BRIDGING THE FINANCIAL FRONTIERS: ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSAL BANKING IN ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study conducts a thorough examination of Universal Banking in Zamfara State, investigating the intricate dynamics of its implementation, challenges, and perceived impact. Drawing on a diverse sample of respondents from various demographics within the banking sector, the research provides nuanced insights into the current state of Universal Banking in the region. The findings reveal a complex landscape where despite a high level of familiarity with Universal Banking, respondents exhibit diverse perceptions of its effectiveness. Regulatory hurdles, technological limitations, and a lack of customer awareness emerge as significant challenges that warrant immediate attention. While the majority acknowledges the positive contribution of Universal Banking, a notable proportion expresses reservations, emphasizing the need for targeted reforms.

The study underscores the importance of addressing regulatory and technological challenges to optimize the impact of Universal Banking. Recommendations include collaborative efforts for regulatory reforms, strategic technological upgrades, focused customer education campaigns, and continuous staff training. These initiatives aim to enhance customer satisfaction, foster economic growth, and fortify the competitiveness of the banking sector in Zamfara State.

Keywords: *Financial Frontier, Universal Banking, Regulatory Hurdles, Banking Sector*
JEL Classification Codes: G21, G28, O16, O17, O55

1.0 Introduction

Nestled in the vibrant and dynamic Northeastern region of Nigeria, Zamfara State unfolds as a captivating tapestry, presenting a nuanced economic and financial landscape teeming with both opportunities and formidable obstacles for the banking sector. This rich terrain is characterized by a mosaic of cultural diversity, creating a unique backdrop for financial activities. Moreover, the region stands as a bedrock of abundant mineral resources, promising untapped potential for economic growth. However, within this promising canvas, challenges persist, creating intricacies that hinder the seamless efficacy of universal banking in the region. These challenges, intricately interwoven with the cultural and economic fabric, underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the local dynamics to navigate and leverage the opportunities that lie within the complex financial landscape of Zamfara State.

Universal banking, a comprehensive financial paradigm offered by a single institution, diverges sharply from the traditional approach where distinct entities manage different financial services. (Joel & Onu, 2013), highlight the broad and all-encompassing spectrum of services provided by universal banks, catering to diverse needs in personal, corporate, and investment banking. These services include Retail Banking, Corporate Banking, Business Loans, Investment Banking, Wealth Management, Treasury and Risk Management, Electronic Banking, Insurance, Real Estate, Pension Fund Management, Credit Cards, and Payment Services, among others.

Recognized as a potential catalyst for economic growth and an enabler of financial inclusivity (Law & Singh, 2014), universal banking faces intricate challenges in its implementation within Zamfara State. These challenges arise from the complex interplay between modernizations and deeply entrenched traditional norms, creating barriers to optimal functionality. This dichotomy significantly hinders access to financial services across diverse segments of society, underscoring the need for nuanced solutions to bridge this gap in Zamfara State's financial landscape.
Amidst Zamfara's recognition for its rich mineral reserves, including gold, and fertile agricultural lands, the state grapples with economic paradoxes, ranking among the poorest states in Nigeria despite its resource wealth(Khan & Cheri, 2016). This economic disparity exacerbates the hurdles faced by the universal banking model in Zamfara, where access to credit remains limited in critical sectors like agriculture and mining, hindering overall economic progress (Balana & Oyeyemi, 2022; Ekwere & Edem, 2016).

In addition to economic disparities, religious and cultural beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping the banking landscape in Zamfara State (El-mubarak et al., 2020; Ezeh & Nkambe, 2020). These deeply rooted beliefs often influence banking practices and customer behavior, presenting challenges for universal banking strategies aiming for widespread financial inclusion and the adoption of modern banking services.

The quest for financial inclusivity and sustainable economic development in Zamfara necessitates a thorough understanding of these challenges within the scope of universal banking. Addressing the underlying factors inhibiting the effective implementation of universal banking becomes imperative to ensure equitable access to financial services for all segments of the population (Marshal, 2020; Ozili, 2020).

