

**AFRICAN JOURNAL OF  
EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

**ISSN 0795 – 0063    Volume 26, Nos. 1&2, 2025**

**A JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT,  
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

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**TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND HOSTEL CONDITIONS AS  
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FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA**

**Adelowokan, Olusogo A. & Ipingbemi, Olusiya**

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**Abstract**

This paper examined how transport and students' hostel conditions affected their university academic performance. A cross-sectional survey research design was used, while both primary and secondary data were sourced. A sample of 1207 students was drawn from three out of six Federal universities in southwestern Nigeria. UI: 257; Unilag: 495; and OAU: 455 students were sampled. A structured questionnaire was designed to obtain information on the socio-economic, transport and housing conditions. The collected data were analyzed using a Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test. The result revealed that the distance of the hostel's location to the class ( $\chi^2=14.04$ ) determined students' academic performance. Only 13.4% of the first-class students lived at distance 4km and above. Contrarily, 81.8% of the students who were advised to withdraw lived 4km or above. Also, the hostels were not in the best condition for reading, while 51.8% prefer reading in the faculty library. It was recommended that the frequency of campus shuttle service should be increased, and on-campus hostels nearer to the lecture halls should be provided.

**Keywords:** Hostel distance; Hostel condition, Transport challenges, Academic performance

**Introduction**

This study investigates the profound impact of transportation challenges and hostel conditions on the academic performance of students in Federal universities across Nigeria. All living organisms live

in specific environments and need movement for various reasons. Humans, a crucial part of this group, require housing and mobility for survival. However, challenges arise when residential locations lack convenient transportation to activity areas. Housing and transport are central to human settlement, particularly in tertiary institutions, where student accommodation and mobility may influence academic achievement (Mohammed & Darma, 2021).

Tertiary institutions act as magnets, attracting large populations and subsequently leading to crowding, especially during peak hours. This phenomenon is underscored by the increasing rate of students' enrolment in universities, which doubled in the last two decades (UNESCO, 2024). In the early days of university establishment in Africa, student populations were smaller, and scholars were accommodated in on-campus hostels close to their lecture halls. Four of the 100 oldest universities in Africa were located in Nigeria, with initially low student populations (Association of African Universities). For example, the oldest certificate-issuing institution in the country, the University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan), began in 1948 with just 104 foundational students.

Over the years, the number of Nigerian university students has surged to 2,159,461, and student accommodation has expanded significantly beyond university campuses (Nigerian University System Statistical Digest, 2019). Presently, over 75% of university students live off-campus, typically ranging from one to six kilometers away from the main campus (Momodu, 2017). This context reveals that the accommodation facilities provided by institutions and through public-private partnerships are inadequate, often leading to transport crises for off-campus students. The perceived challenges of distance and transportation systems are presumed to affect the academic performance of students in Federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria.

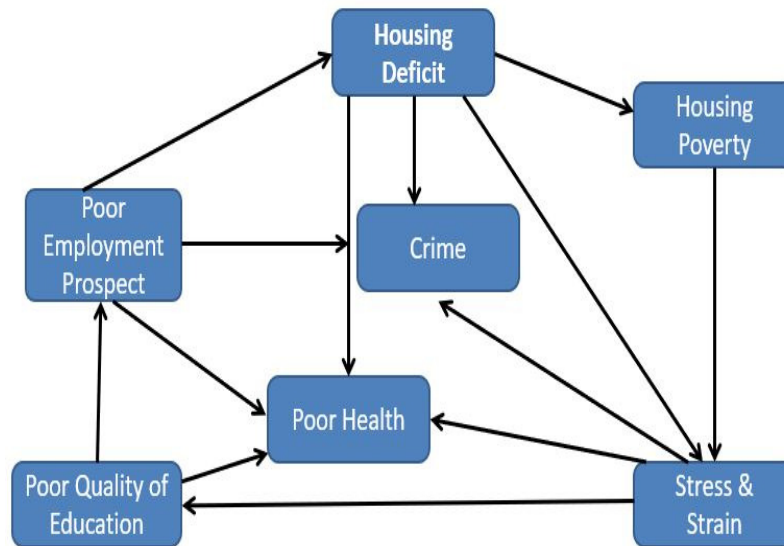
Therefore, this study aims to analyse the transportation distance to lecture halls and its implications for students' academic performance, particularly within the context of transportation experience and hostel conditions as factors influencing academic success in Federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The study hypothesised whether the hostel and distance to lecture halls significantly affect academic performance.

