrument used in this study. Consistent with Easton's (1965) distinction between specific and diffuse support, the governance-perception section of the questionnaire (Section B) was deliberately organised around four subscales, institutional accountability, electoral integrity, service delivery responsiveness, and civil liberties protection, that correspond to discrete objects of specific support, so that a decline in any one subscale could be interpreted as an erosion of specific rather than diffuse support for the democratic system. The civil liberties protection subscale, in particular, was retained as a proxy for residual diffuse support, since it taps normative attachment to constitutional guarantees rather than evaluation of institutional performance; this distinction is drawn upon directly in the Discussion in interpreting the finding that this subscale alone exceeded the criterion mean. The political-participation section (Section C) was, correspondingly, structured around Putnam's (1993) social-capital logic, distinguishing electoral, civic, and contentious participation as differently demanding manifestations of the trust and reciprocity norms that social capital theory predicts will be depleted where institutional trust is low. This theoretical mapping between constructs and subscales is what permits the correlational results reported below to be interpreted as evidence for, rather than merely consistent with, the two frameworks.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design, appropriate for systematic collection and analysis of quantitative data on perceptions and behaviours without experimental manipulation (Kerlinger, 1973). The target population comprised approximately 42,000 full-time undergraduates across three Plateau State institutions. Three universities were purposively selected: University of Jos, Plateau State University (Bokkos), and Federal College of Education, Pankshin. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample of 350 was determined, with proportional allocation across institutions: University of Jos (154, 44%), Plateau State University (109, 31%), and Federal College of Education, Pankshin (87, 25%). Stratified random sampling based on institution, academic level, and faculty was employed, with simple random selection within strata. Of 350 questionnaires administered, 327 were usable (93.4% response rate).

The researchers-developed Democratic Governance Perceptions and Political Participation Scale (DGPPS) questionnaire drawn from validated instruments (Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman, 2017; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). The questionnaire comprised: Section A (socio-demographics), Section B (24 governance perception items across four subscales: institutional accountability, electoral integrity, service delivery, and civil liberties protection), and Section C (18 political participation items across electoral, civic, and contentious dimensions). All substantive items used a four-point Likert scale. Content validity was established through expert review. Pilot testing with 30 students yielded Cronbach's alpha

coefficients: governance subscales ranged from .79 to .85 (overall .83); participation subscales ranged from .77 to .80 (overall .79), exceeding the .70 threshold (Nunnally, 1978).

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Jos Ethics Committee, with institutional permissions secured. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent implied by questionnaire completion. Data were coded, stored securely, and used solely for research purposes. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 22. Means and standard deviations addressed research questions, with 2.50 as the decision threshold (scale midpoint). Pearson correlation (with 95% CI) tested hypothesis one, while one-way ANOVA with eta-squared (η^2) examined institutional differences

Results

Research Question One: Students' Perceptions of Democratic Governance

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of students' responses on the governance perception subscales. As explained in the Method of Data Analysis, the criterion mean for decision-making was 2.50 on the four-point scale.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Perceptions of Democratic Governance

Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Institutional Accountability	327	2.31	0.74	Negative
Electoral Integrity	327	2.18	0.82	Negative
Service Delivery Responsiveness	327	2.27	0.71	Negative
Civil Liberties Protection	327	2.56	0.68	Positive
Total Governance Perception Scale	327	2.33	0.72	Negative

As shown in Table 1, the subscale means for institutional accountability (M = 2.31, SD = 0.74), electoral integrity (M = 2.18, SD = 0.82), and service delivery responsiveness (M = 2.27, SD = 0.71) all fell below the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating negative perceptions in these domains. The civil liberties protection subscale (M = 2.56, SD = 0.68) was the only subscale to exceed the criterion mean, indicating a marginally positive perception. The overall governance perception scale mean of 2.33 (SD = 0.72) indicates that students in aggregate held a predominantly negative perception of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: Level of Political Participation

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the three political participation subscales.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Political Participation

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Electoral Participation	327	2.64	0.79	Positive
Civic Engagement	327	2.48	0.83	Negative
Contentious Participation	327	2.09	0.91	Negative
Political Participation Scale	327	2.4	0.78	Negative

As shown in Table 2, electoral participation (M = 2.64, SD = 0.79) was the only subscale to exceed the criterion mean, indicating that respondents reported moderate engagement in electoral activities such as voter registration and voting. Civic engagement (M = 2.48, SD = 0.83) fell marginally below criterion, whilst contentious participation (M = 2.09, SD = 0.91) recorded the lowest mean, substantially below criterion. The overall political participation mean of 2.40 (SD = 0.78) indicates a generally moderate-to-low level of participation.

