

## Students' Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Automated Admission Services in Nigerian Private Universities: A Qualitative Evidence from Al-Hikmah University

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the students' perceived benefits and challenges of automated admission services at Al-Hikmah University, with a specific focus on understanding the impact of digital literacy and technical reliability on the user experience. Automated admission systems have become an essential tool in streamlining university admissions, offering a more efficient and transparent process compared to traditional methods. However, challenges related to digital literacy, internet accessibility, and system reliability persist, particularly in rural areas, where infrastructure and technological exposure are limited. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of Al-Hikmah University's automated admission system, focusing on students' perceptions of its functionality, reliability, and overall usability. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews with students who have engaged with the automated admission system. The study examined their experiences, perceptions, and challenges, with specific attention to issues related to system performance during peak periods, mobile accessibility, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. The data analysis was informed by thematic coding, which revealed key themes including the ease of use, system reliability, and the digital divide. Findings from the study indicate that while students acknowledge the overall efficiency and organizational structure of the system, significant challenges remain. Many students highlighted the system's reliability issues, particularly during peak admission periods, when slow processing times and system crashes hindered the timely submission of applications. Students with limited digital literacy faced difficulties navigating the system, suggesting a need for additional support, such as step-by-step tutorials and a more intuitive user interface. Moreover, poor internet connectivity in rural areas further exacerbated these issues, with students having to seek external assistance from ICT centers. The study underscores the importance of addressing the digital divide, particularly in rural areas, by improving infrastructure and offering support services to assist students with limited technological skills. Additionally, optimizing the system for mobile use, improving reliability during peak times, and providing clear, accessible instructions are crucial for enhancing the user experience. While the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University has made significant strides in improving the admission process, further refinements are needed to ensure that all students, regardless of their digital literacy or location, can fully benefit from its features. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on the implementation and optimization of automated systems in higher education, particularly in the context of Nigerian universities, where technology adoption remains uneven across regions.*

**Keywords:** Automated Admission Services, Digital Literacy, System Efficiency, Higher Education, Student Experience, Private Universities, Nigeria

### Introduction

Technology has significantly reshaped university administration globally, with student

admissions being one of the most impacted domains (George & Wooden, 2023). In advanced nations such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, higher education institutions have widely adopted digital platforms to streamline application procedures. These systems allow prospective students to complete applications online, upload necessary documents, track the progress of their submissions, and receive timely feedback (Rutvik et al., 2024). Among the key benefits of such automation are reduced processing delays, minimized administrative errors, enhanced institutional accountability, and improved communication between applicants and university personnel. As digital integration deepens, institutional focus is increasingly shifting toward ensuring that these tools are secure, intuitive, and responsive to the needs of their primary users; students.

This global movement toward digitization has extended to Africa, where universities in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana are increasingly leveraging technology to address rising enrollments and streamline administrative demands. Nigeria reflects similar trends, as universities respond to the growing pressures of serving an expanding youth population. Historically, the Nigerian university admission process has been predominantly manual, involving the purchase of physical forms, submission of hard-copy documents, and prolonged waiting periods for admission decisions. These outdated procedures were often time-consuming and vulnerable to human error and inefficiency (Bali et al., 2024). To mitigate these issues, many Nigerian universities, especially private ones, are transitioning to automated admission systems. Compared to public institutions, private universities often demonstrate greater agility in embracing technological change, as they are less encumbered by bureaucratic structures and funding limitations. For these institutions, automation offers a competitive edge, enhancing service delivery, increasing applicant volume, and improving institutional reputation. Through automated platforms, applicants can now submit forms, upload required documents, receive instant notifications, and track application progress without physically visiting the campus.

Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin, Kwara State, serves as a notable example of this shift toward automation in the Nigerian private higher education sector. As a faith-based institution committed to delivering quality education within a morally grounded framework, Al-Hikmah University has implemented an automated admission system designed to simplify the application process. The system supports online submissions, real-time status tracking, and prompt feedback, thereby reducing procedural bottlenecks and enhancing the applicant experience (Nettey&Owusu, 2025). Beyond operational efficiency, the system aims to promote transparency and inclusivity, two values essential in a competitive academic environment. However, despite the recognized advantages, the deployment of automated systems is not without challenges. Students have reported difficulties such as platform glitches, slow response times, and a lack of real-time support in resolving issues (Fujo, Katwale&Dida, 2024). These setbacks can be particularly burdensome for students from rural or underserved regions, who may have limited internet access or lack the necessary digital literacy. Concerns around data privacy and the impersonal nature of automated processes also discourage some students from fully engaging with these systems. While universities implement these tools with the aim of modernization and improved service delivery, a gap often remains in understanding how students actually experience and navigate these platforms; an insight that is vital for continuous improvement (Downie et al., 2021).

At Al-Hikmah University, although the automated admission system has streamlined the process for many, others continue to face considerable challenges. While some students value the speed,

convenience, and transparency the system offers, others express frustration with technical issues or the absence of human support, which they found more accessible in the manual system. These varied experiences raise critical questions about the system's inclusiveness, functionality, and user-centeredness. Without thoroughly understanding students' perspectives, institutions risk adopting systems that fall short of meeting their users' expectations (Zhou, Zhang & Chan, 2024). Consequently, this study seeks to explore the perceived benefits and challenges of the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University, with the goal of informing more effective and equitable technology implementation in higher education.

Automated admission services involve the deployment of digital platforms to streamline student applications, document submission, processing, and communication between institutions and applicants. These systems reduce paperwork and facilitate real-time updates through features such as online forms, document uploads, automated notifications, and secure payment processing. They are categorized into fully automated and semi-automated types, depending on the level of human intervention (Rutvik, 2024). The integration of such systems has significantly improved accessibility and user experience in higher education admission processes. Traditionally, Nigerian university admissions were conducted manually, resulting in inefficiencies and delays (Esomonu, 2025). The rise of information and communication technology (ICT) has shifted this landscape, especially in private institutions like Al-Hikmah University, Covenant University, and AfeBabalola University, which have adopted automation to enhance administrative efficiency and expand their reach. Public universities, however, lag behind due to bureaucratic limitations and inadequate infrastructure (Hassan, 2025). This transition mirrors global trends in the digital transformation of higher education. Technology plays a central role in transforming admissions by improving communication, enhancing data accuracy, and reducing administrative burdens. Automated systems reduce human error and improve transparency by providing applicants with real-time updates (Han et al., 2024). Moreover, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning further strengthens decision-making by predicting student outcomes. However, rural areas continue to face persistent access challenges due to poor internet connectivity.

Several theoretical frameworks underpin the understanding of automated admissions. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), explains user acceptance through constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), highlights perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key drivers of technology adoption. The Task-Technology Fit (TTF) Theory by Goodhue and Thompson (1995) asserts that the success of technology adoption depends on how well the technology supports users' tasks. Additionally, the Digital Divide Theory (van Dijk, 2005) emphasizes socio-economic disparities, digital literacy, and geographic factors as significant barriers to equitable technology access. Empirical studies affirm the benefits of automation. Mohamed et al. (2022) found that automation reduces processing time and errors. Aly (2024) noted that real-time communication and transparency improve user experiences. Furthermore, automation fosters inclusivity by enabling students in remote locations to apply without traveling long distances. The integration of digital platforms with institutional databases enhances efficiency by minimizing redundancy. Private universities are particularly advantaged, benefiting from stronger infrastructure and better institutional support. Esomonu (2025) observed that students in private universities reported higher satisfaction levels than those in

public institutions.

Despite these benefits, challenges persist. Tangkudun et al. (2024) identified system downtimes and response delays as common complaints among users. Limited digital literacy, especially among rural students, remains a critical barrier. Concerns over data privacy and cybersecurity also affect user trust. Singun (2025) warned that inadequate technical support and weak system maintenance can undermine the effectiveness of automation. Additionally, university administrators face financial burdens in maintaining these systems, particularly in underfunded institutions. Students' experiences vary based on technological exposure and support. Cho and Ofosu-Anim (2024) found that tech-savvy students had more positive experiences, while those with limited digital skills struggled to navigate the systems. Hasnine (2023) reported frustrations among students due to poor user interface design and the lack of real-time assistance, despite overall satisfaction with the convenience of online access. From the administrative perspective, Chukwuemeka-Nworu, Chukwuji, and Thompson (2024) acknowledged that automation reduced workloads but noted challenges such as software issues and inadequate staff training. Overall, while automated admission systems have positively transformed university admissions through enhanced efficiency, transparency, and accessibility, gaps in infrastructure, training, and equity remain significant concerns.