This study endeavors to delve into the complexities and nuances surrounding the challenges faced by universal banking in Zamfara State. It aims to identify, analyze, and provide insights into the socio-cultural, economic, and regulatory factors that impede the seamless operation of universal banking within the state. By exploring these challenges comprehensively, this research seeks to pave the way for actionable recommendations and strategies to bolster universal banking's efficacy and foster a more inclusive and sustainable banking environment in Zamfara State.

The forthcoming sections delves deeper into the literature review, methodological approach, data analysis, and concluding insights, offering a comprehensive examination of the challenges and potential pathways to fortify the universal banking landscape in Zamfara.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding the studies on the challenges of universal banking in Nigeria, particularly within the context of Zamfara State, encompasses various pertinent theoretical perspectives and concepts. These frameworks, essential in understanding and analyzing the challenges faced by universal banking in this context, include financial intermediation theory, agency theory, and transaction economics

Financial Intermediation Theory: This theory delves into the mechanisms by which banks facilitate the movement of funds from savers to borrowers. It examines how universal banking extends diverse financial services, enabling capital allocation and fostering economic growth (Allen & Santomero, 2001; Mishkin & Eakins, 2015).

Agency Theory: This framework explores the relationships between principals (bank customers) and agents (bank management), focusing on potential conflicts of interest. It elucidates how banks function as agents for depositors and shareholders, managing conflicts while fulfilling fiduciary duties (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973).

Institutional Theory: This perspective investigates how institutions, regulations, and cultural norms shape banking practices within a socio-economic context. It analyzes the impact of regulatory frameworks and government policies on the operations of universal banks in Nigeria (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; North, 1991). **Transaction Cost Economics:** This framework stresses the minimization of transaction costs in economic exchanges. In banking, it studies how universal banks reduce transaction costs for customers by offering various services under one roof (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1979).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): TAM explores individuals' acceptance and utilization of technology. Applied to universal banking, it evaluates customer acceptance of digital banking services, influencing adoption rates and evolution of banking practices (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis 2000) These theoretical frameworks provide comprehensive lenses through which researchers can analyze and interpret the myriad challenges faced by universal banking in Zamfara State. By leveraging these theories, studies aim to identify, analyze, and address the multifaceted challenges encountered by banks operating within the region.

2.2 Empirical Literature

In exploring the challenges of universal banking in Nigeria, extensive research has enriched our understanding of these multifaceted issues. The literatures encompass various themes, offering profound insights into the complexities and diverse dimensions of these challenges. Abdulmalik & Ahmad, (2016), Enemona, Onuche, (2021), and Agboola et al., (2019) underline the pivotal role of regulatory frameworks like the Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act (BOFIA) and the Central Bank of Nigeria Act. The studies illuminate the significant impact of regulations on banking operations, compliance requisites, and risk management. The challenges include adherence complexities, the need for adaptable yet robust compliance mechanisms, and service constraints due to compliance standards.

Moreover, research focusing on financial inclusion by Marshal, (2020), Ozili, (2020) and Migap et al., (2015), emphasizes the obstacles faced by universal banks in extending services, particularly in underdeveloped regions like Zamfara State. The work illuminates challenges arising from geographic constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities. Issues such as unequal wealth distribution, limited rural access to banking services, and low literacy levels pose significant hurdles to effective financial inclusion initiatives.

Additionally, Owonye & Obonofiemro, (2022), Kure et al., (2017), and (Babajide et al., 2015), delve into risk management practices and governance structures within universal banks. Their studies examine challenges related to inadequate risk assessment, loan recovery, non-performing loans, and governance lapses, raising concerns about the robustness of risk management frameworks and their impact on banking stability.

Abdulquadri et al., (2021), Agboola et al., (2019), and Ameme & Wireko, (2016) scrutinize technological advancements in banking and discuss issues like cybersecurity threats, infrastructure limitations, and the digital divide hindering the establishment of robust digital banking solutions. The focus remains on integrating digital services, addressing cybersecurity concerns, and adapting to innovative technologies.

Furthermore, El-mubarak et al., (2020), Ezeh & Nkambe, (2020), and Yunusa & Nordin, (2015) highlight the impact of socio-cultural aspects on banking practices. Their research explores challenges arising from religious beliefs, cultural norms affecting financial behavior, and their influence on banking services adoption.

