

SURVEY OF DETERMINANTS OF FRENCH UNDERGRADUATE AND POST-GRADUATE ENROLMENT RATIOS ACROSS NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES**By****Cheryl Amaka Udogu PhD**

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Abstract

As increasing numbers of students seek admission into various university programmes at undergraduate and post graduate levels, professionals in French departments expect corresponding enrolment growth. However, this expectation remains largely unrealised, as enrolment ratios in Nigerian University French programmes appear low and in some cases non-existent. This study investigates the determinants of French enrolment ratios across five universities in Eastern and North-Central Nigeria. It is anchored on Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, which explains how attitudes, social pressure, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intention. Data were collected from 65 participants through oral and telephone interviews. Using a descriptive survey and mixed-method approach, the study employs descriptive, statistical, thematic, and content analyses. Findings reveal generally low enrolment ratios, with relatively higher female enrolment. Determinants include social pressure from socialisation agents, limited career guidance, negative perceptions and misconceptions about French studies, and institutional management factors. The study recommends stronger stakeholder collaborations, public sensitisation, and targeted strategies to improve enrolment in French programmes.

Keywords: Determinants, French, Enrolment ratios, Planned Behaviour, Nigerian Universities

Introduction

Nigerian universities are yet to have appreciable ratios of enrolment into French programmes. Studies, such as Mbah (2023), Nwode et al. (2025), and Odion et al. (2025), affirm the statutory backing of French language in Nigeria's policy documents like the National Policy on Education (2013; 2016) and the National Language Policy. The "rules on how languages should be used in a given society" are regarded as language policies (Nwode et al., 2025, p. 1). Thus, language policies in Nigeria stipulate how languages should be used, taught, and learnt in various settings. Interestingly, French language is one of the foreign languages having statutory backing in Nigeria. It is the official language in France, Belgium, Switzerland, parts of Canada, and ex-colonies of France and Belgium in Africa, and the second official language of Nigeria since 1996 (Osawaru & Osawaru, 2022). It is taught across all tiers of education in the country. Since it has statutory backing and offers huge career and communication prospects (Daramola & Udogu, 2025), there is need to investigate the ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities. Doing so would help increase the enrolment ratios and

improve the teaching and learning of the French language.

As Case (2023) notes, policies and various frameworks influence individuals' choices of how, when and where to study. This view points to the determinants of individuals' choice for French Programme at either undergraduate or graduate level. It follows that policy lapses and other factors influence the ratios of enrolment into French programmes. To empirically establish the cause of the current low ratios of enrolment or the dwindling enrolment ratios, a research of this kind is imperative. It is to this end that this study rises to evaluate the ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities in the South-East. The study is significant and innovative, because of its thematic concerns, promising contributions, and envisaged findings. The contributions will be of conceptual, theoretical and empirical folds. The findings will influence language policies and practices in Nigeria. As it leads to increased enrolment, Nigerian universities are bound to become equipped with a larger world-class trained manpower in French language.

Increased enrolment would directly or indirectly widen Nigeria's diplomatic ties with French speaking countries across the globe. Considering the aforementioned benefits of increased enrolment into university French programmes, the study's contributions and findings, the significance of the study cannot be over-emphasised. In view of the foregoing, this study intends to make a critical field-based survey of the determinants of French undergraduate and post-graduate enrolment ratios across Nigerian universities. Stating categorically, the study is aimed at exploring the determinants of student enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities. In addition, the study has the objective of comparing the enrolment ratios between male and female students. The scope of the study also extends to presenting viable ways of attaining and maintaining increased enrolment ratios into French programme across Nigerian universities.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), championed by Icek Ajzen. TPB explains how human behaviour is directly driven by behavioural intention, whereby the intention is shaped by attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms (social pressure), and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, the theory describes behaviour on the basis of perceived behavioural control, attitudes, and subjective norms. It is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which describes the individual's belief in their ability to execute the action. In the context of this study, the perceived behavioural control concerns availability of competent and qualified teachers (lecturers), and the needed resources with which students can get attracted to French and do well in it. The resources include laboratories, instructional materials, learning technologies, and infrastructural facilities. These can be considered as management variables.

Policies, practices, and procedures implemented by school administrators and teachers to create conducive learning environment are regarded as management variables (Ogwunte et al., 2022; Wankasi, 2022). The variables include school leadership, teacher quality, curriculum design, and student discipline. Effective management of these variables is essential for promoting student engagement, motivation, and achievement. These variables play a crucial role in shaping the learning environment and determining the success of students (Agwu & Aja-Okorie, 2021). As Meyers et al. (2023) note, management variables influence the academic performance of secondary school students. This is why many related extant studies point at the challenges of teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on poor foundation and low knowledge of French language at the secondary level as the bane of the poor

performance recorded among university French students.

