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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF SIGNIFICANCE OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AS INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS FIRST IMPRESSION OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

If the first impression leaves a lasting impression as believed among different peoples, then, being informed about the first impression is crucial in the facility planning and development. However, the phenomenon of first impressions has not been sufficiently explored by the Nigeria built industry, as there is a sparing research finding regarding the phenomenon. The phenomenon of first impression was studied in the developed countries, although the studies focused on the commercial and administrative settings, and the need to expand its scope was recommended. Among other facilities, the university setting deserves a well-thought-out environment, such that promotes students' interest and well-being, being the breeding setting for the future leaders across the globe. This study aimed to examine the significance of physical environmental factors as an influence on students' first impression of selected universities in Oyo state, with the objectives to identify the physical environmental factors influencing students' first impression, examine the significance of environmental features in students' first impression, and identify the prevalent physical environmental factors in students' first impression of the university environment. The study employed a quantitative approach, in which data was sourced via an online questionnaire from the students across federal, state, and private universities in Oyo state, Nigeria. A total of three hundred and two students filled out the online questionnaire and the data was analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis revealed that the students' impression towards the university physical environments is largely positive, majority of the students are both impressed and very impressed with the university's physical environment, although notable number of the respondents was uncertain of their impression towards the university environment. In addition, the university type, building appearance and environmental features are significant to the students' first impression of the university environment. Based on the above findings, the study recommends that the Management in Nigeria University prioritizes physical infrastructure, to sustain and improve students' interest and well-being respectively.

KEYWORDS

Arousal theory, Built environment, Environment, Environmental perception, First impression

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Introduction

The phenomenon of first impression originated in social psychology, where it was explained by Asch (1949) as the product of a socio-cognitive process, in which people judge their targets based on the available information about them. Emanated from the study of first impressions, the maxim that the first impression is a lasting impression was queried as engendering an erroneous conclusion about a target, due to man's tendency to judge their targets based on their physical appearances, without considering the invisible factors responsible for their dispositions. Meanwhile, the research findings and environment and behaviour theories provide some information to the rationales for this maxim. One of such theories is the arousal theory, which states that the environment provides sensory stimulations which influence human behavior, depending on the individuals' attributions and interpretations of them. Interacting a target, another person or the built form, the observer experiences stimulations, in excess of which the human behaviour and decision-making process are commonly negatively influenced, as there is a threshold for the acceptable behaviour with every individual. Likewise, the interactionist theories of Man and Environment relationship describe the relationship between man and their environments as a form of transaction in which man consider leverageable opportunities (physical and perceptual) in expressing satisfaction or otherwise dissatisfaction with the environments. This theory further asserted that the individuals develop a cognitive image of the real-life experiences, analyse and make decisions in responding to situations. In summarizing the preceding, man rationalizes sensory cues from their targets in the very first sight by developing a mental imagery, analyzing and interpreting the cues, for their judgments towards them. Being emotional, man's initial judgment towards their targets influenced the subsequent judgments relationships.

In addition, both verbal and non-verbal sensory stimuli influence man's judgment towards their targets, although an empirical study posited that the visual non-verbal stimulation is the most influential in individuals' judgment towards their targets. Hence, one can assume that the physical features of a target including the built forms are influential in first impression. Nevertheless, there is the need to confirm that the non-physical factors are not so significant to first impressions by investigating the significance of physical environmental make-ups as a correlate factor of first impression.

There is a very few studies in Nigeria and other developing countries focusing on first impression, while the studies of the phenomenon in the developed countries focused on the commercial and administrative buildings, leaving a knowledge gap to investigate first impression in other facilities including the University environment. Engineering positive first impression in the university environment is crucial to sustaining students' interest, and improving their well-being and learning. The study investigates the significance of physical environmental factors as an influence on students' first impressions towards selected universities in Oyo State, Nigeria; hence, the objectives are to identify the physical environmental factors influencing students' first impressions, compare the significance of the physical environmental features to students' first impressions from the selected universities, and identify the prevalent physical environmental factors in the students' first impressions of the selected universities in Oyo state. The study is otherwise an examination of students' first responses to the university physical environments in the Oyo State, toward highlighting the influential physical features, for the information and considerations of the policy makers. Hence, findings from the study will enormously benefit the University system in the Oyo State and Nigeria at large.

Oyo state is known as Pacesetter and its capital is Ibadan, a prominent state in the South-West geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Four (4) Universities were selected for the study, private and public Universities, namely the University of Ibadan (Federal university), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho (state university), Abiola Ajimobi Technical University, Ibadan (state university), Lead City University, Ibadan (private university) and Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo (private university).

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspective

In environmental psychology, the notion of environment is more than the physical backgrounds of the study area as the researchers from other fields rendered it. Although the researchers should ensure that the findings from any inquiry is as much as possible free of extraneous variables, study in Environment and Behaviour is not so, given generalizable results. In the context of environmental psychology, the environment provides the basis for understanding the observed attitudes and behaviours in people (Whitehead, 1981; Bechtel & Churchman, 2003). This suggests that the physical backgrounds only do not constitute the environment in the environment and behaviour relationship, but the conglomerate of influences on human behaviour including the social-cultural background and personality (Weiner & Freedheim, 2003).

The mediation of professionals in the built industry contributes in shaping the physical environment for man's activities, and provides man with the environmental stimuli, which engender behavioural and attitudinal responses as a reaction towards the inhabited space (Vischer, 2008). The individuals' reaction towards the built environment is only explainable by the behavioural theory and environmental perception.