Test of Hypothesis One: Relationship between Governance Perceptions and Political Participation

Table 3 presents the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients among the governance perception and political participation subscale scores.

Table 3 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Matrix: Governance Perceptions and Political Participation Subscales

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Overall Governance Perception					
2. Electoral Participation	.52**				
3. Civic Engagement	.44**	.61**			
4. Contentious Participation	.39**	.48**	.53**		
5. Overall Political Participation	.48**	.79**	.82**	.71**	

As shown in Table 3, the overall governance perception scale correlated significantly and positively with overall political participation, r(325) = .48, 95% CI [.39, .56], p < .001. At the subscale level, electoral integrity demonstrated the strongest association with electoral participation, r = .52, 95% CI [.44, .60], p < .001, whilst service delivery responsiveness returned the strongest correlation with civic engagement (r = .44, p < .001). Institutional accountability was most strongly correlated with contentious participation (r = .39, p < .001). On the basis of these results, the null hypothesis $H_{0\ 1}$ is rejected: there is a statistically significant positive relationship between university students' perceptions of democratic governance and their political participation. Interpreted as a coefficient of determination, r^2 = .23 indicates that governance perception accounts for approximately 23 per cent of the variance in overall political participation, a point taken up further in the Discussion.

Test of Hypothesis Two: Institutional Differences in Governance Perceptions

Table 4 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA conducted to test for significant differences in governance perceptions across the three institutions.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA: Differences in Students' Governance Perceptions by Institution

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups (Institution)	7.28	2	3.64	3.87	.022*
Within Groups	304.81	324	0.94		
Total	312.09	326			

As shown in Table 4, the ANOVA yielded $F(2, 324) = 3.87$, $p = .022$, indicating a statistically significant difference in governance perceptions across the three institutions. The effect size associated with this difference, however, was small (η^2 = SS_between / SS_total = 7.28 / 312.09 = .023), indicating that institutional affiliation accounted for approximately 2.3 per cent of the variance in governance perception scores, notwithstanding its statistical significance in a sample of this size. The null hypothesis $H_{0\ 2}$ is accordingly rejected. Table 5 presents the group means and the results of Scheffe's post-hoc test.

Discussion of Findings

University students in Plateau State hold predominantly negative perceptions of democratic governance, particularly regarding institutional accountability and electoral integrity. This aligns with Othman and Okpe (2021), who identified corruption and political violence as key factors undermining Nigeria's democracy. The study extends this evidence by demonstrating how students internalise these national concerns within a local context of ethno-religious tensions and electoral disturbances. However, students view civil liberties protection more favourably, distinguishing between formal constitutional rights and practical institutional performance. This reflects Easton's (1965) distinction between regime legitimacy and specific governmental support, suggesting that while students retain some diffuse support for democracy, their specific support is substantially eroded by poor institutional performance.

Political participation patterns show electoral engagement most prevalent and contentious participation least common, mirroring Ogu and Inyang (2015) and Obiagu et al. (2023). The willingness to vote despite governance scepticism may reflect internalised civic duty norms through education (Manuwa, 2023), while reluctance toward contentious participation likely stems from Plateau State's electoral violence history. This contrasts with Akinyetun's (2021) finding of 76.8% youth participation in #EndSARS protests, likely due to sampling differences, the galvanising nature of that specific event, and Plateau's elevated risk premium on contentious action.The study's central contribution is the statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .48$) between governance perceptions and political participation, providing quantitative evidence for this theoretically predicted relationship. However, governance perception accounts for only 23% of participation variance ($r^2 = .23$), indicating other variables personal efficacy, social networks, and situational factors also substantially influence participation decisions.

