

CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY AWKA: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the challenges of social infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 8061 400-level undergraduate students of the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 800 students was selected using multistage sampling. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85. Mean scores were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that inadequate transportation and security infrastructure negatively impacted academic engagement. The study concluded that insufficient social infrastructure impeded academic engagement. Recommendations include optimizing university transportation and enhancing security measures to foster a conducive learning environment and ensure effective functioning of university facilities. It was recommended among others that all parks in the university, both old and new, should be allowed to function effectively. This is because millions of students reside in close proximity to these parks, and students can reduce the need to trek long distances to and from the university.

KEYWORDS: Academic Engagement, Social Infrastructure, Security, Transportation Infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital component of human development as it empowers individuals and societies to grow and prosper. It fosters intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity, providing individuals with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the world. Perhaps, this is why Offiah and Chikeluba (2025), maintain that education plays a critical role in promoting social mobility, reducing inequality, and fostering economic growth. Education can be categorized into different types, including formal, informal, and non-formal education. Non-formal education is a type of education that takes place outside the formal education system, but is still structured and intentional, such as vocational training or adult education programs. Informal education, on the other hand, refers to learning that takes place outside the formal education system, including self-directed learning, online courses, and community-based programs. Formal education takes place in institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities.

A university is an institution of higher learning that plays a critical role in the development of individuals, communities, and societies. The importance of a university lies in its ability to drive economic growth, social mobility, and cultural advancement. It provides a platform for students to engage with experts, develop research skills, and contribute to knowledge advancement. In this vein, Offor and Offiah (2023), opine that universities promote social cohesion, tolerance, and understanding, essential for building harmonious and inclusive communities. The university primary goal is to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills in their chosen field, preparing them for careers, leadership roles, and lifelong learning. Universities also aim to foster critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, enabling students to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and address complex societal challenges. However, these goals cannot be realized without adequate infrastructure. This is because infrastructure is the backbone of a university, as it provides the physical and technological foundation for teaching, learning, and research.

The history of infrastructure development is a rich and complex narrative that spans centuries, continents, and cultures. From ancient civilizations to modern nations, the development of infrastructure has played a crucial role in shaping human societies, facilitating economic growth, and improving the quality of life. In ancient times, Eneiga (2024) posits that infrastructure development was driven by the need for basic necessities such as water, shelter, and transportation. The ancient Egyptians, for example, built sophisticated irrigation systems

to support their agricultural economy, while the ancient Greeks and Romans constructed elaborate networks of roads, bridges, and aqueducts to facilitate trade, commerce, and communication. These early infrastructure developments laid the foundation for the growth and prosperity of civilizations, and their legacy can still be seen in the modern world. According to Akinkuade and Oredein (2021), the Industrial Revolution marked a significant turning point in the history of infrastructure development. As new technologies and industries emerged, there was a growing need for more sophisticated infrastructure to support economic growth and urbanization. The development of steam engines, railroads, and canals facilitated the growth of industries such as textiles, coal mining, and steel production, and enabled the rapid transportation of goods and people. In the 20th century, Yadav (2020), stress that the rise of modern transportation systems, including highways, airports, and seaports, further accelerated global connectivity and trade. Nigeria's infrastructure history is closely tied to its colonial past. The country's infrastructure development can be divided into several phases. During the colonial era, the British colonial administration introduced modern infrastructure, including railways, roads, and ports, to facilitate colonial exploitation and administration. After independence, Nigeria invested heavily in infrastructure development, including power generation, transportation networks, and social services, to support economic growth and modernization (Eneiga, 2024). However, despite progress in infrastructure development, Nigeria still faces significant challenges, including inadequate power supply, poor road conditions, and limited access to clean water and sanitation. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of infrastructure in supporting the mission of public universities in Nigeria. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has established minimum standards for infrastructure development in Nigerian universities, including requirements for classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities.

