

## Exploring Factors Affecting Online Survey Response Rates among Nigerian Management Graduate Students: A Qualitative Study

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### Abstract

*This study investigates why Nigerian management graduate students often show low participation in online surveys, focusing on practical digital constraints and issues of trust. Using a qualitative design, we conducted online, semi-structured interviews with 18 postgraduate management students from Nigerian universities and analyzed the data using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings show that high data costs, unstable internet connectivity, and limited device capacity discourage participation, while perceptions of researcher professionalism, clarity of consent and privacy information, and sensitivity of survey topics strongly shape willingness to respond. Participants also highlighted survey fatigue, especially when links are widely broadcast in bulk through messaging platforms, and expressed a preference for academically meaningful incentives, such as summaries of findings, over vague prize-based rewards. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how material digital constraints and context-specific trust concerns interact to depress online survey response rates in a resource-constrained setting, and it offers practical recommendations for designing more trustworthy, low-burden online surveys for management research in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Online Survey, Response Rate, Nigerian Management Graduate Students.

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### 1. Introduction

Online surveys have become an indispensable tool of data collection in management research, valued for their cost-efficiency, reduced administrative burden, expanded geographic reach, and ability to generate quality data (Saleh & Bista, 2017; Maurer & Lippstreu, 2008). In developing countries such as Nigeria, where logistical and financial barriers often complicate traditional data collection, online platforms including social media and e-learning environments, have become especially attractive to postgraduate researchers (Abanyam & Onimawo, 2020; Dunmade et al., 2023). The strength of postgraduate research ultimately depends on the quality and

breadth of data obtained, making participation rates a critical methodological concern (Tella, 2023; Tella & Ngoaketsi, 2022).

However, achieving adequate response rates remains a persistent challenge. Low participation introduces selection bias, undermines sample representativeness, and reduces the generalizability and validity of research findings (Saleh & Bista, 2017). In the Nigerian context, limited internet accessibility, uneven levels of digital literacy, high data costs, and distinct cultural attitudes toward research and data sharing further complicate participation patterns (Etim et al., 2023). While existing global literature on online

survey response rates offers useful general insights, it largely reflects high-income settings where digital infrastructure is reliable and affordable conditions that do not apply uniformly in Nigeria.

Graduate students occupy a unique dual role in academic research, functioning both as researchers who administer surveys and as participants who are frequently invited to respond to them. Although survey content and relevance have been shown to influence their participation (Alanezi & Alazwani, 2020), the specific digital, psychosocial, and institutional factors that shape Nigerian management graduate students' willingness to respond to online surveys remain insufficiently examined (Holtom et al., 2022). A deeper understanding of these factors is essential for designing surveys that are both methodologically sound and contextually appropriate for the Nigerian academic environment.

- i. This study therefore pursues the following objectives:
- ii. To explore how Nigerian management graduate students perceive the costs and benefits of participating in online surveys.
- iii. To identify the digital, institutional, and psychosocial factors that shape their willingness to respond to online survey invitations.
- iv. To develop context-sensitive recommendations for improving online survey response rates in management research in Nigeria.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews relevant literature on online survey response rates and introduces Social Exchange Theory as the guiding theoretical framework. This is followed by the methodology section, which describes the research design, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and analytic approach. The results section then presents the four main themes that emerged from the interview

data. The discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing scholarship and the Nigerian higher education context. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key contributions, offers practical recommendations for researchers, and identifies directions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

The quality of online surveys as a method of collecting data is heavily reliant on the ability to attain good response rates. An increasing literature has looked at the factors that drive such rates, with most of them being segmented into survey design and structure, incentive systems, communication, researcher credibility, and respondent features (Alanezi & Alazwani, 2020). Although these categories are well-developed in the Western literature, their applications in the resource-constrained setting as in the case of Nigeria are also relatively uncharted, especially in terms of management research performed by postgraduate students.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

The current study is rooted in Social Exchange Theory (SET) which states that the behavior of human beings is governed by an unspoken cost-benefit equation according to which individuals perform those actions that they think will bring them some rewards that are equal or greater than the costs involved (Dillman et al., 2014). When it comes to online survey participation, possible respondents consider the cost of time, mental effort, data cost, and privacy risk against possible rewards including tangible (e.g., monetary compensation, gift cards, access to research findings) or intangible (e.g., altruism in the academic community, personal interest in the subject, perceived professional duty to participate in the research) rewards (Stantcheva, 2023).

