The Social Harms of Abuse of Academics in Nigerian Universities: Failed Ethical Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Universities are higher institutions where a high level of manpower training is provided for the development of the total man. At the centre of this is the role of members of the academics. The three core function of the academic staff is teaching, research and service. Over the years, there have been cases of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities which has been a source of concern to relevant stakeholders. Abuse of Academics is any form of unethical treatment given to university academics in the course of discharging their duties. The study argues that the abuse of academic staff is an indication of failed ethical leadership. Drawing on the social harms theory, it provides evidence of the hazardous use of power against academics. In this case study of Obafemi Awolowo University, thirty academic staff across all cadres and genders were interviewed. The findings reveal that academic abuse has been an age-long problem in Nigerian universities. The study further shows the causes of academic abuse to be rooted in the fact that government does not place priority on education which makes its budgetary allocation to the sector very ridiculous.

INTRODUCTION

Universities are institutions of higher learning where a high level of manpower training is provided for recipients. The day-to-day activities of universities are carried out by the academic staff also known as faculty members or lecturers and the non-teaching staff who are also referred to as administrative or support staff. The academic staff who are commonly referred to as academics perform a tripartite role of teaching, research and service; such service could be administrative, or community-based (Schwarz et al., 2022). The non-teaching staff on the other hand provide support services which include administrative and technical functions.

The members of academics perform three cardinal functions which include teaching and instruction of students at undergraduate and graduate levels. Members of the public generally hold the view that teaching is the only role performed by academics. This view is not correct. Academics also do research to expand the frontiers of knowledge and provide solutions to societal problems (Fasanmi, 2023a). They equally supervise undergraduate and graduate students' research thus providing mentorship for such students. The research output of academics also forms part of the requirements for their career progression. The third function of academics is service. The service could be in the form of administrative services such as course advisory, and headship of units such as departments, institutes, faculties, colleges, and centres among others. The other aspect of service is service to the outside community. This could be in the form of outreach to the community in the area of health, education and enlightenment. It could also be in the form of serving in public positions through appointments. It may equally be
in the form of carrying out national assignments such as serving as ad-hoc officials during general elections. Summarily, community service is rendered by academics to the town, that is, members outside the campus community; it could be in the host community or beyond (Antiabong, 2018).

It is generally believed that the working conditions of employees in any work setting has a lot of influence on the productivity of such employees. Ajadi and Fasanmi (2018) noted that the working conditions of academics go a long way in determining their productivity in teaching, research as well as administrative service. Ajadi and Fasanmi (2018) further noted in the study that one of the major reasons for labour union disputes in organisations is the issue of poor working conditions for employees. Academic institutions are not left behind as they are also faced with similar challenges. Unfortunately, observations have revealed that the only language that governments especially in Nigeria understand is strike action. When workers make their plights known to the employers and governments, all they get is promise upon promises without any action taken on the promises, workers then through their labour unions embark on strike action to get the attention of the government. Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, the current President of ASUU noted that strike action is not actually a problem rather it is a symptom of a problem. It is of concern that it is when the workers go on a strike action that the government responds to the strike action without actually addressing the cause of the strike action.

The abuse of academics is an age-long problem which has been a source of concern to stakeholders. These abuses have manifested in different areas such as poor working conditions, violation of the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy, victimization, and delay in the promotion of academics due to bureaucracy without any compensation for such delay which is not the fault of the concerned persons but due to the administrative bottlenecks in the system (Adebakin & Fasanmi, 2017). One of the prominent abuses on academics in Nigeria is the remuneration package that has made the job of a university teacher so unattractive even to the brightest set of graduates who in the time past were usually willing to be retained in the system as graduate assistants, this is no longer the situation as the pay of a university Professor is not up to what a political aide to a Nigerian politician earns. Fasanmi (2023) noted with concern that since 2009, lecturers across all cadres in Nigerian universities have been on the same salary scale. This is not unconnected to the poor state of budgetary allocation to education (Gambo & Fasanmi, 2019). The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been on the vanguard of calling the attention of the government on the need to pay more attention to the funding of education, but the government complains of lack of funds even when a lot of money is incurred on the cost of governance (Aluede et al., 2004). Many concerned citizens and non-government agencies such as the Socio-Economic Right Accountability Project (SERAP) have continuously called on the government to cut down on the cost of governance. ASUU has also at different times provided some interventions in the form of technical advice to the government on how to raise money to fund its education sector. One such intervention led to the establishment of the Education Trust Fund now Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). Under one of the military regimes in Nigeria in 1992, the government was finding it difficult to fund tertiary education, ASUU then advised the government to direct private organisations to pay 2% of their profit into the government coffers which translated into the intervention known today as TETFund (Adelokun et al., 2020).