According to Okoroafor (2013), Universities were created to fulfil three functions: teaching, research, and community service. To excel in these roles, housing and transportation systems are fundamental. Significant student housing challenges can be traceable to the high rate of enrollment in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. For instance, in 2025, 1,955,069 students sat for the UTME in an attempt to gain admission into tertiary institutions. If all of these candidates gain admission into tertiary institutions, then the situation will be worse, especially in non-residential institutions (Adekunle, 2025). The On-campus housing that used to serve the majority of the students could no longer meet the students' housing demand, and facility pressure has been observed since the mid-1980s. This made the students search for alternative student residential areas, located at a distance from campus, and municipal transport facilities could not readily support such (Olanrewaju *et al*, 2022). According to Aluko (2011) cost of transportation as well as traffic are the major transport challenges faced by the students.

### **Literature Review**

Student housing goes by many nomenclatures, such as halls of residence, hostel (Amole, 2005) and student dormitory (Kaya & Erkip, 2001), which can either be located within the campus perimeter fence (on-campus) or outside the campus (off-campus). Susilawati (2001) and Khozaei *et al*. (2010) defined student housing as a densely built building with many rooms, each containing several beds for student accommodation while pursuing academics. According to this definition, student housing provides sleeping and living quarters for multiple occupants, usually without a private bathroom, toilet, or kitchen. Nissi *et al* (2020) state that adequate student housing is usually equipped with facilities that include bedrooms that can serve the dual purpose of study and sleeping, bathrooms, water facilities, toilets, a kitchen, laundry, electrical facilities, recreational areas, and access to internet services, as this further enhances the study-learning experience. The student's housing that falls short of these lists aligned with what the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) refers to as slum or housing poverty in the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 'Target 11.1: In 2022, 24.8% of the urban population lived in slums or slum-like conditions, slightly

lower than 25% in 2015, but higher than 24.2% in 2020. The total number of slum dwellers was 1.12 billion in 2022, 130 million more than in 2015. Over 85% of slum dwellers were concentrated in Central and Southern Asia (334 million), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (362 million), and sub-Saharan Africa (265 million). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of urban population living in slums, at 53.6%. Projections suggest that sub-Saharan Africa, where Nigeria belongs, will experience the greatest proportional increase in slum dwellers, with an additional 360 million expected by 2030 (Loewe and Rippin, 2015). The university students housing is not exempted. The steps or approaches that will make the students' housing far better than the situation of housing poverty should be encouraged. Presently, the picture of housing poverty is being experienced in Nigerian universities' student housing (Abdul Hafeez *et al*, 2018). Olatunde & Olotuah (2006) state that housing poverty manifests in a poor environment, overcrowding, and residences that lack vital social services and infrastructure (water, electricity, roads, telecommunication) and facilities (such as educational, health, entertainment, and marketing). It is symptomatic of housing poverty, a consequence of poor economic circumstances. It is considered to lead to irritation, unproductiveness, fatigue, and deleterious behaviour, which in most cases are criminal. The provision of public infrastructure and social services has suffered neglect in federal universities in Nigeria, which has led to several protests by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) (Tolu-Kolawole, 2022). Housing deficit theory explains leads to housing poverty, which significantly impacts students across multiple facets of their lives, creating a cascade of negative effects that hinder their present development and prospects. Poor housing environment often lacks adequate resources and social infrastructure, which can contribute to higher crime rates that also is likely to be expose the students to criminal activity, negative peer influences, and major distractions to academic pursuit. Poor housing conditions, such as dampness, inadequate heating, poor air quality, and exposure to lead, can lead to chronic health problems like asthma and other respiratory illnesses.



