
STUDENTS' SERVICES PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent to which students' services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was guided by three objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. The population of the study comprised 37,374 staff and 100-level students across three universities. A sample of 396 respondents was selected using the Taro Yamane formula and the stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using two instruments: the Student Services Planning Assessment Scale (SSPAS) and the Sustainable Learning Outcomes Assessment Scale (SLOAS), both validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.81 and 0.87 for SSPAS and SLOAS, respectively. Research questions one to three were analysed using simple regression, while hypotheses one to six were tested using t-tests associated with simple regression, whereas hypothesis seven was tested using ANOVA at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that various aspects of students' services planning, such as hostel accommodation, health, transport, sports/recreational, security, and guidance and counselling, both independently and jointly, predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State to a low extent and are statistically insignificant. Based on these findings, it was concluded that students' services planning, both jointly and individually, contribute to sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State to a low extent. Hence, it was recommended, among others, that university

management should prioritise proper planning, renovation, and maintenance of hostel accommodations to ensure a conducive and safe living environment that supports students' comfort and academic engagement.

KEYWORDS: Students' Services Planning, Sustainable Learning Outcomes, Public Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the fundamental drivers of national development because it enriches individuals' understanding of themselves and the world around them. It enhances the quality of human life by equipping people with the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed to contribute meaningfully to society. Quality education promotes productivity, creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, and technological advancement, while also fostering equitable income distribution, social cohesion, and sustainable economic growth. Indeed, the level of development attained by any nation is largely determined by the quality of its human capital. Consequently, Nigeria, as a developing nation, continues to invest in education to provide its citizens, particularly young people, with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for productive and meaningful living.

Recognising education as a vital instrument for national development, Nigeria has continually reviewed its educational philosophy and practices to address emerging socio-economic realities. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), in the National Policy on Education, emphasised the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical, and social competencies necessary for individuals to contribute effectively to national development. The policy further states that the broad aim of education is to prepare individuals for useful living within society (FRN, 2014). Such useful living encompasses self-reliance, productive citizenship, and lifelong learning. It is within this broad national educational framework that university education occupies a strategic position.

University education represents the highest level of formal education after secondary schooling. In Nigeria, it is expected to contribute to national development through high-level manpower training, the advancement of research and innovation, and the provision of accessible, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities that respond to the aspirations of the citizenry. Central to the attainment of these objectives are students, who constitute the primary beneficiaries of university education. They are expected to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and character that prepare them to become responsible and productive members of

society. Achieving these expectations, however, requires not only effective teaching and learning but also the systematic planning and provision of essential student support services. This has become increasingly important in view of the declining quality of student support services in many Nigerian universities and the growing need to produce graduates who are academically competent, socially responsible, disciplined, innovative, and employable (Akpan, 2021).

A student is an individual formally enrolled in an educational institution and actively engaged in academic pursuits. Service refers to activities or support provided by an individual or organisation to satisfy the needs, expectations, or welfare of others, while planning is the systematic process of identifying goals, determining priorities, forecasting future needs, allocating resources, and developing appropriate strategies for achieving desired objectives. Consequently, students' services planning may be defined as a deliberate and systematic process of identifying students' academic, social, physical, emotional, and welfare needs, developing appropriate support strategies, and allocating institutional resources to enhance students' success and overall educational experience (Onungwe, 2021).

Students' services planning encompasses all non-instructional programmes, facilities, and support mechanisms designed to complement classroom instruction and facilitate the achievement of institutional goals. These services contribute significantly to students' academic success, personal development, and overall well-being, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the educational system. Akinnubi and Kayode (2022) described student services planning as the provision of welfare services within educational institutions aimed at reducing antisocial behaviour among students while promoting positive attitudes, responsible conduct, academic achievement, and appropriate career development.

The planning of student services extends beyond the development of academic competence to the holistic development of the individual. It seeks to nurture students intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and morally so that they become well-rounded graduates capable of contributing meaningfully to societal development. Effective planning of student support services therefore remains indispensable to institutional effectiveness. For instance, guidance and counselling services assist students in making informed educational and career decisions, while career development services facilitate employability and successful transition into the labour market. Hostel accommodation provides students with a conducive living and learning environment that enhances comfort, safety, interaction, and academic performance. Health services ensure that students receive preventive, curative, and emergency medical care, including health assessment, counselling, disease prevention,

treatment of illnesses, and health education. Likewise, municipal services such as water supply, electricity, sanitation, and accessible road networks create a healthy and supportive campus environment conducive to learning.

