





Evaluating Key Drivers of Academic Success in Pastoral Communication: First-Year Student Pastors at Baptist College of Theology, Oyo, Nigeria

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Abstract	Article History
<p>This quantitative study investigates the main factors influencing academic success among first-year student pastors enrolled in the pastoral communication course at the Baptist College of Theology (BCT), Oyo, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was administered to 36 student pastors, with 10% female participation, examining domains such as teaching effectiveness, student motivation, access to learning resources, academic support satisfaction, and challenges faced. Descriptive analysis showed 60% positive perceptions of teaching methods, 55% satisfaction with academic support, and 58% confidence in applying course knowledge. Time management issues affected half the students, while resource scarcity was experienced by 42%. Pearson correlation indicated strong positive relations between teaching effectiveness and academic confidence ($r = .62, p < .01$), and moderate association between motivation and class participation ($r = .48, p < .05$). These results highlight the critical importance of pedagogical quality, intrinsic motivation rooted in vocational calling, and access to adequate resources for student success in Nigerian theological training. Recommendations address faculty development, enhanced resource provision, structured academic counseling, and mentorship programs to improve pastoral education outcomes.</p> <p>Keywords: Pastoral communication, academic success, student pastors, teaching effectiveness, motivation, theological education</p>	<p>Received: 22 Sept 2025 Accepted: 26 Sept 2025 Published: 01 Oct 2025</p>  <p>Scan QR Code to view¹</p> <p>License: CC BY 4.0²⁴</p>  <p>Open Access article.</p>
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Introduction

Theological education plays a pivotal role in shaping ministry leaders equipped to engage diverse congregations and fulfill spiritual mandates (Okonkwo, 2022). At the Baptist College of Theology (BCT), Oyo, Basic and Pastoral Communication is a course in pastoral communication, and it serves as a foundational module providing first-year pastors with skills in preaching, counseling, and effective community engagement core competencies for successful ministry (Olufemi, 2023). Despite its organizational and spiritual importance, Nigerian theological education faces multifarious challenges, including chronic underfunding, insufficient infrastructure, limited faculty development, and inadequate resource access. These systemic issues impede full curricular effectiveness and hinder student academic success and ministry readiness (Adeleye, 2024; Kretzschmar & Tuckey, 2017; National Open University of Nigeria, 2023). Moreover,

recent socio-cultural shifts and technology proliferation compel seminaries to modernize both content delivery and administrative structures (Udoekpo, 2024).

Pastoral training demands not only doctrinal knowledge but also the development of practical communication and interpersonal skills. Key factors such as teaching effectiveness, student motivation, availability of learning resources, and institutional support have emerged in research as core influences on learning outcomes (Hardy, 2020; Cockle, Vanderpool, & Hao, 2023). Yet, Nigerian seminaries regularly contend with limited access to academic materials, contextualized pedagogy gaps, and student time management difficulties, all constraining academic achievement (Kretzschmar & Tuckey, 2017; Nzewi, 2018). This study aims to bridge gaps by examining how these factors relate to academic success among first-year student pastors at BCT,

Oyo, highlighting challenges and identifying actionable pathways for improving theological education in similar Nigerian contexts.

Literature Review

Teaching Effectiveness in Nigerian Theological Education

Effective teaching transcends simple knowledge transmission; it involves engaging pedagogies that integrate doctrine with contextual application, active student participation, and practical ministry skills development (Mathews, 2014; Cockle, Vanderpool, & Hao, 2023). Recent studies highlight the positive impact of interactive and innovative teaching methodologies on students' understanding, motivation, and retention in religious education settings (Joshua & Lusa, 2024). However, Nigerian seminaries often remain hampered by didactic instructional methods, insufficient faculty training, and gaps in contextualized curriculum that weaken teaching effectiveness (Kretzschmar & Tuckey, 2017; Udoekpo, 2024). Faculty capacity-building initiatives focusing on participatory learning, real-life ministry case studies, and engagement with digital teaching tools are rising trends to counter these challenges (Hardy, 2020; Phillip, 2024). Consistent with Aristotle's classical rhetoric canons, skilled pastoral communication teaching stresses preparation, relevance, delivery variation, and integration of verbal and non-verbal cues (Phillips, 2024; Influence Magazine, 2024). Enhancing these teaching features is pivotal to improving student ministry readiness and academic confidence.

