
INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND DIGITAL LEARNING PLATFORM UTILIZATION AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIAN

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Introduction

The role of higher education in national development cannot be overstated, especially in developing economies like Nigeria where human capital formation is central to economic growth and social transformation. Universities are expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also adaptable to the demands of a rapidly changing digital economy. In the last decade, the global shift toward technology-mediated instruction has intensified, and Nigeria's university system has not been left out. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, forcing institutions to adopt digital learning platforms such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and proprietary university portals to sustain teaching and learning.

Within Nigeria, state universities in the South-East geopolitical zone have witnessed increased investment in ICT infrastructure by both state governments and Tertiary Education Trust Fund interventions. However, the mere availability of digital platforms does not guarantee effective use. Student academic engagement, defined as the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, and passion that students show when they are learning, remains a critical outcome that determines retention, performance, and graduate quality. According to Obizue & Obizue (2023), recent reports by the National Universities Commission (2022) indicate that while enrollment in South-East state universities has grown, concerns persist about low class participation, poor use of online resources, and high attrition in technology-driven courses.

This raises questions about institutional factors that enable or constrain engagement. Two factors stand out: institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization. Institutional

administrative support refers to the policies, funding, training, technical assistance, and leadership commitment provided by university management to facilitate teaching and learning. When management prioritizes digital infrastructure, provides regular training for lecturers, and ensures stable internet and power, students are more likely to interact meaningfully with learning platforms. On the other hand, digital learning platform utilization captures how frequently and effectively students and lecturers access and use available e-learning tools for instruction, assessment, and collaboration.

The Nigerian government, through the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030), has emphasized digital literacy and e-learning as pillars for education reform. Yet, implementation at the state university level has been uneven. In South-East Nigeria, challenges such as erratic power supply, limited bandwidth, and low digital competence among staff have been documented by the Federal Ministry of Education (2021). These conditions suggest that without deliberate administrative support, digital platforms may remain underutilized, thereby limiting their potential to enhance academic engagement. Therefore, understanding how administrative backing and platform use predict student engagement is timely for improving educational outcomes in the region.

Despite substantial policy attention and funding for digital education in Nigeria, student academic engagement in South-East state universities appears to be lagging (Musa, Adamu & Bello, 2023). Anecdotal evidence and institutional reports show that many students log into learning management systems only to submit assignments, with minimal interaction in discussion forums, virtual labs, or collaborative projects. Lecturers also report low uptake of digital tools beyond uploading lecture notes. This suggests a gap between platform availability and actual academic engagement.

The core of the problem may lie in institutional dynamics. Where university administration provides consistent support, such as funding for data subscriptions, functional ICT centers, and capacity building, students and staff tend to embrace digital platforms more. Conversely, in institutions where support is weak, platforms exist in name but are poorly maintained and rarely used for meaningful learning. Existing studies in Nigeria have largely focused on the availability of ICT or students' attitudes toward e-learning. Few have empirically tested how administrative support and actual platform utilization jointly predict academic engagement, particularly within the context of South-East state universities where resource constraints are more pronounced compared to federal institutions.

If this gap persists, the investment in digital learning by state governments and TETFund may not translate into improved learning outcomes. Graduates may continue to lack the digital competencies required for the 21st-century workforce, and the goal of repositioning Nigerian universities for

global competitiveness will remain elusive. It is therefore pertinent to examine institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization as predictors of students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

This study is delimited to public state-owned universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, specifically Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The focus is on undergraduate students across faculties who have been exposed to digital learning platforms for at least one academic session. The study covers the period 2019 to 2025 to capture pre- and post-COVID-19 experiences with digital learning.

Conceptually, the study examines two independent variables: institutional administrative support, measured in terms of policy, funding, technical support, and training; and digital learning platform utilization, measured by frequency of access, types of activities performed, and perceived ease of use. The dependent variable is students' academic engagement, assessed through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. The study adopts a survey research design and will rely on primary data collected through structured questionnaires and institutional records. It does not cover private universities or federal universities, as their funding and administrative structures differ significantly.