### **Research Questions**

- 1, How do students perceive the effectiveness of automated admission services at Al-Hikmah University?
- 2, How does students' level of digital literacy affect their experience with the automated admission process?
3. What challenges do students encounter when using the automated admission system?
4. What improvements do students suggest for enhancing the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopts a phenomenological research design, which is particularly appropriate for examining individuals' lived experiences of a specific phenomenon. As a qualitative methodology, phenomenology seeks to uncover how individuals perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to their personal experiences. Rather than relying on quantitative metrics or detached observations, this approach foregrounds the voices of participants, encouraging them to express their feelings, insights, and interpretations in their own words. Given the study's focus on students' interactions with the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University, phenomenology provides an ideal framework for exploring their unique and varied experiences.

One of the core strengths of the phenomenological design lies in its ability to elicit deep, subjective meanings from participants' narratives. In the context of this research, the approach enables a thorough exploration of how students engage with the automated admission process, revealing both the ease and difficulties they may encounter. For example, while some students might perceive the system as efficient and intuitive, others may report challenges related to technical barriers, limited digital literacy, or accessibility issues. By allowing each student to share their experience in their own terms, the study gains a rich and nuanced understanding of how the system functions in practice.

This design also supports the identification of common patterns and recurring themes within students' responses. The use of semi-structured interviews enables the collection of detailed accounts while providing the flexibility to probe further into specific areas of interest. This iterative process helps to uncover trends related to system usability, the availability of technical support, and differences in experience across academic levels or faculties. These patterns contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and inclusivity of the automated admission system. Beyond technical assessment, the phenomenological design emphasizes the human dimension of technology adoption. While automation is often evaluated in terms of efficiency and operational performance, this study prioritizes the user experience. By centering students' voices, the research ensures that their perspectives play a vital role in assessing the success and responsiveness of the university's automated admission services.

### Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consists of all students of Al-Hikmah University who have used the automated admission service, ensuring that participants have relevant experience with the platform. This focus allows for a deeper exploration of their interactions, challenges, and perceptions. Three sampling techniques were used to select participants for the study: stratified, purposive, and convenience sampling. First, the stratified technique was used to classify students according to their faculties. Secondly, purposive sampling was employed to select 35 students from different faculties. This method ensures that only individuals with direct experience of the admission process are included, allowing for meaningful insights. The diversity of participants helps capture varying perspectives, making the findings more comprehensive. Engaging students with firsthand experience, the study aims to identify key strengths and weaknesses of the service, contributing to potential improvements in the admission process. Lastly, the convenience technique was applied to select undergraduate students, who are the primary target group for the study.

**Table 1: Selection of participants using Stratified, Purposive and Convenience Techniques**

S/N	Faculties	Number of Selected Students
1	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	5
2	Faculty of Management Sciences	3
3	Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences	5
4	Faculty of Education	5
5	Faculty of Law	4
6	Faculty of Health Sciences	4
7	Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Technology	4
8	Faculty of Agriculture	5
	Total	35

### Interview Protocol

The Interview Protocol for Students' Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Automated Admission Services (IPBCAAS) was designed to facilitate the systematic gathering of relevant, in-depth data to support the objectives of this study. Recognizing the qualitative nature of the research, the protocol adopts a semi-structured interview format, which allows for open-ended responses and flexible interaction between the interviewer and participants. This format not only

enables participants to freely articulate their experiences and perceptions regarding the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University, but also permits the researcher to probe for clarification or further insights when necessary. The interview protocol is structured into two key sections. The first section gathers demographic information from participants, including their faculty affiliation, level of study, and any prior experience with automated admission systems. This background information helps situate each participant's responses within a meaningful context and supports the analysis of trends across various student subgroups. The second section features open-ended questions that explore core dimensions of the students' experiences with the automated admission process. These include perceived ease of use, accessibility, system efficiency, and reliability, as well as challenges encountered. Participants are also invited to propose improvements that could enhance the effectiveness and user-friendliness of the system.