The arousal theory postulated that the environment provides psychological stimulations with behavioural effects from the inhabitant depending on the individuals' attributions and interpretations of them (Bechtel & Churchman, 2003). An empirical study revealed that the relationship between optimal performance (behaviour) and arousal is curvilinear; man seek stimulation when the arousal is low, while the high arousal either from the negative or positive stimulation hurts performance and behaviour (Brown & Richerson, 2013). The preceding suggests that the arousal effect of the university environment might attract or repel the intending and fresh students while sustaining or cutting short the interest of the stale students. The arousal arising from unsightly environmental conditions, noise pollution, unkempt ambiance, and unattractive building and layout developments might cause dissatisfaction among the students. However, the effect of a positively high arousal among the students arising from the environmental situations is an advantage to any institution, though it might impact students' decisions negatively.

The environmental perception explains the various approaches for environmental assessment, involving the

environmental features and cognitive complexes of the assessors (Whitehead, 1981). It is the objective and subjective assessment of an environment, including respectively its observable qualities and users' subjective opinions of its influences. The latter applies to inquiries into users' opinions regarding any phenomenon concerning the environment and behaviour (Lee & Dean, 2018). Being public opinion, the results from such an enquiry can is generalizable.

First Impression

Apart from the primary pursuit of academic excellence, the Nigeria University Commission (NUC) prioritizes an aesthetically pleasing university environment. This is observable in the organically impressive architecture of the foremost universities in Nigeria, on which the federal government spent a huge amount of money. Similarly, both public and private universities in Nigeria are spending a lot of money on providing infrastructure and other services, including landscaping, lighting, garbage removal and bush clearing, to ensure an impressive environmental look and a positive impression on users. An empirical study revealed that environmental design significantly influenced users' first impressions, and adequate lighting, noise reduction, and an aesthetically pleasing environment have been reported positively influencing users' first impressions of any facilities (Bazaid & Pati, 2023). In addition, findings from the various studies indicated that the observer's actual opinions of other people or objects are formed during the first five minutes of mutual interactions, the phenomenon referred to as the first impression (Harmat, 2022b).

First impression is conceptually socio-cognitive and characterized by subjective complexities (Hock, 1992). Being an active process, it is based on the available information about the target (Swann, 1984; Reis et al., 2017; Carney et al., 2007). As in the social psychology, studies in the environment and behaviour found the individuals' tendency to judge their target hurriedly, which the authors attributed to man's tendency to judge at first sight (thin slicing) while comparing the previous experiences with the current related circumstances –stereotyping (Bazaid & Pati, 2023). Findings from other studies of first impression revealed that it is influenced by the individuality, age, and preference of the observer, among others. Age influences perceptual ability as the functional and cognitive effectiveness of the individuals wane with age. Individuality determines users' experiences of space while Preferences determine individual value in the built environment. (Ter Stal et al., 2019). The built environment is imbued with both verbal and non-verbal sensory stimulations (background noise, background odor, untidy environment, staff's composure, building appearances, landscape and layout design, among others), influencing users' first impression of the built form (Finnigan, 2024). However, not every sensory stimulus is operative in developing first impressions, as certain stimulations are filtered in the process. Non-verbal visual stimulation has been identified as the most potent influence on observers' first impressions. This implies that the physical appearance of the built form is an important factor in first impression, including the building appearance, landscape design, and background physical features (Gabor et al., 2015).

Findings from an empirical research indicated that the development of first impressions includes exposure, information pickup, cognition, emotion, and judgment. The exposure time has been identified as the primary determinant of first impressions. Experimentation with different durations of exposure, ranging from 5 seconds to 300 seconds (5 minutes), revealed that the most effective exposure time for an accurate first impression is 5 minutes, which confirms the proposition that man judge based on thin slicing or appearances (Bazaid & Pati, 2023). Another important factor of first impression is the 'information pickup and perceived affordances', as the first impression is determined by the observer's perceptual information of the leverageable opportunities in their targets. Evidently, the observers' perceptual knowledge of affordances in the target is the source of stimulus information. Although Gibson's affordance theory was propounded to facilitate understanding of the transactional relationship between man and the physical environment, its scope has been expanded to include perceptual opportunities in the environment, such as organizational and social affordances (Kaufman, 1967). Organizational affordance is the perceived potential of an organization to facilitate the smooth running of its affairs, while social affordance is the perceived opportunity of social interactions in the environment. However, the observer might not have perceived these before developing the first impression. Emotion and judgment are inseparable in discussing first impressions (Bazaid & Pati, 2023; Kaufman, 1967). With sensory information upon exposure to the target, the perceiver deploys a cognitive process in evaluating the situation, towards their perspectives of the target. The perceptual information and observer's emotional response during first contact influenced the initial impression which determines the judgments for subsequent interactions with the target (Ambady & Skowronski, 2008). Therefore, first impression is influenced by the available information about the target (especially visual information), perceived affordances and emotional response of the observer, with the mediation of individuality, age, and preferences.

