



Learning Community Services and Students' Perseverance in Public Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined learning community services and students' perseverance in public universities in Nigeria's south-south zone. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised for the study. The design was correlational. The population of the study consisted of 370,119 students in the 2020–2021 academic year. A sample of 432 students were generated using Taro Yamene's method and the proportionate simple random sampling technique. The "Learning Community Service Questionnaire" and the "Students' Perseverance Questionnaire" were used to collect data. The validation of the instruments was done by three experts in the fields of educational management and measurement and evaluation at the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments and the confidence values of the various segments is greater than 0.84. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the study, while the null hypotheses were tested using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and the accompanying t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between human resource, emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in Nigeria's South-South Zone. It was therefore recommended that University's administrators provide quality students' support services to enhance students' persistence. Tutors and support staff should make certain that the provided students' support services are effectively and efficiently utilized, while students should be enlightened on the relevance of accessing and using these services, which may result in enhanced learning goals, student incorporation into the university's life cycle, and course perseverance.

Key words: Learning Community Services, Students' Perseverance, Human Support Services, Emotional Support Services

Introduction

It has become obvious that there is increasing competition in the higher education system which, inadvertently, is causing the challenging problem of declining students' enrolment and re-enrolment, including poor strategic marketing planning, intense competition between tertiary institutions as faced by a lot of private and public colleges or universities that run the same courses and service quality suffering setback (Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017). According to Boon, Shukur and Bassim (2016), a very relevant factor to consider with a view to attracting and retaining students is the quality of education provided by the higher education institution since the students see education as substantial investment made by their parents or guardians. The nurturing of the total well-being of the learners, with regards to different aspects, such as intellectual, social, civic, physical, moral and spiritual is the core function of any higher education institutions (Schramm-possinger, Powers, Carlson, Bridgeman, & Golub-smith, 2015). As students develop cognitively, integrating knowledge in ways that reflect their learning, they also need to grow both interpersonal, by considering themselves as part of the larger whole, and interpersonal, by establishing a belief system that can influence and guide their choices and experiences. It is a must that higher education institutions provide a set of student-centred activities and services in support of academic instruction intended to facilitate holistic student development for active involvement in nation building and it must also address social needs, promote solidarity and equity and preserve academic rigours.

In today's competitive academic environment where students have many options available to them, factors that enable educational institutions to attract and retain students should be seriously studied. This leads to the realization that students will have more possibilities to maintain their enrolment in colleges and universities, as well as the discovery of how well educational programmes and facilities satisfy students' service expectations. Taking cognizance of the different students' characteristics and increasingly recognizing that education is a service industry, higher educational institutions deal with a situation which places greater emphasis on meeting the expectations and needs of their students (Nurul, 2012). Universities which want to gain competitive edge may need to search for effective and creative means to draw, retain and foster stronger relationships with students (Vatta & Bhatara, 2013). Hence the key to an enduring competitive advantage depends on providing high quality services that will in turn result in satisfied students. Nabwire, Marcella and Musamas, (2014) opined that to increase satisfaction of students and their interest in courses or programmes, focus on provision of students' support services is paramount and basis for enhancing educational quality. Every institution of higher education must provide students with high-quality student support services (Sabio, 2012). Unparalleled student support services assist students in developing their talents, life abilities, and academic success. (Njuguna, 2017).

The learning community services, as according to Mojgan and Zohrehsadat (2021), are a concentrated structure that offers assistance and assistance circumstances in all perceptual and meta-cognitive aspects as per time and location situations that are adequate to the learner's requirements and circumstances from the time of entry, during the study, and after completion with comprehensive assistance and counsel. In other words, the learning community services are students' support services such as facilities and activities which contribute to the effectiveness of the education and, ultimately, the student's academic success. Students require support during all aspects of their education, regardless of whether it is formal or informal. However, the help that students seek is not restricted to the academic realm of education; rather, it encompasses the psychological and social aspects of an individual's personal education while they are enrolled in higher education.

