

# Deconstructing Tertiary Institution Students' Absenteeism to Complex-course Lectures in Nigeria: A Study of Mass Communication Students of Edo State University Uzairue

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| Article History  | Abstract  |
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| Original Research Article  | <p><i>The study aimed to evaluate tertiary institution students' absenteeism to complex-course lectures in Nigeria using students from the Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University. The study was predicated on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOIT). The objectives included ascertaining of the extent of Mass Communication students' knowledgeability of complex-course teaching, whether students absent from complex-course teaching lecture and the challenges student face while attending complex-course teaching class, as well as to evaluate the reasons behind student Absenteeism from complex-course teaching. Survey research design was employed, while a questionnaire was utilized to elicit responses from 128 students chosen via census. Results showed that the extent of knowledge of complex-course teaching by the Mass Communication students of Edo State University is high. The implication of the above is that students are aware of, and can decipher what constitute complex-course teaching. Further, the findings indicate, amongst others, that more than half of the students (60%) do not absent themselves from the class, because of a complex-course. The implication of the above is that the majority of the students of Mass Communication of Edo State University do not absent from complex course lectures. Given the above, the study recommends that the University should take adequate steps to curb the challenges identified and the reasons behind students' absenteeism from complex course teaching, as well as undertake a comprehensive and sustained review of attendance to lectures in order to properly understand the extent of the problem. It is further recommended that lecturers should engage in a one-on-one discussion with students, in order to identify other innate causes that propel absenteeism to complex courses.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Deconstructing, Tertiary Institution, Students, Absenteeism, Complex-course, Lectures.</p> |
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## 1. Introduction

Education is not merely the delivery of knowledge, skills and information from teachers to students, but to become educated. Scholars agree that being educated means access to optimal states of mind regardless of a current situation, as well as the ability to perceive accurately, think clearly and act effectively to achieve self-selected goals and aspirations. It has been agreed that formal schooling is one of the most important ways educations can take place and that visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles are the three

main learning styles. The visual learning style entails the use of visual objects such as graphs, charts, pictures, and seeing information – this tends to extend the ability to memorise, recall various information, amongst others, the auditory learning style retains information through hearing and speaking, while the kinesthetic learning style uses the hands-on approach to learn new material (Wong, 2006).

Given the above, education and learning require regular attendance in classes, as well as participation. School

attendance is a daily or regular participation in learning activities in a school environment. According to the UNESCO report of 2018, absenteeism, particularly, student absenteeism, is a major school problem and a drain in human capital development that requires urgent attention given its magnitude. Absenteeism in school is the habit of staying away from classes with or without genuine reason (Wikipedia, 2011). Scholars agree that absenteeism is a truant-behaviour that negatively affects student's performance. It is also defined as excused or unexcused absence from school (Dictionary.Com, 2011). It could be linked to many issues, such as health, behaviors, and social factors, amongst others. It could also be caused by the types of courses taught in the school. The jury is still out as to whether or not courses considered as complex courses aid absenteeism in school.

Absenteeism is viewed as habitual absence from work or habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation (Yahaya et al, 2010). Available data indicate that student's absenteeism to class is a general phenomenon. In extreme cases, scholars believe that absence to lectures (class) could hamper the students' ability to acquire knowledge. Several scholars, on the other hand, assert that some of the factors that drive students to absent from lectures include teaching patterns, course type, complex-course, environment, amongst others, and that all these affect the Nigerian education sector. These have also been identified by scholars as a leading cause of poor performance in academics. Scholars asserts that poor management of the above issues could lead to students' frequent absence to school, as well as to hold the view that school is boring and chaotic. Available evidence has shown that students are likely to absent from class when a complex-course/area is to be taught in class.

Scholars agree that absenteeism, as well as absence to class has untoward consequences for the students and the society. Eastman, Cooney, Connor, Small (2007) note in agreement that students who absent from classes have limited opportunities for learning. It has been established that a variety of factors contribute to the reasons for students' absence to classes. Strand and Cedersund (2013) quip that the challenge of changing absenteeism rates, developing meaningful programs are often as challenging as the problem itself. They further assert that educators need to listen to the students with the bid to finding solution to absenteeism. Given scholars' views on students' absenteeism and its effects on the society, it is important to study what propels or lures students to absence to classroom teaching.

