

Corruption And Academic Activities in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines and investigates the effects of corruption on academic institutions in Nigeria using Delta state University Abraka. Nigeria as case studies. As a descriptive research, the study population comprised of 160 students (80 students from each institution) and 40 lecturers (20 lecturers from each institution) making a total of 200 samples. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in carrying out this study. The instrument used to collect data for the study was an inventory while the data collected was analyzed using percentages, chi-square statistic and the t-test. This study found that academic corruption is commonplace in the institutions of higher learning as indicated by students and lecturers. The prevalence of academic corruption was found to exist more among male than female lecturers and it involves parents, students, lecturers and school administrators.

Keywords: Institution, Corruption, Higher Institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has become a potent force in the education sector not only in Nigeria alone but worldwide. Though a later addition to the subjects dealt with corruption studies, corruption in education has become a dominant theme globally, and the dimensions corruption has taken place in our environments and societies where it has become a practical, trending, fashionable and cherishable value system for the survival of the people have been so complex so much that local, national and international efforts and actions to check or contain it has consistently failed. However, a ray of hope came in sight when the United Nations through General Assembly Resolution 58/4 of 31 October 2003 which became operational on 14 December 2005 initiated actions which in addition to creating awareness on strategies for preventing corruption also targets criminalizing corruption in any form it manifests. A close examination of the efforts of the United Nations in this direction can point in two ways namely creating awareness and sensitizing members of the global community on the existence of corruption and its global condemnation and the establishment of a global network of framework upon which conscious fight against corruption can be mounted, initiated or put on global agenda. These are in view of the fact that the free flourishing of corruption at any level can turn out to be a torn in the flesh of members of the global community. This line of thinking is anchored on the position that corruption defies territorial borders and can be instrumental for the promotion of agonizing dehumanizing anti-social practices including organized crimes, terrorism, drug and human

trafficking among others.

The extent of corruption in Nigeria, as revealed by Lawal and Tobi (2006:642) write that “Nigeria presents a typical case of a country in Africa whose development has been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices”. The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria has gained global recognition so much that Transparency International Corruption Perception Index of 1995-1997 ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world and in 1999, Nigeria was also named the second most corrupt country in the world. In recent times, Tony Blair, one time British Prime Minister in one of his state official visits to Nigeria describes Nigeria to be “fatally corrupt” and this description suggests that corruption in Nigeria is systematic and deep rooted in the psyche of majority of Nigerians. The wide spread of corruption in Nigeria means that there is hardly any sector of the Nigerian society that can be exempted as not being corrupt. Be this as it may, there are sectors in which the prevalence of corruption in them can terribly and disastrously destroy a state and her people and one sector where this is real is education. This position is taken because corruption in the education industry is terribly detrimental to the moral and general health of the Nigerian state.

In this paper attempts will be made to demonstrate the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria’s education industry starting from the primary through the secondary to the tertiary levels with emphasis on highlighting the implications of corruption in the education industry for Nigeria’s national development. In our attempt at doing this, we shall identify trends, shapes and forms as well as those whose actions promote and support corruption in Nigeria’s education industry and on one hand proffer solutions on how to tackle the problem of corruption in Nigeria’s education industry. Academic corruption comes in various dimensions. But the most prominent ones are sexual harassment and what is generally called "sorting". "Sorting" is a slang on campus which refers to a situation whereby students are compelled to pay lecturers so that they could be awarded marks they did not score during examinations. It is so bad that indigent but brilliant students who could not afford the money demanded by lecturers are made to fail the courses and sometimes have to carry-over the courses and thereby making graduation a difficult case for such students. Failing students who do not buy handouts or textbooks written by lecturers is another form of academic corruption that is prevalent in the nation's so-called Ivory Towers. Some lecturers even use their academic materials in exchange for marks and any student who buys their materials will automatically be given certain marks. This form of victimization in the academic environment. Sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers is seen as a normal thing among lecturers. Lecturers old enough to be fathers of the female undergraduates throw everything to the dogs in order to lure the students to bed in exchange for marks.

