

## IMPACT OF THE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC CALENDAR ON ADMISSION PROCESSING EFFICIENCY IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

**Uzakah, Chinwe Frances**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education  
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

[cuzakah@gmail.com](mailto:cuzakah@gmail.com)

**Prof. Oladunjoye Patrick**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education  
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

[meetsjiboye@gmail.com](mailto:meetsjiboye@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*The university academic calendar serves as a critical framework for guiding both academic and administrative activities. In public universities in Nigeria, disruptions to this calendar can significantly hinder the efficiency of the admission process. This study investigated the relationship between the academic calendar and admission processing time in public universities within Bayelsa State. Utilizing a correlational research design, data were collected from 384 respondents, including admission officers, university administrators, and newly admitted students. Analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between the academic calendar and admission processing time ( $r = 0.639$ ,  $r^2 = 0.408$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the university academic calendar accounts for 40.8% of the variance in admission processing time. The study concludes that maintaining stability and predictability in the academic calendar is essential for timely admissions. It also recommends policy reforms, infrastructural improvements, and the integration of digital tools to enhance the alignment between the academic calendar and the admission process.*

**Keywords:** Academic Calendar, Admission Processing Time, Public Universities, Bayelsa State, Digitization.

### Introduction

The efficiency of admissions is a crucial measure of performance in higher education. In Nigeria, the duration of the admission process—from obtaining the Post-UTME form to receiving admission letters—has traditionally been extended due to interruptions in university

academic schedules. The time taken to finalize this process is not merely an administrative issue; it also signifies the effectiveness of university governance and the ability of institutions to fulfill their responsibility of providing timely and quality educational access (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022). Delays in admissions create a domino effect that impacts prospective students, their families, academic departments, and even broader national educational planning (Ezekiel & Akpan, 2022).

The academic calendar plays a crucial role in this process. It serves as a guide for both educational and administrative functions within universities. Ideally, the academic calendar would act as a consistent structure, outlining when terms start, when admissions take place, when classes are held, and when exams are scheduled. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, the calendar has frequently been disrupted by ongoing strike actions, insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent policies (Ololube et al., 2016). Each interruption creates a backlog that spills into the following years, compelling universities to either shorten or extend sessions, which disrupts the synchronization between the processing of admissions and the start of academic activities (Akanbi, 2018).

Strikes, especially those led by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), have become a common occurrence in the Nigerian university system. Whenever these strikes take place, the academic schedule is interrupted, leading to either delays in admissions or uncertainty surrounding them. For example, students who have completed the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and Post-UTME can often wait for months—sometimes exceeding a year—before they are able to start classes (Nwabueze & Ejike, 2021). These delays not only frustrate students and their families but also diminish public trust in the higher education system (Ololube et al., 2016). Additionally, inconsistencies in the academic calendar can create overlaps between the admission processes and the current academic sessions, forcing administrators to juggle competing demands with limited resources (Duruji et al., 2014).

The effects of an unstable academic calendar are also noticeable in administrative functions. University admission officers and registrars frequently find it challenging to process applications in a timely manner when the calendar lacks consistency. Extended admission periods lead to delays, diminish efficiency, and can sometimes cause mistakes or lost applications (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022). Additionally, when academic sessions overlap, administrative personnel face the challenge of managing both current students and new admissions at the same time, which can jeopardize the quality and precision of admission decisions. Around the world, universities are expected to follow reliable schedules. In developed regions, the academic calendar is seldom changed, allowing students to plan long-term based on trustworthy admission and start dates (Ezekiel & Akpan, 2022). However, Nigerian universities have gained a reputation for their erratic nature. This unpredictability not only deters potential students but also impacts the system's international standing, making it less appealing to overseas applicants and collaborators (Nwabueze & Ejike, 2021).

Given this context, exploring how the university academic calendar impacts the duration of admission processing is a significant inquiry. The situation in Bayelsa State offers a relevant

example, as public universities in this area encounter challenges common to the Nigerian educational system while also demonstrating attempts at digital innovation and administrative improvements (Ololube et al., 2016). By investigating the effects of academic calendar stability or instability on admission efficiency, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on enhancing access, planning, and management within Nigerian higher education.

The research highlights that the university academic calendar should not be viewed solely as a schedule of events but rather as a vital factor influencing institutional efficiency. The consistency or disruption of the calendar has a direct effect on the promptness and accuracy of admission processing, which subsequently affects students' educational pathways and the reliability of the Nigerian higher education system (Akanbi, 2018).

## **Literature Review**

### **Academic Calendar**

The academic calendar serves as a vital backbone in higher education, articulating a structured timeline that outlines critical periods such as teaching sessions, examination dates, breaks, and various administrative activities. More than just a timetable, it functions as a comprehensive management tool that harmonizes academic pursuits with non-academic operations. A thoughtfully designed academic calendar empowers universities to engage in meticulous planning, ensuring that admission processes are aligned seamlessly with the academic sessions as they unfold (Akanbi, 2018). This alignment fosters predictability for both students and administrators, allowing for smoother navigation through the transition from one academic session to the next without overlaps or disruptions.