The theory is relevant to this study, because students' attitude towards French determines their choice of it for admission at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. Their attitude is influenced by their perception of French as being useful, prestigious or career-prosperous. Next, the theory is relevant to the study because it points to how subjective norms from parents, peers, primary and/or secondary school teachers, the mass media, the new media, and national language policies on French language influence and determine the interest and choice of prospective students. That is, students' intention to get enrolled into French programmes can be influenced or determined by subjective norms. For example, the parental norm of deciding children's courses or careers without minding their capabilities and interests in the courses adversely affect the children's choice of a field of endeavour for career. It is a common practice among some contemporary parents to say: Child A must study Medicine and Surgery; Child B must study Law; Child C would have to go for Engineering; Child E must take up my Aviation profession; and Child F must be an Accountant. Additional to spelling out these fields for the children without testing or considering their interests and capabilities in each of them, such parents go on to say, "Even if I am no more, when you are getting admission into the university, make sure you go for the courses I have mentioned." Thus, as individuals under behavioural control, such intending French language students have their choice, interest and career determined by their parents to become otherwise.

Also, many young people seeking admission into universities have little or no knowledge of the prospects of many courses. So, they often opt for the ones their peers are going for, maybe peers whose parents had decided theirs. Craving for the same field with their peers can also influence them to choose other courses considered popular, lucrative and less stressful, leaving out the French language. The tendency to show off that they too could study the courses their peers or models want or are studying already also determines their choice of courses other than French. Different subjective norms can mislead young people into course other than the ones they would have actually gone into. For example, young persons who ordinarily want to study the French language at the university can change their minds when convinced otherwise with subjective norms or baseless thoughts about professions that can be gotten with the French language by their parents, relatives, peers, teachers, models or even other agents of socialisation. As such, it is obvious that the subjective norms, which such persons came in contact with, or got exposed to, caused their planned behaviour towards French language as a field of study at the university.

Review of Related Studies

The study by Akuneme and Nwosu (2025) examines attribution and language learning narratives, with a central focus on learners of French as third language across Nigerian federal universities in the South-East. Attribution explains how language learners interpret their language success and failures. Their findings show that learners attribute their success or failure to factors such as ability, effort, and task difficulty, which socio-demographic variables like age, gender, and family support influence language learning experiences. Although the study engages with French and the challenges of teaching it in Nigeria, it is not concerned with enrolment ratios into French Language Department. The present study extends the discussion by exploring the factors influencing the dwindling enrolment ratios into French programmes.

The challenges confronting learners of French language are explored by Daramola and Udogu's (2025). Their study identifies poor foundation in French language, overcrowded classrooms, lack of functional language laboratories, and negative perception of the language as key issues affecting French language education. Although these findings

expose structural and pedagogical challenges, the study does not specifically examine the determinants of enrolment into French language programmes in Nigerian universities.

One notable issue identified by Daramola and Udogu (2025) is the admission of students who did not originally apply for French language programmes. This practice reflects the low voluntary enrolment into French language in Nigerian universities. Similar findings were reported by Israel and Israel (2014), who highlighted policy implementation challenges in admission processes. However, these studies focus primarily on admission practices rather than the broader determinants of enrolment ratios.

The study by Odion et al. (2025) examines the removal of French language from General Studies (GS) Course in Nigerian Universities, against its erstwhile inclusion through the National Universities Commission's (NUC) Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) curriculum, aimed at promoting bilingual culture. Data were drawn from 46 questionnaire respondents across selected universities in North-Central Nigeria, South-East, South-South and South-West. Mixed methods with both descriptive and statistical tools, were employed. The results show majority of the teacher and student respondents faulting the removal and affirming the implications of the removal, which include increased mass unemployment and limiting even the basic knowledge of French language to students and teachers in the discipline. Although the study engages with the institutional issues confronting the progress of French discipline, it does not look at the enrolment ratios. The present study is an intervention in that regard.