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the instrument, several validation strategies were implemented. Member checking was employed by allowing participants to review their transcribed responses to verify the accuracy of the recorded data. This approach promotes the authenticity of the findings and helps reduce the risk of misrepresentation. In addition, data triangulation was conducted by selecting students from diverse faculties and academic levels, allowing for a broader representation of perspectives and minimizing potential bias. Peer debriefing sessions with research colleagues and academic supervisors further strengthened the protocol by providing critical feedback on the clarity and objectivity of the interview items. A pilot study was also conducted involving a small group of students who were excluded from the final sample. The pilot exercise aimed to assess the clarity, relevance, and interpretability of the interview questions. Based on the feedback, necessary adjustments were made to refine ambiguous or repetitive items. All main study interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and subsequently transcribed for thematic analysis. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the process, including full disclosure of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage.

### **Method of Data Collection**

For the study on the automation of admission services, interviews were conducted using a variety of tools to ensure accurate data collection. These included a digital audio recorder, a digital camera, a pen, a notebook, and the interview guide. The digital audio recorder was used to capture detailed responses from participants, ensuring that no critical information was lost. The digital camera was employed to document non-verbal cues where necessary, while the notebook and pen were used for taking brief notes during the sessions. Before the interview sessions, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were provided with details about the study's purpose, their rights as respondents, and assurances of confidentiality. This step was crucial in ensuring ethical compliance and voluntary participation. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions before proceeding with the interview. Each interview session lasted a minimum of 25 minutes and a maximum of 30 minutes, allowing sufficient time for participants to express their views comprehensively. The semi-structured format of the interview ensured that while key questions were consistently asked, there was also room for follow-up questions to explore significant responses in greater depth. The use of multiple data collection tools and careful ethical considerations strengthened the reliability and credibility of the study. This

approach ensured that students' perspectives on the automated admission system were accurately captured and thoroughly analyzed.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

After conducting the interviews, the recorded conversations were carefully transcribed using a headset, laptop, and notebook. The headset allowed for clear listening, ensuring that every detail of the participants' responses was accurately captured. The laptop was used for typing the transcripts, while the notebook was helpful for making additional notes on key observations and significant points. The transcription process resulted in a six-page document containing detailed responses from the participants. Following transcription, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. This method involved systematically coding the transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns. The process began with familiarization, where the transcripts were reviewed multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. Next, key responses were coded, and related codes were grouped to form broader themes. These themes were then categorized based on their relevance to the study's objectives, particularly regarding students' perceptions, challenges, and recommendations for improving the automated admission system. The thematic analysis approach allowed for a structured interpretation of the data while maintaining the richness of students' experiences. Through identifying commonalities and differences in responses, the study was able to uncover valuable insights into how students interact with the system, the difficulties they face, and their suggestions for enhancing its effectiveness. This method ensured a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the data, contributing significantly to the study's overall credibility and reliability.

### **Result**

#### **Interview Transcription and Codification**

After conducting interviews with participants, the audio recordings were transcribed, producing a total of ten pages. Subsequently, codification of the data was carried out to identify recurring patterns based on the research questions that guided the study. Coding was performed using a thematic approach, facilitating a clearer understanding of students' perceived benefits and challenges associated with automated admission services in Nigerian private universities. Codes were assigned to participants, and a general synopsis was developed to represent the overarching themes of the study.

**Table 2: Code assigned to participants**

S/N	Faculties	Code Assigned to Participants
1	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	FS1, FS2, FS3, FS4, FS5
2	Faculty of Management Sciences	FM1, FM2, FM3, FM4
3	Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences	FN1, FN2, FN3, FN4, FN5
4	Faculty of Education	FE1, FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5
5	Faculty of Law	FL1, FL2, FL3
6	Faculty of Health Sciences	FH1, FH2, FH3, FH4, FH5
7	Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Technology	FC1, FC2, FC3, FC4
8	Faculty of Agriculture	FA1, FA2, FA3, FA4, FA5