Besides, the term of students' perseverance relates to the persistence and behaviour of progressing learning in the course programme within four consecutive semesters (Arifin, 2018). A review of prior studies on student persistence in the Open University contexts revealed that student support has a pivotal contribution for increasing student perseverance (Choi, Lee, Jung, & Latchem, 2013). The results of the 2014 International Student Survey (ISS) in Australia clearly indicated that the relevance of student support services as a critical factor in service delivery in higher institution of learning cannot be overemphasized as they enhance students' overall satisfaction and high perseverance in their course programmes. However, the Survey also stated that they are certain aspects that need improvement to ensure student continuous satisfaction and retention with student support services despite efforts Australia has made to maintain a sound reputation as a quality hub for international tertiary students. With regards to Nigeria, Omogbadegun, Oyedepo, Fasina and Omotosho (2014) disclosed that there is a foremost inequality in the provision of facilities needed for conducive learning environments in Nigerian universities. Irrespective of the non-adequate provision of facilities and resources which constitute the support services, the available and functional ones seem to be under utilized by both the management of universities and students in the public universities in Nigeria. The reason for this happening may not be unconnected with the fact that lack of good knowledge on the impact of student support services on student perseverance evolves.

The learning community services classified by (Mojgan *et al.*, 2021) and considered for this study include human resource support and emotional support services with a view to determining their relationship to students' perseverance in higher institutions.

Relationship between Human Resource Support Services and Students' Continual Enrolment

The human resource support services refer to teacher support, staff support, and interactive support provided to students in the effort to help them accelerate their learning standards, or generally succeed in school. It is reviewed under the following categories.

Teachers Support

The devotion and adherence to tenets of rule of engagements by teachers cannot be overemphasized based on the fact that it is crucial and serve as significant role of the teachers in improving the quality of education and transforming the future of nation. A teacher should act as a motivational force and should be able to create a learning environment in which students are encouraged to think carefully, rationally and express their thoughts and decide on the situations and difficulties (Nagoba & Mantri, 2015). It is the responsibility of teacher to create a context in which the students' desire and ability to learn can work most effectively. A teacher should act as the role model for the students. Skill development of students, on par with their counterparts elsewhere is an important aspect of enhancement of quality of higher education. With liberalization and globalization of economic activities, the need to develop skilled human resources of a high caliber is imperative. Consequently, the demand for internationally acceptable standards in higher education is evident (Nagoba *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, preparing the students to achieve core competencies, to face the global requirements successfully is very important. This requires that the teachers should be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial in their approach, to ensure skill development amongst the students. Furthermore, Nagoba *et al.* (2015) revealed that many research studies proved that the calibre of teachers has tremendous impact on the calibre of the students. Hence, a teacher, who is a permanent learner has to update the subject knowledge continuously and should be aware of latest development in their subject. Lateral thinking is solving problems through an indirect and creative logic. Teacher should take initiative to nurture and nourish the students to develop lateral thinking. It enables students to master their discipline, performance academically better and continuous in their courses.

Additionally, teachers' assistants contribute tremendously to helping the faculty providing needed academic support to the students. A Teacher's Assistant (TA) is an individual who works in a classroom under the supervision of a licensed teacher, providing support and assistance to students and the teacher. The role of a teacher's assistant can vary depending on the needs of the classroom and the specific duties assigned by the teacher. Some common responsibilities of a teacher's assistant may include assisting with lesson planning and preparation, providing individualized support to students, supervising and managing classroom behaviour, grading assignments and providing feedback, and supporting students with special needs.

Staff Support Service

Staff Support Services (SSS) is a term that refers to a range of services provided by organizations as well as tertiary institutions to support the personnel or learner's needs of their employees or students.