This moderate association carries policy implications: interventions solely targeting governance perceptions are unlikely to produce proportionate participation gains. Complementary measures should address logistical voting costs for students and provide low-risk civic engagement avenues on campus. Significant institutional variation exists ($\eta^2 = .023$), with University of Jos students holding more negative perceptions, possibly reflecting greater exposure to political processes in the state capital. This suggests civic education and governance reforms require contextual tailoring rather than uniform application.

Conclusion

This study examined university students' democratic governance perceptions and their relationship to political participation in Plateau State. Key findings reveal predominantly negative perceptions of governance, moderate participation levels with electoral engagement most prevalent, and a significant moderate positive correlation between governance perceptions and participation. Governance scepticism constrains student political participation, reflecting reasoned responses to observable institutional conduct. Mitigation requires substantive governmental improvement alongside institutional-level interventions within university settings.

Recommendations

1. Federal and state governments should prioritise transparency and accountability with visible enforcement mechanisms to rebuild youth institutional trust.
2. INEC should intensify voter education in tertiary institutions, demonstrating electoral participation's efficacy in producing accountability.
3. University administrations should cultivate participatory governance structures, including transparent student union elections and faculty-student consultative mechanisms.
4. Citizenship education curricula should emphasise practical civic advocacy skills and non-violent political engagement alongside democratic principles.
5. Further longitudinal and multi-state research incorporating additional predictors like political efficacy and peer socialization is recommended to determine causal directions and map variation across Nigeria's geo-political zones.

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INFLUENCE OF INFRASTRUCTURAL INADEQUACY AND EDUCATIONAL WASTAGE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF ECONOMICS STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated the Influence of Infrastructural Inadequacy and Educational Wastage on Academic Performance of Economics Students in Public Universities in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study was Guided by two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study sampled 333 undergraduate economics students from a population of 2621 in the faculty of social science in Plateau State University, Bokkos, employing stratified random sampling to ensure representative inclusion across faculties and academic levels. Data collection utilized the researcher-developed Infrastructural Inadequacy on Infrastructural Facilities and Educational Wastage in Public Universities Questionnaire (IIFEWPUQ), validated for content and face validity, with reliability confirmed through test-retest methods yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Analysis integrated descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics t-test, at 0.05 level of significant. The study revealed that insufficient lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, hostels, and technological resources directly contribute to heightened student dropout rates, disrupt academic progression, impair performance outcomes, extend graduation periods, and erode academic motivation. These inadequacies were particularly pronounced in contexts of overcrowding, unreliable utilities, and inadequate maintenance, with marginalized socio-economic groups disproportionately affected. Based on the study, it was recommended among others that government should invest in physical and digital infrastructure, strategic public-private partnerships for sustainable facility development, institutional adoption of proactive maintenance frameworks, and stakeholder-inclusive policy reforms.

Keywords: Educational Wastage, Infrastructural, Inadequacy, Public University.

Introduction
Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental driver of individual and societal development. It is a transformative process that equips individuals with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for personal growth and meaningful contribution to society. Okoro (2020) emphasized that education encompasses a lifelong continuum of human development, serving as a preparation for life and a means of acquiring essential competencies to

navigate complex realities. According to Adebayo (2023), the adequacy of infrastructural facilities plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of education, particularly in developing countries where resource constraints are prevalent. When infrastructural adequacy is ensured, students are more likely to remain motivated, perform well academically, and graduate within the expected timeline, thereby reducing educational wastage. In public universities, infrastructural facilities such as lecture halls, lavatories, laboratories, libraries, and hostels are the building blocks of an efficient and effective educational system (Yusuf, 2021). The physical presence of these facilities provides a functional framework that fosters learning, teaching, and research. For instance, lecture halls equipped with proper ventilation, lighting, and multimedia technology promote engaging and interactive learning sessions, enabling students to focus fully on academic activities.

Infrastructural inadequacies in public universities have been shown to disrupt the academic ecosystem, these will lead to an unprofitable and uneconomical utilization of time and resources because repetition of classes or dropout from schools has negative effects on the students, parents and the government at large. It is equally important to assess the influence of infrastructural adequacy in mitigating educational wastage. Adequate facilities are expected to reduce dropout rates, minimize delays in academic progression, enhance performance, and improve students' motivation. The ripple effects of infrastructural challenges are evident in the phenomenon of educational wastage, a systemic inefficiency that undermines the goals of higher education. Conversely, infrastructural adequacy is expected to support timely graduation, reduce wastage, and promote academic success, particularly when facilities are efficiently utilized and maintained. For instance, Yusuf (2021) observed that well-equipped universities often produce graduates with higher levels of competence, making them more competitive in the job market. This suggests that infrastructural adequacy, if effectively harnessed, can reduce inefficiencies and strengthen human capital development.