Although other theoretical frameworks have been used to study participation behavior, especially the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which emphasizes on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which emphasizes on perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital tools, SET is more applicable in the study because of two reasons. First, it directly includes material economic costs including data charges and connectivity costs, which are especially relevant in the digital landscape of Nigeria. Second, it captures relational and institutional aspects of trust that are paramount in the privacy issues that are presented in the Nigerian context. TPB and TAM are still complementary lenses though SET is the most straight forward lens through which to understand why Nigerian graduate students opt to engage or disengage in online surveys.

Practically, SET means that the enhancement of the response rates is a strategic decision that should be designed. The researchers will have to minimize perceived costs by using shorter, mobile-friendly surveys that require less data and offering a high privacy level, but also increasing perceived rewards by making their research academically relevant and communicating the social value of their work. Participation will be a motivated and rational choice when the perceived benefits are evidently outweighing the costs.

### **2.3 Influencing Factors of Online Survey Response Rates.**

#### ***Survey Design and Structure***

The most frequently reported factors of participation are survey length and structural quality. Martins and Lavradio (2020) discovered that respondents often leave surveys that are perceived to be too long or disorganized, and Munnich et al. (2024) validated that logical flow and conciseness are highly important to ensure that the survey is filled in. More

importantly, though, these studies were carried out in the setting where the internet connectivity is stable and data is not expensive. In resource constrained environments such as Nigeria, the financial expense of loading a poorly optimized, image heavy survey is an actual financial repellent that transcends the inconvenience factor- a point that the Western-centered survey design literature seldom considers.

#### ***Incentives and Rewards***

Incentives have been the subject of much research on the role of incentives in motivating survey participation, with mixed results. Both Saleh and Bista (2017) and Singer and Ye (2012) find that promise of a reward can enhance the participation in demographic groups, but Wu et al. (2022) and Klingwart & Toepoel (2024) warn that the effectiveness of incentives is population-dependent and that use of rewards blindly is unlikely to enhance response rates. Collectively, these studies imply that the nature, applicability and perceived importance of incentives are equally important as their existence. This is especially true of management graduate students who might be more likely to react to academically significant rewards - such as the right to research results or professional connections - than to generic financial or prize-based rewards.

#### ***Communication and Following-Up Strategies.***

The way and frequency in which the invitations are sent to the survey is an important determinant in participation. Pre-notification messages that present the purpose and significance of a survey have demonstrated to enhance preparedness and willingness to participate (Becker, 2022; Koitsalu et al., 2018), whereas personalized, professionally written invitations are better than generic broadcasting messages (Iguzquiza, 2022; Rashid, 2024). However, there exists a critical conflict in literature: on the one hand, reminders can help to increase the

response rates of busy respondents; on the other hand, over- or impersonally sent messages cause annoyance and survey fatigue (Saw, 2025). In Nigerian academic life, this tension is particularly exerted as survey connections are often distributed without any selection in large WhatsApp and Telegram groups, which form a saturation effect of which the literature on communication strategies is not sufficiently able to help.

#### ***Data Privacy and Credibility of the researcher.***

Researcher and institutional credibility is always a powerful participant force. A survey with a good institution will be more engaging to the respondents and they will be more open in answering the questions when they believe that their information is in safe hands (Holtbrugge, 2025; Saleh & Bista, 2017). Nonetheless, credibility is mostly perceived as institutional reputation and guarantees of generic confidentiality in the current literature. Trust, in Nigeria, where there is a greater level of fear of digital surveillance and data abuse, is distributed in a more unitary manner, down to the technical safety of the survey itself and the perceived ability to trace individual responses.