Without adequate infrastructure, universities in Nigeria cannot provide students with the resources and facilities they need to succeed. Infrastructure refers to the underlying systems and structures that support the functioning of an organization, institution, or society. It can be defined as the physical and organizational structures that enable the delivery of goods and services, including buildings, roads, bridges, and utilities (Bakari et al, 2020). Similarly, Godson and Ngusa (2020) affirm that infrastructure is a network of systems and structures that provide the foundation for economic and social development, including transportation systems, communication networks, and public services. Operationally, infrastructure can be defined as the structures that support the delivery of goods and services, including buildings,

roads, bridges, utilities, and digital networks. In the context of a university, infrastructure can be categorized into several types, including physical, social, economic, and digital infrastructure.

Physical infrastructure includes buildings, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other facilities that support teaching and learning. Examples of physical infrastructure in a university include lecture halls, student dormitories, and athletic facilities. Economic infrastructure in a university includes facilities and systems that support economic activity, such as research parks, incubators, and entrepreneurship centers. Examples of economic infrastructure in a university include business incubators, research parks, and entrepreneurship centers. Digital infrastructure, on the other hand, refers to the digital systems and structures that support teaching, learning, and research, including computer networks, online learning platforms, and digital libraries. Examples of digital infrastructure in a university include online learning management systems, digital libraries, and computer labs. Social infrastructure, on the other hand, refers to the systems and structures that support the social and emotional well-being of students (Hanaysha et al. 2023). This study focuses on social infrastructure, particularly transportation systems and security, which are critical components of a university's social infrastructure. Social infrastructure simply means the physical and organizational structures that support the delivery of social services, including transportation systems and security systems. Transportation systems, for example, enable students to move around campus and access university resources, while security systems provide a safe and secure environment for students to learn and live. These systems and structures are essential for creating a conducive learning environment, where students can focus on their academic pursuits without worrying about their safety or accessibility. When students have access to reliable transportation systems and feel safe and secure on campus, they are more likely to engage in academic activities, such as attending classes, participating in discussions, and seeking help from instructors (Nugroho & Wibowo, 2020). By providing a supportive environment, social infrastructure plays a critical role in promoting academic engagement and student success.

Academic engagement is encompasses students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in academic activities. As Offor and Offiah (2023) rightly put: academic engagement refers to the degree to which students are invested in and connected to their academic experiences, including their motivation, interest, and participation in learning

activities. Academic engagement is the extent to which students participate in and are committed to academic activities, including attending classes, completing assignments, and engaging in discussions with instructors and peers. There are several types of academic engagement, including behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to students' participation in academic activities, such as attending classes and completing assignments. Emotional engagement refers to students' emotional investment in their academic experiences, including their interest and motivation. Cognitive engagement refers to students' mental effort and persistence in learning activities (Offor et al, 2025).

The academic engagement of undergraduate students can be significantly impacted by social infrastructure, particularly transportation systems and security. A reliable transportation system can enable students to attend classes and participate in academic activities, while a safe and secure campus environment can promote students' emotional and cognitive engagement. On the other hand, inadequate transportation systems and security can negatively impact students' academic engagement, leading to decreased motivation, lower attendance rates, and reduced academic performance. In many of these institutions in Nigeria, students face significant challenges in accessing transportation to and from campus, which can have a profound impact on their ability to participate in academic activities. Many students arrive late to class, or miss classes altogether, due to the unavailability of reliable transportation. This can lead to a lack of engagement with course materials, reduced participation in class discussions, and decreased motivation to learn (Nurabad et al, 2020). For example, a student who relies on public transportation to get to campus may have to wake up as early as 5 am to catch a bus, only to arrive at the university several hours later. This can be exhausting and demotivating, particularly if the student has a long day of classes ahead of them. Alternatively, a student who owns a vehicle may struggle with traffic congestion and parking challenges, which can also impact their ability to arrive on campus on time.