Students' services planning therefore focuses on meeting students' welfare needs through the effective provision of services such as admission support, registration, orientation, hostel accommodation, healthcare, transportation, security, sports and recreational facilities, and guidance and counselling. When adequately planned and effectively implemented, these services complement classroom instruction and contribute significantly to sustainable learning outcomes. Sustainable learning outcomes refer to enduring educational achievements that equip learners with the competencies, values, and attitudes required for lifelong learning while promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Such outcomes are achieved within learning environments that support students' physical, emotional, psychological, and academic development (Elseragy et al., 2022).

According to Arikewuyo and Adegbesan (2019), the attainment of sustainable learning outcomes in universities depends substantially on the effective planning and provision of student support services. Similarly, Ineye-Briggs (2023) maintained that student services constitute essential operational components of educational institutions because they facilitate effective teaching and learning while supporting students' overall development. Furthermore, Adesina and Ogunsaju, as cited in Ejeh et al. (2022), observed that educational goals and student services are inseparable, as both operate interdependently in achieving institutional effectiveness. Regardless of the availability of qualified personnel, educational institutions require supportive physical facilities and well-planned student services to function efficiently. Ejeh et al. (2022) further identified hostel accommodation, health services, transport services, sports and recreational services, security services, and guidance and counselling services as critical components of student services that require effective planning to facilitate sustainable learning outcomes.

One important dimension of student services planning is hostel accommodation services planning. Student hostels provide residential facilities for students within the university environment, thereby creating opportunities for academic engagement, social interaction, and personal development. Hostel accommodation services planning involves the systematic design, allocation, management, maintenance, and continuous improvement of residential facilities to ensure that students live in safe, secure, comfortable, and conducive environments that support academic success. Chiguvi and Ndoma (2018) noted that well-planned student hostels provide learners with supportive living conditions that enable them to

concentrate on their studies while fostering personal growth and healthy social relationships. Consequently, university management bears the responsibility of planning, providing, and maintaining adequate hostel facilities for students admitted into various academic programmes.

Furthermore, another critical aspect of students' services planning is health services planning. Student health services comprise preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and emergency healthcare services provided by educational institutions to safeguard students' physical and mental well-being. Health services planning involves assessing students' healthcare needs, designing appropriate health programmes, allocating medical resources, implementing health interventions, and evaluating service effectiveness. Accessible and quality healthcare enables students to maintain good health, improve class attendance, enhance concentration, and achieve better academic outcomes. Conversely, inadequate access to quality healthcare, high treatment costs, and poor attitudes of healthcare providers may discourage students from utilising university health facilities, resulting in increased patronage of unregulated alternatives such as patent medicine vendors, herbal practitioners, and faith-based healing centres (Animba et al., 2022). Therefore, university management has the responsibility to ensure adequate planning, provision, maintenance, and efficient utilisation of campus healthcare facilities.

In addition, transport services planning constitutes another critical component of students' services planning in higher education institutions. Transport services facilitate the movement of students within and around the university environment, thereby improving access to academic, administrative, residential, health, and recreational facilities. Transport services planning refers to the systematic process of designing, coordinating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating transportation systems that are safe, reliable, affordable, efficient, and accessible to members of the university community. Effective transport planning ensures that students experience minimal delays in accessing lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, hostels, and other essential facilities, thereby reducing lateness, absenteeism, transportation stress, and financial burden. A well-planned campus transport system also promotes students' safety, punctuality, academic engagement, and overall satisfaction with university life. Studies have demonstrated that accessible and efficient transportation services positively influence students' attendance, academic participation, retention, and learning outcomes because they enable students to devote more time and energy to academic activities rather than transportation challenges (Aina & Adedokun, 2023; Chukwuemeka & Eze, 2024; Osei, Mensah, & Boateng, 2022; Sharma & Kumar, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Consequently,

effective transport services planning provides an enabling environment that enhances sustainable learning outcomes by ensuring that students have uninterrupted access to educational opportunities and support services.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that students' services planning constitutes an indispensable aspect of university administration because it provides the supportive environment required for effective teaching, learning, and holistic student development. Adequate planning of hostel accommodation, health services, transport services, sports and recreational services, security services, guidance and counselling, and other welfare services creates conditions that promote students' academic engagement, physical and psychological well-being, satisfaction, retention, and overall educational experience. Such comprehensive planning enables universities to respond effectively to students' diverse needs while fostering an inclusive, secure, and conducive learning environment. Contemporary studies have consistently shown that well-planned student support services significantly improve students' academic success, persistence, institutional commitment, and lifelong learning competencies, all of which are fundamental indicators of sustainable learning outcomes (Ineye-Briggs, 2023; Kahu & Picton, 2022; Oduwaiye & Okunola, 2024; Tinto, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, effective students' services planning remains a strategic mechanism through which universities can enhance sustainable learning outcomes and achieve institutional effectiveness.