The violation of the principles of academic freedom which gives the Senate of the University the power to determine what to teach, how to teach and who to teach is another worrisome abuse of academics (Adelokun & Fasanmi, 2017). The principle of university autonomy vests on the Governing Council the power to administer the affairs of the university without any external interference. This has not been the case as the appointments of vice chancellors and other management staff have been politicised by the political class. This is an abuse of the academic culture of the university which is supposed to be guided by the principle of intellectualism and expertise in appointments and promotions. Another form of abuse of academics is a delay in the promotion of academic staff. There are cases where academic staff in the university is due to be promoted and because of some administrative bottlenecks, such as the processes of internal and
external assessments and the presentation of the assessors’ report before the Appointment and Promotions Committee, such person has about three to four years delay which is not their fault and are unfortunately not compensated for the delay.

One of the most recent forms of academic abuse which has been recorded recently, in Nigerian universities is intimidation from the government to prevent university academics and refusing to hear their opinions on issues of critical concern as well as registering their displeasure in cases of infractions (Shokí, 2022). A typical example of this was the situation in February 2022 when ASUU embarked on strike action after exploring all other means to call the attention of the government to issues of revitalisation of university education and the improvement of the working conditions of academics. Instead for the government to address the matters raised, it stopped the salaries of academics a month into the strike action in a bit to force them back to work without addressing the key issues that led to the strike action (Orjinmo, 2022). The strike action continued for eight months without the government addressing the matter and without paying university teachers which led to the death of some and the exit of many others from the university system to other countries of the world. The University World News in its weekly report of 17th October 2022 published a report noting that the strike action has been called off but ASUU’s labour union issues remain unresolved.

The case of one of the lecturers who resigned went viral on social media, the lecturer posted a message on the WhatsApp group of his project student which reads “Good day to all of you, I have this important announcement to make. I will not be able to read and sign your projects when the ASUU strike action ends. I resigned last month to pursue other issues in my life. I left the country already. We shall meet later in the future.” (Catalogue Media, 2022). The project students upon reading the message circulated it on social media and it then went viral. The content and tone of the message speak volume of the state of mind of the Lecturer which led him to make such decision. There was another case of a female lecturer at another university who resorted to hawking food items just to survive with her family. It was an abuse with psychological, emotional and reputational implications and beyond that, it claimed a lot of lives. A department in Obafemi Awolowo University which is the sample for this study lost two senior Professors in a Department. The University lost a total of thirteen (13) staff members during the strike action as published in its News Bulletin of 17th October 2023. The cause of their death was attributed to the hardship that university staff members were subjected to as a result of the non-payment of salaries for eight months.

The foregoing has provided a background to the forms, manifestations and magnitudes of academic abuse of university academics in Nigeria. This unfortunately has resulted in the mass exodus of academics in Nigerian universities (Fasanmi, 2022). This has been a source of concern to stakeholders in the education sector. This concern has necessitated this study.

Generally, abuse is any form of intended or pre-mediated treatment that is unpleasant, unruly and unguarded which usually has effect on the emotional, social, psychological, mental and physical well-being of the abused (Tombs, 2016). The types of abuse have been identified to include physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional, mental, financial, and spiritual. In the context of the discourse, abuse refers to the misuse of something because of some power such a person has over the other party being abused. Some words that are synonymous with it include misuse, mishandle, maltreat, exploit, pervert, take advantage of. It also refers to a treat with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly.

The Abuse of Academics can be described as any form of unjust, unpleasant or demeaning treatment administered to academics in the course of carrying out their obligations (Fasanmi & Adeyemo, 2023). It could be from heads of units, university management, the proprietor of the university in the case of private universities and the government in the case of public universities.

The treatment given to members of academics that is, lecturers in public Federal universities in Nigeria between March and October 2022 has been widely described as a form of abuse of academics. A situation in which the salaries of lecturers were stopped and a pro-rated salary paid...
in the month the lecturers called off has been said to be an abuse of the members of the academia who are the custodians of knowledge in the ivory towers of nations of the world.

The situation was that of an abuse by a Federal Minister, the then Minister for Labour and Employment who wanted to deal with lecturers in the Federal universities for the reasons best known to him. He introduced the “No Work, No Pay” policy neglecting the fact that it was only the teaching duty that was withdrawn by academics under the aegis of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). During the strike action, academics were still going about their research functions as well as community service. Another form of abuse on the academic community in Nigeria that is worthy of note is the fact that the Federal Government compromises expertise for political consideration in the appointment of the head of the Education ministry. The Minister for Education during the immediate past administration during which the 8-month strike action took place is not a trained educationist but a journalist by profession. He recently made a release on the eve of the administration in which he served. Here were his direct words; “I didn’t know anything about the education sector when I was appointed Minister except superficially. But when Buhari (The then Nigerian President) decided to make me Minister of Education, I called some people to assist me in working on a policy document on education because I was a novice in the sector. I shared my idea with them and they assisted me greatly, and I remain grateful to them for these years” (Separately reported by Vanguard Newspaper (2022)). These were the words of Mallam Adamu Adamu, who is the longest-serving Education minister in Nigeria during a valedictory session with officials and heads of parastatals of the Federal Ministry of Education on the eve of the administration that came to an end on 29th May 2023.