However, existing literature lack comprehensive regional analyses that focus on Zamfara State, and this necessitates some deeper examinations of socio-cultural challenges, strategies for enhancing financial inclusion in marginalized communities, and tailored technological solutions for the region's unique challenges. This literature review establishes a foundation for further exploration, providing insights into the intricate challenges faced by universal banking in Nigeria, particularly within specific regional contexts
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3.0 Methodological Approach

The exploration of universal banking challenges in Zamfara State employed a systematic methodology to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies within the banking sector. The research design is carefully structured to accommodate both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a holistic approach to investigate the challenges faced by banks in implementing universal banking practices.

The targeted population for this study comprises of employees and management staff across various banks operating in Zamfara State. This inclusive approach aimed to capture diverse perspectives within the banking sector, ensuring a representative sample reflective of the state's financial landscape. In terms of sample size and sampling technique, a total of 225 questionnaires were distributed, yielding 200 responses. The adoption of a stratified random sampling technique facilitated the categorization of banks based on size and nature. This method ensured that the distribution of questionnaires was proportional to each stratum, ultimately resulting in a representative sample that reflected the diversity of banking institutions in the state.

The primary data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire, designed to capture pertinent information on the challenges faced by banks in implementing universal banking practices. The questionnaire draws inspiration from existing literature on banking challenges and universal banking practices, incorporating relevant and context-specific queries. Direct engagement with bank personnel during the data collection process emphasizes collaboration and responsiveness, contributing to a high response rate.

For the method of data analysis, a two-tiered approach was employed. Following data collection, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is utilized for preliminary quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize key findings, providing a snapshot of the challenges encountered by banks. Additionally, a Likert scale is employed to gain deeper insights into respondents' perspectives. This method facilitated a systematic evaluation of attitudes and opinions regarding specific universal banking challenges, with numerical values assigned to Likert scale responses enabling a quantitative interpretation and comparison of participants' sentiments.

The research methodology adopted for exploring universal banking challenges in Zamfara State is meticulous and systematic. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods, along with a carefully designed questionnaire and a representative sample, ensure a robust foundation for the analysis of challenges faced by banks in implementing universal banking practices in the state.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This section provides a thorough analysis of data collected on the challenges of universal banking in Zamfara State. The Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized for preliminary quantitative analysis. To gain deeper insights, a Likert scale is employed, facilitating a systematic evaluation of attitudes and opinions regarding specific Universal Banking challenges.

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30 Years	50	25.0	25.0	25.0
	31-40 Years	55	27.5	27.5	52.5
	41-50 Years	55	27.5	27.5	80.0
	51-60 Years	40	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1 above presents the distribution of respondents across different age groups, providing a concise overview of the demographic profile. The majority of respondents fall within the 31-40 and 41-50 age brackets, contributing diverse perspectives to the study on the challenges of implementing Universal Banking in Zamfara State.

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	120	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Female	80	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 2 illustrates the gender distribution among respondents. The majority, constituting 60%, are male, while 40% are female. This gender representation provides a balanced perspective on the challenges associated with Universal Banking in Zamfara State. The analysis proceeds to explore how gender dynamics may influence perceptions and experiences related to these challenges.

Table 3: Educational Qualifications

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	OND/NCE	60	30.0	30.0	30.0
	B.Sc./HND	130	65.0	65.0	95.0
	M.Sc. and Other Advanced Degree	10	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source Field Survey 2023

Table 3 provides an insightful breakdown of respondents' educational qualifications, showcasing frequencies and percentages across different categories. Notably, 30.0% of participants hold OND/NCE qualifications, indicating a significant representation with diploma or certificate-level education. The largest segment, constituting 65.0%, possesses B.Sc. or HND qualifications, highlighting a substantial proportion with undergraduate degrees or equivalent higher diplomas. A smaller portion, 5.0%, has pursued advanced degrees such as M.Sc. The educational distribution reflects diversity within the sample, ranging from diploma holders to those with advanced degrees. The emphasis on undergraduate qualifications, evident in the 65.0% holding B.Sc. or HND, is crucial for contextualizing the subsequent analysis of universal banking challenges based on respondents' educational backgrounds.