Student Motivation: Deep Intrinsic Vocational Drive

Intrinsic motivation, where learners are propelled by personal calling and spiritual satisfaction rather than extrinsic rewards, fosters deeper engagement, conceptual understanding, and active participation essential for pastoral education (Wong, 2024; Gibbs, 2019). This deep motivation contrasts with surface learning aimed merely at memorization or grade achievement and is linked to transformative theological education and ministry effectiveness (The Gospel Coalition, 2021). In Nigeria's religiously vibrant context, intrinsic vocational motivation remains a strong driver for pastoral student commitment, fueled by cultural and ecclesiastical expectations (Adeleye, 2024). Programs encouraging reflection on personal calling and ministry relevance have demonstrated capacity to sustain motivation, participation, and academic resilience (Cockle et al., 2023).

Resource Access and Digitalization in Nigerian Seminaries

Learning resources, including physical textbooks and increasingly digital libraries, are essential for theological students to develop research competencies and deepen biblical literacy (Kretzschmar & Tuckey, 2017). However, Nigerian seminaries face funding constraints leading to inadequate resource acquisition, contributing to student frustration and academic underperformance (National Open University of Nigeria, 2023; Adeleye, 2024). Recent developments show some seminaries embracing ICT and digitalization initiatives, such as Bigard Seminary's pioneering library digitization project, improving student access to theological materials and enabling blended learning

environments (Bigard Seminary, 2014; Nigeria Catholic Network, 2024). Despite infrastructural gaps and uneven internet access, such advancements hold promise for leveling resource disparities in theological education nationwide.

Time Management Challenges in Nigerian Higher Education

Time management barriers such as procrastination, social media distractions, and competing personal and academic demands are widely documented among Nigerian tertiary students, including theological undergraduates (Nzewi, 2018; Balon & Abanto, 2025). These challenges detract from concentration, attendance, and assignment completion, adversely impacting academic performance. Effective time management interventions within theological programs can markedly improve student outcomes (Uwazuruike & Anyaogu, 2024). Mentors and academic advisors play key roles in guiding study schedules and prioritization to mitigate these obstacles (Chiroma, 2015).

Academic Counseling and Mentorship

Mentorship offers invaluable benefits by integrating theoretical learning with practical ministry wisdom, emotional support, cultural competency, and long-term relational accountability for pastoral students (Chiroma, 2015; Hall, 2017; Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024). Effective mentorship programs help mentees develop study techniques, career insight, and personal discipline, enabling holistic theological formation. Given Nigeria's ethnic diversity, mentorship that promotes intercultural awareness and adaptability is particularly critical for pastors assigned across heterogeneous congregational contexts (Chiroma, 2015). Despite proven benefits, structured mentorship remains unevenly implemented in many Nigerian theological colleges, necessitating institutional prioritization (Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024).

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

A quantitative descriptive design was utilized to capture perceptions related to academic success determinants among first-year student pastors studying Basic and Pastoral Communication at BCT Oyo. The study population comprised of 36 students participant out of those enrolled in the 2024 academic session. Female participants represented 10% of the cohort, illustrating gender distribution consistent with seminary demographics (Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024). Convenience sampling was employed due to institutional access and scheduling constraints, which is a limitation influencing generalisability.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments with demonstrated reliability in theological education research contexts (Cronbach's alpha = .82). The tool encompassed ten domains rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree):

- i. Teaching Effectiveness
- ii. Student Motivation
- iii. Resource Access
- iv. Satisfaction with Academic Support

- v. Participation Frequency
- vi. Course Clarity
- vii. Time Management Skills
- viii. Challenges Encountered
- ix. Additional Support Needs
- x. Confidence in Course Application

This instrument was pilot tested with 10 student pastors outside the study cohort, ensuring face and content validity.