School authorities are aware of the prevalence of academic corruption on campuses but have turned a blind eye to it. That is why it is very rare to hear that lecturers have been caught in the act or brought to book. The case of the Delta State University Abraka the institution has since disowned any lecturers who allegedly took advantage of an admission-seeking teenage daughter of his friend by raping her on campus is just one among many of such sexual harassment cases on university campuses across the country. There are few lecturers who are above board,

especially the elderly ones, but the vast majority of the younger lecturers engage in the act. This study is aimed at investigating the impacts of corruption on academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria using Delta State University Abraka, Delta State. as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

Education in Nigeria is an important policy in the business of governance. Apart from the fact that a nation must educate its citizens to become learned, knowledgeable and civilized, it is also an acknowledged means of attaining prospects; that would help the people to be relevant and maintain sustainability of resources for the unborn generations. Education in any kind, reading and writing, be it science, or arts are basic knowledge that can lead learners to be conscious of their rights and become useful tools for national development with the inclusion of historical and religious knowledge. However, there is no compulsion in religion adherence but, who follows God's guiding principles will dwell in wisdom and positive thoughts. In pool of such knowledge, people with such knowledge would examine the challenges the nation confronted with in the past, try to be conscious of the present and future needs of the society. Ozigi and Ocho,(1981) pointed out that in the northern parts of Nigeria, Islam was deeply entrenched both in the religious belief and educational orientation of the people who had a uniform Quiranic education policy. The author, in another cited work argues further that in the southern parts, each ethnic group had its own traditional form of education based on its own culture and tradition, whose aims and objectives were similar. Therefore, education as life investment is utterly not foreign to Nigerian society.

Research Questions

The following constitutes the research questions for the study.

- a. What are the various forms of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria?
- b. What is the prevalence of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria?
- c. What are the effects of corruption on academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The specific objective includes:

- a. To examine the various forms of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria.
- b. To investigate the prevalence corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria.
- c. To determine the effects of corruption on academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

It is important that we have understanding of what students say make them to indulge in corrupt practices knowing that discovery can result in heavy penalties including imprisonment and the truncation of their career prospects. This research will provide such understanding by the articulation of students' ideas and concepts of corruption as a map of higher education student

corruption. Also, it suggests possible directions for implementation of anticorruption policies and mechanisms in the higher education sector. Likewise, it serves as a basis upon which further research of this kind will be done.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature is carried in order to have deeper understanding of corruption related issues in academic environment with regards to institutions of higher learning most especially in Nigeria. The section begins with a presentation of conceptual issues followed by reviews of theoretical and empirical issues.

Concept of Corruption

The word corruption is originally from the Latin verb *rumpere* which means to break (Abdul-Ismail, n.d.). Following from the above, corruption means the breaking of a certain code of conduct for the personal benefit of the perpetrator. According to Andrig and Fjeldstad (2001), “corruption is a composite and multifaceted marvel with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts”. In fact, one of the major crises in conceptualizing corruption is that while it is difficult for it to disappear it has a capacity to take on new forms (Andrig & Fjeldstad, 2001; Girling 1997). The difficulty of defining corruption is first a function of its being a secret and clandestine activity and secondly because it has numerous manifestations, dimensions and procedures. That is why Johnston contends that studying corruption is a tricky business. According to him, definitions are controversial, and solid evidence is often elusive. Descriptive accounts may be clouded by self serving equivocations. Equally subtle is the question of the significance of a corrupt act – not only its consequences, but also its meaning as perceived by citizens and officials alike (Ogundiya, 2009). Be that as it may Tanzi has argued that while it may not be easy to define corruption, the crisis associated with corruption is not difficult to recognize (Tanzi, 1998).

Various definitions of corruption have been put forward. For example, Seen outlines it as the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Aluko, 2009). Osoba defines it as “an anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the capacity of authorities to improve the living conditions of the people” (Aluko, 2009) The World Bank describes corruption as: The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantages or profit. Public office can also be ill-treated for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets, or the diversion of state resources (Agbu, 2003).