#### ***Characteristics and Attitudes of respondents.***

Participation propensity is also influenced by individual factors, such as email-checking habits, previous research experience, and demographic factors. Park et al. (2018) discovered that male respondents were more receptive to reminders, whereas older respondents were more affected by material gifts. Academic engagement, especially in graduate students, might be an effective motivational factor at first, but the motivation may be easily overcome by survey fatigue caused by the number of requests and their lack of specificity. These demographic peculiarities imply the

necessity of customized instead of standardized strategies of surveying.

#### ***Literature Summary and Gaps.***

Together, the literature confirms that the online survey response rate is influenced by the combination of the quality of design, incentive systems, and communication strategies, the credibility of the researcher, and the nature of the respondent. Nevertheless, the existing scholarship has three conceptual gaps that restrict its application in the case of the Nigerian management research. First, the majority of the studies are based on high-income conditions, and they fail to consider the material financial cost of data internet use as a barrier to participation. Second, the literature views trust as more of an institutional and reputation problem, which ignores the platform-level surveillance issues that are especially relevant in Nigeria. Third, although the problem of survey fatigue is globally recognized, less attention has been paid to its concrete form as an informal means of communication via WhatsApp and Telegram, which are core elements of the Nigerian scholarly communication. These gaps are directly tackled through the present study, where the authors consider the impact of online survey participation on the experience and navigation of the costs, rewards, and trust factors among Nigerian management graduate students through the prism of the Social Exchange Theory.

### **3. Methodology**

The study design and philosophy will be straightforward and uncomplicated, as participants will be approached to answer questions as outlined below.

#### ***3.1 Research Design and Philosophy.***

The current research design was an exploratory qualitative research design, which was conveniently suitable in exploring the how and why of online survey participation behaviour among the management graduate students in Nigeria.

A qualitative approach was selected as it would allow in-depth and contextually-based descriptions of lived experiences of participants - the complex interplay of digital constraints, issues of trust, and academic motivations that cannot be well covered using survey tools. The choice of semi-structured interviews was predetermined by the purpose of these interviews to enable the participants to narrate their experiences using their own words and the possibility of the researcher to inquire about the emerging issues based on the Nigerian socio-technical context (Ahmed et al., 2025; Lepik et al., 2025).

### **3.2 Respondents and Sampling Strategy.**

The use of purposive sampling was to ensure that the participants used were those who would have informed data. The selection was informed by three eligibility criteria: (a) enrolment in a postgraduate management course in a Nigerian university; (b) use of digital research tools; and (c) administration or completion of at least three online surveys in the last 24 months. To increase geographic and institutional heterogeneity, the respondents were selected at three geopolitical zones of Nigeria South-West, South-East and North-Central regions and reflected the diversity of management sub-disciplines, such as human resource management, marketing and business administration.

The sample was a total of 18 participants, which was chosen based on theoretical saturation, i.e., when no new categories of concepts were developed using the data (Munnich et al., 2024). However, one must note that there are several sampling limitations. To begin with, limiting the sample to students of management implies that the results might not be applicable to postgraduate students of other fields, including STEM or health sciences who might have different digital habits and motivation. Second, the purposive target of digitally active students probably underrepresents students with the most

serious limitations to connectivity, who may face the highest barrier to participation but were less reachable via online recruitment methods. Third, although geographic dissemination was the central focus, the research cannot boast national coverage and the views of students in North-West, North-East, and South-South regions of Nigeria were not stratified.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instrument**

The semi-structured interview guide was designed and made digitally valid in this study. The guide was organized in terms of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the questions were devised to bring out the perceptions of the participants in terms of the costs incurred in terms of time, data costs, privacy risk, and internet instability as well as the rewards in terms of incentives, academic altruism, and perceived relevance of the survey in terms of relevance to the survey. To test the instrument contextual appropriateness and linguistic accessibility, a pilot study on three doctoral students was carried out, and after that, slight modifications were made to the wording and order of questions.