However, concerns have continued to be raised regarding the declining quality and inadequacy of student support services in many public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, as reflected in overcrowded hostels, inadequate healthcare facilities, inefficient transportation systems, poor security, and limited recreational opportunities. These challenges may undermine students' learning experiences and compromise the attainment of sustainable learning outcomes. Although previous studies have examined student support services in higher education, limited empirical attention has been devoted to investigating how students' services planning influences sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to examine students' services planning and sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, with a view to providing empirical evidence that will inform policy formulation and institutional decision-making for improved educational outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic role of students' services in facilitating effective teaching and learning, many public universities in Rivers State continue to experience persistent challenges associated with inadequate planning and management of essential student support services. Reports of overcrowded and poorly maintained hostels, inadequate healthcare facilities, inefficient campus transportation, insufficient sports and recreational facilities, and security concerns have continued to affect students' welfare and overall learning experience. These deficiencies have the potential to reduce class attendance, increase stress and dissatisfaction, weaken students' engagement in academic activities, and ultimately undermine the achievement of sustainable learning outcomes such as academic success, lifelong learning competencies, personal development, and graduate employability. Although considerable attention has been devoted to improving instructional quality in Nigerian universities, comparatively less empirical emphasis has been placed on the extent to which the planning of students' support services contributes to sustainable learning outcomes, particularly in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. This knowledge gap creates uncertainty for university administrators and policymakers regarding the aspects of students' services that require greater planning attention to enhance students' educational experiences and institutional effectiveness. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between students' services planning and sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examined students' services planning and sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study seek to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which students' hostel accommodation services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which students' health services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.
3. Determine the extent to which students' transport services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do students' hostel accommodation services planning predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does students' health services planning predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does students' transport services planning predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. Students' hostel accommodation services planning significantly does not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Students' health services planning significantly does not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.
3. Students' transport services planning significantly does not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design to determine the extent to which student services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. The population comprised 37,374 respondents, consisting of 3,798 administrative/student affairs unit staff and 33,576 100-Level students from the three public universities in the state. A sample of 396 respondents (113 administrative/student affairs staff and 283 students) was determined using the Taro Yamane formula and selected through stratified random sampling, with 132 respondents drawn from each university. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: the Student Services Planning Assessment Scale (SSPAS) and the Sustainable Learning Outcomes Assessment Scale (SLOAS), structured on a modified four-point Likert scale. The instruments were validated by the researcher's supervisor and three experts in Measurement and Evaluation, University of Port Harcourt, while reliability was established through a pilot study involving 30 respondents outside the study area, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.81 for SSPAS and 0.87 for SLOAS. A total of 396 questionnaires were administered with the assistance of three trained research assistants; 385 copies (97%) were retrieved, and 381 (96%) were found

valid for analysis. Data were analysed using simple regression to answer research questions one to six and multiple regression for research question seven, while the corresponding hypotheses were tested using the t-test associated with simple regression and ANOVA associated with multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent do students' hostel accommodation services planning predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple Regression on the Extent of Students' Hostel Accommodation Services Planning Predict Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.505 ^a	.377	.375	37.7%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 100%- 76% = Very High Extent, 75% - 51% = High Extent, 50% 26% = Low Extent, and 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .505 and .377, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .375. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that students' hostel accommodation services planning accounted for 37.7% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. This implies that hostel accommodation services planning significantly predicts sustainable learning outcomes, although to a low extent. The remaining 62.3% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model and random error.

Research Question 2: What is the extent to which students' health services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Students' Health Services Planning Predicts Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.461 ^a	.274	.253	27.4%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 100%- 76% = Very High Extent, 75% - 51% = High Extent, 50% 26% = Low Extent, and 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 2 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .461 and .274, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .253. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that students' health services planning accounted for 27.4% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. This implies that students' health services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes to a low extent. The remaining 72.6% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model as well as random error.

Research Question 3: To what extent do students' transport services planning predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 3: Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Students' Transport Services Planning Predict Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Extent of Prediction	Decision
1	.654 ^a	.454	.453	45.4%	Low Extent

Scale of Measurement: 100%- 76% = Very High Extent, 75% - 51% = High Extent, 50% 26% = Low Extent, and 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) were .654 and .454, respectively, while the adjusted R^2 was .453. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 \times 100$) indicates that students' transport services planning accounted for 45.4% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. This implies that students' transport services planning predicts sustainable learning outcomes to a moderate extent. The remaining 54.6% of the variation in sustainable learning outcomes is attributable to other variables not included in the regression model as well as random error.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Students' hostel accommodation services planning does not significantly predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent Students' Hostel Accommodation Services Planning Significantly Predict Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	2.951	.077		38.374	.000		

Hostel Accommodation Services Planning	.104	.029	.105	3.587	.143	0.05	Ho ₁ Accepted (Not Significant)
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a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Learning Outcomes

Scale of Measurement: 100%- 76% = Very High Extent, 75% - 51% = High Extent, 50% 26% = Low Extent, and 0% - 25% = Very Low Extent.