**Table 3: Synopsis of Thematic analysis off the study**

Theme One: Students' Perception of the effectiveness of Automated Admission Service
Sub-theme: 1. Functionality
2. Reliability
Theme Two: Influence of Digital Literacy on Student Experience of Automated Admission Service
Sub-theme: 1. Digitally Proficient Users' Advantage
2. Need for Training and Support
Theme Three: Challenges Encountered with the Automated Admission System
Sub-theme: 1. Network glitch
2. Technical Issues
3. Inadequate information
4. Digital divide
Theme Four: Suggested Improvements for Enhancing the Automated Admission System
Sub-theme: 1. Technical Efficiency
2. User Interface Enhancement
3. Support Services
4. Information Clarity

## Response to Research Questions

**Research Question One:** How do students perceive the effectiveness of automated admission services at Al-Hikmah University?

From the interviews conducted, students' perceptions of the automated admission system's effectiveness were categorized into two sub-themes: Functionality and Reliability.

Functionality

- **FS1 stated:**
- "The system is structured to simplify the admission process by eliminating long queues and paperwork, making it well-organized and easy to navigate. However, some students, especially those with limited digital literacy or exposure to technology, struggle with the initial steps. Occasional system errors and difficulties in correcting form submission errors can make the process frustrating at times. A step-by-step guide or tutorial would greatly help first-time users in navigating the system more efficiently."
- FL1 noted that..." for students in rural areas, internet access is a significant challenge. Despite the system being well-designed, poor connectivity makes it difficult to complete applications. Additionally, some technical terms used in the system were hard to understand, which led me to visit an ICT center for assistance".
- Reliability
- FS4 mentioned that..." the system works well most of the time, but during peak admission periods, it becomes slow and sometimes crashes. This makes it difficult for students to submit their applications on time".
- FA5 suggested that..." while automation reduces paperwork, it is not always reliable. There were times when the system failed to save my progress, forcing me to start over. A backup feature that allows students to resume their applications from where they stopped would be helpful."

### **Research Question Two: How does students' level of digital literacy affect their experience with the automated admission process?**

Students' experiences with the automated admission system formed the second major theme, with sub-themes of Digitally Proficient Users' Advantage and Need for Training and Support. Digitally Proficient Users' Advantage.

- FS1 stated that..." the system is easy to use if you have basic computer knowledge. I had no issues navigating through the process, and I could complete my application within minutes".
- FM3 added that..." having prior experience with online applications helped me complete the process without assistance. The automated system is efficient, and I liked how quickly I could check my admission status without visiting the school".
- Need for Training and Support
- FN4 explained that..." I found the system quite challenging at first. The instructions were not clear enough, and I had to rely on a cybercafé operator to complete my application."
- FH1 observed that..." some students, especially those from rural areas, struggle with the system due to a lack of digital skills. A step-by-step guide or a support center within the university would be helpful for those facing difficulties."

### **Research Question Three: What challenges do students encounter when using the automated admission system?**

Students' challenges with the automated admission system formed the third key theme, encompassing sub-themes such as Network Glitches, Technical Issues, Inadequate Information, and Digital Divide.

#### **Network Glitches**

- FS1 reported that..." there were times when the system would freeze due to poor

network, and I had to refresh multiple times before my application could go through. During peak admission periods, the system becomes unresponsive, making it difficult to complete applications on time."

- FE4 shared that..."I struggled with slow internet speed, which made it hard to upload my documents. The process took much longer than expected because the system kept timing out."
- Technical Issues
- FM3 described that..."I got an error message while trying to submit my application. Even after several attempts, I couldn't proceed until I contacted support. The portal sometimes logs out unexpectedly, and students have to restart the process. This can be frustrating, especially when working with a deadline."
- FL1 noted that..."some features of the system are not intuitive. I had issues with document verification, and there was no clear troubleshooting guide to resolve them."
- Inadequate Information
- FN1 stated that..."the instructions provided were not detailed enough. I had to rely on trial and error to figure things out, which was stressful. The university should provide a step-by-step guide or video tutorials to help students understand the process better."
- FA4 mentioned that..."there were no clear directions on document requirements. I had to resubmit my documents multiple times because of missing details that weren't specified beforehand."