Reflexivity journal was kept during the data collection and analysis process to reduce researcher bias so that the researcher could record personal assumptions, emotional reactions, and interpretations. In addition to this, the interviewer influence was also minimized by using the neutral and open-ended probes that did not lead the participants into specific answers. Six participants were also subjected to member-checking where they were given a summary of the emerging themes and affirmed that they were well captured by these themes. Another check on the analytical interpretations was peer debriefing with a colleague who was not part of the study.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

Interviews were carried out on encrypted synchronous video conferencing systems,

namely Zoom and Microsoft Teams, that helped to reach the participants in various geopolitical areas of Nigeria and enabled the relational rapport required in the process of qualitative inquiry. Informed consent was provided before every interview in the form of digital consent forms signed with the help of DocuSign. Interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes and they were audio-taped with the consent of the participants.

The recordings were transcribed with the help of AI-based transcription software, and then it was verified manually to check the accuracy and to consider expressions of the Nigerian English and the terminology that is related to the discipline. All information was anonymized and stored on a cloud server with password access in strong adherence to the Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023).

It should be noted though that using online video platforms to conduct interviews also brought about a degree of bias when it comes to digital exclusion. Students who had the strongest internet connectivity limitations, which is arguably the most direct impact of the digital barriers being studied, were the least likely to engage in video-based interviews because it would in turn demand a reliable internet connection and adequate data. Such structural irony implies that the results of the study, though also full and deeply contextual, might not be reflective of the true scope of digital burden that the wider group of Nigerian management graduate students have to bear.

### **3.5 Method of Data Analysis**

This research used Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) developed by Braun and Clarke (2022). RTA was chosen instead of more organized strategies like traditional content analysis since it clearly places the researcher as a direct participant of the knowledge construction, so that the themes could be produced in a rigorous process of interpretation instead of the mechanical

procedure of counting the frequency of the codes. This is especially suitable based on the interpretivist epistemology that the study is founded on and the contextually based nature of the phenomenon that is under study.

The stages of the analysis were six:

- i. Familiarization: Reading through of the interviews and listening to the tape recordings of the interviews multiple times to achieve a deep familiarity with the data.
- ii. Coding: NVivo software version 14 was used to systematically organize and manage the data by assigning initial codes to meaningful segments of data.
- iii. Theme Generation: Preliminary codes were combined into candidate themes of patterns of meaning that were consistent and pertinent to the research aims.
- iv. Reviewing: Monitoring The themes of the candidate were checked against the entire dataset to ensure that they were well-supported by the data and that they reflected the experiences of the participants.
- v. Defining: Analytically precise definitions of all the themes were created, stating what each theme entails and what it adds to the interpretation of survey participation behavior.
- vi. Reporting: Participant verbatim quotes were embedded in a narrative report that placed findings in the context of the larger academic literature.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

Analysis of the 18 in-depth interviews through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) generated four principal themes that illuminate the factors shaping online survey participation among Nigerian management graduate students. The findings presented here are drawn from a purposive sample and are intended to be analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable. They offer contextually grounded insights into the depth and complexity of participation

experiences rather than estimates of prevalence across the broader student population.

#### **4.1 Theme 1: Digital Burden and Infrastructural Constraints**

Digital burden emerged as the most prominent and consistently discussed theme across the interviews. Participants frequently described high mobile data costs and unreliable internet connectivity as tangible, recurring deterrents to survey participation. Unlike the largely time-based participation costs documented in Western literature, Nigerian management graduate students framed participation as a direct financial expenditure — one they actively weighed before deciding whether to engage with a survey link.

*"When I click on a link, sometimes the pictures or scales just take long to load up. When I am accessing my personal data sub [subscription], I simply close it. It's not worth the MBs."* (Participant 4, PhD Candidate)

This theme was particularly prominent among PhD candidates, who spoke at length about the cumulative data costs associated with extended research programmes, and among older participants, who emphasized financial constraints alongside connectivity problems. Device limitations — such as low storage capacity and outdated smartphones — were also raised by a smaller number of participants as secondary but compounding barriers.

