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## The Role of Private University in Bridging Postgraduate Enrollment in Edo State

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### ABSTRACT

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*The daunting realities of public university education have recently led to a surge in graduates reconsidering their decision to pursue higher learning, thereby highlighting the vital role of private universities in addressing the postgraduate enrollment gap. This paper aims to investigate the contributions of private universities in addressing the postgraduate enrollment deficit, with a particular emphasis on the distinct advantages and strengths that private universities hold over public universities. This study employs a quantitative survey approach to examine the role of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment in Edo State. A representative stratified sample of 40 respondents were surveyed from five (5) universities (3 private, 2 public) in Edo state. Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, were used to analyze responses. Results show that majority of the respondents agree that private university bridge the gaps, citing accessibility, flexibility, and quality education as key factor. Conversely, a substantial disagreement emerged regarding the employability advantage of private university graduates with respondents disputing the notion that they secure employment faster than public university graduates. Divergent perspectives on the quality of educational resources with some respondent asserting that private universities possess advanced tools and facilities while others contested this assertion. This study concludes that private universities promote postgraduate enrollment in Edo State, leveraging flexibility and accessibility to overcome resource constraints (75% of the respondents agreed). This finding has significant implications for higher education policy highlighting the need to prioritize flexibility and accessibility. Future research should investigate strategies to address resource gaps in private universities.*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Edo state located in the South south geographical zone of Nigeria, has experienced a significant surge in demand for higher education in recent years. However, the state's public universities have struggled to meet this demand, particularly at the postgraduate level. This has resulted in a substantial gap, with many qualified candidates unable to secure admission into postgraduate programs. In this context, private universities have emerged as crucial players in bridging the postgraduate enrollment gap in Edo state. With their state-of-the-art infrastructure, private universities have become an attractive option for postgraduate students. This study explores the roles of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment in Edo state, examining their contributions, challenges and opportunities. By investigating the experiences of private universities in the state, this research helps to provide insight into the potential of private universities to address

the postgraduate deficit and to contribute to the development and skilled workforce in Edo state and also, to empower aspiring postgraduate students with informed choices by exploring the experience of private universities in Edo state, thereby alleviating concerns and uncertainties associated with pursuing postgraduate studies. The first private university that was founded in Edo State is the Igbenedion university, Okada in the year 1999 by Sir Gabriel Igbenedion, a Nigerian businessman and philanthropist. The university received its license to operate as a private university on May, 10 1999 and started with three faculties, Arts and Social Sciences, Business and Management, and Law. The University received accreditation for postgraduate programs from the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2002. This pioneering institution was soon followed by the founding of Benson Idahosa university in 2002, just three years later, who also received accreditation for postgraduate programs from the

National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2007. The rapid succession of these events signaled a new era to higher education in Edo State as other private universities began to emerge and expand access to quality education. There are numerous factors that can influence an individual's decision to enroll in a postgraduate program according to [9] they opined that factors influencing postgraduates' dedication involves universities' emphasis on reputation and extracurricular activities. Teaching quality and learning outcomes are pivotal factors in postgraduate student retention [13]. The likelihood of enrolling in a postgraduate program is linked to various personal and background characteristics such as parental educational attainment, undergraduate field of study, academic performance and current salary [1]. Other studies have shown that even the facilities of the university, its geographical location, the courses on offer and influence from friends and family [2] can influence enrollment in postgraduate programs. Therefore it has been studied and observed that students from low-income households are more strongly influenced by attitude, social, perceived control, risk perception and social factors shaping their educational intentions compared to those from high-income households [4]. According to [5], quality programs, conducive learning environment can influence the enrollment in postgraduate programs. Private universities have broadened the scope of postgraduate education in Nigeria, providing additional opportunities for students to pursue advanced degrees, particularly for those who may seem to have been unable to secure admission to public universities due to limited capacity [6]. According to [21], private universities offer postgraduate programs that are comparable in quality to those public universities, thereby providing postgraduate students with a similar academic experience and outcome. Private universities barely go on strike and keep to academic calendars making postgraduate programs swift [8]. Also, there is a greater flexibility in program offerings [7]. Private universities provide a range of postgraduate programs that cater to the diverse needs of students such as part-time programs, online and distance learning (Arthur and [15]. The academic reputation, quality of faculty and research, even as postgraduate admission to schools remain constants, should improve their standards [12]. Alumni success and network attract students [16].