The findings of this study will be relevant to multiple stakeholders. For university management and governing councils in South-East Nigeria, the study will provide evidence on the extent to which administrative decisions and resource allocation influence student engagement with digital learning. This can guide strategic planning and budgeting for ICT in state universities. Also, this study results will inform policymakers at the state and federal levels, particularly the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission, on digital education implementation and funding priorities for state universities. It will go further to highlight whether current interventions are yielding the desired engagement outcomes or require redesign. For lecturers and students, the study will create awareness on the importance of active utilization of digital platforms and the role of institutional support in making e-learning effective. It may also encourage peer learning and better adoption of online pedagogical practices.

Academically, the study will contribute to literature on educational technology in Nigeria by testing a predictive model that links institutional support and platform use to engagement. Given that most existing studies are descriptive or focused on federal universities, this research will fill a contextual gap for South-East state universities. Finally, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education, the study will offer insights on how digital transformation in higher education can be made more inclusive and effective in resource-constrained settings.

This study specifically seeks to:

1. Examine the extent to which institutional administrative support predicts students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.
2. Determine the extent to which digital learning platform utilization predicts students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.
3. Assess the combined effect of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization on students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

In line with the objectives, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. To what extent does institutional administrative support predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?
2. To what extent does digital learning platform utilization predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?
3. What is the combined effect of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization on students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Institutional administrative support does not significantly predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

H₀₂: Digital learning platform utilization is not significant determinant of students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

H₀₃: Institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization do not have a significant combined effect on students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

Literature Review

Concept of Institutional Administrative Support

Institutional administrative support refers to the deliberate actions, policies, and resource provisions by university management that enable teaching and learning processes. Okeke and Nwosu (2021) defined it as the extent to which university leadership provides funding, technical infrastructure, policy direction, and staff development for academic activities. In the context of digital education, Adebayo and Ibrahim (2023) asserted that administrative support is demonstrated through budgetary allocation to ICT, maintenance of learning platforms, provision of internet bandwidth, and regular training for lecturers and students. Obizue & Obizue (2023) further argued that without committed leadership, digital initiatives in Nigerian universities often fail because they lack continuity and monitoring. Thus, administrative support serves as the enabling environment that determines whether digital tools are integrated meaningfully into instruction.

Concept of Digital Learning Platform Utilization

Digital learning platform utilization is the frequency and quality of interaction with technology-based systems designed for teaching, assessment, and collaboration. Eze and Chukwu (2022) described it as students' and lecturers' active use of Learning Management Systems such as Moodle and Google Classroom for content delivery, feedback, and communication. According to Musa et al. (2023), utilization goes beyond mere login rates to include participation in discussion forums, submission of assignments, and engagement in virtual labs. Nwachukwu and Bello (2019) noted that in Nigerian universities, utilization is often hindered by poor connectivity and low digital literacy, which reduces platforms to repositories for lecture notes. Therefore, effective utilization implies purposeful and consistent use that supports learning outcomes.

Concept of Students' Academic Engagement

Academic engagement is a multidimensional construct that captures how students invest time, effort, and interest in their learning. Ugwu and Okonkwo (2021) conceptualized it in three dimensions: behavioral engagement, reflected in attendance and participation; emotional engagement, shown through interest and sense of belonging; and cognitive engagement, demonstrated by self-regulation and deep learning strategies. Danladi and Sule (2024) maintained that in digital environments, engagement is evident when students actively contribute to online discussions and use platform tools for collaborative learning. The Federal Ministry of Education (2021) also emphasized that

engagement is critical for retention and academic performance, especially as Nigeria transitions to blended learning models.

Theoretical Link between the Variables

The relationship between administrative support, platform utilization, and engagement has been explained within the Technology Acceptance Model. Obi and Yusuf (2022) applied the model to Nigerian universities and found that perceived institutional support increases perceived ease of use, which in turn improves platform utilization and engagement. Similarly, Ibe and Onwuka (2020) argued that when management provides stable power, internet, and training, students develop positive attitudes toward digital learning, leading to higher engagement. Recent evidence from South-East Nigeria by Nwankwo and Agu (2023) suggests that universities with stronger administrative backing recorded better student interaction with e-learning tools during and after COVID-19.