Although pioneer researches into first impression focused on human beings, as the concept emanated from social psychology, the notion of first impression has been interpreted for application in the built environment planning and design. At the inception of the study of first impression in social psychology, it was understood only in terms of the sensory and perceptual information between strangers which influences interpersonal relationship (Bazaid & Pati, 2023). In furtherance of the knowledge of initial impression, the sociological concept of Zero Acquaintance Judgment (ZAJ) was coined and explored, which eventually furnished the knowledge base of initial impression with the social judgment scenarios with its importance in daily living (Letzring & Spain, 2021). The Zero Acquaintance Judgments (ZAJs) are based on the static and expressive attributes of a person to another person involved in a social relationship. The spatial discriminatory discourses, including feminist, queer, racial, and disability are the various social- spatial frames for social judgments, describing the various way environments and spaces influence first impression and social judgments (Naumann et al., 2009). In view of the spatial discriminatory discourse being a social-temporal issue and the need to relate them to the built environment where the first impression takes place, Tooley (2024) expanded the social discriminatory discourse in examining the effects built environment on the interpersonal relationships and social judgments, toward their

implementation in the facility design and management. Using the lens of spatial discriminatory discourse, the above mentioned research identified the influences of the static and expressive attributes of the built environments on the first impression as being determined by their location, belonging and performative values.

The expanded perspective of the spatial discriminatory discourse is adaptable to the study of first impression towards the built environment. The observers' discrimination in favour of or against a strange built form (targets) may be influenced by their perception of its static or expressive attribute, namely design features, suitability for purpose, and affordability (cues). Meanwhile, first impression being the outcome of acquaintanceship, the static attributes of the built forms might be so influential. With the exemption of some specific design considerations, findings from a study of first impression of a built feature in a country may be applied to the related built forms in other countries with the design standards equally applied. This provides the foundation for determining the influences of environmental features and built forms in first impression, as the values of any facilities in terms of their location, features and suitability determine people's impression towards them. And being a subjective approach to the built forms evaluation, by which people register their opinions about a facility, stakeholders can be informed of the implications of the project locations, environmental features and design decisions for first impression.

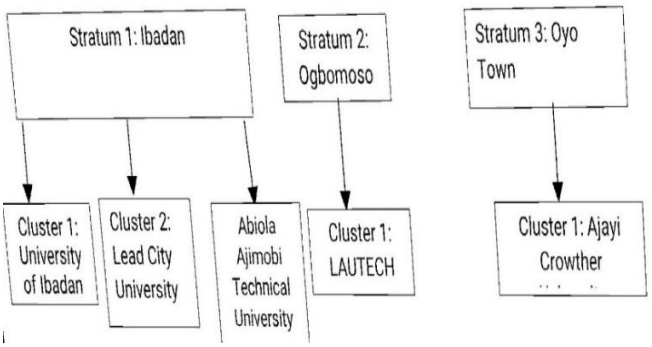
Studies in the environment environmental psychology that relates the first impression to design and environmental features include the study of physical environmental factors influencing user's first impression toward the healthcare centre in the United State of America. This study involved an in-depth literature review culminating into the development of a conceptual framework for the study of first impression phenomenon, including the exposure time, information pickup, cognition, emotion and judgment (Bazaid & Pati, 2023). The study found among other discoveries that a positive first impression of the healthcare centre contributes to higher patronage, positively influencing the overall patient experiences and ratings of the healthcare facilities. The authors found that there is a causal association between first impression and information pickup within first five (5) seconds from the target, which led to the conclusion that the physical design elements influence the first impression toward the health care facility. Likewise, positive first impression was successfully engineered in the US federal building and retail through the environmental and design features. While the findings from the above mentioned studies are applicable in Nigeria, there is no or limited record of the study of first impression on the academic building in the literature.

First impression is measured in terms of the observers' possible reactions towards their targets namely positive or negative reaction (Ambady & Skowronski, 2008), or on a continuum of values. For this study, a positive and negative impression is measured using ordinal values on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very impressed (5) to very unimpressed (1), and all values above and below neutral (3) are considered positive and negative first impressions respectively.

Methodology

First impressions of students towards their institution environment are critical in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward institutions. These Physical environmental factors, such as campus aesthetics, infrastructure, and cleanliness, play a significant role in influencing these impressions. This study aims to explore the significance of these factors on students' first impressions of selected universities in Oyo State, Nigeria.

To achieve the study's focus, the study made use of stratified random samplings by dividing Oyo State into three major strata, Ibadan, Ogbomoso and Oyo Town. The choice of these three major cities is premised on the fact that they are the cities where universities are predominantly located. Notably, each of these strata are further divided into cluster as shown below:



Furthermore, the study population includes undergraduate and postgraduate students of selected universities which include, the University of Ibadan (UI), Lead City University (LCU), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ajayi Crowther University. The study made use of primary data collection methods to obtain data from the students. Specifically, the study made use of an online questionnaire survey and they were sent to the different WhatsApp students' platformss of the aforementioned universities. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and a five-point Likert Scale. The Likert Scale ranges from very impressed (5) to very unimpressed (1) and very significant (5) to very insignificant (1). Having used the online questionnaire survey, the study made use of convenient sampling by randomly sending the questionnaire to students in their various WhatsApp groups. A total of 302 responses were gathered across the various selected universities. To analyze the data, the study used frequency, percentages, Chi-Square, Relative Important Index (RII), and regression analysis.

Analyses and Findings

Table 1 below shows the biodata of the respondents which include gender, institutions, status, and level of the respondents.