**Figure 1: The Vicious Cycle of Student Housing Poverty**

Source: adapted from Gupta, R., & Kumar, P. (2007)

Housing poverty creates a vicious cycle for students, where inadequate living conditions contribute to stress, health problems, and instability, all of which profoundly undermine their ability to succeed academically. This, in turn, can lead to poor employment prospects and, in some cases, an increased likelihood of involvement in criminal activity, perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage. Addressing housing poverty is therefore a critical step in promoting students' well-being, educational attainment, and future societal contributions.

On the other hand, needless to say that the Federal universities cannot accommodate all of the enrolled students on campus. as a result, the housing deficit theory surfaced which can be described as a discrepancy between the actual and the required (Morris and Winter, 1978). A positive number denote an abundance, whereas negative numbers denote shortages.

A wider deficit can also be established through the student population that reside at the informal residence, especially outside the campus. Most of these houses are not purposely built for students' accommodation and as a result they fall below the student housing standards. While the neighbourhoods and location of the students

hostels influence their travel behaviour to class and other places. Gatersleben and Uzzell (2007) examined the experiences of daily bus commuters, finding that public transport users generally perceived their experiences as unpleasant. This negative experience was typically driven by factors such as crowding, physical space, and time factors, such as increasing travel time. According to Khozaei *et al.* (2010), the main factor influencing students' choice of residence is their convenience. Oyetunji and Abidoye (2016) observed that proximity to campus, rental value of property, and type of dwelling are the critical factors that influence students' preferences. Zortovie (2017) discovered that proximity to lecture halls, spacious and well-ventilated rooms, a calm and peaceful environment, availability of study areas, rent, and availability of electricity and water are critical factors influencing students' choice of residential accommodation.

Most of these factors that influence students' choice of accommodation are related to finance, security, housing facilities, and transportation. Housing and transportation are two Siamese twins that are indispensable for survival. Unfortunately, the students are challenged by these two facilities in Nigerian federal universities. The challenges of transport they experience are similar to what is also referred to as 'transport poverty': it means individuals' and households' inability or difficulty to meet the costs of private or public transport or their lack of or limited access to transport needed for their access to essential socio-economic services and activities, taking into account the national and spatial context (Saheb, *nd*). It is usually caused by one or a combination of factors, such as low income, high fuel expenditures, or a lack of affordable or accessible private or public transport.

The two related concepts have common characteristics, which are not far from what the students of the public tertiary institutions in Nigeria are known for. Mbee *et al* (2017) opined that the students in Federal universities of Nigeria are children from low and middle economic backgrounds, the reason which influences their transportation pattern and poor housing choices. As a result, living in quality student accommodation is challenging for the indigent students, which made them to reside in hostels that are substandard, and many of such are located farther away from the main campuses, thus, experiencing transportation crisis. The geometric increase in student population worsens the schooling experience, especially during the

peak period. Findings of Dell'Olio *et al.* (2010), Politis *et al.* (2010), and Tang and Thakuriah (2012) have examined the role of real-time bus information systems in improving the overall bus transport experience, while little has been done on students' transportation.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The design was chosen because it allows the results to be reported easily and is generally understandable, while complex statistics are difficult for many to interpret. The sample for this study was drawn through a multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage, 50% of the entire federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria were sampled, which are The University of Ibadan (UI), the University of Lagos (UNILAG), and Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU). They are the first-generation and oldest universities in the region, and their selection for study can serve as best practice for the newly established Universities. The three universities operate both on-campus and off-campus student accommodation. At the second stage, all the undergraduates in the three universities were enumerated while they were sampled using a proportionate to size sampling procedure. The student population is 102,450, while a sample ratio of one percent was chosen (1,024) as revealed in Table 1. However, 1207 respondents (UI: 257; Unilag: 495; OAU: 455) were used against the 1,024 (UI: 244; Unilag: 456; OAU: 324) due to a single online link used for the three universities. This resulted in an excess of 183 respondents, and the differences for each university can be explained as UI: 13, Unilag: 39, and OAU: 131. The number of halls of residence on-campus is 51 (UI: 12, Unilag: 13 & OAU: 26) with 31,237 bed spaces, on the other hands, the off-campus hostels within a 6km radius to campus were identified by purpose-built hostels and the number is 142 (UI: 32, Unilag: 59 & OAU: 51) with 71,213 bed spaces. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the students.