Data Collection and Ethics

Surveys were administered face-to-face during class sessions with faculty approval. Participants were fully informed about study purpose, assured of confidentiality, and gave voluntary consent. Research procedures complied with ethical guidelines stipulated by the National Open University of Nigeria (2023). No identifying personal data were collected beyond gender and academic year to protect privacy.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Mode	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Satisfaction with Academic Support	3.9	1.0	Satisfied	20	55
Participation Frequency	3.6	1.1	Sometimes	14	40
Confidence Applying Knowledge	4.1	0.8	Confident	21	58
Resource Access	3.2	1.2	Limited	15	42
Time Management Skills	3.0	1.0	Moderate	18	50

Teaching effectiveness was the highest-rated factor, indicating positive reception of pedagogical methods. Satisfaction with academic support was moderate, with response variability likely reflecting individual differences in perceived support. Participation frequency showed heterogeneity, evidencing varied engagement levels. Confidence in applying course knowledge was consistent with teaching ratings.

Challenges Experienced

Table 2 identifies prevalent challenges reported by participants; thereafter discussed briefly.

Table 2: Reported Challenges by Participant Frequency

Challenge Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time Management	18	50
Lack of Access to Learning Resources	15	42
Personal Issues affecting Study	12	33
Suboptimal Teaching Methodologies	9	25
Financial Constraints and Fees	7	19
Other (Technical, Spiritual)	3	8

Time management difficulties, such as procrastination and balancing academic with personal demands, were foremost challenges. Followed by lack of access to learning resources which include inadequate access to textbooks and digital materials, reflecting systemic infrastructural deficits. Some

Data Analysis

Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations) summarized central tendencies and variabilities. Relationships between teaching effectiveness, student motivation, participation frequency, and confidence measures were examined using Pearson correlation coefficients. Normality assumptions were preliminarily checked, and significance criteria were set at $p < .05$.

Results

Descriptive Statistical Profiles

Table 1 includes a detailed breakdown of key variables; showing the variable, means, standard deviations, modes, frequency and percentiles: Findings show students confidence in applying knowledge coming top of the list of the key drivers, followed by students' satisfaction with academic support, then, frequency of participation, resource access and time management skills.

students expressed concerns regarding teaching approaches, highlighting potential for pedagogical refinement. The last on the list of challenges identified is financial constraints as well as fees.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows significant positive relationships among studied variables.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	r	p
Teaching Effectiveness & Confidence Application	.62	< .01
Motivation & Participation Frequency	.48	< .05
Resource Access & Academic Confidence	.39	< .05
Time Management & Participation	.33	> .05

Table 3 illustrates that high teaching effectiveness strongly correlates with students' confidence applying their knowledge. The strong positive correlation between teaching effectiveness and confidence indicates that higher teaching quality fosters greater student self-efficacy in ministry tasks. Motivation was moderately linked to participation frequency, reinforcing intrinsic motivation's role in active student engagement, and adequate resource access positively influences confidence, underscoring the need for Investment

Discussion

The study substantiates teaching effectiveness as a pillar supporting academic confidence and ministry readiness among Nigerian pastoral students (Townes, 2010; Cockle et al., 2023). The positive learner perceptions at BCT Oyo suggest that pedagogical approaches grounded in active learning and content-specific skill development resonate well with first-year pastors (Mathews, 2014). Interactive teaching methodologies, incorporation of storytelling, active listening, and hands-on ministry training contribute to strengthening student engagement and comprehension (Phillips, 2024; Joshua & Lusa, 2024).