Table 1: Biodata of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	157	52
Female	145	48
Total	**302**	**100**
Institution		
University of Ibadan (UI)	148	49
Lead City University (LCU)	50	16.6
Abiola Ajimobi Technical University	77	25.5
Ajayi Crowther University	8	2.6
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH)	19	6.3
Total	**302**	**100**
Academic Status		

Undergraduate	277	91.7
Postgraduate	25	8.3
Total	**302**	**100**
Level		
100L	116	38.4
200L	71	23.5
300L	34	11.3
400L	47	15.6
500L	15	5
Masters	17	5.6
PhD	2	0.7
Total	**302**	**100**

Source: Author's Computation, 2024

Results from Table 1 show that 52% of the respondents were male which was slightly higher than the female respondents whose percentage was 48%. This shows that the gender distribution for this study is fairly balanced, with a slight majority of male respondents. In terms of institutions, the majority of the respondents are from the University of Ibadan representing 49% of the total respondents and this was followed by students from Abiola Ajimobi Technical University with a percentage of 25.5%. Lead City University had 50 respondents representing 16.6% of the respondents, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) had 6.3% of the respondents' while Ajayi Crowther University had the least respondents with 2.6% of the respondents. In terms of academic status, 91.7% of the respondents were undergraduate students which was far higher than postgraduate students with 8.3%. In terms of academic level, a large percentage of the students were in 100 levels while the least respondents were PhD students with a percentage of 0.7%. The results are further presented in the charts below:

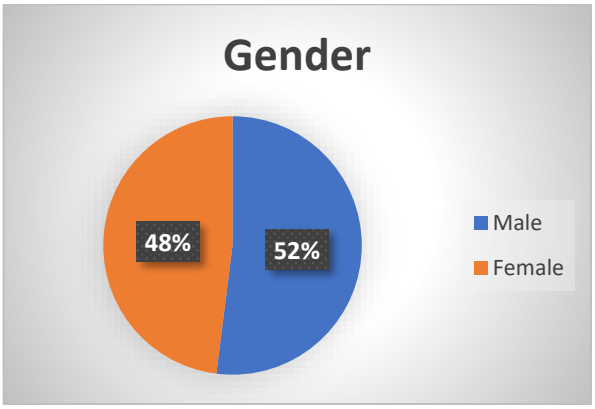


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

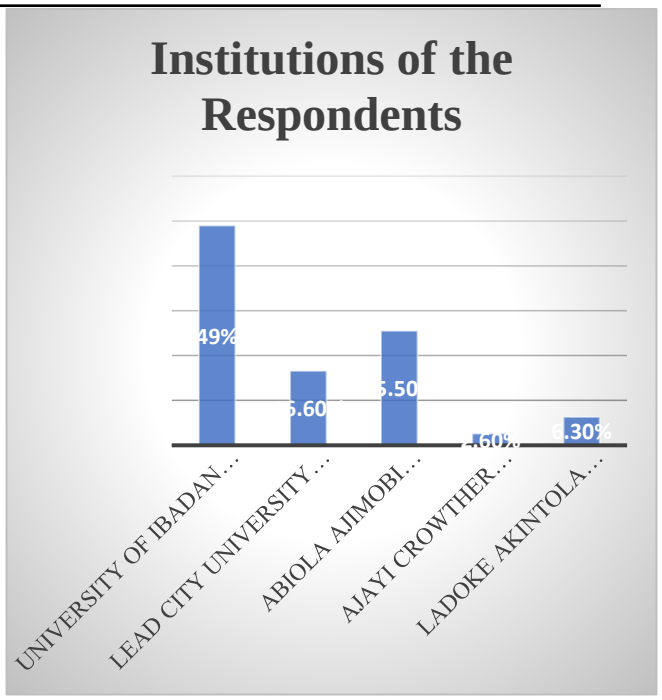


Figure 2: Institutions of the Respondents

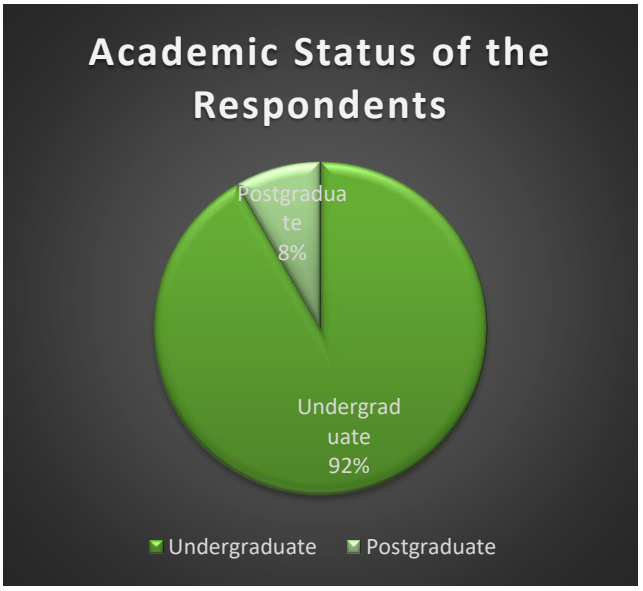


Figure 3: Academic Status of the Respondents

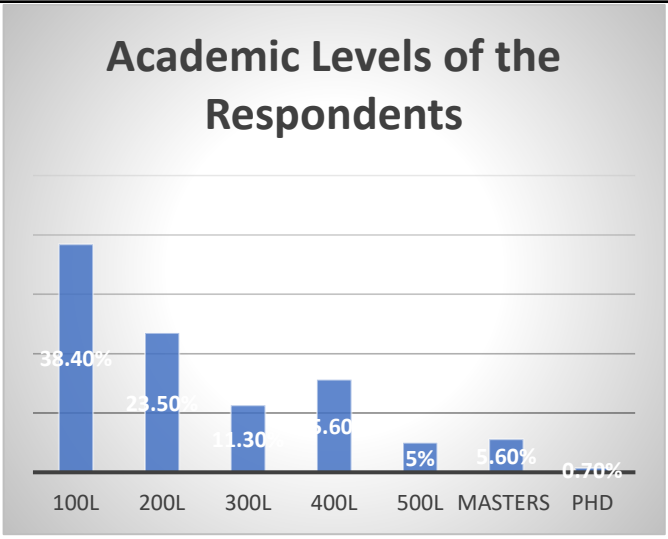


Figure 4: Academic Levels of the Respondents

Level of Impression of the Students to the Universities' Environment

Table 2 below shows the level of impression of the students of the aforementioned universities' environment.

Table 2: Level of Impression of the Students to the Universities' Physical Environment

Level of Impression	Frequency	Percentage
Very unimpressed	10	3.3
Unimpressed	15	5
Neither impressed nor unimpressed	64	21.2
Impressed	116	23.8
Very Impressed	97	19.9
Total	**302**	**100**

Source: Authors' Computation, 2024

From the results in Table 2, it was revealed that a large percentage of the students with a percentage of 23.8% were impressed with their university environment. Notably, the result also shows that the percentage of the students who were impressed with the university environment was slightly higher than the students who were neither impressed nor unimpressed with a percentage of 21.2%. This shows that there seems to be no significant difference between the students who were impressed with the universities' environment and those who were indifferent towards the environment. The indifferent nature of students could imply that the students are nonchalant with the university's environment.

In furtherance, 19.9% of the students who participated in the survey admitted to being very impressed with the university environment while an insignificant percentage of students representing 3.3% of the respondents were very unimpressed with the universities' environment.

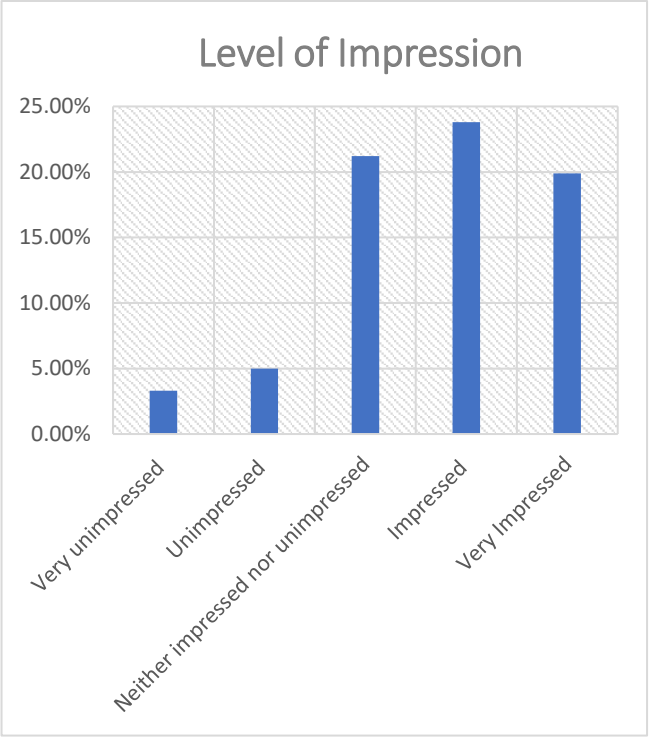


Figure 5: Level of Impression of the Students to the Universities' Environment

To further establish the level of impression of the students to the universities' environment, the study makes use of the Chi-Square Test to determine the level of impression along the categorical variables. Table 3 below shows the Chi-Square results along age, institutions, academic status, and level.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test

Gender		Impressed	Neither Impressed nor Unimpressed	Unimpressed	Very Impressed	Very Unimpressed	P-value	X^2-Calculated
							0.211	**5.849**
Female	Count	62	33	4	43	3		
	Expected Count	56.3	30.5	7.2	46.3	4.8		
Male	Count	56	31	11	54	7		
	Expected Count	61.7	33.5	7.8	50.7	5.2		
							0.000	**68.196**
Ajayi Crowther University	Count	5	0	1	4	0		
	Expected Count	3.9	2.1	.5	3.2	.3		
	Count	25	21	11	11	9		

	Expected Count	29.9	16.2	3.8	24.6	2.5		
(LAUTECH)	Count	4	6	1	7	1		
	Expected Count	7.4	4.0	.9	6.1	.6		
Lead City (LCU)	Count	27	6	0	15	0		
	Expected Count	18.6	10.1	2.4	15.3	1.6		
University of Ibadan (UI)	Count	56	31	2	59	0		
	Expected Count	57.4	31.2	7.3	47.2	4.9		
							0.959	**2.555**
Postgraduate	Count	10	5	1	8	0		
	Expected Count	9.3	5.1	1.2	7.7	.8		
Undergraduate	Count	107	59	14	89	10		
	Expected Count	108.3	58.7	13.8	89.0	9.2		
							0.422	**24.711**
100L	Count	38	27	5	42	4		
	Expected Count	45.0	24.4	5.7	37.0	3.8		
200L	Count	27	13	5	21	5		
	Expected Count	27.6	14.9	3.5	22.7	2.3		
300L	Count	11	12	3	8	0		
	Expected Count	13.2	7.2	1.7	10.8	1.1		
400L	Count	27	6	2	14	0		
	Expected Count	19.0	10.3	2.4	15.6	1.6		
500L	Count	5	3	0	6	1		
	Expected Count	5.8	3.2	.7	4.8	.5		
	Count	9	3	0	5	0		
	Expected Count	6.6	3.6	.8	5.4	.6		
Masters	Count	1	0	0	1	0		
	Expected Count	.8	.4	.1	.6	.1		
PhD	Count	38	27	5	42	4		
	Expected Count	45.0	24.4	5.7	37.0	3.8		

Source: Author's Computation

The Chi-Square Test in Table 3 presents data on respondents' levels of impression based on gender, university affiliation, academic level, and year of study. The test examines whether there are significant differences based on how the groups are impressed, unimpressed, or neither impressed nor unimpressed by certain factors.