Educational wastage refers to inefficiencies within the education system that hinder the optimal utilization of resources, leading to high dropout rates, prolonged academic timelines, course repetitions, and underutilization of institutional facilities. It is a critical challenge in public universities, where infrastructural inadequacies and systemic inefficiencies often impede students' ability to progress smoothly through their academic programs. Coombs (2016) described educational wastage as the loss of human and material resources in the education system due to factors such as poor learning conditions, ineffective policy implementation, and institutional mismanagement. In public universities, this manifests through delayed graduations, students abandoning their studies, and the inability of institutions to provide a conducive learning environment. Infrastructural inadequacies remain a primary driver of educational wastage in public universities. Poorly equipped lecture halls, insufficient hostel accommodations, outdated library resources, and inadequate laboratory facilities contribute to students' inability to complete their programs within the stipulated timeframe (Adesina, 2020). Infrastructural facilities are essential for the smooth functioning of higher institutions, as they support teaching, learning, and research. Adequate lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, and hostels provide the enabling

environment needed for effective academic performance; such facilities are indispensable for creating conducive learning conditions and their adequacy determines the quality of academic experiences students encounter. Ideally, infrastructural adequacy should minimize delays, improve performance, sustain motivation, and support timely graduation. Despite this expectation, evidence shows that educational wastage persists in Nigerian public universities even where infrastructural adequacy exists.

Academic performance is a critical determinant of a student's educational progress and future success. It is commonly measured through grades, standardized tests, and other performance metrics that reflect the extent to which students meet educational objectives and acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies. Academic performance serves as a benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching practices, learning environments, and educational policies, highlighting its importance in the educational process (Smith, 2021). It encompasses cognitive, social, and emotional growth, which collectively shape learners into well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. High levels of academic achievement are often associated with better career opportunities, higher income potentials, and greater societal contributions. Conversely, poor academic performance may hinder personal development and reduce opportunities for upward mobility, perpetuating socio-economic disparities. Numerous factors influence academic achievement, including teacher quality, availability of learning resources, student motivation, parental support, and the integration of modern technologies. In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, improving academic performance remains a central goal, as it not only benefits individuals but also drives innovation, economic development, and societal progress. Therefor Poorly equipped lecture halls, insufficient hostel accommodations, outdated library resources, and inadequate laboratory facilities contribute to students' inability to complete their programs within the stipulated timeframe for example, overcrowded classrooms often lead to poor academic engagement, as students struggle to focus due to noise disturbances and limited interaction with lecturers. Similarly, laboratories that lack modern equipment hinder students' ability to conduct practical experiments, resulting in a weak grasp of technical and scientific concepts.

Therefore, conducive academic environments directly enhance student morale, while decaying infrastructure contributes to loss of interest and psychological disengagement. This implies that overcrowding and limited accessibility often weaken the effectiveness of available facilities. This issue is particularly evident in Plateau State, where Plateau State University is a major institution for human capital development. Although infrastructural adequacy exists to some extent, the persistence of wastage raises a critical question: to what extent does infrastructural adequacy courses delay in academic performance, graduation timelines, and motivation of Economics students? Addressing this problem is necessary to determine whether adequacy alone can reduce wastage or whether additional factors undermine its impact.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim and objectives of the study is to examine the Influence of Infrastructural Inadequacy and Educational Wastage on Academic Performance of Economics Students in Public Universities in Plateau State. The specific objectives of the study is to:

1. Determine the extent to which infrastructural inadequacy influences the academic performance of Economics students in plateau state university Bokkos.
2. Assess the influence of infrastructural inadequacy on the graduation timeline of Economics students plateau state university Bokkos.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does infrastructural inadequacy influence the academic performance of Economics students in plateau state university Bokkos?
2. How does infrastructural inadequacy affect the graduation timeline of Economics students in plateau state university Bokkos?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. Infrastructural inadequacy does not significantly influence on economics students' academic performance in plateau state university Bokkos.
2. There is no significant difference between infrastructural inadequacy and the graduating time line of economics students in plateau state university Bokkos.