The correlation between motivation and participation confirms the power of vocational intrinsic motivation, reflecting students' internal desire to fulfill ministry callings (Wong, 2024). Intrinsic vocational motivation emerges as a vital source of student perseverance and deep learning, aligned with theological education goals emphasizing transformation rather than rote memorization (Wong, 2024; The Gospel Coalition, 2021). However, structural barriers such as time management struggles and inadequate resource access mirror broader challenges documented in Nigerian higher education (Nzewi, 2018; Kretzschmar & Tuckey, 2017; National Open University of Nigeria, 2023; Adeleye, 2024). Critical structural challenges time management difficulties and limited resource availability mirror those found across Nigerian tertiary education and seminaries (Nzewi, 2018; National Open University of Nigeria, 2023). These constraints hinder consistent participation and acquisition of complex pastoral competencies, necessitating institutional focus on student support and infrastructural improvements.

The statistics in table 3 illustrate that high teaching effectiveness strongly correlates with students' confidence applying their knowledge. The strong positive correlation between teaching effectiveness and confidence indicates that higher teaching quality fosters greater student self-efficacy in ministry tasks (Cockle et al., 2023). Motivation was moderately linked to participation frequency, reinforcing intrinsic motivation's role in active student engagement (Wong, 2024). Adequate resource access positively influences confidence, underscoring the need for investment in learning infrastructures. Time management, while moderately correlated, warrants further investigation in larger samples.

Moderate satisfaction with academic support underscores the need for enhanced counseling, mentoring, and peer support, consistent with research linking these interventions to improved theological student retention and spiritual formation (Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024; Chiroma, 2015). To sustain student success, BCT Oyo and similar seminaries should expand faculty professional development focusing on practical pedagogy, improve resource availability through investments in digital libraries and textbooks, and institutionalize structured academic counseling addressing time management and personal challenges (Hardy, 2020; National Open University of Nigeria, 2023).

The moderate satisfaction with academic support invites expansion of counseling and peer mentoring programs, crucial for enhancing student retention and academic progression (Chiroma, 2015; Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024). Effective mentorship provides practical ministry wisdom, emotional support, and cultural competency training necessary for the multi-ethnic Nigerian church landscape (Hall, 2017). Digitally enhanced libraries and ICT integration, as demonstrated by pioneering efforts like Bigard Seminary, mark progressive directions for Nigerian seminaries to democratize information access and enrich theological education despite infrastructural deficits (Bigard Seminary, 2014; Nigeria Catholic Network, 2024).

Limitations

The study's convenience sampling from a single institution with limited female representation constrains generalisability. Self-reported measures risk biases, and the relatively small sample size restricts multivariate analysis usage. Lack of qualitative depth limits nuanced understanding of mentorship and time management experiences. The single-institution context limits applicability across Nigeria's diverse theological education landscape. Future research should incorporate larger samples, mixed methods including qualitative interviews, and multisite comparisons to enrich understanding, validity and scope.

Future Research Directions

Building on this study, qualitative investigations using focus groups and semi-structured interviews could provide deeper insights into pastoral students' lived academic experiences and challenges (Okonkwo, 2022). Comparative studies across Nigerian seminaries would elucidate contextual variations in pedagogical effectiveness and support systems. Evaluation of technology-enhanced learning models and blended pedagogies is warranted in resource-constrained settings (Adeleye, 2024). Multi-cohort comparative studies would clarify systemic disparities and best practices across theological education providers. Continued exploration of mentorship models focusing on intercultural ministry preparation promises significant contribution (Chiroma, 2015; Olawoyin & Kayode, 2024).

Recommendations

- i. Structured Academic Counseling: Establish programs focused on time management, study skills, and personal support to mitigate major student challenges.
- ii. Peer Mentorship and Support Networks: Develop formal mentoring and collaborative learning structures to build community and academic resilience.

Conclusion

This study highlights teaching effectiveness, intrinsic motivation linked to vocational calling, and adequate resource access as fundamental to academic success in the Basic and Pastoral Communication as a course at BCT, Oyo. Confronting challenges in time and resource management through enhanced counseling is essential to advancing theological education quality. The findings provide practical