From the way the ASUU Strike action was handled by the Minister of Education who obviously left his roles in the hands of his counterpart in the Labour Ministry, it was manifestly clear that the Minister who later owned up, was not only not prepared for the job but also did not have a good grasp of the very crucial role committed into his hands for a long period of eight years. While every sector of the nation is very important, many people were concerned about the fact that a crucial sector such as that of Education could be left in the hands of a “novice” for eight years. During the strike action by the academic union, the Minister of Education himself spoke in support of the “No work, No pay” policy whereas if the position was occupied by a trained academician or educationist, such person would have on one hand understood the importance of the demand of the union which was centred on the revitalisation of university education and other vital demands, and on the other hand understood that academics perform a tripartite function of teaching, research and service, and as such it was only the teaching functions that are suspended during strike actions and that members of academics still perform the two other roles and as such it would have been unjust to withhold their salaries altogether.

While searching the literature, there were not many writings on academic abuse reason being that most nations of the world see their teachers and academics as assets and nation builders and such they treat them with all sense of dignity because they are at the centre of knowledge generation and dissemination. It is of concern that it is only in Nigeria, that being an academic is not a desirable thing. Other forms of academic abuse in Nigeria were identified by respondents who are lecturers in one of the Nigerian universities later in this study.

Generally, Harm means physical or mental damage. Other words that are synonymous with it are affliction, damage, detriment, hurt, injury, and flaw among others. Harm is the outcome of a negative intention backed up with a corresponding action (Raymen, 2022). Seyama (2022) noted that growing harms are primarily hidden, ignored, normalised or accepted as part of societal and organisational life in contemporary society. Harms have equally been defined as specific events or instances where ‘human flourishing’ is said to have been compromised (Raymen, 2022). These harms can be categorised as physical and mental health harms; autonomy harms; and relational harms. Social harms are described as preventable harm in so far as they are either foreseeable events or the result of alterable social conditions (Pemberton, 2015). The concept of social harm emerged from critical criminology, which problematized conventional criminology’s limitations to fully capture the “legal” harms that fall outside the criminal boundaries (Hillyard & Tombs
It was further noted that harms are not inevitable but are determined by the forms of organisation our societies take. Pemberton (2015) further introduced the notion of ‘capitalist harm’ harms that are inherent to the capitalist form of organisation and develops a useful typology of harm reduction regimes, which draw upon, but supplement, a combination of existing varieties and models of capitalism literature, and groups nation-states according to the harm reduction/production features they demonstrate.

Hillyard et al. (2004) put it in perspective by describing social harm as applying to a broad range of areas of social life, involving vices such as violence and victimisation. The term social harm has equally been described as an aspect of crime and criminology which has social implications. Hillyard et al. (2004) further argued that the most important criticism of social harm as a category of crime is that it has no ontological reality which implies that in reality there is nothing intrinsic to any particular event or incident which permits it to be defined as a crime. The authors described crimes and criminals are imaginary events and characters in the sense that they have to be conceived before they can exist because it is what is conceived that is achieved.

Describing the features of social harm, they noted that it encompasses social, economic, psychological and environmental maltreatment, injury or damage inflicted on society either intentionally or unintentionally in most cases by the powerful elites such as government and political leaders. It has equally been described as a concept that enables criminology to move beyond legal definitions of ‘crime’ to include immoral, wrongful and injurious acts that are not necessarily illegal under the law. The concept originates from the work of Edwin Sutherland’s 1945 titled ‘Is “White Collar Crime” Crime?’ (McLaughlin & Muncie 2001). Edwin in his book described social crime as white-collar crime.

From the foregoing, social harm refers to all forms of maltreatment either from individuals, institutions or government melted a group of people either consciously or unconsciously which most times is attributable to human nature and has emotional, psychological, social and mental implications on recipients.

The purpose of the research was to trace the history of abuse of academics, identify the causes, forms and consequences of abuse of academics and ascertain the ways of mitigating academic abuse in Nigerian universities.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

Drawing on the critical social constructivism paradigm, the qualitative case study examined academics’ experiences of abuse in universities. Critical social constructivism maintains that historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts construct individuals’ perspectives on the world (Børsen, 2020). Thus, central to the study is how asymmetrical power imbalances are used to exploit academics, producing untenable working conditions. Obafemi Awolowo University, one of the first-generation universities in Nigeria was selected as a case study to enable in-depth insights into academics’ experiences of disabling power within a real context. Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) was established in 1962 and was known then as University of Ife, the name was changed to immortalize Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was very passionate about education and who established the University while he was the Premier (Governor) of the Western Region of Nigeria. The University is among the first five universities established in Nigeria which are commonly referred to as the first generation being the first set of universities to be established in the country. On the academic front, OAU is noted to have a very high academic standard in the country which makes it prestigious, and its products are usually the choice of most industries. It also prides itself as the pioneer of academic programmes such as Pharmacy in the country. OAU is equally noted for vibrant unionism among both students and members of staff.