Table 4: Years of Experience in Banking Industry

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 Years	40	20.0	20.0	20.0
	6-10 Years	50	25.0	25.0	45.0
	11-15 Years	60	30.0	30.0	75.0
	16-20 Years	30	15.0	15.0	90.0
	Over 20 Years	20	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 4 presents a comprehensive overview of respondents' years of experience in the banking industry, detailing frequencies and percentages. The data highlights a diverse representation, with 20.0% having 1-5 years, 25.0% having 6-10 years, and 30.0% having 11-15 years of experience. In addition, 15.0% fall in the 16-20 years category, while 10.0% have over 20 years of experience. The concentration of respondents within the 11-15 years range indicates a significant presence of individuals with a moderate level of experience, complemented by a substantial representation in the 6-10 years category. This distribution provides valuable insights into the varied perspectives on universal banking challenges based on respondents' diverse levels of expertise within the banking sector.

Table 5: Current Position in Banking Industry

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Managerial Position	35	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Customer Service Representative	26	13.0	13.0	30.5
	Financial Analyst	22	11.0	11.0	41.5
	Loan Officer	20	10.0	10.0	51.5
	Compliance Officer	22	11.0	11.0	62.5
	IT Specialist	25	12.5	12.5	75.0
	Administrative Staff	27	13.5	13.5	88.5
	Others (specify)	23	11.5	11.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 5 presents a comprehensive overview of the roles held by respondents in the banking industry, showcasing both frequencies and percentages. The analysis reveals a diverse distribution of participants across various positions, providing valuable insights into the workforce composition within the sector. Key findings include a significant 17.5% of respondents occupying managerial positions, indicating a substantial presence in leadership roles. This suggests their likely involvement in decision-making processes, emphasizing their role in shaping the organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, 13.0% of respondents serve as customer service representatives, underscoring the importance of roles directly influencing client interactions. This highlights the crucial contribution of frontline staff in shaping positive customer experiences. Within the financial domain, approximately 11.0% of respondents are dedicated financial analysts, showcasing the prevalence of expertise in financial analysis within the banking industry. Another vital role is that of loan officers, held by 10.0% of respondents, indicating the significance of positions directly tied to lending activities. The presence of 11.0% of respondents in compliance officer roles signifies the industry's commitment to ensuring regulatory adherence and compliance. This reflects a concerted effort to navigate the intricate regulatory landscape within the banking sector. The technological aspect is well-represented, with approximately 12.5% of respondents identified as IT specialists. This underscores the critical role of technological expertise in modern banking practices. Administrative roles, held by about 13.5% of respondents, contribute to the operational and administrative functions of banking institutions, showcasing the diverse skill sets required for smooth day-to-day operations. The "Others" category encompasses 11.5% of respondents in various unspecified roles, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the industry and the presence of diverse positions beyond explicit categorization

The detailed analysis of Table 5 offers a nuanced understanding of the varied roles assumed by respondents in the banking sector. The prevalence of managerial, customer-facing, analytical, and specialized roles highlights the multifaceted nature of the workforce, providing insights into the intricate structure of the modern banking industry.

Table 6: Familiarity with the Concept of Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Familiar	170	85.0	85.0	85.0
	Somewhat Familiar	27	13.5	13.5	98.5
	Not very Familiar	3	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 6 provides an overview of respondents' familiarity with the concept of Universal Banking. The majority, accounting for 85%, claim to be very familiar with the concept, while 13.5% express a somewhat familiar understanding. Only a small percentage, 1.5%, indicate not being very familiar. This distribution ensures that the survey captures insights primarily from individuals with a solid understanding of Universal Banking, contributing to a more informed analysis of challenges in Zamfara State.