In summary, literature indicates that institutional administrative support creates the conditions for digital learning platform utilization, and both factors jointly shape students' academic engagement. However, empirical studies specific to South-East Nigerian state universities remain limited, hence the need for this study.

How Institutional Administrative Support Predicts Students' Academic Engagement

Institutional administrative support is the foundation that makes engagement possible. It does not directly teach students, but it creates the conditions that allow engagement to happen.

1. Resource Provision → Behavioral Engagement: When management provides stable internet, functional ICT labs, power alternatives, and funds for data subsidies, students can consistently access learning platforms. Okafor (2020) noted that without these basics, students disengage because they cannot participate in online quizzes, live classes, or submit work on time. So administrative support first predicts behavioral engagement_: attendance, participation, and task completion.
2. Policy and Training → Cognitive Engagement: Administrative support shown through regular training for lecturers and digital literacy workshops for students increases confidence and competence. Eze & Chukwu (2022) found that when students are trained to use LMS features beyond uploading notes, they move to deeper learning: asking questions, doing peer reviews, and self-regulated study. This predicts cognitive engagement.

3. Leadership Commitment → Emotional Engagement: When students see that management prioritizes e-learning through clear policies and quick technical support, they develop a sense of institutional care. Obizue & Obizue (2023) argued that this sense of belonging increases interest and emotional investment in learning.

How Digital Learning Platform Utilization Predicts Students' Academic Engagement

Digital learning platform utilization is the actual mechanism through which engagement is expressed in a digital environment. It is the “use” part of the equation.

Frequency of Use → Behavioral Engagement: Musa et al. (2023) established that students who log in daily, watch lecture videos, and submit assignments online show higher class participation and lower dropout. The platform becomes the space where learning behavior is performed.

Quality of Use → Cognitive Engagement: It is not just logging in. Danladi and Sule (2024) asserted that when students use discussion boards, take online quizzes with instant feedback, and collaborate on group projects via the platform, they demonstrate deeper processing and problem-solving. This is cognitive engagement.

Interactivity → Emotional Engagement: Platforms that allow chat, feedback, and peer interaction make learning less isolated. Obi and Yusuf (2022) found that students who actively use platform communication tools report higher interest and motivation because they feel connected to lecturers and peers.

Platform utilization translates institutional support into visible engagement. Without utilization, support is wasted. With utilization, engagement increases.

The Combined Predictive Model

The two variables work sequentially and jointly:

Institutional Administrative Support → Digital Learning Platform Utilization → Students' Academic Engagement

1. Administrative support is the enabler. It predicts whether students and lecturers will use the platform. Nwankwo and Agu (2023) found that in South-East state universities with better ICT funding and support staff, LMS usage rates were 2.3 times higher.
2. Platform utilization is the mediator. It predicts how much students engage once they have access. Ibe and Onwuka (2020) showed that 42% of the variance in academic engagement among Nigerian students was explained by frequency and quality of platform use.
3. Together they explain engagement. A university can have good platforms but weak support, leading to low use. Or it can have strong support but students don't use the platform, leading to low engagement. Maximum engagement occurs when both are high.

Key Takeaway for Nigeria/South-East Context

In resource-constrained settings like South-East Nigerian state universities, administrative support is the strongest initial predictor because it removes barriers of power, data, and training. Once those barriers are removed, digital platform utilization becomes the strongest direct predictor of engagement because that is where learning actually happens. Therefore, to improve academic engagement, universities must first strengthen administrative support, then drive intentional platform utilization through pedagogy and assessment design.

Empirical Review

Obi and Yusuf (2022) studied 620 undergraduates in 4 federal universities in Nigeria and found that administrative support explained 38% of students' use of digital platforms. Where management provided training and technical help, students used the platforms more easily. They concluded that management support is key to technology adoption and recommended that universities create dedicated e-learning support units.

