

Bridging Gaps in Admission Practices to Enhance Operational Efficiency and Student Satisfaction in Southwest Colleges of Education in Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Published: May 2026

Keywords:

Admission practices
 Operational efficiency
 Student satisfaction
 Digitalisation
 Nigerian Colleges of Education

ABSTRACT

Admission processes in tertiary institutions are very important for the efficiency and effectiveness of the operational performance of tertiary institutions and the satisfaction of students. The admission processes of Nigerian Colleges of Education (NCEs) in the Southwest geopolitical zone are often sub-optimal, with manual processes, inconsistencies, delays, and lack of transparency. This study explores the problem areas in admission process and discusses the effects of the implementation of technology, standardisation and staff capacity on the efficiency of operation and students' satisfaction in the Federal, State and Private Colleges of Education. A mixed methods design was used, collecting primary data via surveys and structured interviews with 720 respondents (students, admission officers, and administrative staff) and secondary data from institutional records. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation were used to analyse quantitative data while thematic interpretation was used to analyse qualitative data. Results show that there is a great difference among institutions, with Federal and State Colleges being moderate in terms of efficiency and student satisfaction, and the fully digital Private College being high in terms of efficiency and high in terms of student satisfaction. The identified challenges are manual processes, inadequate data integration, lack of technical skills, non-standardisation of procedures, and slow communication. The study finds that closing these gaps will need strategic adoption of digital, procedural standardization, staff training and improved communication. These measures can help to make the operational process more efficient, to standardize the admission process and to improve the satisfaction of students, and can provide actionable information for the formulation of policies and institutional reform.

1. Introduction

Admission systems are the first interface of the institution and have an impact on both the performance and the perception of students across the global higher education landscape. In today's digital age and data-driven government, admissions processes are expected to be efficient, transparent and responsive. However, countless institutions, especially in developing areas, still use the old-fashioned systems with manual processes, data silos and bureaucratic delays. The inefficiencies not only place a heavier burden on administrative resources but also negatively impact students' trust and satisfaction, which ultimately affects the credibility of the institution (Adhikari and Budhathoki, 2025; Irani et al., 2023; Istiqomah, 2025). In the global context, the transition to digital admission processes has proven to be effective in improving the efficiency of processes and services. Research has shown that the use of automated admission platforms can cut down on the processing time by as much as 40 percent and enhance accuracy and transparency (Boison, 2025; Kayanja et al., 2025; Schmidt et al., 2025). Likewise, the use of data analytics in the admission process has facilitated predictive decision-making, empowering institutions to more effectively navigate admission trends and resource allocation (Adeniran et al., 2024; Lam et al., 2024). The developments are part of a larger shift in higher education administration, in which technology is no longer seen as a support, but as a means to achieving institutional performance. The developments are part of a larger shift in the management of higher education, as technology is no longer a means to an end, but a means to improve institutional performance. The same has been observed in the increasing importance of AI and digital ecosystems in enhancing the responsiveness and efficiency of institutions in the Nigerian educational landscape (Adelakun & Mande, 2026; Carmo et al., 2025).

In spite of these worldwide developments, there remains a huge gap between the technologically advanced systems and those still based on traditional administrative systems. Despite the numerous benefits of digital solutions, structural hurdles like poor infrastructure, lack of technical skills, and policy fragmentation persist in many developing nations, hindering their implementation (Abuali and Ahmed, 2025; Murire and Gavaza, 2025; Nnaji et al., 2026). The same has been observed in research on the use of AI in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, with varying levels of readiness and technological capabilities between the educational systems (Adelakun & Mande, 2025). The admission of students to tertiary institutions has long been a concern in Nigerian. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has implemented a centralised system to simplify the admission

process, but the admission process at the institutional level is still limited by manual processes and administrative delays (Ajayi and Afolabi, 2012; Oparinde et al., 2025). There are ongoing reports of continued issues with admission processing, real-time communication and decision making. In addition, there are no fully integrated digital systems, which restricts the ability to plan and continuously improve based on data.