### Digital Divide

- FN5 highlighted that..."students in urban areas have an easier time accessing the system, but those in remote areas struggle due to poor internet and lack of digital literacy."
- FE2 added that..."not all students have personal computers or smartphones, making it harder for them to complete the process independently. Many depend on cybercafés, which increases their financial burden. Universities should create access centers for students who lack personal devices."

### Research Question Four: What improvements do students suggest for enhancing the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University?

Students' suggestions for enhancing the automated admission system formed the fourth major theme, with sub-themes of Technical Efficiency, User Interface Enhancement, Support Services, and Information Clarity.

#### Technical Efficiency

- FS1 suggested that..."the system sometimes freezes during peak admission periods. It should be optimized to handle high traffic without lagging or crashing, and there should be an automatic save feature to prevent data loss when there's an unexpected shutdown or network disruption."
- FN1 added that..."speed should be improved. The system takes too long to load, especially when submitting documents or making payments. More integration with mobile applications would help. A dedicated mobile app could make access easier and faster."

#### User Interface Enhancement

- FS4 noted that..."the system should have a more intuitive design with clear instructions

at every step to guide users efficiently. A progress bar should be added to show applicants how far they have gone and what remains to be completed in the admission process."

- FN3 commented that..."more visual aids, like infographics or step-by-step video tutorials, would make navigation easier for first-time users. Font size and contrast should be adjustable to accommodate users with visual impairments or difficulty reading small text."
- Support Services
- FS5 proposed that..."there should be a dedicated helpline or live chat service to provide real-time support for applicants facing difficulties. Many students rely on cybercafés for assistance. The university should offer free training sessions to help students navigate the system."
- FE4 suggested that..."an automated ticketing system should be introduced to track and resolve user complaints effectively. Admission officers should have access to a dashboard where they can monitor issues and provide prompt feedback to students."

### Information Clarity

- FS2 opined that..."admission guidelines should be clearly outlined on the portal to avoid confusion and misinformation. Applicants should receive real-time notifications via email and SMS at every stage of the admission process."
- FN5 stated that..."a checklist should be included to ensure students complete all necessary steps before submission. A dedicated section for document requirements should be highlighted to prevent unnecessary rejections due to missing files."

### Discussion

In response to the first research question, students at Al-Hikmah University expressed mixed perceptions of the automated admission system, with two main themes emerging: Functionality and Reliability. Many students acknowledged the system's improved efficiency, particularly in reducing paperwork and eliminating long queues (Rutvik, 2024; Mohamed et al., 2022). However, significant barriers were also reported, including limited digital literacy, inadequate user guidance, and poor internet connectivity, especially in rural areas (van Dijk, 2005; Singun, 2025; Esomonu, 2025). Technical concerns such as system crashes during peak periods (Tangkudun et al., 2024), lack of mobile optimization (Han et al., 2024), and loss of user data (Chukwuemeka-Nworu et al., 2024) further hindered users' experiences.

Addressing the second research question, the findings revealed that digital literacy significantly influences students' interactions with the automated admission system. Two sub-themes emerged: Digitally Proficient Users' Advantage and Need for Training and Support. Students with a strong digital background navigated the system with ease (Cho & Ofosu-Anim, 2024; Aly, 2024), while others faced difficulties due to a lack of digital skills or inadequate guidance. These findings support the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which emphasize the roles of perceived ease of use, performance expectancy, and supporting conditions in determining technology adoption (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003; Hasnine, 2023).

Regarding the third research question, the study identified four key challenges faced by students: Network Glitch, Technical Issues, Inadequate Information, and the Digital Divide. Participants reported frequent disruptions due to poor connectivity, error messages during application

submission, and system timeouts (Tangkudun et al., 2024; Chukwuemeka-Nworu et al., 2024). The lack of detailed instructions led many students to adopt a trial-and-error approach, reinforcing the need for better communication tools (Hasnine, 2023; Han et al., 2024). These issues align with the Digital Divide Theory (van Dijk, 2005), which contextualizes the disparities in access to digital services, particularly between urban and rural students (Esomonu, 2025).