**Table 1: Selected Universities, Sample Frame and Sample Size**

S/No	Universities	Students Population	Students Sample Frame		Students Sample Size (1%)		Sample Size Total/ university
			On-Campus	Off-Campus	On-Campus	Off-Campus	
1	University of Ibadan (UI)	24,497	9649	14,848	96	148	244
2	University of Lagos (UNILAG)	45,552	10,397	35,155	104	352	456
3	Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU)	32,401	11,191	21,210	112	212	324
	Total	102,450	31,237	71,213	<b>312</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>1,024</b>
	Grand Total						

The cumulative grade point average (CGPA) at the end of a semester or entire programme is often employed to measure academic success and achievement in tertiary institutions. Students' Hostel Distances to the Lecture Hall were investigated and categorized into: Less than 1km, between 1km and 2km, between 2km and 3km, between 3km and 4km, between 4km and 5km, between 5km and 6km and lastly 6km and above. The student's academic grading scales are first-class, second-class honours (upper and lower grades), and third-class honours, while the Pass is the lowest. The grade ' Pass,' between 1.0 and 1.99, is considered a Pass without honours. Not too many organizations or companies will want to employ a third-class graduate. Failure or advice to withdraw is termed a 'no degree' situation, which many students do not desire. According to Emma (2019), no Nigerian student whose CGPA is less than 1.0 is qualified to be awarded a degree. The new academic grading scale regulation for the 2017/2018 Session was recognized, though the old regulation was applied to admit students before the 2017/2018 Session. Many universities are facing challenges with the newly approved grading system by the National Universities Commission (NUC) while they still maintain the status quo. However, the old academic grading scale (5.0) applies to this study as the respondents of focus had been admitted before the new grading.

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate travel time to the lecture hall. Other data were collated, analysed and interpreted using a Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test to test the hypotheses to determine the influence of distance as an independent variable on academic performance as a dependent variable at the 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

The 36.9% of the students live at less than 1km, while 6.3% live in a neighbourhood that is located above 6km from the lecture class. Most of the respondents who fall into the latter category (i.e., above 6km) attended classes from their parents/guardians' homes. Punctuality is important in academic success and this study examined this and related factors. This is essential because it is easy to relate the location, distance and condition of ones' house with the attendance of such students to school which may finally affect performance.

The study revealed the condition of hostels that is best for students to read and do class assignments. The 51.8% of the respondents preferred to read in the school or faculties libraries.

It was discovered that 22.0% read in the hostels' reading room but many of the students' hostels reading rooms are not conducive and are inadequately ventilated. Students that read in open space (such as sit-outs, open fields, courtyards garden and parks) accounted for 10.6% and open spaces are only available on the campus while the rest 15.6% preferred to read in their rooms. The fear of crime is another factor that dictated the time and the location of students for serious readings.

*Ho:* The distance from the students' hostel to the lecture hall has no significant influence on students' academic performance.

**Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Hostels Dist. to Lecture Class by Grade**

Level	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Advised to Withdraw	447.09	14.04	4	.007
Third Class	707.42			
Second Class Lower	563.59			
Second Class Upper	543.68			
First Class	588.46			

For further analysis, a Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test was conducted to assess if there were significant differences in the distance of the hostel to class and their academic grades. The question is whether distance affects the grade level of the respondents. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the distance of hostels and students' academic scores,  $\chi^2(4) = 14.04$ ,  $p = .007$ , with a mean rank grade score of 447.09 for Advised to withdraw, 707.42 for Third-class, 563.59 for Second-class-lower, 543.68 for Second-class-upper and 588.46 for First-class.

**Table 3: Distance of Students' Hostels to The Lecture Halls and Academic Grade**

Distance of Hostel to Class	Grade					Total	% (%)
	Advised to Withdraw	Third Class	Second Class Lower	Second Class Upper	First Class		
Less than 1km	0	1	115	241	88	445	36.9
Between 1 & 2 km	0	1	89	198	69	357	29.5
Between 2 & 3 km	1	14	43	96	41	195	16.2
Between 3 & 4 km	1	3	17	24	14	59	4.9
Between 4 & 5km	0	2	9	19	5	35	2.9
Between 5 & 6km	3	12	7	6	12	40	3.3
Above 6km	6	6	19	29	16	76	6.3
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>11(0.9)</b>	<b>39(3.2)</b>	<b>299(24.8)</b>	<b>613(50.8)</b>	<b>245(20.3)</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 revealed that 20.3 % of the respondents have first class, 50.8 % have second class upper, 24.8 % have second class lower, 3.2 % have third class, while 0.9 % were advised to withdraw, as against the different distances covered to class. Only 13.4% of the students who have first-class live at locations where their distances are 4km and above. On the other hand, 81.8% of the students who were advised to withdraw lived 4km or more away from the campus.