Literature Review

Infrastructure serves as the foundational framework that supports the efficient functioning of societies, institutions, and economies. In its broadest sense, infrastructure encompasses the essential physical, technological, and institutional structures required for the delivery of services and the facilitation of development. According to Adebayo (2019), infrastructure can be categorized into two primary forms: hard infrastructure, which includes tangible physical assets such as roads, buildings, power supply, water systems, and telecommunications networks, and soft infrastructure, which comprises policies, governance structures, human capital, and service-oriented institutions necessary for societal advancement.

In education, particularly in public universities, infrastructure refers to the facilities, resources, and systems that enable the seamless delivery of academic programs, research, and student welfare. Ogunleye (2020) emphasized that university infrastructure extends beyond mere physical buildings to include modern information and communication technology (ICT) systems, functional laboratories, well-equipped libraries, adequate student housing, and reliable energy and water supply. Without these critical elements, the academic environment becomes less conducive to learning, limiting both student engagement and faculty productivity. Infrastructural

inadequacies in public universities refer to the deficiencies, deterioration, or complete absence of essential physical, technological, and operational facilities required for effective academic functioning. These inadequacies significantly hinder teaching, learning, research, and student welfare, thereby reducing the overall quality of education. According to Aliyu, & Mohammed (2021) infrastructure serves as the backbone of any university system, facilitating the smooth operation of academic and administrative activities. When these structures are lacking or substandard, students and faculty members experience considerable difficulties in achieving their academic and professional goals.

The consequences of infrastructural inadequacies are far-reaching. Eze (2022) noted that students in universities with poor infrastructure experience reduced academic motivation, Delayed graduation, higher dropout rates, and lower retention levels. The inability to provide a conducive learning environment leads to declining research productivity among faculty members and graduates who are ill-prepared for professional challenges. Universities that fail to maximize available infrastructure, teaching personnel, and financial resources often experience high levels of academic inefficiency. Yusuf (2021) observed that poor governance and misallocation of funds lead to underutilized lecture halls, abandoned projects, and ineffective faculty-student ratios. This indicator is assessed by evaluating the alignment between institutional resources and student needs, ensuring that universities operate efficiently.

Many students struggle academically due to poor foundational knowledge, inadequate teaching methodologies, and a lack of academic support systems. Ogunleye (2021) emphasized that universities that fail to provide structured academic counseling and early intervention mechanisms experience higher dropout rates, as struggling students do not receive the necessary academic reinforcement. Public universities are frequently affected by industrial actions, bureaucratic delays, and inconsistent academic calendars, which disrupt students' educational progress. Agbo (2021), who noted that infrastructural weaknesses in public universities often lead to delayed practical sessions, missed lectures, and disrupted academic calendars, all of which extend the graduation period. He also observed that lecturer strikes, delayed results processing, and poor administrative communication create uncertainty and frustration for students, leading many to discontinue their studies. For instance, prolonged university closures due to industrial disputes often force students to seek alternative opportunities, such as employment or vocational training, rather than waiting indefinitely for academic activities to resume. Bello (2020) argued that universities with inefficient administrative structures and poor academic planning experience higher student attrition rates, as students lose confidence in the system’s ability to support their educational journey.

Poor academic performance severely limits career prospects and causes intense mental health challenges. Many students struggle academically due to poor foundational knowledge, inadequate teaching methodologies, and a lack of academic support systems. Yusuf (2023) observed that students who fail key courses repeatedly or struggle to meet their degree requirements often feel discouraged and opt to withdraw rather than continue facing academic difficulties. The absence of remedial programs, tutorial support, and effective mentorship further