The goal of staff support services is to provide support to employees or students to help them perform their jobs or engage in learning processes more effectively, while also promoting their well-being and satisfaction. By providing a range of services to meet the diverse needs of employees or students, staff support services can help organizations attract and retain top talent, increase productivity and efficiency, and create a positive workplace or learning culture.

With regards to students' affairs, school support staff played an important role in ensuring students learn in a safe and supportive learning environment. They can foster positive, trusting relationships with students and improve school climate by encouraging parent and family involvement in their students' education. School support staff can go beyond the curriculum by providing youth development resources for families and teachers that address trauma-informed practices and positive behavioural interventions. Because students connect with school support staff on many occasions throughout the school day, support staff can model positive behaviour and send positive messages to students as well (Cook, Fettig, Morizio, Brodsky, & Gould, 2018).

Specialized instructional support staff include guidance counsellors, social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses. Staff members usually have vast community networks and strong collaborations with external stakeholders whom they may enlist to help teachers and other staff members provide resources to students (Cook *et al.*, 2018). In particular, they can link students to special services when issues interfere with academic learning. They can also create opportunities for students to authentically envision their future that allows them to go beyond the traditional path with the necessary support and guidance (Cook *et al.*, 2018).

Learning community services such as food services, building services, and others are exercised by specialized instructional support staff as they frequently mentor students in their buildings. In this role, they are able to build trusting relationships with students and help to connect them with others in and outside the school. Hence, higher education administrators should provide opportunities for support staff to work closely with students on an activity or a project in the school as they act as role models not only to students, but to their families as well. These services by the support staff go a long way to help students have the comfort to concentrate on their academic activities and excel, and as well enroll further in their programmes.

Interactive support

There are three types of interaction framework developed by Moore (1989); learner-content, learner-instructor (teacher), and learner-learner. Learner-content interaction is when students have internal discussions about the information they encounter in the course or elsewhere. Learner-instructor is the most commonly understood interaction and involves instructors stimulating student's interest of what is being taught (Keaton & Gilbert, 2020). This type of interaction also involves helping students organize and self-direct their learning, so this could also be expanded to students' interactions with advisors/mentors. The last type of interaction described by Moore is learner-learner interaction. This is essential for learning and is an important skill for students' future involvement in society (Keaton *et al.*, 2020). Content is at the heart of learning. Learners come to higher education institutions to discover new information, identify important problems and their solutions, encounter new ideas, and learn new processes. Succinctly, engaging with content is nearly always a learner's primary goal. Students interact with content any time they encounter a new fact, idea, theory, or principle presented to them by another person in a course, whether by reading, watching, listening, or viewing something. In his seminal work on interaction in distance education, Moore (1989) locates learner-content interaction at the heart of all learning experiences. "Without learner-content interaction there cannot be education, since it is the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner's understanding, the learner's perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind." Moore (1989)

In the case of learner-teacher interaction, Turley and Graham (2019) discovered that the students they surveyed found teacher interaction to increase their satisfaction with the course. Interaction is important both academically for student achievement, and also socially for student satisfaction with the school. A common reason for attrition is the lack of social interaction and isolation (Hawkins, Graham, Sudweeks, & Barbour, 2013). Academic interaction is especially important between students and teachers for student satisfaction, success and persistence. Research has shown that teacher practices are most important factors in determining student and school success (Belair, 2012). It is important that teachers are prepared to teach in virtual education with sound communication skills. In one study a survey was given to students at a virtual high school and showed that the quality and frequency of interaction between students and teachers impacted student completion rates (Belair, 2012). Fascinatingly, Borup, Graham and Davies (2013) found the opposite correlation between learner-teacher interaction and completion rates. However, due to the varying need of student-teacher interaction, the extent of student and teacher interactions should vary with the degree of learner autonomy (Belair, 2012). The two main areas in which students feel they benefit from teacher interaction in their courses is to create a feeling of connection and also to make class more enjoyable, both of which could increase engagement. An increase in student engagement in a course could have a positive effect on their overall success in the course (Keaton *et al.*, 2020).