Table 7: Effectiveness Level of Universal Banking Implementation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Effective	10	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Moderately Effective	60	30.0	30.0	35.0
	Ineffective	125	62.5	62.5	97.5
	No Opinion	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 7 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Universal Banking implementation. The majority, constituting 62.5%, perceive it as ineffective, while 30.0% consider it moderately effective. A smaller proportion, 5.0%, views it as very effective. A small percentage, 2.5%, expresses no opinion. This distribution provides valuable insights into the varying perspectives on the effectiveness of Universal Banking implementation in Zamfara State.

Table 8: Primary Objectives of Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diversification of Financial Services	33	16.5	16.5	16.5
	Integration of Financial Activities	36	18.0	18.0	34.5
	Enhancing Efficiency	30	15.0	15.0	49.5
	Financial Inclusion	35	17.5	17.5	67.0
	Economic Growth	41	20.5	20.5	87.5
	Strengthening Competitiveness	25	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 8 provides an overview of survey participants' perceptions regarding the primary objectives of universal banking, offering insights through frequencies and percentages. The responses indicate diverse perspectives, with 16.5% emphasizing the diversification of financial services and 18.0% highlighting the integration of financial activities. Additionally, 15.0% prioritize enhancing efficiency, 17.5% recognize financial inclusion as a key goal, and the majority, constituting 20.5%, identifies economic growth as a primary objective. Approximately 12.5% of respondents emphasize strengthening competitiveness.

This varied distribution suggests a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted goals associated with universal banking. While economic growth takes precedence, other objectives such as financial inclusion and operational efficiency are also considered significant. The diversity in responses underscores varying priorities and perceptions among participants, providing valuable insights into the complex landscape of objectives associated with universal banking within the surveyed population.

Table 9: Most Significant Challenge to Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Regulatory Hurdles	55	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Technological Limitations	50	25.0	25.0	52.5
	Lack of customer Awareness	55	27.5	27.5	80.0
	Operational Complexities	20	10.0	10.0	90.0
	Competition From Specialized Banks	20	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 9 presents the perceived challenges to universal banking based on responses from survey participants. The most frequently identified challenge, cited by 27.5% of respondents, is regulatory hurdles, indicating a widespread perception that regulatory complexities pose a significant impediment to universal banking. Approximately 25.0% points to technological limitations as a significant challenge, underscoring the importance of technology in the sector and the associated difficulties. Lack of customer awareness is identified by 27.5% of participants, reflecting perceived challenges in effectively communicating the concept and benefits of universal banking. Additionally, 10.0% acknowledged operational complexities, emphasizing the intricate operational processes involved, and an additional 10.0% highlighted competition from specialized banks as a challenge, suggesting a competitive threat to the universal banking model.

The distribution of responses highlights key areas that require attention for successful implementation of universal banking, including regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, effective communication strategies, and addressing operational intricacies and competition from specialized banks. This table offers valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by the banking sector in adopting universal banking practices.

Table 10: Universal Banking and Financial Accessibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Improved Accessibility	190	95.0	95.0	95.0
	Decreased Accessibility	7	3.5	3.5	98.5
	No Significant Change	3	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 10 provides insights into survey participants' perceptions of the impact of universal banking on financial accessibility. The majority of respondents (95.0%) expressed a positive view, indicating that universal banking has led to improved financial accessibility. This suggests a general consensus among participants regarding the positive influence of universal banking practices on enhancing access to financial services. While a small proportion (3.5%) of respondents perceived a decrease in financial accessibility associated with universal banking, this percentage is relatively low, indicating that only a subset of participants holds a negative perception. More so, a minimal percentage (1.5%) reports no significant change, suggesting that, for a small portion of respondents, the implementation of universal banking did not result in noticeable alterations in financial access. Overall, the distribution of responses in Table 11 underscores a predominantly positive perception of the impact of universal banking on financial accessibility within the surveyed population.

Table 11: Contributions of Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive Contribution	190	95.0	95.0	95.0
	Negative Contribution	10	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 11 captures survey participants' perceptions of the contributions of universal banking, presenting frequencies and percentages. The data reveals that 95.0% of respondents overwhelmingly perceive universal banking as making a positive contribution. This high percentage reflects a strong consensus within the surveyed population regarding the beneficial impact of universal banking practices. Participants likely acknowledge advantages such as enhanced financial accessibility, improved services, and potential positive effects on economic growth. The substantial agreement among respondents suggests a widely shared optimism about the benefits attributed to universal banking.