The real-world data show a clear connection between inefficiencies in admission processes and students' satisfaction and institutional reputation. Ojetunde et al., 2026 examined the influence of admission criteria on the access to higher education in Nigeria with respect to gender, region and type of institutions from 2015 to 2022. Results reveal that the universities tend to be more restrictive in their admission criteria and more emphasis is placed on the admission requirements, whereas the polytechnics and colleges of education have fewer restrictions. The study reveals the inequities in access and suggests the reinforcement of alternative institutions and the implementation of more equitable university admission policies, especially in the south-western region of Nigeria. The study highlights the need for a system-wide reform, especially with the use of technology solutions. Colleges of Education are a vital, but less studied, part of this national context. As key institutions responsible for teacher training and human capital development, their operational effectiveness has far-reaching implications for the education sector. But many of these colleges still struggle with antiquated admission processes that prevent them from attracting, processing and enrolling qualified candidates in an efficient way. This is especially true in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, where institutions are diverse, and technologic uptake is uneven, resulting in divergent performance outcomes.

This persistence of manual admission procedures in these colleges is a deeper structural issue, one that is a mix of resource limitations and resistance to change. Some institutions have started to test digital platforms, but this is not standardised and coordinated so far, which restricts the impact of these initiatives. Some institutions are already trying to use digital platforms, but there is not enough standardisation and coordination to have the greatest possible impact. In Nigeria, the recurring challenges of using electronic learning systems are infrastructural constraints, low technical support and inconsistencies in the implementation of the systems (Adelakun et al., 2022; Uwanogho, 2025). As a result, most admissions processes remain siloed and lack the use of data analytics or automation. This piecemeal process can slow down decision making and diminish the confidence and clarity of the process. Policy-wise, there is an urgent and inevitable need for the modernisation of admission procedure in Colleges of Education. The future of higher education is undoubtedly digital, and this shift is evident in the global landscape of higher education institutions. In this context, technology adoption is not an option but a must to survive and compete. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) offers insights into this shift, highlighting the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping attitudes toward technology adoption (Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022; Sule, 2024). In the context of admissions, it implies that the adoption of such a system requires user readiness as well as institutional involvement and support. At the same time, there is an alternative view from Systems Theory, which sees the admission processes as parts of a larger institutional system. When one segment of the system is inefficient, it has a negative impact on the entire system. This further supports the need for integrated, data-driven strategies that bring people, processes and technology together (Agu et al., 2024; Khuzwayo, 2020; Matebese and Ndlovu, 2026). These systems, when properly aligned, can offer better operational efficiency, decision-making and student experiences.

Despite these theoretical and empirical findings, there is a significant lack of the use of structured, technology-based admission systems in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. The existing literature has concentrated on universities and polytechnics, with a critical gap in the literature regarding the other part of the education system. Furthermore, little research so far has focused on the joint effect of admission inefficiencies on operational performance and student satisfaction in this particular institutional setting. It is here that the relevance of the present study lies. This research aims to highlight the areas of admission practice that need to be addressed and discuss the role of digital transformation in this context to propose a practical roadmap for change. The attention paid to Southwest Colleges of Education provides an element of context and policy relevance, providing insights that can be brought to bear on institutional strategies and policy frameworks. The general objective of this study is to explore the problems of admission in Colleges of Education in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria and suggest ways of improving the efficiency of their operations and making students more satisfied. In particular, the study aims to examine the existing challenges in the admission process, analyse the effects of the use of technology, create a framework for digital optimisation, and suggest policy recommendations for improvement of the institutions.

This study is based on a simple, yet powerful premise: effective admissions processes are the lifeblood of institutional effectiveness. Optimizing processes, making them transparent and data-driven helps institutions to be better positioned to provide value, gain trust and continue to grow. On the other hand, when inefficiencies continue, they have a long shadow effect on results, perceptions and progress. It is time to move beyond incremental changes and to make a strategic transition to technology-based, modern admission processes that can address the needs of a changing educational environment.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Admission Practices and Institutional Outcomes

Figure 1 shows how the inefficiencies of admissions directly affect institutional performance. Manual processes, data silos, and the absence of standardisation are inhibitors, and their impact is compounded, negatively affecting the operational efficiency and student satisfaction. The figure illustrates the importance of the connection between procedural gaps and institutional results, and that institutional reform is necessary to ensure optimal functionality and improve the student experience. This visual structure provides a foundation for the theoretical underpinning of the study, and explains how admission inefficiencies become tangible institutional problems.