Looking at the learner to learner interaction, it tended to be related to encouraging one another or working together to better understand content. Students interact with their peers during synchronous classes and in clubs that are offered by the school.

Finally, when students interact with teachers and classmates it helps them with course content because they can share ideas and resources during classes. But social connectedness was the more common way that learner-learner interactions could help students in the school. While these social interactions may not help with their success in class directly, they could help students be more satisfied with the school and possibly help retention or persistence of these students.

Relation between Emotional Support Services and Students' Continual Enrolment

The transition from post-primary education to higher education can be challenging. The experience reflects dramatic changes in peer groups, separation from parents/caregivers, immersion within new cultures and lifestyles, and expansive learning opportunities. Further, the prevalence and complexity of mental health disorders among higher education students has increased over time and few higher education students seek support (Xiao Carney, Youn, Janis, Castonguay, Hayes & Locke, 2017), and few higher education students seek support. According to the 2021 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment, nearly 50 percent of higher education students experience moderate (23.8 percent) or serious (24 percent)

psychological distress. Recent research indicates the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on higher education institution student's mental health, adding considerable stress and resulting in notably elevated mental health challenges during this time of life involving notable pre-existing developmental challenges (Copeland, McGinnis, Adams, Nardone, Devadanam, Rerrew, & Hudziak, 2020). However, to effectively support the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of higher education institution students, it is critical to intentionally integrate systems such as education, health, and mental health within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework (Eber, Barrett, Perales, Jeffrey-Pearsall, Pohlman, Putnam, Splett, & Weist, 2019).

Resources to address child and student mental health needs vary across schools, programmes, and districts, often focus on crisis management, and rest heavily on reactive responses to individual student issues rather than a comprehensive system of support (Geiser, Fehrer, Pyne, Gerstein, Harrison, Joshi, & Stanford University, 2019). One major way this can be addressed by the higher education institutions (university) is through guidance and counselling. It has been found that character formation could be achieved through intense formal and informal programmes for guidance and counselling. It is through guidance and counselling that students remain disciplined, maintain sound mind and stay focused in life. Collins (2012) in his empirical study aptly submitted that through proper management of counselling support services, students are assisted to be disciplined and become able to deal with challenges and realities they face in their academic, social and physical environment, even in a predominantly local area. Additionally, in the view of Okolie, Nwajiuba, Binuomote, Osuji, Onajite and Igwe (2020), career advice, guidance and counselling services and programmes in higher educational institutions foster students' career development, aspiration, and choice. However, Okolie *et al.* (2020), in their study, found that no career advice, guidance and counselling services and programmes for students were practiced in higher educational institutions, especially in the technical, vocational education and training system.

This review categorically reveals that students have a lot of emotional challenges which have effect on their social, physical and mental well-beings. For the students to continue with their studies in the chosen higher education institutions, the authority of the institution should at the early stage of the student's admission and periodically during their expected years of engagement carry out medical exercises to identify those experiencing mental health programmes for immediate remedial provisions and promote effective guidance and counselling programmes or services.

Statement of the problem

The number of persons seeking for higher education is increasing every year in Nigeria. When admitted, these individuals come into the higher institutions, especially the university, with their diverse characteristics. In assessing student characteristics, it is proposed to include the main feature of student identity: gender; age; employment or unemployment; disposable income; educational background; geographical situation; special needs; language; ethnic and cultural characteristics; communication technology connectedness (Arifin, 2018). Deficiency in any of these student identities seldom caused social isolation and emotional difficulties among students which, in turn, lead to poor students' academic performance, dissatisfaction and lack of perseverance in their programmes. The more universities are able to invest in a wide range of services the better they will be able to meet the needs of student development and learning, among other things, in order to maintain a high index of student satisfaction and to reduce the level of university dropout rate.