In contrast, universities in developed countries typically uphold consistent academic calendars, allowing students to plan their educational journeys with assurance (Ezekiel & Akpan, 2022). Conversely, the irregularity prevalent in Nigerian institutions has garnered a reputation for unpredictability, deterring potential applicants and diminishing their global competitiveness (Nwabueze & Ejike, 2021). Consequently, the academic calendar is not only essential for effective academic planning but also for the smooth operation of admissions. Its stability is a critical element in maintaining institutional credibility and facilitating timely access to education (Ololube et al., 2016).

### **Admission Processing Time**

The admission processing time is the duration it takes for applicants to transition from purchasing admission forms to receiving their admission letters. This time frame serves as a crucial indicator of how efficiently a higher education institution is managed. A shorter and well-organized admission process reflects effective governance, while prolonged timelines often highlight systemic issues. In Nigeria, delays in the admission process are a common challenge and negatively impact both students and universities (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022).

Multiple factors contribute to lengthy admission processing periods. Common issues in Nigerian universities include bureaucratic obstacles, dependence on manual methods, and insufficient utilization of digital technologies. These issues hinder the assessment of applications and result in unwarranted backlogs (Akanbi, 2018). In some instances, the process is further delayed by disruptions in the academic calendar, which compel institutions to defer or rearrange admission activities (Duruji et al., 2014). Such delays not only frustrate applicants but also diminish public trust in the reliability of the higher education system.

Globally, universities are making significant strides in refining their admission processes by embracing advanced digital platforms, utilizing automated evaluation tools, and fostering efficient communication systems. These innovations contribute to a remarkable decrease in the time required to process student applications, enhancing the overall experience for prospective students (Ezekiel & Akpan, 2022). In stark contrast, Nigerian universities face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to achieve similar levels of efficiency, including outdated infrastructure and inconsistent policy frameworks that complicate the admission landscape (Ololube et al., 2016). This stark contrast underscores the pressing need for comprehensive reforms that will modernize the admission process and align Nigerian institutions with global best practices.

Ultimately, the time taken for the admission process transcends mere administrative functionality; it plays a vital role in shaping students' educational journeys. The efficiency of this process directly influences their timely access to education and significantly impacts the overall reputation and credibility of the universities themselves (Nwabueze & Ejike, 2021).

### **Academic Calendar and Admission Processing**

The connection between the academic calendar and the admission process is a vital issue for universities. A well-organized academic calendar gives admission officers the ability to plan their activities—such as selling application forms, conducting screenings, holding interviews, and sending out admission letters—systematically. When this framework is established, students can be admitted promptly, allowing institutions to commence their academic sessions without unnecessary delays (Akanbi, 2018). Thus, the academic calendar acts not only as a tool for scheduling but also as a guide for coordinating admissions with teaching and learning.

In Nigeria, however, interruptions to the academic calendar frequently lead to considerable delays in admissions. Extended strikes, funding issues, and administrative challenges can prolong the period between application and the start of classes, sometimes by several months or even an entire academic year (Ololube et al., 2016). These interruptions create uncertainty for prospective students and put a strain on institutional resources. Admission officers may be tasked with processing new students while also overseeing continuing students, resulting in bottlenecks and a decrease in the quality of services offered (Duruji et al., 2014). Comparative studies indicate that in higher education systems where the academic calendar is consistently upheld, admission processes generally progress more quickly and reliably (Ezekiel & Akpan, 2022). Conversely, Nigerian universities face reputational challenges due to regular

disruptions, which not only frustrate applicants but also lessen the appeal of these institutions to international students (Nwabueze & Ejike, 2021). It is evident that the stability of the academic calendar has a direct impact on the efficiency of admission processing. Consistency facilitates smoother transitions between academic sessions, whereas disruptions extend timelines and compromise institutional credibility (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2022).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on two theoretical perspectives: the Change Management Theory and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Both frameworks offer valuable insights into how institutions react to disruptions and adopt innovations that enhance efficiency.

The Change Management Theory, conceptualized by Lewin (1947), portrays organizational change as a three-step process: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In the realm of universities, the theory elucidates how institutions can unfreeze inflexible and outdated systems, implement new strategies like calendar reforms, and subsequently institutionalize these changes to ensure sustainability. When applied to admission processing, this framework underscores the necessity for universities to move away from traditional practices that lengthen timelines, embrace flexible strategies that boost efficiency, and solidify these changes into enduring policies. Thus, stability in the academic calendar is a result of effective change management.