2. Methodology

The study aimed to investigate the gaps in the admission process and its implications for operational efficiency and satisfaction among students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Six institutions were purposively selected to represent the various forms of ownership and operation of the schools which included three Federal Colleges of Education, two State Colleges of Education and one Private College of Education. This list enabled a comparative analysis of admission procedures at public and private schools. A total of 720 respondents participated in the study. These consisted of students, admission officers and administrative personnel, with a proportional distribution among the six colleges: Federal College A (140), Federal College B (132), Federal College C (128), State College A (120), State College B (115), and the Private College (85). This meant that all types of institutions were represented and that the results would be indicative of differences in admissions practices, operating efficiency, and student satisfaction.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used and a mixed-methods approach was adopted. The primary data was collected through structured survey and interview which is concentrated on the efficiency, transparency, communication and challenges of the admission processes. Secondary data was collected from institutional records, admission policies and reports to validate and put into context the findings. The quantitative data have been analysed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations and qualitative data using thematic analysis to capture insights on the procedural bottlenecks, technology adoption and institutional practices. This methodology enabled to obtain a comprehensive picture of the differences in admission procedures between institutions and their effect on operational efficiency and satisfaction of students, which allowed for the development of policy-oriented recommendations.

3. Results

Data for this study were obtained from 720 respondents drawn from six Colleges of Education in the Southwest region of Nigeria which include three Federal, two State and one Private College. The respondents consisted of students, administrative staff, and admission officers, offering a comprehensive view of the institutional admission practices, operational efficiency, adoption of technology, and student satisfaction.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Institution Type	Institution Name	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Federal Colleges of Education	Federal College A	90	50	140	19.4
	Federal College B	78	54	132	18.3
	Federal College C	69	59	128	17.8
State Colleges of Education	State College A	62	58	120	16.7
	State College B	55	60	115	16.0
Private College of Education	Private College	35	50	85	11.8
	Total	389	331	720	100

As seen in Table 1, the respondents were 54% male and 46% female, thus, it is a balanced representation of the gender. The contributions were made from the various colleges proportionately and with a fair representation from Federal, State and Private institutions. This balance enhances the credibility of the results, since both male and female actors were able to contribute to the issues of admissions, the efficiency of the institutions, and the satisfaction of their students, giving a wide perspective of institutional practices in Southwest Colleges of Education.

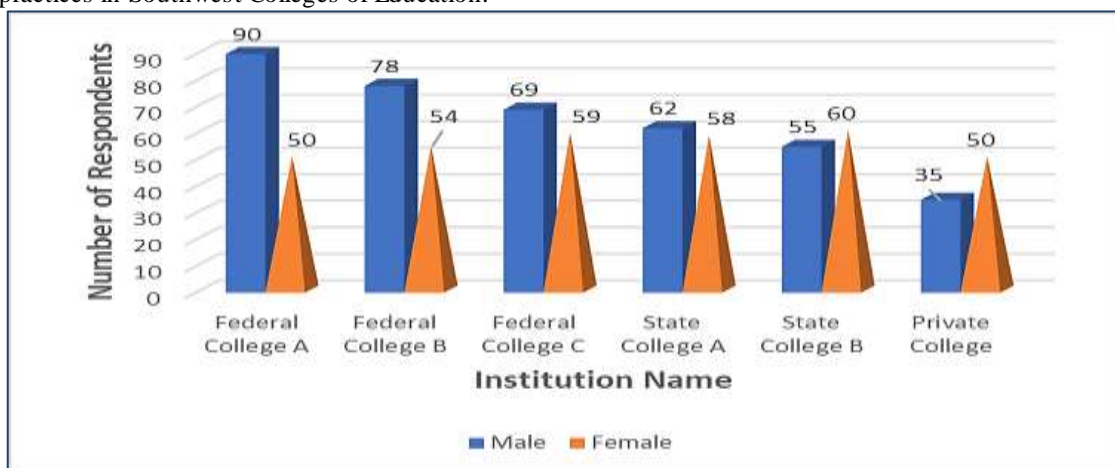


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Admission Stakeholders Across Institutions