According to Lee and Choi in Arifin (2018), student traits (attributes, experience, abilities and psychological characteristics) and external conditions (family members, peers and professionals) are three important aspects that lead to student retention or perseverance. As a consequence of this, establishments of higher learning such as the University should consider all of its human and institutional capacities to be an integral component of the support services they provide. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the relationship between learning community services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South zone of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between learning community services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Examine the relationship between human resource support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.
2. Find out the relationship between emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. To what extent does human resource support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does emotional support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between human resource support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Methodology

The correlational design was used as the research design for the study. The population of the study comprised 370,119 students in the sixteen (16) Public Universities (7 Federal and 9 State) for 2020/2021 academic session in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. (Source: University Data Management System (Portal), Academic Planning Unit of the universities under study, 2021 and website of National Universities Commission, 2022). The sample consisted of 434 students obtained using Taro Yamane's formula. The purposive sampling technique was used to select one Federal and one State Public University that has existed not less than ten (10) years from each State of the South-South zone. Simple random sampling technique was further adopted to select one University where there is more than one Public Federal or State University in any of the States respectively, and also for selection of the faculties and departments. Twelve (12) Universities out of the sixteen (16) Public Universities as well as eight faculties and 48 departments were selected. In order to have a fair representation of the sampled Universities, the proportionate simple random sampling technique was used to select 11% of the students for the study from each of the sampled faculties and departments, resulting in 432 students. A self structured research instruments titled: "Learning Community Services (LCSQ) and Students' Perseverance Questionnaire (SPQ)" were developed for data collection and formulated on a four-point modified Likert rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points; High Extent (HE) = 3 points; Low Extent (LE) = 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE), 1 point respectively. The learning community services questionnaire (LCSQ) had two sections; sections A and B. Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while section B comprised 15-item questionnaire statements relating to the two (2) research questions. The face and content validity of the instruments were validated by three experts in the field of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The corrections made up the final draft of the questionnaire. One hundred and twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to 120 students third year regular undergraduate students (60 from each of the two public universities), one federal and one state, in Abia and Ekiti states which were not part of the geo-political zone selected for the study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The reliability coefficients for the two (2) clusters of Learning Community Services Questionnaire were 0.85 and 0.88 respectively, and for Students' Continual Enrolment Questionnaire was 0.85. The four hundred and thirty-four (434) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the students in each of sixteen (16) selected public universities in South-South Zone of Nigeria while 402 (202 from male and 200 from female) copies of the questionnaire were fully filled and retrieved for data analysis. The research questions raised were answered using means and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the associated t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Mean score of 2.50 and above was considered as high extent while mean below 2.50 indicated low extent. Also, the null hypotheses whose calculated value is greater than the r critical value of 0.098 was rejected while the calculated value is less than the r critical value of 0.098 was accepted.

Results

Answer to the Research Questions

Research question 1: To what extent does human resource support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Human Resource Support Services and Students' Perseverance in Public Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria

S/N	Human Resource Services item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Faculty using teaching methods and learning activities that promote effective students' learning enhance students' persistence in course of study.	149 (596)	156 (468)	61 (122)	36 (36)	402 (1222)	3.04	0.94	HE
2	Faculty catering for student's individual learning needs support students' perseverance.	178 (534)	168 (504)	48 (96)	8 (8)	402 (1142)	3.28	0.75	HE
3	Faculty setting assessment tasks related to the learning outcomes encourage students' perseverance.	213 (852)	143 (429)	28 (56)	18 (18)	402 (1355)	3.37	0.80	HE
4	Faculty providing timely and helpful feedbacks about the result of student's assessment encourages students' persistence in programmes.	173 (692)	168 (504)	48 (96)	13 (13)	402 (1305)	3.25	0.79	HE