#### **4.2 Theme 2: Academic Solidarity versus Survey Fatigue**

A strong sense of academic solidarity initially motivated many participants to respond to survey invitations, grounded in an awareness of how difficult data collection can be. However, this collegial motivation was frequently undermined by survey fatigue, driven by the indiscriminate mass distribution of survey links through departmental WhatsApp and Telegram groups. Participants described a

tipping point at which the volume and poor targeting of requests eroded their goodwill and prompted selective disengagement.

*"We assist one another, as we are all in the same boat. However, when I encounter five surveys daily in the departmental group, then I begin to turn a blind eye to them unless it is a subject quite related to mine."* (Participant 12, MSc Student)

Survey oversaturation was a recurring concern raised by nearly all participants and was particularly salient among younger respondents aged 25 to 30, who described being constantly exposed to survey requests across multiple platforms. This pattern suggests that the informal digital channels commonly used to distribute surveys in Nigerian universities — while convenient — may be actively diminishing the social capital that sustains voluntary academic participation.

#### **4.3 Theme 3: Trust, Confidentiality, and Surveillance Concerns**

Trust and confidentiality concerns constituted a significant structural barrier to participation, particularly when surveys touched on sensitive organizational topics such as workplace corruption, management misconduct, or institutional politics. Participants expressed skepticism not only about how their data would be used but also about the technical capacity of survey platforms to guarantee genuine anonymity — especially when invitations were delivered through personal direct messages that felt traceable.

*"In Nigeria you must be mindful. Although they may insist that it is anonymous, when the link is shared through a personal DM, you question whether or not the researcher will be able to trace you."* (Participant 7, PhD Candidate)

Female participants were notably more likely to raise privacy and surveillance concerns, suggesting that trust operates along gendered lines within this context. Participants' discussions revealed that standard anonymity disclaimers were often

perceived as insufficient, particularly when the distribution method itself — a personal message from a known researcher — created doubt about traceability. This points to a gap between formal privacy assurances and their perceived credibility in practice.

**4.4 Theme 4: Incentive Structures and Professional Value**

While monetary compensation was acknowledged as a positive signal of researcher seriousness, participants broadly indicated that non-monetary, academically meaningful rewards were more persuasive. Executive summaries of research findings, opportunities for professional networking, and acknowledgment of participants'

contributions were identified as more effective motivators than vague prize-based or lottery-style incentives, which several participants associated with a lack of research credibility.

*"If you tell me I will get a summary of what you find, I am more likely to take your survey seriously. It means you value my input, not just my click."* (Participant 15, MSc Student)

This preference for value-aligned incentives aligns with SET's proposition that intangible academic rewards can be highly motivating within professional communities, provided they are clearly communicated and perceived as genuine.

**Table 1: Summary of Themes and Key Sub-themes**

Theme	Key Sub-themes	Analytical Significance
<b>Digital Burden and Infrastructural Constraints</b>	High data costs; Internet instability; Device limitations	Most prominently discussed theme; framed participation as a direct financial cost
<b>Academic Solidarity vs. Survey Fatigue</b>	Collegial obligation; Survey oversaturation; Platform-specific fatigue	Reveals tension between prosocial motivation and structural exhaustion
<b>Trust, Confidentiality, and Surveillance Concerns</b>	Anonymity skepticism; Data misuse concerns; Platform security	Trust operates beyond institutional reputation to include platform-level traceability
<b>Incentive Structures and Professional Value</b>	Professional development value; Research findings access; Monetary incentives	Academic value incentives more persuasive than monetary or prize-based rewards

*Source: Derived from NVivo 14-assisted analysis, 2025*

Table 1 summarizes the four themes and their constituent sub-themes. Digital burden was the most persistently and emotionally discussed theme across the sample, with participants returning to issues of data costs and connectivity repeatedly and unprompted. Survey oversaturation emerged as a near-universal concern, reflecting a systemic challenge in Nigerian academic networks where informal messaging platforms have normalized the mass broadcasting of

survey requests. Trust concerns, while slightly less prevalent, were discussed with notable intensity, particularly among female participants and those whose research topics touched on sensitive organizational issues. Incentive structures generated the most positive and forward-looking discussion, with participants offering concrete suggestions for how researchers could better signal the value of participation.