The gender distribution of the respondents in the selected Colleges of Education is presented in figure 2. It compares the number of males and females who have participated in the study, such as students, admission officers, and administrative staff. The figure shows a fairly even gender split, which contributes to the representativeness and inclusiveness of the study results.

Table 2: Admission System Adoption Across Colleges

College	Admission System Type	Number of Respondents
Federal College A	Semi-Digital	140
Federal College B	Semi-Digital	132
Federal College C	Manual	128
State College A	Semi-Digital	120
State College B	Manual	115
Private College	Fully Digital	85
Total		720

Table 2 shows that Federal and State Colleges mainly have either a semi-digital or manual admission system, whereas the Private College used in the study is fully digital. Semi-digital systems are prevalent in public institutions, where some aspects are digitised but other manual bottlenecks remain. This reflects a clear technology gap and impact on operational efficiency and student satisfaction. The differences in adoption enable analysis of the impact of technology on admission results and performance of institutions.

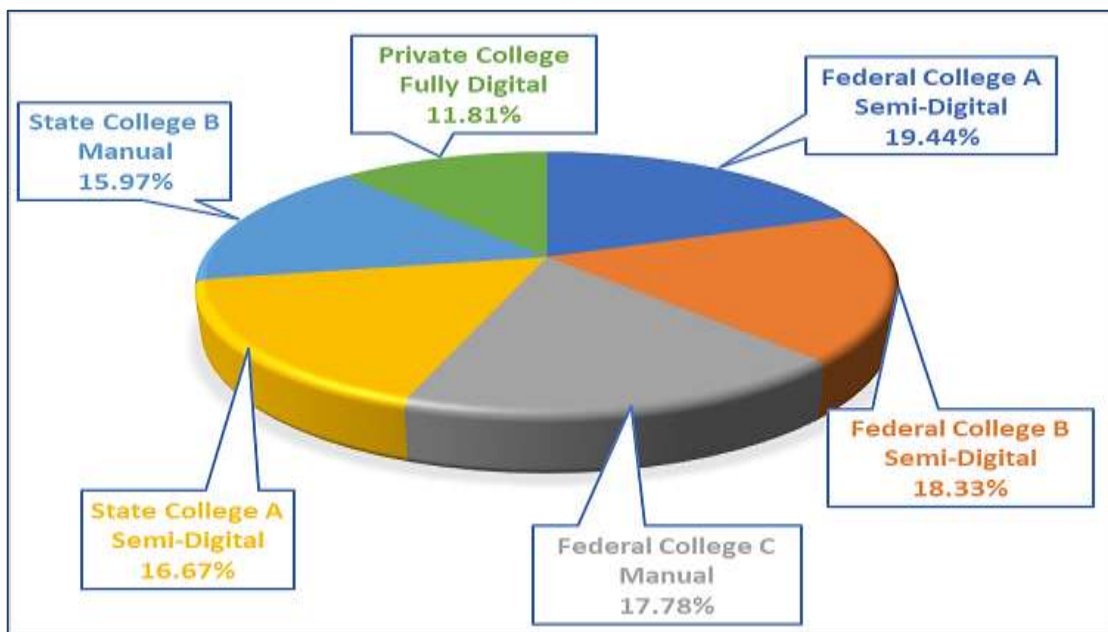


Figure 3: Level of Admission System Digitisation Across Institutions

Figure 3 shows that the level of digitisation of the admission system at institutions ranged from 10% to 100%. The distribution of types of admission systems adopted by the selected Colleges of Education is presented in figure 3. It classifies institutions as manual, semi-digital and fully digital systems to create a visual representation of the current state of technology use in admission practices. The figure shows that the Private College's digital infrastructure is more developed than that of public institutions, which are predominantly semi-digital.