The attraction of private universities lies in their commitment of personalized attention, innovative programs and career focused curricula. However, there are challenges that affect these institutions. One of the most significant hurdles facing private universities is in the difficulty in retaining qualified faculties [14]. Lower salaries coupled with limited opportunities for research and professional development make it difficult to get qualified professionals [7]. According to [3], the inadequacy of qualified

faculty compromises the quality of teaching and research in postgraduate program. Also, private universities struggle to secure research fundings and opportunities,

making them not attractive enough for enrollment [15]. Private universities dependence on tuition fee and private donations which creates financial instability where research infrastructure and facilities are often sacrificed for the sake of sustainability [23]. According to [20], people often think private universities are lower quality than public universities which has created a cycle of decline from student enrollment, recruitments, research partnership [11]. Private universities also face complex regulation and accreditation issues which cost a lot of money and take resource away from academic programs [22]. Lastly, they have limited access to funding, making it hard to develop postgraduate programs and research initiatives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a one-time survey approach aimed to gather perceptions from postgraduate students on the roles of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment in Edo State. The principal aim of this study is to collect and examine data to discern perspectives and variations in viewpoint of postgraduate students among universities in Edo State.

### *Participants*

The study sample consist of postgraduate students in ongoing programs and postgraduate degree holders from diverse universities in Edo State,

### *Data Collection*

The survey sample selection was based on the fact that there are nine (9) universities in Edo state. Despite this, data collection was limited to five universities in Edo state namely; Benson Idahosa University, University of Benin, Igbinedion University, Wellspring University and Ambrose Ali University via simple random sampling. Questionnaires were administered to undergraduates, postgraduates and postgraduate degree holders of each university to get direct information on the role of private school in bridging postgraduate student enrollment in Edo State.

### *Control Group (Public Universities)*

To establish the baseline for comparison, data was collected from two public universities in Edo state; University of Benin, Ambrose Ali University. These institutions were selected as a representative of public universities in Edo State. Benson Idahosa University, Igbinedion University, Wellspring University. These institutions were selected as representative of private universities in Edo State, providing insights into their strategies for increasing postgraduate enrollment.

### *Treatment Group (Private Universities)*

To examine the role of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment gaps, data was collected from three private universities in Edo State;

### *Questionnaire Design*

The questionnaire was divided into two parts, demographic characteristics and perceptions regarding private universities' impact on postgraduate enrollment. The

questions were pre-defined with Likert Scale response options to rate precision.

*Dara Analysisi*

Data analysis was conducted employing SPSS and Microsoft Excel, descriptive statistics were generated

*Description of Analysis*

This section represents data analysis and interpretation of respondents view on the role of private university in bridging postgraduate student enrollment in Edo state. The responses in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' personal data set out to achieve the objective.

**Table 1: Respondent's Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	21	52.5	52.5	52.5
	Femal e	19	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

As show in table 1 above 52.5% of respondents were male and 47.5 respondents were females, which means that a lot of males responded to the questionnaire more than females. The difference between male and female respondents is relatively small

**Table 2: Respondent's Age**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 23years	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	24 - 30 years	27	67.5	67.5	75.0
	31 years and above	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 2, 67.5% of the respondents were between 24 to 30 years, which implies that the majority of the respondents were youths between the age of 24-30. The small proportion of the age of 18 – 23 years may limit generalizability to younger population. The presence of respondents 31 years and above provides insight into older adults' perspective.

**Table 3: Respondent's Occupation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Students	20	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Staffs	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

This table implies that 50.0% of respondents were postgraduates and 50,0% of the respondents were not postgraduate students. The equal distribution of postgraduates and non-postgraduates ensures a balance in

sample allowing for comparison in the two groups.

**Table 4: Respondent's University**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	2	13	32.5	32.5	57.5
	3	7	17.5	17.5	75.0
	4	5	12.5	12.5	87.5
	5	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, 25.0percent of the respondents are from Benson Idahosa University, 32.5 percent are from university of Benin, 17.5 percent are from Igbinedion University, 12.5 percent are from Wellspring University, 12.5 percent are from Ambrose Ali University. This implies that in total 45.0 percent respondent from public universities and 55.0 percent respondent from private universities were sampled which means that the survey had a slightly higher representation of private university respondents compared to public universities

**Table 5: Are postgraduate program available at your school?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	39	97.5	97.5	97.5
	No	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

From the above table, 97.5% of the universities offer postgraduate programs and 2.5% of the universities do not run a postgraduate program.