**Table 2: Participant Profile and Thematic Emphases**

Demographic Group	n	Primary Thematic Emphasis	Notable Observations
PhD Candidates	9	Digital Burden	Spoke extensively about cumulative data costs over long programmes
MSc Students	9	Survey Fatigue	Described high exposure to survey requests across multiple platforms
Male	11	Digital Burden	Focused predominantly on cost-benefit calculations
Female	7	Trust and Confidentiality	Raised privacy and surveillance concerns more frequently and intensely
Age 25–30	8	Survey Fatigue	Most digitally active but most saturated with requests
Age 31–40	10	Digital Burden	Linked data costs to broader financial pressures

Source: Derived from NVivo 14-assisted analysis, 2025

Table 2 provides contextual background on how thematic emphases varied across demographic sub-groups within the sample. These differences are illustrative rather than statistically representative, given the small purposive sample. Nevertheless, they suggest that a homogeneous approach to survey design and distribution is likely to be inadequate. PhD candidates' sensitivity to cumulative data costs points to a risk of attrition in longitudinal studies, while female participants' heightened privacy concerns suggest that standard anonymity assurances may need to be strengthened for studies involving sensitive organizational topics. The concentration of survey fatigue among younger, digitally active participants is particularly noteworthy, as it implies that the most accessible demographic may simultaneously be the most disengaged.

### Discussion

These results confirm that Social Exchange Theory is an explanatory relevant general model of online survey participation, but demonstrates that the theory has been limited in its operationalization within the survey methodology. The question of whether respondents balance costs and benefits is not central but how these costs

are formed in resource-constrained digital environments. Three context-specific costs were eminent in this study: direct financial spending on mobile data, instability of infrastructures, and loss of social capital of the academia because of oversaturation. These dimensions demand a more context sensitive deployment of SET.

Traditional survey research, based on the studies of Dillman et al. (2014), Stantcheva (2023), and so on, views the cost of participation mainly in cognitive and time terms. Time and effort are considered to be the major discouraging factors. Nevertheless, in this study Nigerian management graduate students continued to construct participation as a material burden. It took little mobile data to complete a survey and relied on untrustworthy Internet connectivity. This expense is usually unobservable in the theoretical framework in high-income situations, when broadband is stable and comparably inexpensive, as in Munnich et al. (2024) and Martins and Lavrado (2020). The current evidence shows that this omission is not only empirical, but conceptual. Internet-mediated interaction has a physical financial and infrastructural cost, which can be interpreted as some kind of digital tax. In comparable contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa and in some aspects of

South Asia, the concept of data minimization and mobile-first design is not an optional tool but a mandatory technique. The analysis also reinvigorates the assumptions regarding academic solidarity as a motivation resource that is stable. Previous studies, such as Saleh and Bista (2017), name collegial obligation as an influential factor in graduate student attendance. As this relationship existed, respondents related to a breaking point in which constant and haphazard survey invitations led to disengagement. The goodwill of the academia became exhaustible instead of exhaustive. It is hard to rebuild once it has been lost through over saturation. The situation is being further fueled in the conditions when the informal platforms, like WhatsApp and Telegram, are used as the main channels of distribution. The current communication practices, which are typically based on email-based models, e.g., described by Becker (2022) and Koitsalu et al. (2018), do not fully cover this saturation effect. Distribution management is thus long term, and it has its consequences on the longterm sustainability of data collection.