5	Personnel staff rendering quality information technology services to students promotes students' perseverance in course of study.	171 (684)	163 (489)	58 (116)	10 (10)	402 (1299)	3.23	0.79	HE
6	Personnel staff assisting students with quality health services promotes students' perseverance.	188 (752)	158 (474)	51 (102)	5 (5)	402 (1333)	3.32	0.74	HE
7	Student accessibility to enrolment staff, counsellors and general enquiries staff enhances students' perseverance.	208 (832)	146 (438)	24 (48)	24 (24)	402 (1342)	3.34	0.84	HE
8	Quality teacher-student interaction encourages students to persist in their institution of study.	213 (852)	135 (405)	41 (82)	13 (13)	402 (1352)	3.36	0.79	HE
9	Easy access to university's messengers such as email and social networks for quality student-student interactions on course content encourages students to complete studies in their chosen institution.	48 (192)	111 (333)	203 (406)	40 (40)	402 (971)	2.42	0.83	LE
Grand Mean		171 (665)	150 (449)	62 (125)	19 (19)	402 (1258)	3.18		HE

The result in Table 1 shows that the grand mean score of 3.20 of all the item-mean scores (3.04, 3.28, 3.37, 3.25, 3.23, 3.32, 3.34, 3.36 and 2.42) is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 revealing that the respondents agree that human support services relate to students' perseverance to a high extent. This reveals that provision of quality human support services would promote students' perseverance in public Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Research question 2: To what extent does emotional support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Emotional Support Services and Students' Perseverance in Public Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria

S/N	Emotional Services item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
10	Adequate attention to students' psychological issues and rendering auxiliary system based on their needs enhance students' perseverance.	98 (392)	169 (507)	70 (140)	65 (65)	402 (1104)	2.75	1.00	HE
11	Activities that increase students' confidence and support for gender issues and behavioural improvement support students' perseverance.	149 (596)	139 (417)	78 (156)	36 (36)	402 (1205)	3.00	0.96	HE
12	Availability of quality career counselling services to enable a student finds solution to academic problems promotes students' perseverance.	142 (568)	177 (531)	40 (80)	43 (43)	402 (1222)	3.04	0.94	HE
13	Introductory course to promote student's knowledge of his/her course support students' perseverance.	98 (392)	176 (528)	120 (240)	8 (8)	402 (1168)	2.91	0.78	HE
14	Ideal attention to social class differences among students enhances students' perseverance.	113 (452)	164 (492)	93 (186)	32 (32)	402 (1162)	2.89	0.91	HE
15	Proper attention to life skills development programmes for students that ensure job opportunity on graduation encourages students' perseverance.	113 (452)	164 (492)	93 (186)	32 (32)	402 (1356)	3.37	0.70	HE
Grand Mean		132 (529)	166 (498)	72 (144)	32 (32)	402 (1203)	2.99		HE

The result in Table 2 shows that the grand mean score of 2.99 of all the item-mean scores (2.75, 3.00, 3.04, 2.91, 2.89, and 3.37) is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 revealing that the respondents agree that emotional support services relate to students' perseverance to a high extent. This implies that provision of quality emotional support services would enhance students' perseverance in public Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between human resource support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Summary Analysis of the Relationship between Human Resource Support Services and Students' Perseverance in Public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Variable	N	$\sum x$	$\sum (x - \bar{x})^2$	$\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})$	df	α	r_{cal}	r_{crit}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	Decision
Human Services(X)	402	2862	2123.40								
				1930.69	400	0.05	0.92	0.098	46.95	1.96	Sign. Rejected
Students' Perseverance(Y)	402	3030	2086.94								

Result from Table 3 disclosed that the sum and sum of square for human support services are 2862 and 2123.40 while that of students' perseverance are 3030 and 2086.94 respectively. The sum of product of scores on the two variables (human support services and students' perseverance) is 1930.69. The correlation coefficient is 0.92 which is greater than the critical value of r (0.098) at 400 degree of freedom under 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between human support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria is rejected. The t-value testing the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient r between the two variables presented in table 3 was (46.95 > 1.96, P < 0.05). This reveals that there is a positive relationship between human support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Summary Analysis of the Relationship between Emotional Support Services and Students' Perseverance in Public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Variable	N	$\sum x$	$\sum (x - \bar{x})^2$	$\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})$	df	α	r_{cal}	r_{crit}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	Decision
Emotional Services(X)	402	2900	1992.10								
				1879.29	400	0.05	0.92	0.098	46.95	1.96	Sign. Rejected
Students' Perseverance(Y)	402	3030	2086.94								