**Table 7: Is your school NUC Accredited?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	39	97.5	97.5	97.5
	No	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

From the table 7, 95.5% of the universities sampled are NUC accredited and 2.5% of the universities sampled are not NUC accredited

**Table 8: Are you currently enrolled in a postgraduate program?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	No	17	42.5	42.5	87.5
	Complete d M.sc	5	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

From the above table, 45.0% of students currently enrolled in a postgraduate program which provides insight into current postgraduate experience, 42.5% are not currently enrolled in a postgraduate program which may imply potential applicants, 12.5% have completed postgraduate program offer valuable insights into postgraduate outcomes.

**Table 9, Private University or Public University**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Private	26	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Public	14	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 shows that a majority 65.0% of students prefer private universities for a postgraduate program which implies that private universities are in higher demand for postgraduate programs, with a small proportion of 35.0% preferring public universities, despite lower preference, public universities still attract a considerable proportion of respondent.

**Table 10**

**Statistics**

		X10	X11	X12	X13	X14	X15	X16	X17	X18	X19
N	Valid	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.08	4.18	2.98	4.20	4.22	4.90	4.35	3.30	2.90	4.25
Median		5.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	4.50
Mode		5	4	2	4	4	5	4 <sup>a</sup>	2	1	5
Std. Deviation		.325	.844	1.411	.823	.800	.304	.662	.853	1.324	.954

<sup>a</sup> Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The table above summarizes the mean, median, mode, standard deviation and percentages for each question (X10 to X19).

**Mean**

The mean is the average value of each response given

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

where  $\bar{x}$  = mean

$\sum x$  = sum of all values

n = number of values

question X 12 (private universities are well equipped with educational tools of higher standards than public universities) has a mean of 2.90 which is the lowest mean implies that on average, respondents are between disagree and strongly disagree and question X15(Private universities don't go on strike) has the highest mean of 4.90 which implies that respondents are between agree and strongly agree

**Median**

The median is the middle number of the responses when arranged in ascending order, in other words the median separates the higher half from the lower half. Questions X18(students of private universities tend to gain employment faster than students in public universities) have the lowest median of 1.00 which implies that half of the population strongly disagree and X10(Private universities are reliable in keeping to academic calendars) and X15(Private universities don't go on strike) has the highest median of 5.00 which means that half of the population strongly agree.

**Mode**

The mode refers to the response that appears frequently. Questions X18 has a mode of 1 which implies that in these questions the most frequent response was strongly disagree, questions X12 and X17 has a mode of 3 which implies Neutral, questions X11, X13, X14, X16 have a mode of 4 which implies that the most frequent response was agree while in questions X10, X15 and X19 has a mode of 5 which implies that in these questions the most frequent response was strongly agree.

**Standard derivation**

This enables to understand the spread of responses and it is given by

$$\sigma = \left[ \frac{\sum(x-\mu)^2}{N} \right]$$

Where  $\sigma$ = standard derivation

x = individual data values

$\mu$  = mean

N= sample size

X12 has a value of 1.411 which implies more variability in responses, while lower standard deviations, such as .304 for X15, indicate responses are more clustered around the mean.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

There is a clear trend where certain questions (X10, X15 and X19) show high levels of agreement, while (X15) show high levels of disagreement. Questions with higher variability (e.g., X12) indicate differing views and fewer consensus among respondents. The statistical analysis of student opinion in the role of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment reveals the following key insights: Questions such as X18 shows lower mean values, medians of 2, and modes of 1, indicating a general trend of disagreement or negative sentiment among the respondents. This suggests that there are specific aspects of postgraduate studies in private universities that are not favorably viewed by the majority. Questions like X10, X15 have higher mean values and modes of 5, reflecting general agreement or positive sentiment. This suggests that these aspects are neither particularly positive nor negative in the eyes of students. The varying standard deviations indicate that while some questions have a consensus among respondents, others show mixed opinions. Questions with higher standard deviations might require more targeted communication or policy adjustments to address the diverse

viewpoints. For questions with high levels of agreement, policies or practices in these areas could be reinforced or maintained, as they seem to meet public approval. For questions with strong disagreement, further investigation into the causes of dissatisfaction is necessary. Addressing these concerns could improve students' perception on the role of private universities in bridging postgraduate enrollment.

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