Eze and Chukwu (2022) examined 850 students in 3 South-East state universities. They found that students who frequently used LMS for discussions and quizzes had higher participation and better test scores. The study concluded that active platform use improves engagement and recommended that lecturers use LMS for interactive activities, not just uploading notes.

Nwankwo and Agu (2023) compared state universities in South-East Nigeria from 2020-2022. Universities with better ICT funding and TETFund support had 2.3 times more LMS logins and 27%

higher engagement. They concluded that administrative support enables platform use which then drives engagement. They recommended increased ICT funding and alternative power supply.

Musa, Adamu and Bello (2023) worked with students in 2 state universities using a 12-week experiment. Students who used interactive platform features improved by 18% and showed higher motivation than those who only downloaded materials. They concluded that quality of platform use matters more than frequency and recommended training lecturers on interactive e-learning pedagogy.

Danladi and Sule (2024) surveyed 1,100 students in North-Central and South-East Nigeria. They found that clear e-learning policies and 24/7 technical support increased platform interaction by 44% and improved students' self-regulation and problem-solving. They concluded that institutional policy boosts meaningful platform use and recommended that NUC set minimum standards for e-learning infrastructure.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Davis, 1989

The Technology Acceptance Model explains that people's use of technology is determined by two main beliefs: Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. Davis (1989) asserted that when users believe a technology will improve their performance and is easy to use, they are more likely to accept and use it. In education, this means students and lecturers will only engage with digital learning platforms if they see them as helpful and not difficult to operate. Obi and Yusuf (2022) applied TAM in Nigerian universities and found that institutional factors like training and technical support increase perceived ease of use, which leads to higher platform utilization.

This theory relates to the present work because institutional administrative support serves as the external factor that influences students' and lecturers' perception of digital platforms. When management provides internet, power, training and technical help, students perceive the platform as easy to use and useful. This then increases digital learning platform utilization and consequently students' academic engagement. Thus, TAM explains the link between support → utilization → engagement.

Student Engagement Theory Kuh, 2009

Kuh (2009) defined student engagement as the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which institutions deploy resources to induce student participation. He identified behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement as key dimensions. According to Kuh (2009), engagement does not happen in isolation; it is strongly influenced by institutional conditions, resources, and learning environments provided by the university. Ugwu and Okonkwo (2021) adapted this theory in Nigeria and noted that where institutions provide adequate support and interactive learning tools, students show higher levels of participation and interest.

This theory is relevant because it directly links institutional inputs to student engagement outcomes. In this study, institutional administrative support represents the institutional resources and conditions, while digital learning platform utilization represents the educationally purposeful activity. Both are expected to predict students' academic engagement. Therefore, Student Engagement Theory provides the foundation for examining how support and platform use jointly influence engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

In summary, TAM explains why students use digital platforms, while Student Engagement Theory explains what happens when they use them within a supportive institutional environment. Together, the two theories justify examining administrative support and platform utilization as predictors of academic engagement.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a correlational approach to examine how institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization predict students' academic engagement. The design was considered suitable for collecting data from a large population at one point in time and for analyzing relationships among variables that cannot be manipulated. The study was conducted in all five public state universities in South-East Nigeria covering Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. These institutions were selected because they have implemented digital learning platforms after COVID-19 and share similar funding and infrastructural challenges, making them appropriate for assessing the influence of administrative support and platform use on engagement.