To begin with, the juxtaposition of the females and males was the first group to be accessed, and was found that 62 females were impressed compared to an expected count of 56.3, while 56 males were impressed compared to an expected count of 61.7. Notably, 33 females chose "Neither Impressed nor Unimpressed"(expected count: 30.5), while 31 males chose "Neither Impressed nor Unimpressed" (expected count: 33.5). This implies that a slightly higher number of female students were neutral in terms of their impression towards their university. Holistically, the neutrality of the students in terms of their impressions towards their school environment is a reflection of mixed feelings towards the school environment. In totality, the result shows that 64 students (31 males and 33 females) representing 21.19% of the total population have indecisive impression towards their universities' environments. However, the p-value of gender is 0.211 (P-value > 0.05), and this implies that there is no significant difference between males and females regarding their level of impression towards the university's physical environment.

In terms of university, the result shows that 56 students from UI were impressed, while the expected count was 57.4, which signifies close alignment with the result. Also, 25 students from the Abiola Ajimobi Technical University were impressed with the university's physical environment, with expected counts of 29.9, showing a close alignment. LCU has 27 students who were impressed with the university's physical environment and has an 18.6 expected count. Ajayi Crowther University has 5 students who were impressed with the university's physical environment while 3.9 was the expected count. Lastly, LAUTECH has 7 students who were very impressed with the university's physical environment and an expected count of 6.1. Furthermore, no respondents from ACU chose the neutral option (expected count: 2.1), suggesting a strong polarization of opinions from this group, either impressed or unimpressed. This implies that all the surveyed students in ACU were affirmative and indecisive in terms of their impression or unimpressionable attitudes towards ACU. 21 students from Abiola Ajimobi Technical University were neither impressed nor unimpressed (expected count: 16.2), which exceeds the expected count. For the students in LAUTECH and LCU, only 6 respondents from each school were "neither impressed nor unimpressed" (expected count: 10.1), implying that fewer students than expected were neutral, indicating stronger opinions from the respondents. Finally, 31 respondents were neutral (expected count: 31.2), which is very close to the expected count, indicating neutrality aligns with expectations. Comparatively, from the results it can be deduced that a larger percentage (10.26%) of students from UI were neither impressed nor unimpressed with the university environment. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that UI is the oldest university among the five chosen universities and the aesthetic designs of the university perhaps do not befit the modern standards in other selected universities and hence informing the uncertainty of students. Notably, the P-value of the group of universities is significant, 0.000 (P-Value < 0.05) indicating a highly significant difference in impression levels based on university affiliation,

suggesting that students' impressions vary significantly depending on their university.

As regards the academic status of the students, it was found that 10 postgraduate students in the universities were impressed with an expected count of 9.3, and 107 undergraduates were impressed with an expected count of 108.3. Also, the result found that 5 (1.66%) postgraduate students were neither impressed nor unimpressed (expected count: 5.1), the result indicates that a larger proportion of the postgraduate students were decisive on whether they were impressed or unimpressed. Contrarily, 59 undergraduate students (expected count: 58.7) representing 19.54% were neutral in terms of their impression towards their university environment. The higher percentage of the undergraduate shows that the undergraduate students are more indecisive than the postgraduate students as far as the university environment is concerned. The high decisiveness of postgraduate students can be interpreted that they are more experienced and conversant with university environment than undergraduate students. However, the P-value as regards academic status is 0.959 indicating that no significant difference between postgraduates and undergraduates regarding their levels of impression.

In terms of level of study, students' responses were analyzed about their year of study, from 100 level (100L) to 500 level (500L), including Masters and PhD students. The result shows that in 100L, 38 students were impressed, while the expected count was 45.0. For 500L, 5 students were impressed with an expected count of 5.8. In addition, the result shows that 27 (100L) students chose "Neither Impressed nor Unimpressed" (expected count: 24.4), showing that the neutrality at this level slightly exceeded expectations but is still reasonably close. 13 (200L) students were neutral (expected count: 14.9), slightly fewer than expected, indicating stronger opinions among 200-level students. 12 (300L) were neutral (expected count: 7.2), indicating that more students than expected were neutral, which might suggest uncertainty or ambivalence at this level. 6 (400L) students were neutral (expected count: 10.3), fewer than expected, showing that more students had clear opinions at this level. 3 (500L) students were neutral (expected count: 3.2), aligning closely with expectations, showing typical levels of neutrality. Comparatively, the higher number of students in 100-level were neutral in terms of their impression towards their universities, this probably shows that the students were new to the university environment. Similarly, the 27 PHD students who were neither impressed nor unimpressed probably implies that some of the PHD students were new to the universities, probably, they had their first two degrees from other universities. However, the p-value of 0.422 indicates no significant difference between students' years of study and their levels of impression.