Table 3: Student Satisfaction with Admission Processes

Scale: 1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent

College	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Most Common Rating
Federal College A	10	20	50	40	20	Fair
Federal College B	12	25	45	35	15	Fair
Federal College C	15	30	40	30	13	Fair
State College A	12	25	40	35	8	Fair
State College B	15	30	35	30	5	Fair
Private College	0	3	7	25	50	Excellent

Table 3 shows that the students of the Federal and State Colleges generally indicated moderate satisfaction with the admission process, with the majority responding with the rating of "Fair." The Private College, on the other hand, was rated mostly "Excellent" with high satisfaction. The findings indicate that fully digital systems help to increase timeliness, transparency, and communication with students. Differences by institution type validate the impact of technology on student perceptions of the admission process.

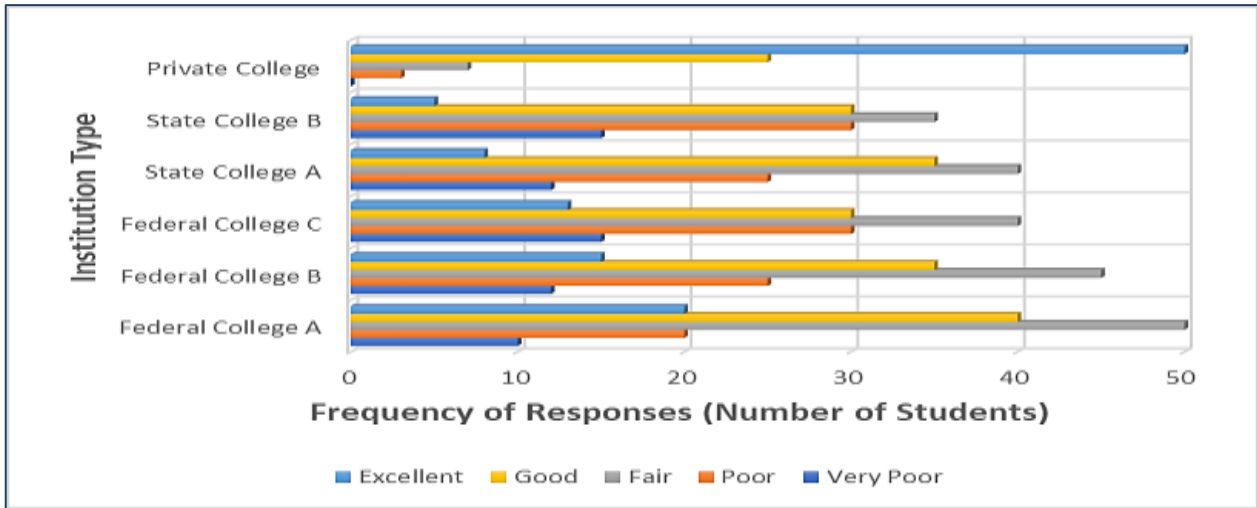


Figure 4: Level of Admission System Digitisation Across Institutions

Figure 4 shows that the level of Admission System Digitisation across institutions is at 50%. The distribution of students' satisfaction level about admission process in the selected Colleges of Education is presented in Figure 4. The responses are analyzed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Very Poor” to “Excellent”. The figure shows that the satisfaction level is higher for students in institutions that have more sophisticated digital admission systems, and the satisfaction level is mainly moderate for the institutions that use manual or semi-digital systems.

Table 4: Perceived Challenges in Admission Practices (5-Point Likert Scale)

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Challenge	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Most Common Response
Manual or slow processing	5	20	35	250	410	Strongly Agree
Poor integration of data systems	8	25	40	240	407	Strongly Agree
Limited technical capacity	10	30	50	230	400	Strongly Agree
Lack of standardised procedures	6	25	40	245	404	Strongly Agree
Delayed communication to students	8	28	50	235	399	Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents strongly agree or agree that challenges like manual processing, poor data integration, limited technical capacity, lack of standardisation and delayed communication are significant barriers. The private college respondents would largely disagree, indicating that digital systems help to address these issues. The results indicate the need to reform public colleges to improve their operational efficiency and effectiveness and the satisfaction of students.