Perceived Corrupt Practices in Academic Institutions

Corrupt practices are human behaviors or acts that diverge from the norms and values of the society or which tend to break certain moral or social codes and administrative rules and procedures (Lawal, 2006). These acts are not in consonance with the acceptable practices of societies, institutions and groups. A litany of corrupt practices have been found to exist in

academic institutions some of which are fraud, embezzlement, bribery, smuggling, sexual abuse, examination malpractices, distorting of grades, over use of power, and certificate forgery (Eze, 2006, Lawal, 2006). These are intolerable practices and behavior which members of staff are alleged to engage in as they execute their duties in their academic institutions. A review of literature also reveals that sexual harassment, favoritism, examination malpractices, admission malpractices, compelling students to buy handouts or extortion, neglect of duty, certificate forgery, among others, are the common corrupt practices pervasive in the universities (Nnodum, 2008).

Empirical Issues

Studies have been conducted to ascertain corruption of academics in some countries. Alutu and Alutu (2006) explored unethical practices in the faculties of the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study discovered that unethical practices are generally prevalent in all the faculties. It also emerged from the study that the views of the male respondents did not differ significantly from those of their female counterparts on unethical practices of academic staff of the university. A similar study was conducted in University of Calabar in Nigeria on various corrupt practices alleged to be engaged in by academic staff. The study disclosed that students perceived the academic staff to engage in corrupt practices such as money for selfish purposes, overuse of power, sexual harassment, examination malpractices, nepotism and favouritism, and certificate forgery. The study also found that the male and female respondents did not differ in their perceptions of corrupt practices of the academic staff (Nnodum, 2008).

On the issue of which gender group is perceived to be more corrupt, a findings by Swamy, Knack, Lee, and Azfar (2000) unearthed that women tended to be significantly less corrupted than men. The findings explored the determinants of bribery at both macro and micro levels in 50 countries. Among other things, the study revealed that countries and firms with a greater proportion of women in the labour force tended to have lower levels of corruption. A study by Mocan (2004) also found a relationship between corruption and gender and concluded that men are more likely to be asked for bribe than women. The results of Calekora and Hanousek (2004) study on corruption perception and willingness to pay bribe showed no relationship between gender and willingness to pay bribe in educational institutions. Shaw (2005) also investigated the determinants of corruption in universities. The study revealed a striking perception among the respondents that women tended to have a higher probability of bribery on examinations and for entrance into the institutions than men. This finding is apparently inconsistent with studies which disclosed that women tended to be less significantly corruptible than men.

A study conducted by Swamy (2005) also discovered that bribery during secondary school was a predictor of bribing for entrance into tertiary institutions and on term papers. The results of the study indicated that students who involved themselves in bribery and other corruptible practices at the secondary school were very likely to do so at the tertiary level of education and vice versa. This imposes a responsibility on instructors at the high school level to curb this practice so that it does not continue and even escalate at the higher level of education.

An international organization, Transparency International, has also conducted several studies

into corrupt practices in academic institutions of different countries. For instance, Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted an opinion poll among university students. The following were found to be the most common forms of corruption perceived by the students: bribes for passing examination, compulsory purchase of textbooks written by lecturers and buying and selling of diplomas. (Meier & Griffin, 2005). Heyneman (2010) reported, inter alia, that Transparency International monitoring of corruption in education shows that 70% of the respondents in Middle East described educational systems as being either “corrupt” or “extremely corrupt”. The findings further elaborate that the corruption perception in the region was deemed to be very high.

The foregoing studies present a panorama of the various aspects of the perceived corruption endemic in universities that have been investigated. It is very conspicuous that the initiators of the act and the condition in the institutions that give way for the perpetuation of the act, however, have not been explored. Hence, the need for a study to unravel these issues to extend knowledge on this all-important subject became eminent

Forms of Academic Corruption in Nigerian Universities

Academic corruption constitutes a major cause of the challenge of unemployable graduates. The questions then arise: who are the stakeholders in our tertiary education? What forms of academic corruption do they perpetrate? What are the effects of these corrupt practices in more specific terms on the quality of graduates from our tertiary institutions? The answers to these questions shall be briefly addressed.

There are different stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector. As listed by Adebisi, Adebisi and Arogundade (2015), prominent among them are the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Commission for College of Education (NCCE) the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) etc; the Governing Councils of the institutions, the Management of the tertiary institutions, the lecturers, the administrative staff, the parents and even the students among others. It is disheartening to note that a good number of corrupt practices are perpetrated by each of these stakeholders which have contributed to the slide in the standard of tertiary education in the country. These corrupt practices are outlined as follows:

Corrupt Practices by Government Agencies

The common corrupt practices by government agencies are:

- * Granting of accreditation by the NUC, NBTE and NCCE to underfunded, ill-equipped and poorly staffed institutions.
- * Leakage of examination questions by some staff of examination bodies particularly JAMB either by design or default.