Atilade and Osunniran's (2024) work determines the relationship between mode of admission and students' academic performance in French language, as in the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. The study regrets that little or no scholastic attention is paid to the relationship between the two variables. It relied on beginner and non-beginner Fourth Year students' results and overall CGPA within 2010-2019. The analysis reveals that non-beginners have an edge over the beginners, and there was no significant performance difference in their session results. The study concludes that post-secondary French programmes into undergraduate programmes equip students with more skills that make them perform better than their contemporaries, who got admitted from secondary straightaway into the programmes as beginners. Although the study establishes the relationship between mode of admission and students' academic performance, it does not engage with the determinants of enrolment ratios into French programmes. Thus, the present study goes beyond the preoccupations of the reviewed literature.

Olajide's et al. (2024) study assesses the effect of acculturation programme on the academic achievement of French students in Nigerian colleges of education. The acculturation exercise popularly describes the Immersion Program, the compulsory course needed for the graduation of French students at the college of education (NCCE, 2020). The results of the analysis demonstrate that students exposed to the acculturation programme significantly outperformed their contemporaries who were not exposed to the programme. The study concludes that since the acculturation programme is result-oriented and performance-driven, it has to be taken seriously and sustained. Teachers should endeavour to expose all French students to the programme for the attainment of efficiency and optimal performance. The study relates to the present one, as proves the benefits of deep engagement with French in language learning. Nevertheless, it is not concerned with exploring and establishing the determinants of French enrolment ratios into Nigerian universities.

For Olaseinde and Olaseinde's (2024) study, French language teachers face some challenges in the classroom. These include mother-tongue interference among learners, shortage of instructional materials, lack of modern technologies, teacher and student

factors bordering on their personal in/actions and mis/deeds, public misconception of French language, and psychological issues. The study concludes that the challenges lead to poor academic achievement among students of French in internal and international examinations. Like others, the study is not concerned with the determinants of enrolment ratio into French programmes.

Jaja's (2023) study explores availability and adequacy of language training resources to students who undergo the immersion programme at the Nigeria French Language Village (NFLV), Ajara, Badagry. Descriptive survey design was employed. Data were obtained from 377 NCE year II students and 17 facilitators at the NFLV. The analysis of the gathered data revealed shortage of material resources and physical facilities, while human and a few material resources were found available and adequate. Although the study highlights the challenges facing French learners at the practical level of professional practice, it leaves out issues of enrolment. To that end, the current study is an intervention. The findings of Jaja's (2023) study reflect those of Abdulraheem's (2022) study, which are logistical challenges and institutional practical, such as delayed visa processing, high cost of the programme, and insufficient pre-departure preparation of students.

The measures for curbing the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in contemporary South-Eastern Nigeria are established by Osuchukwu's et al. (2023) study. The increasing fall in enrolment ratios into the Nigerian colleges of education is lamented in the study. The results show that by 2010-2011, the enrolment ratios were around 420-above but below 500; dropped to 320-380 in 2012 and 2018; increased to 600-668 in 2013 and 2014; dropped again to 200-227 in 2019; and below 100 between 2020 and 2023. Negative attitude towards colleges of education programmes, parents' mentality and socialisation against these colleges, ignorance and low awareness, lack of career guidance and counseling, management factors, certificate dichotomy, and discriminations against students of colleges of education among university students were established to be the major causes of the dwindling enrolment ratios into Nigerian Colleges of Education. The viable means of addressing the dwindling ratios of enrolment include increased mass awareness campaigns, teacher-parent partnership, meaningful stakeholder collaboration, availability and accessibility of up-to-date learning resources, early and effective career guidance and counselling, and reduced admission cut-off points. Although the study engages with enrolment ratios, its focus is on Colleges of Education, not French programmes. Nevertheless, it offers valuable insights into causes of and solutions to dwindling enrolment into tertiary institutions.

The study by Bello et al. (2022) evaluates the state of French language teaching and learning in Nigeria. It demonstrates that French language has statutory backing and offers huge benefits to its learners, teachers and speakers in different settings of the globalised society. It concludes that French language is currently faced with a range of challenges that affect its teaching and learning across Nigerian institutions of learning. It recommends that Nigerian government should recruit and train more teachers to fill the numerous vacancies across the institutions. The study relates to the present one, as it engages with the trends in French language teaching and learning in Nigeria. However, it does not show the determinants of enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities. The finding supports the stance of the present study. Its conclusion stresses the need for stakeholders to address the challenges and make French attractive to prospective students. The recommendation points to the reality of enrolment ratios into

French programmes increase, the various institutions would undoubtedly have more numbers of trained teachers of French language.