The population comprised all 200 to 400 level undergraduate students in the five universities, totaling approximately 78,450. This group was chosen because they have sufficient exposure to university systems and digital platforms. A sample of 450 students was drawn to allow for

generalization and to cater for non-returned questionnaires. A multi-stage sampling technique was used. All five universities were purposively included. Faculties were then selected through stratified random sampling to ensure disciplinary representation, after which students were chosen from the 200 to 400 levels using simple random sampling to give all eligible students equal opportunity.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Institutional Administrative Support and Digital Learning Platform Utilization Questionnaire (IASDLPUQ). It had four sections: demographic information, twelve items on administrative support, ten items on platform utilization, and fifteen items on academic engagement covering behavioral, emotional and cognitive dimensions. All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated for face and content by three experts from the Departments of Educational Management, Educational Technology and Measurement and Evaluation within the South-East zone. Their corrections were incorporated. For reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 40 students outside the study area and data were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. Coefficients of 0.84, 0.81 and 0.88 were obtained for the three sections, with an overall reliability of 0.86, which showed the instrument was reliable. The questionnaires were administered directly to respondents in their faculties with the help of research assistants. The purpose was explained and confidentiality assured, and copies were retrieved immediately to ensure a high return rate.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with 2.50 as the criterion mean. Mean ≥ 2.50 is taken as High Extent while Mean < 2.50 is concluded as Low Extent

Simple linear regression tested the individual predictive effect of the two independent variables, while multiple regression tested their combined effect. Standardized beta values were used to identify the most significant predictor. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected if p-value was less than 0.05 and accepted if greater than 0.05.

Results and Analysis

Research Question 1: To what extent does institutional administrative support predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Institutional Administrative Support

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My university provides adequate funding for digital learning	398	2.89	0.92	High Extent
2	The university management maintains stable internet for learning	398	2.76	0.88	High Extent
3	Lecturers receive regular training on use of digital platforms	398	2.54	0.95	High Extent
4	Technical support is available when there are issues with LMS	398	2.41	0.99	Low Extent
5	University policy encourages the use of digital learning	398	3.12	0.81	High Extent
6	Power supply is stable for e-learning activities	398	2.38	1.02	Low Extent
Cluster Mean		398	2.68	0.91	High Extent

Table 1 shows a cluster mean of 2.68 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that institutional administrative support is provided to a high extent in South-East Nigerian state universities. However, items on technical support and power supply were rated low.

Research Question 2: To what extent does digital learning platform utilization predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Digital Learning Platform Utilization

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I regularly log into the university LMS	398	3.05	0.79	High Extent
2	I submit assignments through the digital platform	398	2.98	0.85	High Extent
3	I participate in online discussions and forums	398	2.61	0.93	High Extent
4	I use the platform to access lecture notes and videos	398	3.21	0.74	High Extent
5	I take quizzes and tests on the digital platform	398	2.55	0.97	High Extent
Cluster Mean		398	2.88	0.84	High Extent

The cluster mean in table 2 is 2.88. This implies that students utilize digital learning platforms to a high extent in South-East Nigerian state universities.

Research Question 3: What is the combined effect of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization on students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities?

To answer this research question, the scores of the two predictor variables were combined and analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Multiple Regression.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Combined Effect of Institutional Administrative Support and Digital Learning Platform Utilization

S/N	Combined Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	When my university provides good ICT infrastructure, I use the more often	398	3.11	0.78	High Extent
2	Regular training from the university makes me participate more in online classes	398	2.95	0.84	High Extent
3	Stable internet and power supply from the increases use of digital platforms for learning	398	2.87	0.91	High Extent
4	Administrative support for digital tools encourages me to submit assignments online	398	3.04	0.81	High Extent
5	University policy and technical support make me engage actively in discussions on the learning platform	398	2.92	0.88	High Extent
6	Availability of funds and maintenance by management improves my use of multimedia on the LMS	398	2.79	0.94	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	398	2.95	0.86	High Extent

The result in Table 3 shows that the combined effect of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization on students' academic engagement is high. The cluster mean of 2.95 and standard deviation of 0.86 which are above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that when administrative support is available, students' utilization of digital platforms and consequently their engagement increases to a high extent.

All the 6 items have mean scores above 2.50, ranging from 2.79 to 3.11. This suggests that respondents agreed that funding, ICT infrastructure, training, stable internet, technical support and university policy working together with platform utilization significantly influence how students engage academically.

The relatively low standard deviations ranging from 0.78 to 0.94 show that respondents' opinions were not too far apart, indicating agreement on the items.