It can therefore be deduced from the Chi-Square test that the university affiliation of the students significantly affects the students' levels of impression (p-value < 0.05). However, gender, academic level, and year of study do not exhibit significant effects on students' impressions of the physical environment.

Table 4: Physical Environmental Factors Determining the Rating of the First Impression Towards Institutions

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Layout and ground scenery	144	29.6
Building Appearance	138	28.3
Support Facility	94	19.3
Background Physical Features	100	20.5
Others	11	2.3
Total	487	100.0

Source: Author's computation

From Table 4 above, the result indicates that a larger percentage of the respondents 29.6% chose layout and ground scenery as the basic factors determining their impression towards their universities. This was followed by the building appearance with 28.3% of the students claiming that the building appearance within their universities is a contributing factor that determines their impressions of their university environment. The building appearance in this case includes the building design, structure, and aesthetics among others. Also, 20.5% of the students chose the background physical features of their universities as the factor that determines the rating of their first impression of their institution. 19.3% of the students chose support facility as the factor determining the rating of their first impression towards their institution. However, a meagre percentage of the students representing 2.3% of the total population chose other factors such as the size of the classroom, and electricity among others.

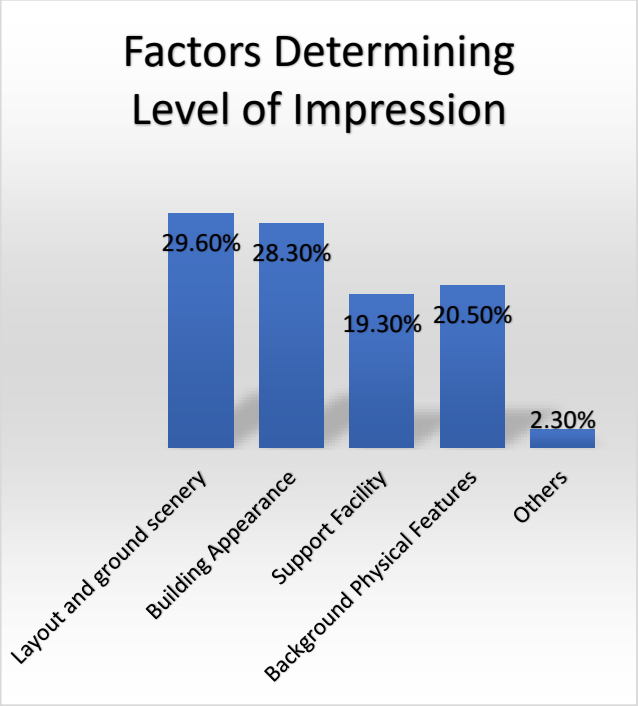


Figure 6: Factors Determining the Rating of the First Impression Towards Institutions

Table 5: Level of Impression of the students to the Physical Environmental Factors Determining their First Impression towards their Universities

Factors	Very unimpressed	Unimpressed	Neither Impressed nor	Impressed	Very impressed	$\sum W$	RII	
Layout and ground scenery	29	40	79	82	69	1019	0.68	**2nd**
Building Appearance	23	32	95	79	67	1023	0.69	**1st**
Support Facility	26	49	95	71	55	968	0.65	**4th**
Background Physical Features	25	50	86	73	68	1015	0.67	**3rd**

Source: Author's Computation, 2024

The result from Table 5 shows the Relative Important Index (RII) of the factors determining the first impression of the students towards their universities. The result shows that "Building Appearance" has the most important index with an RII of 0.69. This shows that the building's appearance of the universities is an important factor in determining the level of impression of the students at the selected universities. The breakdown of the 0.69 reveals that a very smaller proportion of the students (23) were very unimpressed with the building appearance and this was followed by students that were unimpressed with the building appearance (32). Furthermore, a quite high number of students (95) were neither impressed nor unimpressed with the building appearance, meaning that a larger percentage of the students representing 31.46% were undecided as regards their impression towards the building appearance of their universities. This might imply that a larger percentage of the respondents were not conversant with the university appearance and hence cannot be affirmative with the building appearance. Next after students who were neither impressed nor unimpressed were students, 79 in number, who were impressed with building appearance within their universities. Lastly, 67 students were very impressed with the building appearance. Holistically, the result shows that a higher number of students were neutral towards their universities.

Next to this is the "layout and ground scenery" of the selected university with an RII of 0.68. This implies that the impression and unimpressed attitudes of students are largely determined by the good layout plan and a well scenery environment of the universities. This is evident from the breakdown of the responses, a very large number of the students (82) with an equivalent percentage of 27.15% were impressed with their university's layout and ground scenery. This was followed by 79 students who were neither impressed nor unimpressed with their universities' layout and ground scenery. This implies that 79 students were undecisive of their impressions towards their universities' layout and ground scenery, perhaps because they were nonchalant towards the universities' layout and ground scenery. A reasonable number of students (69) representing 22.85% of the population were very impressed with the universities' layout and ground scenery. 29 and 40 students were very unimpressed and unimpressed respectively with the layout and ground scenery. Notably, the insignificant difference between the first and second RIIs shows that the nature of the "Building Appearance" and "layout and ground scenery" of a university goes a long way in determining how impressed or unimpressed students are towards their universities.