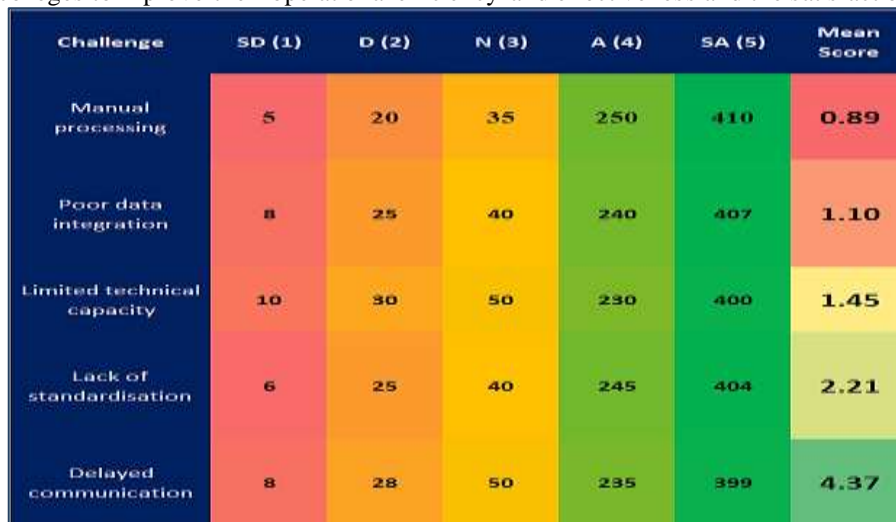


Figure 5: Intensity of Perceived Admission Challenges Across Institutions

Figure 5 shows intensity of perceived admission challenges across institutions. The heat map in figure 5 represents the perception of the respondents on the key challenges faced in admission practices in the selected Colleges of Education. The figure displays the level of responses to each challenge on a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”, including: manual processing, poor data integration, limited technical capacity, lack of standardisation and delayed communication. The darker the colour, the greater the consensus, and the more important the operational challenges are to institutional efficiency and student satisfaction.

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation of Institution Type vs Admission Performance

Institution Type	Avg. Technology Adoption	Avg. Processing Time (weeks)	Avg. Error Rate	Avg. Transparency	Avg. Student Satisfaction	Performance Score
Federal Colleges (3)	Semi-Digital	4.3	Moderate	Moderate	Fair	65
State Colleges (2)	Mixed (Manual & Semi-Digital)	4.8	High	Low-Moderate	Fair	62
Private College (1)	Fully Digital	1.5	Low	High	Excellent	90

Table 5 shows that Private College has the highest Performance Score as they have fully adopted digital technologies, whereas Federal and State Colleges have lower scores. Partially digital systems, longer processing times, more errors, and less transparency are among the reasons that public institutions are not doing as well. The table offers a clear comparison, and it's evident that technology is the primary factor for enhancing operational efficiency and student satisfaction. It points out a policy focus area for the improvement of admission practices at Southwest Colleges of Education.

4. Discussion of Findings

The study shows that there is a wide variation in operational efficiency and student satisfaction in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The semi-digital/manual admission systems of Federal and State Colleges are moderately efficient and fair, whereas the fully digital system of the Private College is highly efficient, timely, transparent, and satisfying to students. It should be noted, however, that not every private college has such sophisticated systems; the results are based on the colleges studied, chosen to be representative of the various ownership and operation models. This comparison underscores the fact that the admission process varies among Nigerian Colleges of Education and that performance may vary significantly based on the resources available to each of these institutions and the extent of adoption.