The combined presence of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization contributes to high students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

Test of Hypotheses

H01: Institutional administrative support does not significantly predict students' academic engagement

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression of Administrative Support on Academic Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	0.512	0.262	0.260	140.87	0.000
	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.842	0.156	11.81		0.000
Admin Support	0.489	0.041	0.512	11.87	0.000

Decision: Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, H01 is rejected. Therefore, institutional administrative support significantly predicts students' academic engagement. It accounts for 26.2% of the variance in engagement.

H02: Digital learning platform utilization does not significantly predict students' academic engagement

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression of Platform Utilization on Academic Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.	
1	0.587	0.345	0.343	208.45	0.000	
	Unstandardized B		Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.521		0.142	10.71		0.000
Platform Utilization	0.562		0.039	0.587	14.44	0.000

Decision: Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, H02 is rejected. Therefore, digital learning platform utilization significantly predicts students' academic engagement. It accounts for 34.5% of the variance in engagement.

H03: Institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization do not have a significant combined effect on students' academic engagement

Table 4.5: Multiple Regression of Combined Predictors on Academic Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	0.643	0.413	0.410	139.12	0.000
	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.203	0.151	7.97		0.000
Admin Support	0.281	0.045	0.294	6.24	0.000
Platform Utilization	0.438	0.042	0.457	9.71	0.000

Decision: Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, H03 is rejected. Therefore, institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization have a significant combined effect on students' academic engagement. Together they account for 41.3% of the variance.

H04: There is no significant difference in the predictive power of institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization.

From Table 4.5, the standardized Beta for Platform Utilization = 0.457 while Beta for Admin Support = 0.294. Since $0.457 > 0.294$ and both are significant at $p < 0.05$, H04 is rejected.

Digital learning platform utilization is the most significant predictor of students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

Summary of Findings

1. Institutional administrative support is provided to a high extent in South-East Nigerian state universities.
2. Digital learning platform utilization is high among students in South-East Nigerian state universities.
3. Institutional administrative support significantly predicts students' academic engagement.
4. Digital learning platform utilization significantly predicts students' academic engagement.
5. Institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization have a significant combined effect on students' academic engagement.
6. Digital learning platform utilization is the most significant predictor of students' academic engagement.

Discussion of Finding

The findings of this study revealed that institutional administrative support is provided to a high extent in South-East Nigerian state universities. This agrees with Obi and Yusuf (2022) who stated that university management plays a key role in providing the enabling environment for digital learning. However, the low rating on technical support and power supply suggests that infrastructural challenges still persist.

The study also found that digital learning platform utilization is high among students. This is in line with Eze and Chukwu (2022) who reported increased use of LMS for assignments and accessing materials post-COVID-19. The high utilization indicates that students are adapting to technology-mediated learning.

Furthermore, the results showed that institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization both significantly predict students' academic engagement, with a significant combined effect of 41.3%. This supports Nwankwo and Agu (2023) who found that administrative backing and actual platform use jointly improve engagement. The finding that digital platform utilization is the most significant predictor implies that while support is important, actual student use of the platform drives engagement more.

In summary, administrative support enables platform use, and platform use directly enhances academic engagement.

Conclusion

This study concludes that institutional administrative support and digital learning platform utilization significantly predict students' academic engagement in South-East Nigerian state universities.

It is further concluded that digital learning platform utilization is the most significant predictor, and both variables jointly account for a substantial variation in students' academic engagement.

Recommendations

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

1. University management should strengthen institutional administrative support by providing adequate funding, stable internet and regular power supply to sustain digital learning.
2. University administrators should organize continuous training and technical support for both lecturers and students to improve digital platform utilization.
3. Government and university authorities should invest more in ICT infrastructure to address challenges of poor connectivity and power that hinder engagement.

4. Students should be encouraged to maximize the use of digital learning platforms for assignments, discussions and accessing materials to boost academic engagement.
5. Policy makers should develop clear policies that mandate and monitor the effective integration of digital learning platforms in teaching and learning in state universities.

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