Trust also went beyond institutional affiliation. Whereas credibility in the survey methodology is commonly considered an institutional feature, as in the case of Holtbrugge (2025) and Saleh and Bista (2017), respondents rated trust on platform and distributional levels. Anonymity was judged based on the perceived security of the survey instrument and the mode of delivering the invitation. It happened that direct messages by known researchers undermined confidence on confidentiality at times, despite formal disclaimers. This finding is consistent with Etim et al. (2023) in terms of the impact of digital literacy and context, but more specific since it refers to the distributional traceability as a particular mechanism. There is some evidence, based on gender, that the differences in privacy concern, so

strategies of trust-building can be offered as differentiation, but not one-size-fits-all. Lastly, the effectiveness of incentives was based on the alignment of values. In line with Wu et al. (2022) and Klingwart and Toepoel (2024), the efficacy of rewards was population-specific. Nevertheless, academically significant incentives were understood as a sign of respect and seriousness, and rewards based on prizes were considered transactional. Incentives therefore served a communicative purpose that determined the relationship nature of the survey encounter.

All in all, the results suggest the need to recalibrate the methodology of online surveys in context. Digital infrastructure should be considered as a design variable of primary focus, trust conceptualized as multi-layered, academic social capital as a resource with limited management, and incentives as a result of professional identity. Models of high-connectivity environments are not supposed to be transferred directly into resource-constrained situations.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

This research indicates that online surveys in Nigeria are structurally challenged in a manner that is not similar to those that are reported in high-connectivity environments. Models based on contexts where broadband is stable and affordable do not take into account the main limitation in Nigeria, which is the monetary cost of mobile data. Participants put the data cost higher than time burden, length of survey and cognitive effort as the main discouraging factors of participation. This observation raises doubts about the blind application of models of the dominant survey methodology to resource-constrained situations.

The findings also point to the fact that small procedural changes are insufficient. The respondents were more attracted to

academically significant rewards, like having access to the study results and professional recognition as opposed to rewarding them with prizes. They perceived incentives as the indication of the respect to their intellectual input and the gravitas of the research process.

The sustainable data collection thus necessitates conscious management of the costs of participation, more robust assurances of trust that transcend beyond the institutional branding to practices of platforms and distribution, and close management of the circulation of the surveys. The goodwill of academic work is compromised by a lack of fairness in random allocation, overactive demands, or ineffective privacy protection. Further studies need to be longitudinal, cross-disciplinary, and cross-regional in Nigeria and how institutional ethics and data protection policies can be used to facilitate equitable research participation.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the study findings, it is recommended that Low-bandwidth design should be one of the major methodological standards that management researchers should employ when carrying out surveys among Nigerian university students. One should use data-efficient platforms like KoboToolbox or Google Forms, reduce or eliminate images, slider scales can be substituted with basic Likert choices, and multimedia features should be avoided. It is advisable to test all the surveys on a 3G connection before being deployed and not exceed 12-15 minutes so that it does not consume much data as well as becoming tiresome.

Privacy statements should no longer be generic statements on confidentiality. Following the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, the researchers must explicitly provide the legal basis of data collection, data controller, storage platform and security measures, retention and erase explanations, and the rights of the

participants to withdraw and demand erasure. This knowledge ought to be given in simple terms prior to the start of survey. Rewards must be based on academic reciprocity as opposed to a transactional reward. Signs of seriousness and respect are executive summaries, recognition of participation or access to findings. Lastly, distribution must be organized and customized. One-on-one requests, reduced follow-ups, and recommendation by the trusted institutional agents are desirable as compared to random broadcasts in groups, which lead to survey fatigue.

### **Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this study is not devoid of certain methodological limitations which limit the generalizability of findings. To begin with, the qualitative design and the sample size of 18 participants do not allow one to statistically generalize to the larger population of Nigerian university students. Second, the study was limited to the field of management; therefore, the results might not be applicable to other student groups, including STEM and medicine, which might have different digital habits and educational incentives. Lastly, the use of online interview forms could have created a digital exclusion bias, which could have underrepresented the views of students who have the greatest internet connectivity issues.

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