Scholars agree that attendance and participation of students in classroom learning activities in school contribute to academic excellence. Several studies, as well, have

indicated that improved or high attendance to classes is related to higher academic achievement. It also indicates that chronic truancy (frequent unexcused absence) is a strong predictor of undesirable outcomes in students, such as academic failure, dropping out of school, substance abuse, and involvement in criminal activities, amongst others. It should also be noted that family issues, health or financial concerns, transportation issues, drug and alcohol use, community attitudes towards education, amongst others, are some of the factors that contribute to student absenteeism. However, in spite of the above, some scholars have indicated that courses considered as complex by students are likely to cause or contribute to students' absence to school. It is in the light of the above, that this study seeks to ascertain, whether or not complex courses contribute or propel students of the Department of Mass Communication of Edo State University Uzairue to absent from school. In other word, whether or not students of the Department of Mass Communication of Edo State University Uzairue absent from classes because of courses considered as complex courses.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Available evidence indicates that some students do not attend classes when they perceive that a complex-course/area is to be taught in class. Morgan (2001) identified students' poor attendance to lectures as an area for concern that requires urgent attention. He further identified several prisms through which absence to lecture can be viewed - Ability to attend lectures, motivation to attend lectures and the factors that could influence decision to or not-to attend lectures - which could be the resultant effect of students' fear for complex-courses. However, there are various reasons why students do not attend complex-course lecture, which include; peer pressure, lecturers teaching strategy, environmental condition, dislike for the course, amongst others (Marburger, 2001). This trend is however dangerous to the performance of students in universities given that students' success is tied to their presence and participation in classes. Statistics however, shows that the level of students absenting themselves from complex-course is high, but it is uncertain whether or not this data reflects the situation in Edo State University Uzairue, particularly, students of Department of Mass Communication.

## 3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Ascertain the extent of Mass Communication students' knowledge of complex-course teaching
2. Find out whether students absent from complex-course teaching lecture

3. Assess the Challenges Students face while attending Complex-course teaching class
4. Evaluate the reasons behind Student Absenteeism from Complex-course Teaching

#### 4. Research Questions

1. What is the extent of students' knowledge of complex-course teaching?
2. Do students absent from complex-course teaching lecture?
3. What are the Challenges Students face while attending Complex-course Teaching class?
4. What are the reasons behind Student Absenteeism from Complex-course Teaching

#### Theoretical Framework

The study is predicated on Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOIT), developed by Everett M. Rogers in 1983. The DOIT explains the process through which an innovation is communicated through channels, over-time, to the members of a social system. In other words, it explains how a new idea or innovation is diffused or consumed by the members of the society. It also measures the extent of consumption and diffusion of new idea or innovation in the society. The theory also identified five adopters of a product namely; early adopters – awareness, first people to find and innovate the idea; the early majority –interest, first people to have interest and buy the product after the early adopters; late majority – evaluators, people who find reviews before buying the product; laggards – people who wait after everyone has bought before buying.

Similarly, Rogers identified five characteristics that speed-up the rate of adoption of innovations - (i) Relative advantage, (ii) Compatibility, (iii) Complexity, (iv)

Trialability and (v) Observability, and concluded that innovations offering more relative advantage, compatibility, simplicity, trialability and observability will be adopted faster than other innovations. Given the above, the researchers posit that complexity in any innovations affects adaptability. This implies that the tools utilised to teach complex courses are also important and could play a major role in the students' attitude to complex course lectures. This theory is germane to the study in this regard.

#### 5. Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. According to the University record, the population of Mass Communication students of Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State, Nigeria, stood at 128. The study adopted census sampling technique, hence a sample size of 128 was utilised for the study. The questionnaires were administered on the respondents utilising Convenience and Snowball Sampling Techniques, which helped the researcher to track the students considering their busy academic schedules. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and Weighted Mean Score (WMS). On WMS, scores above 3.0 are considered as Positive or High, scores on 3.0 reflect Undecided, whilst below 3.0 are seen as Negative or Low. Also, the analysed data were presented on tables for legibility.

#### 6. Data presentation, Analysis and Discussion of findings

**Research Question One:** What is the extent of knowledge of complex-course teaching by students of Mass Communication Department of Edo State University Uzairue (EDSU)?

*Table 1: Extent of knowledge of complex-course teaching by students of Mass Communication Department, EDSU*

| OPTIONS          | RESPONDENTS | WEIGHTED   | WMS        | RESPONSE RESULT | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Very high extent | 60          | 300        |            |                 | 47         |
| High Extent      | 50          | 200        |            |                 | 39         |
| Undecided        | 18          | 54         |            |                 | 14         |
| Low Extent       | -           | -          |            |                 | -          |
| Very Low Extent  | --          | -          |            |                 | -          |
|                  | <b>128</b>  | <b>554</b> | <b>4.3</b> | <b>HIGH</b>     | <b>100</b> |

The table shows that the extent of knowledge of complex-course teaching by the Mass Communication students of Edo State University is high. In other words, the weighted means score is high and above 3 points. The implication of

the above is that students are aware of, and can decipher what constitute complex-course teaching.

Ascertain the extent of students' knowledge of complex-course teaching

How vast is your knowledge on complex-course teaching?  
84 responses

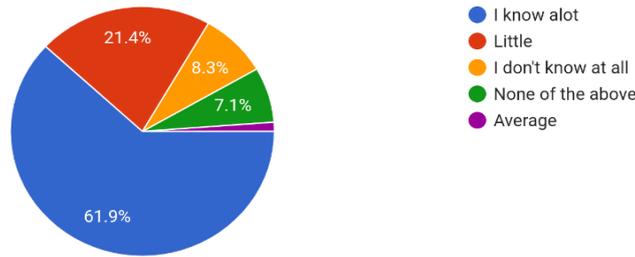


Figure 1: Extent of student knowledge on complex-course teaching

Figure 1 shows that more than half of the students (61.9%) know a lot about complex course teaching compared to those who have little knowledge about complex-course teaching (21.4%). Further, the percentage rate for those who do not know at all are small (8.3%) compared to those who have knowledge about it. The implication of the above

is that the extent of the students' knowledge of complex course teaching is high.