The study also highlights the challenges that are impacting admission processes in public colleges. Manual processing, lack of integration of data systems, lack of technical capacity, lack of standardised procedures and delays in communicating with students were consistently seen as significant obstacles. These limitations have a direct impact on the efficiency of operation and students' satisfaction, resulting in bottlenecks and affecting institutional effectiveness. These limitations have a direct impact on the efficiency of operations and the satisfaction of students, resulting in a lack of efficiency in the operations of an institution. The finding agrees with Sule (2024) who posited that inefficient administrative structures and fragmented operational systems greatly reduce the effectiveness in Nigerian higher education institutions. The study also highlighted the importance of strategic institutional changes and process optimisation for better service delivery and organisational performance. Adebayo et al. (2026) also noted in their previous study that efficient administrative structures, monitoring mechanisms, and coordinated management practices are crucial in achieving institutional effectiveness in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The fully digital Private College addresses these challenges, showcasing the power of technology to streamline processes, minimize errors, and improve transparency. The same evidence from Colleges of Education shows that AI-based systems have the potential to greatly enhance institutional service delivery, responsiveness, and user satisfaction (Iyanda et al., 2025).

This is corroborated by student satisfaction ratings, where public colleges are given mostly moderate ratings, indicating a satisfactory, but not optimal process, and the Private College receives mostly excellent ratings. The pattern highlights the importance of digital adoption and the need for procedures to be standardised in order to influence student experiences. Overall, the results suggest a need for targeted policy action, investment in digital platforms, and staff training to close these gaps in admission practices. The differences among the types of institutions and the use of technology-based solutions by the Colleges of Education can improve the efficiency of the Colleges of Education operation, standardise admission procedures, and boost student satisfaction, thereby bringing the performance of the Colleges of Education in line with national and international best practices.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study findings indicate that the efficiency and effectiveness of the admission process in Nigerian Colleges of Education is not uniform and varies with the type of the College and technology use. In Federal and State Colleges, the use of semi-digital or manual systems creates ongoing operational delays, inconsistencies in procedures, and delays in student communications, reducing overall institutional effectiveness. On the other hand, the Private College examined shows that fully digital systems can provide a major boost in transparency, minimize errors and enrich the student experience. The findings show that there is no uniformity in the admission processes in institutions and that the level of digitisation, clarity of processes and staff capacity affect the operational efficiency and student satisfaction. Although this successful approach can be adopted by some private colleges, many public colleges still face systemic issues that affect the effectiveness of their enrolment efforts. The results highlight the need for a strategic policy response, investment in technology infrastructure, and staff training to standardise and automate admission processes to bridge these gaps. Improved digital adoption and operational oversight can minimize errors, speed up the processes, and provide fair and transparent admission procedures. Finally, the issue of reforming admission systems in Colleges of Education in Nigeria is not only about efficiency, but also about equity and satisfaction of students. These institutional inequities can be addressed to enhance enrolment outcomes, bolster institutional performance, and create a more streamlined and positive enrolment experience for all students.

6. Recommendations

The following ten recommendations are made on the basis of the findings of the study to improve the operational efficiency and student satisfaction in Nigerian Colleges of Education:

- Public colleges should make an investment in totally integrated digital platforms to simplify processes, minimize errors, and enhance processing times.
- Procedures should be established and applied in a clear and consistent manner to ensure fairness and consistency throughout all institutions.
- Ongoing staff education and training for admission officers and administrative personnel regarding digital systems, data management and workflow optimization is needed.
- Develop effective and timely communication channels such as automated notifications, email and online helpdesks to ensure students are kept informed throughout the admissions process.
- Perform regular checks on admission procedures and digital platforms to detect inefficiencies, track adherence and guarantee accountability.
- National and state regulatory bodies should establish and implement admission procedures guidelines, incorporating technology standards and performance guidelines.
- Test new digital solutions on a small scale before implementation to uncover challenges, assess performance, and make informed adjustments to processes.
- Ensure that student information is transferred between departments and systems without delay, errors or duplication.
- Partnerships, workshops, and knowledge sharing between public and private colleges can serve to learn from each other's best practices.
- Establish a system of regular student and staff feedback to uncover gaps, inform policy changes and increase satisfaction with admission services.

Recommendations

This research was supported by TETFUND Grant

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