The study carried out by Osawaru and Osawaru (2022) looked at some challenges confronting French language teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities. The challenges it identifies are lack of functional laboratories, admitting students who did not apply to study French language, and over-crowded classrooms. The effects of these challenges include producing poorly trained graduates of French, who are deficient in French knowledge, competence and performance, and may be unemployable. Of specific interest to the present study is the issue of admission. The implication is that following low free-will enrolment into French programmes, particularly at the undergraduate level, university authorities often resort to admitting even those who did not apply for French. There is need for public sensitisation and early career guidance and counselling involving French teachers, who educate young people and children on the benefits of taking up a career in French discipline. Concerted efforts also have to be made to build a solid foundation in French language in pupils and secondary school students.

The study by Gyuse et al. (2019) explores teaching of French and the place of translation in Bachelor's curricula in Nigerian universities. The study notes that the importance of teaching French language in Nigeria, stating that teaching French in Nigeria helps tighten Nigeria's relationship with its neighbouring French countries. It reveals that undergraduates of Nigerian universities usually face some challenges in acquiring proficiency in French language, and in translating from English into French. It also points out that translation is a distinct competence that equips students with self-employment skills, which put them above others for employment opportunities. Those skills are additional to acquiring the knowledge of French language. The findings underscore the importance of translation and the relevance of French language education in Nigeria and elsewhere, as a second language (L2). The study concludes that translation increases efficiency in French. It recommends that further scholarly investigations should be carried out into how translation is being taught in Nigerian universities, particularly the translation from French to English and vice versa. In view of the foregoing, it is imperative to carry out a study of this kind on the enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was employed. This design involves eliciting information from a sample drawn from a target population through self-administered questionnaire or interviews and the subjecting the collected data to statistical analysis, with the aim of answering the research questions and meeting the research objectives (Suemo et al., 2016; Ubah et al., 2012). Nwobi (2014), "descriptive survey design focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviour" (p. 106). Thus, it aptly suits this study. Survey research is affirmed to be "the commonest and most popular type of research in management, educational, behavioural and social sciences" (Ubah et al., 2012, p. 12). This design is chosen for several reasons. First, it allows for the use of purposive population, precision and the reduction of a large population into a small or concise one that represents the large one. It also allows for qualitative data and in-depth analysis of data through its interrogatory tools. Besides, the findings of a research involving the survey method usually validate or disprove the research questions and

hypotheses or assumptions.

The reliable findings allow for a valid conclusion, upon which recommendations are made. Structured and unstructured oral (face-to-face) and telephone interviews were held with 65 oral respondents. Out of the 65, 25 are teachers of French language across 5 Nigerian universities in the South-East and North-Central Nigeria. Similarly, 25 parents were involved. And, across the selected universities, 3 students each were selected, making up a total of 15 student oral respondents. The data analysis involved using 5-point Likert scale coding and simple percentage to determine the results. Its formula is:

$$\frac{E}{EN} = 8 \frac{O}{100}$$

Tables, figures, interpretive devices, analytic description, and critical techniques are the other analytical tools employed. Both primary and secondary data were subjected to thematic and content analyses. Besides, the systematic review was employed specifically for the analysis of the secondary data, focusing only on the thematic concerns.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Current Enrolments and the Determinants

SN	Variables	SA	A	N	D	SD	Tot.
1	The ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities are currently high	6	9	3	18	29	65 100%
2	The ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities are currently low	39	14	-	12	-	65 100%
3	The current low ratios of enrolment into French are caused by attitude, behavioural intention, perception, subjective norms or social pressure, and perceived behavioural control.	38	11	-	9	7	65 100%
4	Policies and various regulatory frameworks influence individuals' choices of courses, thereby determining enrolment ratios into French.	16	39		10	-	65 100%

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

Data obtained for Variable 1 of the Table 1 prove that the ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities are currently not high. The proof was got from 29 and 18 respondents, who strongly disagreed and disagreed to the assertion "the ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities are currently high." Put together, 47 (72.3%) disproved the proposition. Thus, since the remaining sets of responses, alone or together, are statistically inconsequential, the 47 are upheld as the basis of the finding. Similarly, on the proposition that "the ratios of enrolment into French

informants strongly agreed and agreed that the enrolment is currently low. Thus, 53 (81.5%) held that the current enrolment ratios are low. These responses further strengthen or complement those against the postulation that the enrolment is currently high. In the same vein, the theoretical factors for the low enrolment are upheld by 38 (58.5%) and 11 (16.9%) interviewees, who chose Strongly Agreed (SA) and Agreed (A) response variables. Put together, the 49 (75.4%) informants confirmed that attitude, behavioural intention, perception, subjective norms or social pressure, and perceived behavioural control cause the current low ratios of enrolment into French. As such, the theoretical framework applies to the study practically in real-world context. Finally, the Variable 4 data show that “policies and various regulatory frameworks influence individuals' choices of courses, thereby determining enrolment ratios into French. That is, the realisation or manifestation of the three aspects of the Theory of Planned Behaviour determines the choice of other courses over French among the prospective students of French. This finding is established from the responses of 55 (), being 16 (24.6%) and 39 (60%) interviewees