On the other hand, 5.0% of respondents express a negative contribution associated with universal banking. While this percentage is relatively low compared to the positive perception, it signifies a subset of participants holding a more critical view. Reasons for this negative perception could range from concerns about potential risks to skepticism about the overall effectiveness of universal banking strategies. The smaller percentage reporting a negative contribution indicates that the majority of participants do not share this critical perspective, emphasizing the predominantly positive perception of the contributions of universal banking within the surveyed population. However, the presence of this minority highlights the diversity of opinions on the impact of universal banking.

Table 12: Changes in Customer's Satisfaction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Increased Satisfaction	180	90.0	90.0	90.0
	No Noticeable Satisfaction	15	7.5	7.5	97.5
	Decreased Satisfaction	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 12 presents survey participants' views on changes in customer satisfaction due to universal banking, including frequencies and percentages. The majority of respondents (90.0%) believe universal banking has increased customer satisfaction, indicating a widespread positive impact on customer experiences and perceptions of banking services. A smaller proportion (7.5%) reported no noticeable change in satisfaction, suggesting a subset of participants did not observe a significant impact. A minority (2.5%) expressed a decrease in customer satisfaction linked to universal banking, indicating a small subset with a negative perception. These subsets underscore the diversity of opinions within the surveyed population, emphasizing the need to consider varying perspectives on the effects of universal banking on customer experiences.

Table 13: Impact of Technological Advancement to Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Significance Influence	180	90.0	90.0	90.0
	Moderate Influence	15	7.5	7.5	97.5
	Minimal Influence	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2023

Table 13 indicates respondents' perceptions of the impact of technological advancement on Universal Banking. The majority, constituting 90.0%, believes that technological advancement has a significant influence. A smaller percentage, 7.5%, perceives a moderate influence, while 2.5% indicates minimal influence. This distribution provides insights into the perceived significance of technological advancement in shaping Universal Banking in Zamfara State.

Table 14: Impact of Online Banking Services to Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Improved Financial Transactions	195	97.5	97.5	97.5
	No Significant Improvement	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2023

Table 14 outlines the perceived changes in customer satisfaction as reported by survey participants, presenting frequencies and percentages. The majority of respondents, constituting 90.0%, indicated that universal banking has led to increased customer satisfaction. This suggests a widespread positive impact on customers' experiences and perceptions of banking services, potentially attributed to the benefits associated with universal banking practices. A smaller proportion, 7.5% of respondents, reported no noticeable change in customer satisfaction. While this percentage is relatively low, it indicates that there is a subset of participants who did not observe a significant impact on customer satisfaction resulting from universal banking. A minority of respondents, 2.5%, expressed a decrease in customer satisfaction associated with universal banking. This suggests that there is a small subset of participants who perceive a negative impact on customer satisfaction, which could be attributed to various factors related to the implementation of universal banking practices.

The distribution of responses in Table 14 reveals that the majority of participants (90.0%) believe universal banking has increased customer satisfaction, indicating a widespread positive perception of the impact on customer experiences. The small percentages reporting no noticeable change (7.5%) or decreased satisfaction (2.5%) highlight the diversity of opinions within the surveyed population. While the overall trend suggests a positive impact on customer satisfaction, the presence of these subsets underscores the need to consider varying perspectives on the effects of universal banking on customer experiences.

Table 15: Role of Training and Education to Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	180	90.0	90.0	90.0
	Moderately Important	15	7.5	7.5	97.5
	Not Very Important	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2023

Table 15 reveals the survey participants' perspectives on the significance of training and education in universal banking, providing frequencies and percentages. The majority of respondents (90.0%) consider training and education extremely important, indicating a strong consensus on their crucial role in the successful implementation of universal banking practices. A smaller proportion (7.5%) views training and education as moderately important, suggesting a subset that recognizes their importance but may not attribute the highest significance. A minority (2.5%) perceives training and education as not very important, indicating a smaller group that downplays their significance in the effective functioning of universal banking. Overall, the distribution of responses emphasizes the widely acknowledged critical role of training and education in the context of universal banking, with diverse opinions regarding the degree of importance assigned to these factors.