### Research Question 2

Do students absent from Complex-course teaching Lecture?

Have you been absent from class because of a complex-course?  
85 responses

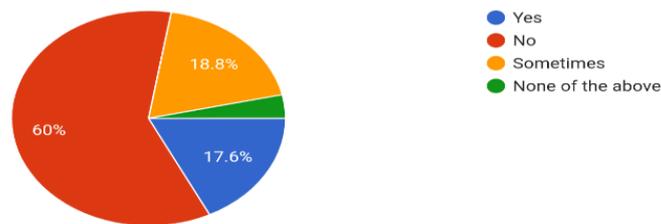


Figure 2: Rate at which students are absent from complex-course lecture

Figure 2 shows that 17.6% students absent themselves from complex-course teaching, while more than half of the students (60%) do not absent themselves from the class, because of a complex-course, and (18.8%) students sometimes skip classes because of complex-course lecture. The implication of the above is that the majority of the students of Mass Communication of Edo State University do not absent from complex course lectures. This shows that only a tiny fraction of the students absented from

lectures because the course or courses are complex. This outcome is at variance with the data utilized in the literature review of this study, which indicated a high result for absence to complex course lectures.

### Research Question 3

What are the Challenges Students face while attending Complex-course Teaching class?

What are the problems you faced while attending complex-course lecture?  
85 responses

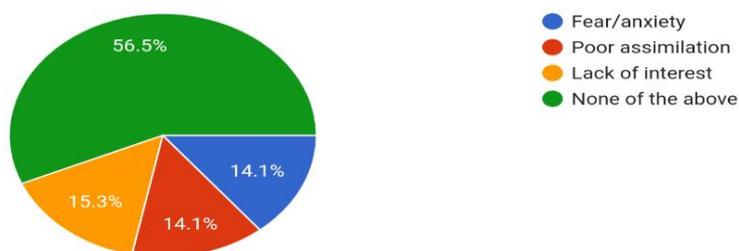


Figure 3: Challenges faced by students while attending complex-course lecture

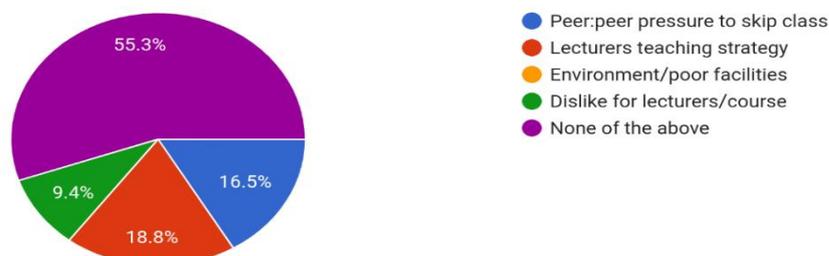
This figure shows that 14.1% of the students exhibit fear/anxiety, another 14.1% of the students exhibit poor assimilation during complex-course teaching, and 15.3% of the students exhibit lacks of interest for complex-course, while the majority of the students (56,5%) indicated no challenges attending complex-course lecture. The implication of the above results is that 43.5% of the

respondents (students) faced challenges whilst attending complex course lectures, even though the majority of the students did not indicate any challenges.

#### Research Question 4

What are the reasons behind Student Absenteeism from Complex-course Teaching?

What are your reasons for being absent from complex-course lecture?  
85 responses



Data in figure 4 showed that 16.5% of students are absent during complex-course lecture because of pressure to skip class. 18.8% are absent because of lecturers teaching strategy, 9.4% are absent due to dislike for lecture and the course. Data also indicates that majority of the students (55.3%) students did not identify reasons behind students' absenteeism from complex course teaching. The implication of the above is that reasons exist behind students' absenteeism from complex course teaching, despite the fact that majority of the students stated otherwise.

### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the extent of the Mass Communication students' knowledge of complex course teaching is high and that majority of the students did not absent from complex course teaching. The study also concludes that 43.5% of the respondents (students) faced challenges, whilst attending complex course lectures, even though the majority of the students did not indicate any challenges. Further, the study concludes that reasons exist behind students' absenteeism from complex course teaching, despite the fact that majority of the students stated otherwise. Given the above, the study recommends that the University takes adequate steps to curb the challenges identified and reasons behind students' absenteeism from complex course teaching, as well as undertake a comprehensive and sustained review of attendance to lectures in order to properly understand the extent of the problem. It is further recommended that lecturers should engage in a one-on-one discussion with students, in order to identify other innate causes that propel absenteeism to complex courses.

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