In terms of citing a good instance, one such institution where this issue of transportation system is particularly pronounced in Nigeria is Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The relocation of transport services and business operators at Engineer Johnbosco Onunkwo Bus Terminal, located within the UNIZIK permanent site to the new park (Don Greg Park) appears to have devastating impact on students' academic engagement. This is because

thousands of undergraduate students live close to Engineer Johnbosco Onunkwo Bus Terminal. The new park is not closer to them, these millions of students are forced to trek long distances to lectures or spend more money on transportation. This has resulted in increased fatigue, decreased motivation, and a significant impact on students' ability to participate in academic activities. Many business operators in Engineer Johnbosco Onunkwo Bus Terminal were given five days' notice to move to Don Greg Park without the provision of electricity and security which led to high increase in the cost of services to students. Typing and printing services for thousands of students residing closer to Engineer Johnbosco Onunkwo Bus Terminal, which are essential for students' academic work, have become more expensive due to the increased cost of operating in the new park. This has led to a significant burden on students who are already struggling financially. Many students are being forced to choose between paying for these services or other essential expenses such as food and textbooks. Thus, the relocation of transport services to the new park has led to a significant increase in lateness to lectures, absenteeism, and other academic activities. The impact of this relocation is evident in the number of students who are struggling to keep up with their academic work. Many students are finding it difficult to balance their academic responsibilities with the challenges posed by the new park. Therefore, it is vital for universities to invest in social infrastructure, more particularly transportation systems and security.

The significance of security in universities is paramount, as it fosters a safe and conducive environment for academic pursuits. Security encompasses measures implemented to safeguard the lives and property of students, staff, and visitors within the university community. According to Offor et al. (2023), a secure university environment enables students to focus on their studies without fear of harm or intimidation, allowing staff to perform their duties without safety concerns. Recent security breaches in Nigerian universities, including cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, and violence, have eroded trust in the university's ability to provide a safe environment. This has led to students being distracted from academic pursuits due to safety worries, resulting in decreased motivation, reduced academic performance, and increased absenteeism. In extreme cases, students may abandon their studies due to safety fears (Offor and Offiah, 2023). The fear of insecurity also affects students' participation in extracurricular activities, essential for overall development and well-being. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (2021), students who feel unsafe are

less likely to engage in these activities, limiting opportunities for personal growth and development.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, has recently experienced a surge in insecurity, with frequent incidents of robbery, kidnapping, and violence. Hoodlums often target student lodges, robbing students of valuables like phones, laptops, and money, particularly before 9 pm. Female students are especially vulnerable, facing rape and coercion, with non-compliance met with violence or death. Male students living with girlfriends are also targeted, forced into compromising situations. Secret cults contribute to the violence, carrying out armed robberies and attacks on campus. The university's security personnel, including the anti-cult squad, are ineffective, often arriving late to scenes and harassing students instead of perpetrators. This fosters a culture of fear, with students feeling forced to stay indoors early. Some students collaborate with hoodlums, informing on peers to carry out robberies (Offor et al., 2023). The situation is dire, with students jumping from buildings to escape violence, resulting in injuries and deaths. Frequent gunshots on campus, day and night, have claimed lives, including innocent students caught in crossfire. The university's inability to address security concerns significantly impacts students' academic engagement and well-being (World Bank, 2020). Many students fear night classes and consider abandoning studies due to safety concerns.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, faces significant challenges with social infrastructure, notably transportation and security, which hinder students' academic engagement. Inadequate transportation options lead to increased absenteeism, lateness, and decreased motivation, affecting students' academic performance. Students often experience stress navigating the limited transportation system, impacting their ability to attend classes, participate in activities, and sit exams. For instance, unavailability of transportation in the old park has caused students to be late or miss exams, resulting in unnecessary stress and anxiety. The insecurity on campus creates unease, making students feel unsafe and unsupported, leading to decreased participation in academic activities and reduced motivation. The cumulative effect is a decline in academic engagement. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensure students can fully engage with their academic programs and achieve their potential. Investigating the impact of social infrastructure on academic engagement, specifically transportation and security, is necessary to inform sustainable solutions and ensure students can achieve their academic goals. Consequently, it becomes needful to investigate the challenges of social

infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the effects of transportation infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. What are the effects of security infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Methods