In the third position was the "background physical features" with an RII of 0.67. By implication, the background physical features of the universities such as campus landscaping, recreational space for students, and topography, among others play important roles in determining the level of impression of the students towards the universities' environment. However, a larger proportion of the students (86) which represents 28.48% of the total population claimed that they were "neither impressed nor unimpressed" implying that a larger percentage of the students were neutral and indecisive about the school background physical features. This was followed by 73 (24.17%) and 68(22.52%) students who were impressed and very impressed with the background physical features. The study further concluded that 25 (8.28%) and 50 (16.56%) students were "very unimpressed" and "unimpressed." Deductively, the result concluded that a larger percentage of the respondents were indifferent to the background physical features.

The last position was the "support facilities" such as laboratories, the university's stadium, and workshops among others which have an RII of 0.67. Breaking the RII down, the result shows that many students (31.4%) were "neither impressed nor unimpressed" with their universities. This connotes that a larger percentage of the respondents were indecisive of their impression towards "support facility" and hence it appears that many of the students did not have a decisive assessment of their universities' support facilities. Also, 71 (23.51%) and 55 (18.21%) of the students were impressed and very impressed about the support facilities, this shows though a large number of students were indecisive, a considerable large number of students were still impressed with support facility. Contrarily, 26 and 49 students were "very unimpressed" and "unimpressed" respectively of the support facility in their universities. This implies that very low percentages, 8.60% and 16.23% were "very unimpressed" and "unimpressed" respectively to their universities' support facilities. The reason for being in the last position could be attributed to the inaccessibility of the support facilities in assessing the physical features of a university.

Table 6: The Influence of Physical Environmental Factors on the Student's First Impression towards their Universities

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.293	.183		12.532	.000
	Layout and scenery	.146	.055	.180	2.653	.008
	Building appearance	-.017	.057	-.020	-.296	.768
	Support facility	.053	.062	.062	.858	.392
	Background physical features	.297	.062	.357	4.782	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Level of impression						

The regression analysis table in Table 6 above reveals the effect of the physical environmental factors on students' first impression of the universities. The result reveals a constant value of 2.293, meaning that at the point where all other independent variables are zero, there is a constant effect of 2.293 on the level of impression of the students. This value serves as the base level of impression of the students' impression. Furthermore, the result shows that one of the independent variables, "layout and scenery" has an unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.146, with a t-value of 2.653 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.008. This implies that "layout and scenery" has a positive and statistically significant (P-value < 0.05) relationship with students' first impressions. This implies that for every one unit increase in the "layout and scenery", it will lead to a significant 14.6% increase in students' first impressions and vice-versa. Furthermore, the "building appearance," has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of -0.017, with a t-value of -0.296 and a significance level of 0.768. This implies that the relationship between "building appearance," is negative but statistically insignificant. This means that an increase in building appearance will lead to a --2.96 % decrease in the impression of the students and vice-versa. This insinuates that universities without aesthetic beauty will lead to a fall or negatively affect the impression of students in the physical environment. The support facility has an unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.053, with a t-value of 0.858 and a significance level of 0.392 (P-value > 0.05). This suggests that support facilities have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on students' impressions. Lastly, the "background physical features" have an unstandardized coefficient of 0.297, with a t-value of 4.782 and a significance level of 0.000 (P-value<0.05). This shows a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between background physical features and students' impressions. Interpretatively, every 1-unit increase in background features leads to a 29.7% increase in the students' impression.

Limitation

The basic limitation of the study was the constraint relating to the sample size and the demographic representation. The reason behind this cannot be far-fetched, the study made use of convenient sampling and as such, the researchers could not influence the number of participant as well as the demographic representations in terms of number of students per school. Despite this limitation, the researchers were able to gather the valid perspective of the students from their respective universities.

Area for Further Research

While this study adopted quantitative data analysis, other studies can adopt the use of qualitative data analysis to further establish the changes in the in the perceptions of the students over time.

Conclusion

From the analysis and interpretations, the research found that the level of impression of students towards their university physical environment is largely positive, with a significant portion of students expressing either being impressed or very impressed. However, a notable group remains indifferent, this suggests a level of uncertainty towards the university's physical environment. Furthermore, the study established that the building appearance within the universities constitutes the major factor determining the impression of the students towards their universities. Also, through the use of Chi-Square, the university type has a significant dependent relationship with the impression of the students. This implies that the student's impression of their university's physical environment varies by the university's building appearance. The findings also highlight that students' impressions are influenced significantly by the physical attributes of their surroundings, such as the layout and ground scenery, as well as the building's appearance. This indicates the importance of maintaining a visually appealing and well-organized campus to foster positive student perceptions. This study therefore has implication on the educational practices and policy-making by informing school management as well as government on the need to prioritize the maintenance of the universities' environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that universities should prioritize the aesthetic and structural appearance

of their buildings to enhance students' overall impression of the campus. This could involve continuous maintenance, renovation of older buildings, and the construction of modern buildings, visually attractive structures. Also, the universities should ensure that the universities' buildings align with contemporary architectural design. Similarly, the university should inculcate building maintenance, and an organized campus layout which will improve students' perception and potentially increase their level of satisfaction with the university environment.

Additionally, universities should consider developing green spaces and enhancing the overall campus scenery, as the study indicates that the hysical environment, including layout and ground scenery, plays a significant role in shaping students' impressions. By incorporating well-maintained lawns, parks, and recreational spaces, universities can create a more inviting and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere that not only positively influences students but also serves as a space for relaxation and social interaction, contributing to the well-being of the academic community.

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