Corrupt Practices by Institutional Administrators (Management and Administrative Staff)

- * Offering admission to candidates beyond carrying capacities approved for courses. For example, the NBTE sometime discovered that
- * Hiring of equipment and lecturers from other institutions to secure accreditation. Afigbo

correctly captured this corrupt practice in this manner .This they do in connection with the accreditation visit established and administered by the NUC, the NBTE and the NCCE. Accreditation visit is for each institution

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology is a research process adopted or employed to systematically and scientifically present the results of a study to the research audience viz. a vis, the study beneficiaries.

Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed the survey research design. This is due to the nature of the study whereby the opinion and views of people are sampled. According to Singleton & Straits, (2009), Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods). As it is often used to describe and explore human behaviour, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research.

Population of the Study

In the conduct of this research, the population of study consists of lecturers and undergraduate university students in Delta State University, Abraka and University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria as case study

Sample Size Selection Technique and Procedure

The sample size is drawn from the entire population of Delta state university, Abraka and University of Benin where 200 students were selected. Rhe were subdivided into 160 students with 80 students from each institution and 40 lecturers comprising 20 lecturers each from the respective institution.

Method of Data Collection

Two methods namely, primary and secondary sources of data collection were employed for the study. The primary source involves the use of questionnaires whilst the secondary source entails textbooks, internet, journals, published and unpublished articles and government publications.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSI

The analysis and interpretation were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as interpretation of the information gathered. The two hundred (200) questionnaires administered to respondents were all returned and validated.

Descriptive Analysis of demographic variables

An important demographic information is that all the respondents are female. On the age of the respondent 43.5% were within the age bracket of 22-28, 27% of the respondents were with the age bracket of 30-37 years, 16.5% of the respondents were with the age bracket of 37-43years.

13% of the respondents were with 44years and above. This indicates that majority of respondents were in Child bearing age. On the Religion, 60% are Christian, 28% are Muslim, 12% ticked other. This indicates that majority of respondents were Christians.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percent
Female	200	100%
Age		
22-29	87	43.5%
30-37	54	27%
37-43	33	16.5%
44+	26	13%
Religion		
Christianity	120	60%
Muslim	56	28%
Others	24	12%
Marital Status		
Single	33	16.5%
Married	160	80%
Divorced/Separated	07	3.5%
Educational Level		
Primary	47	23.5%
Secondary	98	49%
Tertiary	55	27.5%
Ethnicity		
Itsekiri or Ijaw	73	36.5%
Igbo	62	31%
Yoruba	41	20.5%
Hausa	18	9%
Fulani	06	3%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

On marital Status 16.5% of the respondents are single, 80% are married, 3.5% are separated. This indicates that majority of respondents were married. On educational level, 23.5% of the respondent are primary school leavers. 49% are SSCE holders and 27.5% are Tertiary school graduates. On ethnicity of the respondent, 36.5% are Itsekiri or Ijaw, 31% are Igbo, 20.5% are Yoruba, 9% are Hausa, 3% are Fulani. This indicates that majority of respondents were Ijaw/Itsekiri.

Descriptive Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the various forms of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria?

Table 2 contains perception of respondents on the forms of corruption in academic activities in

higher institutions in Nigeria.

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents on Forms of Corruption

s/n	Items/Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Leakage of examination questions and even answers to students	3.54	.67	Accepted
2	Outright demand for and taking of bribes by lecturers	3.63	.63	Accepted
3	Award of marks based on purchase of handouts from lecturers	3.57	.63	Accepted
4	The use of secret cults to terrorise lecturers	3.73	.51	Accepted
5	Involvement in examination malpractice	3.50	.69	Accepted
6	Plagiarism or outright stealing of academic works	3.5	0.64	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 showed that the six items had their mean ranging from 3.50–3.73 which indicates that all the variables were considered as the forms of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is there prevalence of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria?