This study employed a descriptive survey design, focusing on 400-level undergraduates (2024/2025 academic session) at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, totaling 8061 students. The selection of 400-level students was informed by their concerns regarding the relocation of transportation services from Engineer Johnbosco Onunkwo Bus Terminal to Don Greg Park and security challenges impacting academic activities. A sample of 800 undergraduates was chosen using a multistage sampling technique, which involved selecting 10 faculties out of the 14 faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, using simple random sampling. In each of the 10 selected faculties, 2 departments were selected using simple random sampling, resulting in a total of 20 departments. From each of the 20 departments, 40 undergraduates were selected, making a total of 80 undergraduates from each faculty and a total of 800 undergraduate students for the study. Data collection employed the Challenges of Social Infrastructure on Academic Engagement of Undergraduate Students Questionnaire (CSIAEUSQ), validated by three experts (two in sociology of education and one in measurement and evaluation) and tested for reliability (Cronbach Alpha: 0.83 for transportation infrastructure, 0.81 for security infrastructure). The 20-item questionnaire (10 items per part) used a four-point response mode (Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree = 1 point). Research assistants administered and collected the questionnaire, achieving 100% return due to on-the-spot delivery and collection. Mean scores were analyzed, with 2.50 as the decision cut-off point (mean scores ≥ 2.50 = agreed, < 2.50 = disagreed).

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the effects of transportation infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on the effects of transportation infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students.

S/N	Because of Transportation Infrastructure	$\bar{X}$	REMARKS
	Students miss classes.	2.56	Agreed
	Students arrive late to class.	2.80	Agreed
	Students do not participate in extracurricular activities as expected.	2.50	Agreed
	It difficult for students to get to and from campus for academic activities.	2.70	Agreed
	Students are highly stressed which negatively impact their study habits.	2.82	Agreed
	Students' ability to complete assignments is reduced.	2.53	Agreed
	Students' access to educational resources are limited.	2.87	Agreed
	Students do not go for tutorials when needed	2.51	Agreed
	Students spend more on their studies.	2.88	Agreed
	Students' ability to succeed academically is hindered.	2.97	Agreed
	total	29.77	
	Cluster x	2.71	Agreed

In Table 1, all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) including the mean of means obtained mean rating above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating agreed. It shows that transportation infrastructure has negative effects on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Research Question 2

What are the effects of security infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on the effects of security infrastructure on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

S/N	Because of Security Infrastructure	$\bar{X}$	REMARKS
.	Students feel fearful which hinder their efforts to make good results.	2.58	Agreed
.	Students feel unsafe, which reduce their sense of academic well-being.	3.07	Agreed
.	Students are discouraged from engaging in academic activities outside of class.	2.93	Agreed
.	Students' collaboration in academic activities are reduced.	2.69	Agreed
.	Students do not attend lectures regularly	2.88	Agreed
.	Students are not motivated to succeed academically.	2.94	Agreed
.	Students hardly go for group reading during the day	3.22	Agreed
.	Students no longer go for night classes	2.95	Agreed
.	Students loose interest in continuing their studies because of fear of death.	2.89	Agreed
.	Students miss their examinations	2.73	Agreed
	Total	32.03	
	cluster x	2.91	Agreed

Data in Table 2, showed that all the items (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20) including the mean of means obtained mean rating above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating agreed. This result implies that security infrastructure has negative effects on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that transportation infrastructure has a detrimental impact on the academic engagement of undergraduate students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This aligns with Eneiga's (2024) assertion that subpar transportation infrastructure can increase stress and anxiety levels among students, ultimately hindering their academic performance. Godson and Ngusa (2020) also found that inadequate transportation options restrict students' access to essential resources and opportunities, exacerbating the negative effects on academic engagement. Consequently, poor transportation infrastructure can erode students' sense of community and belonging, negatively impacting their overall well-being and academic success. The results show that transportation infrastructure has a negative impact on academic engagement, likely due to increased stress and anxiety from unreliable

transportation, making it difficult for students to focus on their studies. Limited access to resources and opportunities also hinders academic progress, while a decreased sense of community and belonging among students affects their overall well-being.