Result from Table 4 revealed that the sum and sum of square for emotional support services are 2900 and 1992.10 while that of students' perseverance are 3030 and 2086.94 respectively. The sum of product of scores on the two variables (emotional support services and students' perseverance) is 1879.29. The correlation coefficient is 0.92 which is greater than the critical value of r (0.098) at 400 degree of freedom under 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria is rejected. The t-value testing the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient r between the two variables presented in table 4 was (46.95 > 1.96, P < 0.05). This indicates that there is a positive relationship between emotional support services and students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The results from Tables 1 and 3 showed how human resource support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. The finding of the study reveals that faculty using teaching methods and learning activities that promote effective students' learning, catering for student's individual learning needs, setting assessment tasks related to the learning outcomes, providing timely and helpful feedbacks about the result of student's assessment, personnel staff rendering quality information technology services to students, assisting students with quality health services, student being accessible to enrolment staff, counsellors and general enquiries staff, and existence of quality teacher-student interaction encourage students to persist in their institution of study. The finding of this study is in line with that of Sarita *et al.* (2015) that revealed the calibre of teachers has tremendous impact on the calibre of the students, hence; teacher should take initiative to nurture and nourish the students to develop lateral thinking as it enables

students to master their discipline, performance academically better and continue in their courses. Also, the finding of this study is in support of that of Cook *et al.* (2018) who found that school support staff (personnel) members such as guidance counsellors, school resource officers, nurses, social workers, and special education aides play critical roles in helping students acquire the resources they need to achieve academically. The result of this study is in corroboration with the work of Keaton *et al.* (2020) as they found that the interactions that teachers have with their students enable them to clearly evaluate and break down the teaching, social and cognitive presence variables which assist students to benefit from teacher interaction in their courses which also creates a feeling of connection and to make class more enjoyable, both of which could increase engagement. This implies that an increase in student engagement in a course could have a positive effect on their overall success in the course and continuity in programmes of choice.

The results from Tables 2 and 4 revealed how emotional support services relate to students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. The finding of the study depicts that adequate attention to students' psychological issues and rendering auxiliary system based on the needs of students, activities that increase student confidence and support for gender issues and behavioural improvement, availability of quality career counselling services, introductory course to promote student's knowledge of their course, paying attention to social class differences among students, and proper attention to life skills development programmes for students cause students to remain in their chosen programmes and higher education institutions. The finding of this study agrees with the position of Eber *et al.* (2019) as submitted that to effectively support the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of higher education institution students, it is critical to intentionally integrate systems such as education, health, and mental health within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. They however observed that mental health promotion is a critical part of education, but schools and programmes struggle with how to establish a comprehensive system of mental health support. In addition, the result of this study is in line with the view of Okolie *et al.* (2020), who found that career advice, guidance and counselling services and programmes in higher educational institutions foster students' career development, aspiration, and choice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that learning community services enhances students' perseverance in public universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. Hence, its aspects such as human resource support services and emotional support services relate to students' perseverance positively and to a high extent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers and personnel staff should endeavour to provide meaningful human support services that would enhance students' perseverance. Address student's individual learning needs, rendering quality information technology and health services, students having unhindered access to enrolment staff and general enquiries staff as well as quality teacher-student interaction can incorporate the students into the university's cycle life.
2. The students should be sensitized and enlightened by the student's affairs personnel on the need to seek for emotional support services in the universities such as guidance and counseling and life skill development programmes with a view to taking care of their psychological issues which may affect their continual schooling.

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