Table 16: Recommendations to Enhance Universal Banking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Enhance Customer Education and Awareness	45	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Technological Upgrade	45	22.5	22.5	45.0
	Regulatory Reforms	50	25.0	25.0	70.0
	Staff Training and Development	40	20.0	20.0	90.0
	Improved Customer Service	20	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Field Survey: 2023

Table 16 presents survey participants' recommendations to enhance universal banking, including frequencies and percentages. A subset of respondents, constituting 22.5%, recommends enhancing customer education and awareness as a means to improve universal banking. This suggests a recognition of the importance of educating customers about the features and benefits of universal banking practices. An equal percentage, 22.5%, advocates for technological upgrades as a recommendation to enhance universal banking. This reflects a belief in the significance of technological advancements in improving and modernizing banking services within the framework of universal banking.

The highest percentage of respondents, 25.0%, suggests regulatory reforms as a crucial recommendation to enhance universal banking. This indicates a consensus among the participants that regulatory changes are necessary for the effective implementation and growth of universal banking practices. A notable percentage, 20.0%, recommends staff training and development as a key aspect to enhance universal banking. This underscores the importance of equipping banking personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to and excel in the evolving landscape of universal banking. The smallest percentage of respondents, 10.0%, proposes focusing on improved customer service to enhance universal banking. While this percentage is relatively low, it signifies a subset of participants who prioritize enhancing the customer service aspect within the context of universal banking.

Table 16 reveals diverse recommendations from survey participants to enhance universal banking. The percentages indicate varying priorities among respondents. Regulatory reforms stand out as the highest recommendation, emphasizing the perceived significance of regulatory changes for the successful implementation of universal banking. The distribution of responses underscores the multifaceted nature of improvements needed for universal banking, with suggestions ranging from customer education to technological upgrades and regulatory reforms.

Table 17: Likert Scale Analysis

Likert Scale Analysis	Total Score	Mean	Interpretation
Regulatory Support	3	2.24	Participants lean towards a Disagree response, indicating skepticism about the regulatory framework supporting universal banking.
Technological Infrastructure	3	2.18	Participants express a stronger Disagree response, suggesting concerns about the adequacy of technological infrastructure.
Customer Awareness	3	1.86	Respondents tend to strongly disagree, indicating a perceived lack of customer awareness about universal banking benefits.
Competitive Landscape	3	2.14	Participants lean towards a Disagree response, suggesting that the competitive environment poses challenges to universal banking implementation.
Infrastructure Limitations	3	4.46	Participants strongly agree, indicating a consensus that infrastructure limitations are major obstacles to effective universal banking.

The findings from Table 17 shed light on participants' sentiments through the Likert scale analysis. Starting with Regulatory Support, the Mean score of 2.24 reveals that, on average, participants lean towards a "Disagree" response, reflecting a discernible level of skepticism regarding the efficacy of the existing regulatory framework supporting universal banking. While not an outright rejection, the data suggests a lack of unwavering confidence in the regulatory support structure currently in place.

Moving on to Technological Infrastructure, the mean of 2.18 indicates a stronger "Disagree" response on average. This signals pronounced concerns among participants about the adequacy of the technological infrastructure supporting universal banking. The lower mean underscores a more critical perspective toward the current technological setup, hinting at the need for improvements and advancements.

Customer Awareness, with a mean of 1.86, paints a picture where respondents, on average, strongly disagree. This underscores a prevalent perception of a significant gap in customer awareness concerning the benefits of universal banking. The lower mean emphasizes a pressing need for strategies to enhance understanding and communication with customers in this regard.

Analyzing the Competitive Landscape, the mean of 2.14 suggests that, on average, participants lean towards a "Disagree" response, indicating concerns about the challenges posed by the competitive environment to the successful implementation of universal banking. While not a resounding disagreement, it highlights apprehensions about the competitive dynamics in the banking sector.