The study also revealed that security infrastructure has a negative impact on academic engagement, consistent with Offor et al.'s (2023) finding that poor security infrastructure increases stress and anxiety, negatively affecting mental health and academic performance. Offor and Offiah (2023) also noted that inadequate security measures restrict access to resources and opportunities, further exacerbating the negative effects on academic engagement. Consequently, poor security infrastructure can erode students' sense of safety and security, negatively impacting their overall well-being and academic success. The results indicate that security infrastructure has a negative impact on academic engagement, likely due to increased stress and anxiety from security concerns, impacting mental health and academic performance. Limited access to resources and opportunities further exacerbates negative effects, while a decreased sense of safety and security among students affects their overall well-being. The findings emphasize the need for the university to prioritize improving transportation and security infrastructure to support students' academic success and well-being.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the impact of social infrastructure challenges, specifically transportation and security, on undergraduate students' academic engagement at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The findings revealed that inadequate transportation and security infrastructure negatively affect students' academic experiences, leading to increased absenteeism, lateness, and decreased motivation. The university's transportation system is often unreliable, causing students undue stress as they navigate limited options to attend classes and participate in academic activities. Furthermore, security concerns on campus have created a sense of unease, with students feeling vulnerable to crime, including robbery and theft of personal belongings. As a result, students' participation in academic activities has decreased. The study concludes that social infrastructure challenges significantly hinder academic engagement among undergraduate students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. However, the study has some limitations. The research focused solely on 400-level students, which may not represent the experiences of students in other levels of study. Additionally, the study was conducted at a single institution, limiting the generalizability of the findings to

other universities. The reliance on self-reported data from students may also introduce bias in the results.

Implications for Educational Development

The implications of neglecting social infrastructure challenges, specifically transportation and security, on academic engagement of undergraduate students in Nigerian public universities are not farfetched. If left unaddressed, these issues will perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage, hindering students' ability to access reliable and affordable transportation, leading to increased absenteeism, lateness, and decreased academic performance. The persistent lack of security on campus will foster a culture of fear and anxiety, causing students to feel vulnerable, unsupported, and disconnected from their academic pursuits. This will have a ripple effect, leading to decreased motivation, reduced academic engagement, and a decline in overall well-being. The repercussions will extend beyond individual students, impacting the reputation and academic standards of Nigerian universities. The inability to provide a safe and supportive learning environment will deter prospective students, resulting in decreased enrollment and revenue. The university's ranking and accreditation will also be compromised, further exacerbating the problem. Moreover, the long-term consequences of neglecting these challenges will be profound, affecting students' future career prospects and overall quality of life. The failure to address these issues will undermine the public universities' mission to provide quality education and produce well-rounded graduates, ultimately hindering Nigeria's socio-economic development. It is imperative that university administrators prioritize investments in transportation and security infrastructure to create a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic success and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. All parks in the university, both old and new, should be allowed to function effectively. This is because millions of students reside in close proximity to these parks, and students can reduce the need to trek long distances to and from the university. This, in turn, would enable them to attend lectures on time, which can positively impact their academic performance and overall university experience.
2. The university should establish a student-focused transportation and security committee that provides a platform for students to express their concerns and suggestions on transportation and security issues. This committee can work closely with university

administrators to develop and implement policies that address the transportation and security needs of students.

3. The university should prioritize the safety and security of students by increasing the number of security personnel on campus, improving lighting and surveillance systems, and establishing a functional emergency response system. This can be achieved by collaborating with local law enforcement agencies and investing in modern security infrastructure.
4. The university should conduct regular assessments and evaluations of its transportation and security systems to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the needs of students are being met. This can be achieved by conducting surveys and other forms of research to gather feedback from students and identify areas for improvement.
5. The university should provide financial support to students who are struggling to access transportation due to financial constraints. This can be achieved by offering transportation subsidies or grants to eligible students, or by partnering with private transportation companies to provide discounted services.

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