For the fourth research question, students proposed several improvements, categorized under four sub-themes: Technical Efficiency, User Interface Enhancement, Support Services, and Information Clarity. Suggestions included upgrading system infrastructure to reduce downtimes (Tangkudun et al., 2024), integrating mobile applications to increase accessibility (Rutvik, 2024), and incorporating interface features such as progress bars and adjustable accessibility settings (Davis, 1989). Additionally, students recommended real-time assistance through AI-powered chatbots (Singun, 2025) and live technical support (Venkatesh et al., 2003). They also emphasized the need for clear, simple, and accessible information to guide users at every stage of the admission process (Han et al., 2024).

## Conclusion

This study explored students' perceived benefits and challenges associated with the automated admission system at Al-Hikmah University, a Nigerian private university. The findings reveal a dual reality: while the system offers notable advantages such as enhanced efficiency, convenience, and real-time access to admission status, significant challenges continue to undermine its overall effectiveness. One of the primary benefits identified is the streamlined nature of the automated process, which allows students to complete their applications online without the need for physical presence on campus. Many students appreciated the speed and responsiveness of the system. Furthermore, those with adequate digital literacy found the platform intuitive and easy to use, which positively influenced their experience.

However, the study also uncovered critical limitations. Technical issues such as system downtimes, processing lags, and disrupted connectivity particularly during peak periods—posed major obstacles. In addition, many students cited inadequate user guidance, lack of technical support, and limited access to resources as barriers. These challenges were especially pronounced among students from rural backgrounds and those with limited digital skills, thereby highlighting a digital divide. To address these issues, students suggested several practical solutions. These included improving the system's technical efficiency, optimizing performance during high-traffic periods, and developing mobile-compatible platforms. Additionally, they recommended enhancing the user interface with more visual guides, progress indicators, and accessibility tools. The provision of real-time support services such as live chat, helpdesk access, and video tutorials was also emphasized. Lastly, clearer and more detailed information regarding admission requirements and procedures was seen as essential for improving the overall user experience.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of automated admission services at Al-Hikmah University and other Nigerian private universities:

1. Al-Hikmah University should prioritize system upgrades to minimize technical issues such as crashes, slow response times, and data loss, particularly during peak admission periods (Tangkudun et al., 2024). Investing in scalable server infrastructure and robust

software solutions would ensure smoother operations even under heavy traffic, thereby enhancing students' trust and confidence in the system.

2. Given the widespread use of smartphones among Nigerian students (Han et al., 2024), it is crucial to optimize the automated admission system for mobile access. Features such as mobile apps, responsive design, and intuitive navigation should be integrated. Additional improvements like progress bars, adjustable font sizes, and multilingual options would make the system more inclusive and user-friendly (Davis, 1989; Hasnine, 2023).
3. To bridge the digital divide, the university should provide targeted training and support services, especially for students with limited technological exposure (van Dijk, 2005).

**This could include:**

- Step-by-step user guides and video tutorials
  - On-campus workshops
  - Helpdesk services or live support during admission periods (Singun, 2025; Hasnine, 2023).
4. Introducing AI-powered chatbots, live chat options, and callback services would address immediate user queries and reduce frustration caused by technical difficulties (Singun, 2025). These features would ensure that students receive timely assistance when navigating the system.
  5. The university should simplify system instructions, avoid technical jargon, and incorporate preview options before form submissions (Han et al., 2024). Clear, concise communication will reduce errors and ease the process for first-time users.
  6. Recognizing that students in rural or underserved areas face significant connectivity challenges, Al-Hikmah University should:
    - Explore partnerships with internet service providers to offer subsidized data plans
    - Establish accessible ICT centers where students can complete their applications
    - Consider hybrid support options that combine online and in-person assistance (Esomonu, 2025; van Dijk, 2005)
  7. Ensuring the automated admission system integrates seamlessly with other university portals will improve efficiency and reduce redundancies (Rutvik, 2024). Additionally, the university must strengthen data protection measures to reassure students about privacy and security concerns.
  8. Regularly collecting feedback from students who use the system will help identify emerging issues and opportunities for improvement (Zhou, Zhang & Chan, 2024). Periodic reviews and usability testing should be institutionalized to keep the system aligned with user needs and technological advancements.

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