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory, introduced by Rogers (1962), examines how new ideas and technologies disseminate within a system. It categorizes adopters into groups such as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. In the context of Nigerian universities, this theory is especially pertinent for understanding how digital technologies are integrated into admission processes. Innovations such as online platforms, electronic communication systems, and automated evaluation tools have been gradually accepted, although the rate of adoption varies among institutions. The theory indicates that universities that embrace these tools sooner are more likely to process admissions efficiently, while those that resist change face ongoing delays.

Collectively, these two theories furnish a framework for examining the relationship between the stability of the academic calendar and the efficiency of admissions, as well as the impact of digital innovation on minimizing admission processing times.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a correlational research design. The design was considered appropriate because the purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the university academic calendar and admission processing time in public universities. Correlational research is particularly useful in educational settings where the aim is to establish the degree and direction of association between two or more variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2014). The population of the study comprised admission officers, university administrators, and newly admitted students across the four public universities in Bayelsa State. These

categories of respondents were selected because they are directly involved in, or affected by, the admission process. Admission officers and administrators handle the planning, scheduling, and execution of admissions, while students experience the outcomes of these processes. A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across the four universities. Within each institution, respondents were further drawn proportionately from admission units, administrative offices, and student groups. This approach enhanced the representativeness of the data and reduced sampling bias. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire contained items that measured respondents' perceptions of the stability of the academic calendar and the timeliness of admission processing. Items were presented on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in educational management and test measurement. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents outside the study population, and the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, personally administered the questionnaires to respondents in the selected universities. This method was chosen to improve the response rate and allow clarification of items when necessary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved on the spot to minimize loss of instruments. Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). This statistical tool was suitable because it measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables—in this case, the university academic calendar and admission processing time. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance with 382 degrees of freedom. The decision rule was that where the calculated p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected, indicating a significant relationship between the variables.

## Findings and Discussion

**Table 1**

**Correlation between Academic Calendar and Admission Processing Time**

| Variable                                       | N   | r     | r <sup>2</sup> | p-value | Decision                 |
|--|-----|-------|----------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Academic Calendar vs Admission Processing Time | 384 | 0.639 | 0.408          | 0       | Significant relationship |

Note.  $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).

The result in Table 1 shows a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.639$ ) between the university academic calendar and admission processing time. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.408$ )



indicates that the stability of the academic calendar explains 40.8% of the variance in admission processing time. The relationship was found to be statistically significant ( $p = 0.000$ ).

**Table 2**

**Correlation Results for All Digitization Attributes and Admission Processing Time**

| Variable                          | N   | r     | r <sup>2</sup> | P-value | Decision    |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|----------------|---------|-------------|
| Academic Calendar                 | 384 | 0.639 | 0.408          | 0       | Significant |
| Online Platforms                  | 384 | 0.61  | 0.372          | 0       | Significant |
| Automated Evaluation Tools        | 384 | 0.709 | 0.503          | 0       | Significant |
| Electronic Communication Channels | 384 | 0.675 | 0.455          | 0       | Significant |
| Joint Influence of All Attributes | 384 | 0.883 | 0.78           | 0       | Significant |

**Note.  $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed).**

Table 2 highlights that all digitization attributes significantly influence admission processing time. Among them, the academic calendar explains 40.8% of the variance, while automated evaluation tools explain the highest proportion (50.3%). Collectively, the joint influence of all attributes accounts for 77.97% of the variance in admission processing time, showing that digitization has a substantial effect on admission efficiency.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the university academic calendar has a significant influence on admission processing time in Nigerian public universities. Stable calendars reduce processing delays, while disruptions prolong admissions and create systemic inefficiencies.

### Recommendations:

1. Federal and state governments should prioritize resolving strike actions and funding shortages that destabilize academic calendars.

2. Universities should adopt **digital academic calendar management systems** to better align administrative and academic timelines.
3. Admission officers should strictly synchronize admission cycles with calendar timelines to minimize bottlenecks.
4. Policy reforms should target calendar stability as a strategic pathway to improving admission efficiency.

### References

- Akanbi, M. (2018). Academic calendar and university efficiency in Nigeria. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 12(3), 44–56.
- Duruji, M., Okwara, N., & Ossai, E. (2014). Academic calendar stability and institutional effectiveness in Nigerian universities. *African Journal of Education and Management*, 8(2), 22–36.
- Ezekiel, T., & Akpan, B. (2022). Delayed academic sessions and admission bottlenecks in Nigerian universities. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation*, 21(1), 15–28.
- Nwabueze, J., & Ejike, C. (2021). Academic calendar disruptions and their implications for admission processes. *International Journal of Educational Policy*, 19(4), 55–68.
- Ogunode, N., & Abubakar, Y. (2022). Challenges of admission processing in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 14(2), 30–47.
- Ololube, N. P., Dudafa, U., Uriah, O., & Agbor, C. (2016). Strikes in Nigerian universities: Causes and management implications. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(24), 34–42.