The Infrastructure Limitations category stands out with a mean of 4.46, signifying a strong agreement among participants that infrastructure limitations are major obstacles to effective universal banking. This high mean underscores a clear consensus on the substantial impact of infrastructure constraints on the successful implementation of universal banking practices. The Likert scale analysis unravels a nuanced perspective among participants, revealing areas of skepticism, concern, and consensus. While regulatory support, technological infrastructure, and competitive landscape pose challenges, there is a unanimous acknowledgment of the need for addressing customer awareness and infrastructure limitations to enhance the effectiveness of universal banking practices. These insights provide valuable directions for strategic improvements in the realm of universal banking within the surveyed context.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5. 1 Summary**:**

The exploration of universal banking challenges in Zamfara State has provided valuable insights into the diverse perspectives of stakeholders within the banking industry. The research encompasses a comprehensive analysis of respondents' demographics, educational qualifications, years of experience, and their roles within the banking sector. The data unveil a multifaceted workforce, showcasing the varied positions and expertise contributing to the financial landscape of Zamfara State.

Likert scale analyses delve into participants' perceptions of regulatory support, technological infrastructure, customer awareness, competitive landscape, and infrastructure limitations. The findings indicated a nuanced landscape of skepticism, concerns, and consensus among respondents. While challenges exist in regulatory frameworks, technological readiness, and competitive dynamics, a unanimous acknowledgment of the impact of infrastructure limitations emerged.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, Zamfara State's banking industry faces a complex terrain with both opportunities and challenges. The study highlighted the need for strategic interventions to address regulatory uncertainties, enhance technological capabilities, and bolster competitiveness. Additionally, a critical focus on improving customer awareness and overcoming infrastructure limitations is paramount for the successful implementation of universal banking practices.

5.3 Recommendations

In order to fortify the banking sector in Zamfara State for the era of universal banking, a strategic approach is imperative. Here are the recommendations:

i. **Regulatory Enhancement:** Collaborate closely with regulatory bodies to streamline frameworks that underpin universal banking. A key initiative is to foster an open and continuous dialogue between banking institutions and regulatory authorities. This collaborative effort aims to promptly address concerns, provide clarifications, and cultivate a more supportive regulatory environment.

ii. **Technological Advancements:** To meet the evolving demands of universal banking, substantial investments in upgrading technological infrastructure are paramount. Additionally, initiating comprehensive training programs for banking professionals becomes imperative. These programs are designed to enhance their technological skills, ensuring adaptability to the rapidly changing technological landscape.

iii. **Customer Awareness Initiatives:** Developing and executing robust awareness campaigns is crucial to educate customers about the myriad benefits and services associated with universal banking. Leveraging diverse channels such as online platforms and community engagement will enable reaching a broad and diverse audience, fostering a greater understanding and acceptance of universal banking practices.

iv. **Competitive Strategy Enhancement:** Conducting regular assessments of the competitive landscape is essential for banks in Zamfara State. Identifying emerging trends and opportunities is pivotal in maintaining a competitive edge. Moreover, encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing among banks will foster a collective approach in addressing industry challenges, thereby enhancing overall competitiveness.

v. **Infrastructure Improvement:** Advocacy for infrastructure development initiatives is a fundamental step, requiring collaboration at both industry and governmental levels. Establishing contingency plans to effectively mitigate the impact of infrastructure limitations is equally crucial. This proactive approach ensures uninterrupted service delivery even in the face of unforeseen challenges.

vi. **Continuous Training and Education:** Emphasizing the importance of continuous training and education is a strategic move, especially in areas critical to universal banking practices. Collaborating with educational institutions allows for the tailoring of programs that align precisely with the evolving needs of the banking sector. This forward-looking approach ensures that the workforce remains well-equipped with the necessary skills.

vii. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including banks, regulatory bodies, and the government, is pivotal in creating a cohesive and supportive ecosystem for universal banking. This collaborative synergy ensures a holistic and well-coordinated effort in navigating challenges and capitalizing on opportunities.

By diligently implementing these recommendations, the banking sector in Zamfara State is poised to navigate challenges effectively, seize opportunities, and establish the foundations for sustainable growth in the dynamic landscape of universal banking.

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