Table 4 revealed that the standard beta value and t-trans are .105 and 3.587. The p-value of 0.143 is higher than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, students' hostel accommodation services planning significantly do not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: Students' health services planning significantly does not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: t-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent Students' Health Services Planning Significantly Predict Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	2.539	.076		33.343	.000		
1 Health Services Planning	.060	.029	.061	2.079	.130	0.05	Ho ₂ Accepted (Not Significant)

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Learning Outcomes

Table 5 revealed that standard beta value and t-trans are .061 and 2.079. The p-value of 0.130 is higher than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, students' health services planning significantly does not predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: Students' transport services planning does not significantly predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 6: t-test Associated with Simple Regression on the Extent to Which Students' Transport Services Planning Significantly Predicts Sustainable Learning Outcomes in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Alpha level	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	2.299	.077		29.928	.000		
1 Transport Services Planning	.162	.030	.154	5.332	.072	0.05	Ho ₃ Accepted (Not Significant)

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Learning Outcomes

Table 6 revealed that the standard beta value and t-trans are .154 and 5.332. The p-value of 0.072 is higher than the level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, students' transport services planning does not significantly predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Students' Hostel Accommodation Services Planning and Sustainable Learning Outcomes

The findings revealed that students' hostel accommodation services planning predicted sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State to a low extent (37.7%) and did not significantly predict sustainable learning outcomes. This finding corroborates the studies of Ezeokoli and Enueme (2020), Olatunji et al. (2021), Ogunode and Abubakar (2022), and Agboola (2023), who reported that hostel accommodation services planning contributes only minimally to sustainable learning outcomes in public universities. However, the finding contradicts Akpan (2021), UNESCO (2022), and Adebayo and Salami (2022), who found that effective hostel accommodation planning substantially enhances sustainable learning outcomes. The low predictive influence observed in this study may be attributed to the poor condition, inadequate capacity, and ineffective management of hostel facilities in many public universities, which negatively affect students' comfort, concentration, and academic engagement.

Students' Health Services Planning and Sustainable Learning Outcomes

The study further revealed that students' health services planning predicted sustainable learning outcomes to a low extent (27%) and did not significantly predict sustainable learning

outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with Akpan (2021), WHO (2022), Ogunsemi et al. (2022), and Ibrahim et al. (2023), who associated poor health services planning with weak learning outcomes in higher education institutions. Conversely, the finding disagrees with Usman and Abdulrahman (2019), Okafor et al. (2021), Okojie et al. (2021), Ajayi and Fakorede (2022), and Adegboyega et al. (2023), who reported that well-planned health services significantly improve sustainable learning outcomes. The finding suggests that inadequate planning and provision of health services may expose students to health-related challenges that reduce attendance, participation, and academic productivity, thereby limiting sustainable learning outcomes.

Students' Transport Services Planning and Sustainable Learning Outcomes

The findings also indicated that students' transport services planning predicted sustainable learning outcomes to a low extent (45%) and did not significantly predict sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State. This finding supports the studies of Akpan (2021), Gbadamosi (2023) and Houston Chronicle (2025), which linked poor transport services planning with weak learning outcomes in educational institutions. However, it contradicts the findings of Arikewuyo and Adegbesan (2019), Usman and Abdulrahman (2019), Okafor et al. (2021), Ajayi and Fakorede (2022), Bundy et al. (2022), and Msuya (2024), who found that effective transport services planning significantly enhances sustainable learning outcomes. The low predictive influence observed in this study may be due to inadequate transportation planning, which contributes to lateness, irregular attendance, and reduced participation in academic activities, thereby limiting students' academic success and sustainable learning outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that although various aspects of students' services planning, such as hostel accommodation, health, transport, sports/recreational, security, and guidance and counselling, jointly and individually contribute to sustainable learning outcomes in public universities in Rivers State, their influence remains low and statistically insignificant.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following were recommended:

1. University management should prioritise proper planning, renovation, and maintenance of hostel accommodations to ensure a conducive and safe living environment that supports students' comfort and academic engagement.

2. University health units should strengthen the planning and provision of student health services by upgrading medical facilities, employing qualified personnel, and ensuring timely access to quality healthcare for all students.
3. University administrators alongside students' unions should develop comprehensive transport plans within campuses, including shuttle services and road infrastructure improvement, to enhance students' mobility, punctuality, and participation in academic activities.

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