exacerbates this issue, as students lack the necessary guidance to improve their academic performance. Ogunleye (2021) emphasized that universities that fail to provide structured academic counselling and early intervention mechanisms experience higher dropout rates, as struggling students do not receive the necessary academic reinforcement. Therefore, since the effectiveness of these institutions depends largely on government policies, institutional leadership, and the availability of resources, their sustainability requires continuous investment, strategic planning, and policy reforms to enhance their capacity to deliver quality education and research.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Eyong (2024) emphasis the relevance and application of survey research method that is a representative sample of small or large population and help to determine the characteristics of the whole population which may be of interest to the researcher. This design allows for the collection and analysis of data from a representative sample to describe the current state of infrastructural inadequacies and their impact on educational wastage. The descriptive survey design is appropriate as it facilitates a systematic examination of opinions and experiences from a large sample, offering comprehensive insights into the research problem. The choice of this design is informed by its suitability for exploring complex relationships between variables and generating findings that can be generalized to the larger population. The population of this study comprises undergraduate students from the faculty of social science in Plateau State university, specifically department of economics in the Plateau State University, Bokkos. This university serve as major academic hubs in Plateau State and exhibit varying levels of infrastructural challenges. The total population for this study is estimated at 2621 students, cutting across different faculties and academic levels.

A sample of 333 students is selected for the study, ensuring representation across faculties and academic levels. The sample size is determined using research advisory for finite populations, balancing statistical rigor with logistical feasibility. The sample includes students from 100 to 400 levels and across multiple faculties to ensure diversity and inclusivity. The study employs a stratified random sampling technique to select participants. Simple random sampling is chosen because it accounts for the heterogeneity of the population, ensuring that the sample reflects the diverse characteristics of the students in public universities. The primary instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, titled: Infrastructural Inadequacy of Infrastructural Facilities on Educational Wastage in Public Universities Questionnaire (IIFEWPUQ). The questionnaire comprises 10 items which was developed by the research following an extensive review of relevant literature and consultations with experts in economics education. The instrument is validated through content and face validity, conducted by experts in educational research and test measurement from the Department of Science and Technology Education, University of Jos. This validation process ensures that the items accurately reflect the constructs under investigation and are free from ambiguity. The reliability

of the instrument is determined using the test-retest reliability method and when yielding a reliability score of 0.82. This high reliability index indicates that the instrument is consistent and dependable for data collection**.** Data collection involves the administration of the questionnaire to the selected sample of 360 students. The researcher distributes hard copies of the questionnaire to ensure accessibility, while online versions are made available through Google Forms for respondents who prefer digital submission.

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation and independent t-tests, were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical analysis is performed using SPSS software, with results presented in tables and charts for clarity and interpretation.

Results And Discussions

Research Question One: To what extent do infrastructural inadequacies influence the academic performance of students in public universities? Data on the extent by which infrastructural inadequacies influence the academic performance of students in plateau state university Bokkos is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Students on Infrastructural Inadequacies and Academic Performance.

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Lack of modern learning facilities negatively impacts performance.	4.29	0.85	Agree
2.	Insufficient library materials hinder academic success.	3.84	1.01	Agree
3.	Inadequate seating in lecture halls affects concentration.	3.75	0.96	Agree
4.	Limited ICT access reduces e-learning engagement.	3.45	1.13	Disagree
5.	Poor hostel conditions affect performance.	3.28	1.20	Disagree
	Grand Mean	**3.72**	**1.03**	**Disagree**

NB: N=333. Decision: X <2.50 = Disagreement, X≥ 3.00

Data in Table 1 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations of items addressing research question three. The results reveal mean ratings of 4.29, 3.84, 3.75, 3.45, and 3.28, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.85, 1.01, 0.96, 1.13, and 1.20, respectively. The grand mean rating is 3.72, which is above the 3.50 criterion mean. This suggests that respondents generally agreed that infrastructural inadequacies influence students' academic performance. However, access to information and communication technology facilities and poor hostel conditions received relatively lower ratings, indicating that students were more divided on their impact.