Table 3: Percentage of Respondents on th Prevalence of Corruption

s/n	Items/Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Corruption is common in universities	3.54	.67	Accepted
2	Involves parents, students, lecturers & administrators	3.63	.63	Accepted
3	It exists among both the male and female gender	3.57	.63	Accepted
4	It is higher in universities than other institutions	3.73	.51	Accepted
5	It is common among male than female lecturers	3.50	.69	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2023

In Table 3 perception of respondents on the prevalence of corruption in academic activities in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria was presented. The Table showed that the five items had their mean ranging from 3.50–3.73 which indicates that all the variables were considered as the prevalence of corruption in academic activities in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

This study shows that academic corruption is commonplace in the universities as indicated by students and lecturers. The prevalence of academic corruption was found to exist more among male than female lecturers (87.85) and it involves parents, students, lecturers and school

administrators (82.7%) as seen in Table 2. This shows a high degree of agreement by the two groups of respondents to the items. This finding is consistent with previous reports that parents pay bribes for their children's admission into universities; professors alter scores of students and teachers were involved in aiding and abetting students in examination malpractices (Osipian, 2007; Jubril, 2010). Similarly, the findings are in consonance with another report that points to university administration as the most corrupt and that both students and lecturers initiate bribe (Rostiashvili, 2004). In other words, the finding is in line with the observation that corruption in the academia is one of the most prominent factors contributing to diminishing standard of university education (Kingston, 2011). The finding further corroborates the views that students alone should not take the blame because they were aided and abetted by lecturers (Jubril, 2010). The highest causes of academic corruption were poor study habits of students (68.8%) and poor entry qualification of students (66%). The finding justifies earlier literature that the entry behaviour and mental ability of entrants could affect the quality of education and that bribe given to the university to facilitate students' admission by parents signifies their poor entry qualifications (Osipian, 2007; Babalola, 2010). In terms of the effects, delayed absorption of university graduates into the labour market (91.5%) and poor quality of university graduates (87.8%) were indicated as the main effects of academic corruption. This study confirms those of Okebukola (2005) who noted that students who engaged in paying bribes for good grades are not academically sound and Moja (2000) who reiterated that the quality of university products in Nigeria have dwindled from what it was in the early 1970s.

5. Concluding Remarks

The findings of this research are those that should be treated with the urgency they deserve if Nigerian universities will make appreciable progress in the near future in order to meet up with global challenges in higher education. Therefore, government and all stake holders must join hands in ensuring quality assurance, pursuant to the requirements for ranking Nigerian universities among the world class universities. Although university education should play a major role in actualizing the MDGs, academic corruption is a disadvantage in this direction. This is why academic corruption should be fought among lecturers and students while counselling is emphasized in bringing about quality management of staff and students so as to ensure ethical and moral uprightness which includes honesty, teaching right values and academic integrity, hard work and self discipline in order to ensure provision of quality university education in Nigeria.

Accordingly, the following recommendations are made as a way forward:

Counselors in the universities should organize seminars/symposia and workshops in enlightening the university community on good moral and ethical standards that help to prevent academic corruption especially based on examination ethics once in a semester, using orientation programmes. Invitation for such programmes should be extended to parents as well since they were identified as one of the people involved in academic corruption.

Emphasis should be placed on cognitive restructuring of behaviour and inculcating good morals in terms of good lecture delivery qualities, course content quality and staff-student relationships by learning essential skills as well as ethical behavioural standards. Family values should be

emphasized, which used to be the pride of the African people in times past, especially on the part of parents.

Government should also strictly apply some anti-corruption measures in the universities such as the use of economic and legal means in addition to supplying lecture rooms and offices with surveillance cameras for monitoring activities of staff and students in the university.

In view of poor entry qualification of students as one of the causes of academic corruption, universities should ensure that only qualified students are admitted. This is a challenge for the Minister of Education to work closely with the vice chancellors of universities and for them to conduct more research on academic corruption. Counsellors should organize lectures for students, giving them tips on how to improve on their study habits. This can be integrated into the university orientation programmes or prior to the commencement of semester examinations.

In addressing the effects of academic corruption such as poor absorption of graduates into the labour market and general poor quality of graduates, the National Universities Commission should ensure that increase in student number be commensurate with staff and facilities.

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