Table 2: Enrolment Ratios, Gender, and Increasing the Ratios

SN	Variables	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The following factors are the major determinant of student enrolment ratios into French across Nigerian universities:	28	23	4	-	10
	1. Motivations and students' percept attitude towards French language 2. French language policy and its implementation 3. Career opportunities and labour prospects 4. Admission requirements 5. Exposure to Francophone environment 6. Availability and access to resources and infrastructure 7. Socio-economic factors, including income and agents of socialisation 8. Quality and availability of French teaching					
2	Female enrolment ratios are more than males.	28	23	-	14	-
3	Enrolment ratios into French programs in Nigerian universities can be increased and maintained through the following ways:	20	26	9	5	5
	1. Policy support and implementation by government and its concerned agents 2. Effective and earlier career guidance and counselling 3. Strengthening French teaching and learning at primary and secondary school levels 4. Improving university learning facilities and making them accessible to learners 5. Curriculum review and innovation 6. Increased collaboration with French-speaking countries and their institutions for exchange programs 7. Scholarships, awards, incentives, and support systems 8. Mass media partnership and wide dissemination on old and new media to reorient guardians and learners on realities, tales about the field of French language 9. Building avenues for easy access to opportunities and career advancement					

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

The major determinants of enrolment into French language unanimously identified by 28 (43.1%) and 23 (35.4%) informants, together, amounting to 51 (78.5%). Next, the informants disclosed that female enrolment ratios currently top those of the males. That is to say, there are more female French language students than there are male across Nigerian universities. This finding is established from 28 (43.1%) and 23 (35.4%) responses for SA and A respectively. The reason for the differentials in gender enrolment ratios were neither investigated nor established. Further studies are suggested in that regard. Finally, the major ways of increasing and maintaining enrolment ratios are proffered and confirmed by the interviewees. Out of the 65 (100%) interviewees, 46 (70.8%) considered them as viable, result-oriented and problem-solving mechanisms for ensuring increased and sustained enrolment ratios into French language.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were established:

- (i) The enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities are currently low.
- (ii) The low ratios of enrolment are caused by a range of factors, which include attitude, perception, social pressure, behavioural control, misconceptions, policy lapses and non-implementation of policies, and management variables.
- (iii) Female enrolment ratios are higher than those of the males, as there are more female French language students than the male counterparts. This might be because females are generally more in population than males.
- (iv) There are 8 major determinants of enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities as well as elsewhere. See Variable 1 of Table 2.
- (v) Some viable ways of increasing and maintaining enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities as well as elsewhere are identified. See Variable 3 of Table 2.
- (vi) The Theory of Planned Behaviour aptly reflects and describes the subject matter of discourse in the real-world setting, as its kernel concepts are some of the major determinants of enrolment into the French language discipline.
- (vii) There currently exists a vast gap in literature on the subject matter, as evident in the related studies presented under the “Review of Related Studies” subheading of this work. Scholarly attention is yet to be drawn to the determinants of enrolment ratios into French programmes and the associated issues of enrolment into French.

Conclusion

The glorification of some courses over others makes many prospective students of French language choose other courses over French language. Other factors determining their choice abound. These range from attitude, perception, subjective norms (social pressure) and behavioural control to management factors. The factors, which have been discussed in details in the work, are considered the determinants of enrolment ratios into French programmes across Nigerian universities. In the course making a field-based survey of the state of the enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities, the study found that the ratios are currently low and female enrolment ratios far outweigh those of the males.

The range of factors constituting the determinants of the enrolment ratios are identified and described. Besides, ways of increasing and maintaining increased enrolment ratios are also identified and confirmed by the research participants to be viable means of doing so. Addressing the factors militating against the ideal enrolment ratios would help increase the ratios of enrolment into French programmes across Nigerian universities. Collective, individual and institutional efforts and measures are required. Stakeholders in the realms of power and public affairs should make concerted efforts to collaboratively tackle the identified challenges to the enrolment into French programmes in Nigeria as well as other like nations, where French language is taught and learnt as a Second Language.

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