Hypothesis One: Infrastructural inadequacies do not significantly influence students' academic performance in plateau state university Bokkos. Table 2 shows the summary of results of the test of hypothesis using Single Sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2
Single sample t-test showing influence of infrastructural inadequacies on students' academic performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Infrastructural Inadequacies and Academic Performance	333	3.72	0.89	359	7.211	0.000	Disagree

Table 2 indicates that the mean score for students' responses was 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.89. The t-value is 7.211 and the significance level is 0.000. Since this is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means infrastructural inadequacies significantly influence students' academic performance in plateau state university Bokkos.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of infrastructural inadequacies on the graduation timeline of students in public universities? Data on the influence of infrastructural inadequacies on the graduation timeline of students in plateau state university Bokkos is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Students on Infrastructural Inadequacies and Graduation Timeline

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
6.	Infrastructure breakdowns prolong time in school.	4.08	0.94	Agree
7.	Poorly equipped labs delay practical courses.	4.17	0.92	Agree
8.	Lack of structured facilities affects meeting graduation requirements.	3.68	1.06	Agree
9.	Poor maintenance causes academic disruptions.	3.49	1.04	Disagree
10.	Unavailability of learning resources increases failure rates.	3.27	1.14	Disagree
	Grand Mean	**3.74**	**1.02**	**Agree**

NB: N=333. Decision: X <2.50 = Disagreement, X≥ 3.00

Data in Table 3 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations of items addressing research question four. The results reveal mean ratings of 4.08, 4.17, 3.68, 3.49, and 3.27, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.94, 0.92, 1.06, 1.04, and 1.14, respectively. The grand mean rating is 3.74, which is above the 3.50 criterion mean. This implies that the majority of respondents agreed that infrastructural inadequacies significantly affect the graduation timeline of students. However, items concerning poor maintenance and lack of learning resources attracted relatively lower scores, showing that some respondents may not view these factors as primary contributors to graduation delays.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between infrastructural inadequacies and the graduation timeline of students in plateau state university Bokkos. Table 4 below shows the summary of results of the test of hypothesis using Single Sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4
Single sample t-test showing relationship between infrastructural inadequacies and graduation timeline

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Infrastructural Inadequacies and Graduation Timeline	333	3.24	0.93	324	8.027	0.000	Disagree

From Table 4, students had a mean score of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 0.93. The t-value is 8.027 and the p-value is 0.000. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows a significant relationship between infrastructural inadequacies and the graduation timeline of students.

Discussion of Findings

Results from Research Question one and Hypothesis one demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between infrastructural inadequacies and students' academic performance. The study revealed a mean score of 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.89. The computed t-value was 7.211 and the p-value stood at 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that inadequate infrastructure, particularly in learning environments and academic resource centers, negatively impacts how students perform. This finding aligns with Okon (2020), who observed that poorly maintained academic facilities reduce concentration, hinder learning, and ultimately affect students' grades.

The analysis of Research Question two and Hypothesis two indicated a statistically significant relationship between infrastructural inadequacies and students' graduation timeline. The mean score was 3.24 with a standard deviation of 0.93. The t-value computed was 8.027, with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that students believe the unavailability of adequate learning structures, frequent infrastructural breakdowns, and delayed academic processes contribute to prolonged stays in school. This supports the findings of Agbo (2021), who noted that infrastructural weaknesses in public universities often lead to delayed practical sessions, missed lectures, and disrupted academic calendars, all of which extend the graduation period.

Conclusion

The study concluded that students' academic performance is adversely affected by infrastructural inadequacies. This implies that the Limited access to quality academic resources, ineffective learning environments, and insufficient academic tools hinder students' ability to concentrate, engage, and succeed in their studies. The results also indicated that infrastructural inadequacies prolong students' graduation timelines. This implies that lack of structured academic infrastructure and frequent breakdowns in facilities lead to repeated academic disruptions, which in turn delay students from meeting graduation requirements within the expected time frame. The study found that infrastructural deficiencies negatively impact students' academic motivation. Poor physical learning environments, absence of well-equipped libraries, and lack of recreational facilities contribute to decreased enthusiasm, lowered academic interest, and psychological strain among students, underscoring the critical role infrastructure plays in sustaining student engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government both federal and state should investment in physical and digital infrastructure, strategic public-private partnerships for sustainable facility development, institutional adoption of proactive maintenance frameworks, and stakeholder-inclusive policy reforms.
2. Student support units should incorporate infrastructural feedback mechanisms into their services, allowing students to report facility-related issues promptly, which will enable quicker administrative responses.
3. University policies by government should intentionally integrate infrastructural needs into academic planning and budgeting processes, recognizing that sound infrastructure is foundational to reducing educational wastage and enhancing student outcomes.

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