**Table 5: Modes and Cost of Transportation to and from Class**

S/No	Transportation Modes	Transport Cost Range (₦)	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bus & Motorcycle	Less ₦200	Public	846	70.1
2	Taxi Car	₦201 - ₦400	Public	146	12.1
3	Dia-A-Ride	₦401 - ₦600	Public	107	8.9
4	Train	0	Public	0	0
5	Owned Vehicle	₦601 and above	Private	12	0.9
6	Pedestrian	-	Private	96	8.0
	<b>Total</b>			<b>1207</b>	<b>100</b>

70.1% of the students used the mini-bus as the mode of transportation to class and other areas, which is operated by private owners. The transport mode is cheaper and carries more commuters compared to other modes (Table 5). Despite the speed of cars and tricycles in loading and movement, students prefer the mini-bus.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

These results agreed with Oneya and Onyango (2021) and Emerson, Shiela and John (2022) who indicated that there was a significant relationship between the students' distance to school and their academic performance which affects lecturer - students relationship, causes health implication and some other related issues which reduce school attendance and completion rates. Many of the hostels are not directly accessible by roads, students may have to trek some distance before getting to the car parks where they board a cab or bus every day.

The library opens 8am and closes between 4pm to 8pm depending on the university, after which the students will likely resort to reading in the hostels. Unfortunately, the hostels are not in the best condition for reading due to noise, obnoxious odour, space restrictions, distractions, epileptic electricity and absence of reading facilities such as chairs and tables.

The findings further revealed that longer distances from class have a high influence on the student's academic performance. Far-distance locations can make the students late to class, while closer hostels may be the rationale for resuming early for lectures. Similarly, lectures that are fixed at odd periods may not be comfortable for students who live at a farther distance due to transport bottleneck, cost and security factors. There is also the possibility that the students that live above 3km distance to class spend a longer time on the road with increased stress, as well as bus delays at the park, long queues, traffic congestion and high cost of transportation fare, which align with Gatersleben and Uzzell (2007). The coping mechanism the students deployed during the examination period is to squat with friends in the on-campus or close-by hostels to the campus to avoid lateness to the examination hall.

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that the distance of students' hostels to lecture halls significantly influences their academic performance in Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria. A substantial percentage of students who were advised to withdraw lived 4km or more away from campus, contrasting sharply with first-class students. Only a small percentage of students who lived beyond 4km to campus obtained first-class. Furthermore, the findings indicate that current hostel conditions are not conducive for academic activities, with a majority of students preferring to read in school or faculty libraries due to issues like noise, inadequate ventilation, and lack of reading facilities in hostels. The challenges associated with longer distances, such as increased travel time, stress, and transportation bottlenecks, contribute to students' academic difficulties, including lateness to class and discomfort with lectures scheduled at odd hours. The prevalence of public transport modes like mini-buses, though cheaper, is accompanied with challenges. The findings align with existing literature suggesting a significant relationship between school-home distance and academic performance.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The frequency of campus shuttle services should be increased to mitigate transportation challenges for students living far from lecture halls.
- ii. On-campus hostels located closer to lecture halls should be provided to improve accessibility and reduce travel burden on students.
- iii. Hostel conditions need significant improvement to provide a conducive reading environment, addressing issues such as noise, ventilation, space, and the provision of adequate reading facilities like chairs and tables.
- iv. . Students with disabilities or mobility challenges should be given special attention so as not to be deprived of regular and punctual attendance in classes. By carefully ensuring these, it is assumed that the academic performance of students will improve.
- v. Renovation of students hostels and integrated security systems in the student's areas should be given priority.

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