Thirty members of academic staff were selected from thirteen departments across eight faculties of the University. Thirty participants were interviewed comprising of seven full Professors, six Associate Professors, eight Senior Lecturers and nine Lecturers. This was made up of 16 males and 14 females)
Individual Semi-structured interviews were utilised. An interview guide was used to elicit responses from the participants who were selected from different cadres. The data collected were analysed thematically using a content analysis procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion

The history of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities

Through the social harms lens, the study noted that the respondents who are lecturers of different cadres ranging from Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturer I from one of Nigerian’s first-generation universities, Obafemi Awolowo University located in Ile-Ife, in the south-western part of the country that abuse on academics has been in the universities as far back as the 1980’s during the military regimes.

Keys to respondents:

- The six full Professors that were interviewed were represented as Professor A-F
- The seven Associate Professors that were interviewed were represented as Associate Professor A-G
- The eight Senior Lecturers selected were represented as Senior Lecturer A-H
- The nine lecturers selected were represented as Lecturer A-I

Respondents reflected on their earlier experiences of abuse under the military regimen. Professor A, a very senior Professor at the University noted with concern that as a lecturer since the 1980s, academics have witnessed quite a lot of abuses ranging from intimidation, deprivation, and erosion of academic freedom among others. Similarly, Professors B and C noted that during one of the military regimes in Nigeria, the military leader at that time threatened to evict lecturers from the Staff quarters facilities across Federal universities in Nigeria because lecturers made some legitimate demands on the government. The professors reflected that three of them were young lecturers in the same department then and recollected that their Head of Department opened the attendance register at the instance of the military government. And that anyone who fails to sign the attendance and teach due to the Lecturers’ union strike action will be dismissed. The experience was described as a challenging one indeed. (Professor B)

Another Professor noted that he was a young lecturer then and witnessed the threat to evict lecturers from the staff quarters and there were threats to dismiss them from the system when lecturers embarked on strike action and that the government would recruit new lecturers to take over their duties. (Professor D)

In corroborating this position, Ojeifo (2014) noted that during the military period, ASUU had problems with the government over; the survival of the university system. This is composed of the conditions of service, funding of the university, issues of university autonomy/academic freedom; the defence of the right to education; broad national issues such as the struggle against the dictatorship of the military regime, the struggle against privatisation, against the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the World Bank’s attempt to take over universities.

Lecturer A: One of the sampled lecturers noted that as an undergraduate about two decades ago who was outstanding, he was very close to his Part Adviser who took special interest in him due to his performance, his level adviser and a lecturer at that time usually shares some of her experiences on the job with him, she coordinates about six other programmes then and usually lament that the stress she goes through to compute the results of about four hundred students manually without any ICT support facilities and after manually computing the results, she would still have to process the results by presenting them before various committees and sometimes to Senate in the case of graduating results and all these she needs to combine with teaching and research.”

Senior Lecturer A, D, C, B, E: (Similar responses merged). As a Senior Lecturer with about fifteen years’ experience in the university system, the time that lecturers spend on processing results, although now online, and presentation of same before various committees is really of concern as it interferes with their commitment to teaching and most especially research which
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determines our promotion largely. This makes it challenging for academics to be able to meet up with expectations of research output. Most lecturers had to resort to sleeping over in the office at night to pay attention to research due to the enormity of result processing.

Professor E: Some full Professors still works as a Result Processing Officer. Other junior colleagues also have a lot of results to process, as such, the senior colleagues cannot afford to leave it all for them because it was difficult for the senior ones to get promoted due to the task of result processing as early career academics. It is therefore important to assist the upcoming colleagues. In other climes, the task of result processing and presentation before vetting committees should not be the job of an academic. This is to ensure that they focus on their tripartite role of teaching, research and service functions which are demanding on their own.”

Lecturer D, B, G, E, F and A: (Similar responses merged). Over the years, the way and manner in which academics are treated have made young and brilliant graduates who ordinarily are supposed to be retained by the system as lecturers usually reject such offers because of the treatment given to academics starting from the salaries to the working conditions. The sampled lecturers noted with concern that most of their colleagues with less qualification in the industries are living a better life. Early career academics are not encouraged nor satisfied with the working conditions of the university teacher and the motivation to work is getting dampened. They noted that if opportunities opened in other sectors or outside the country, they would abandon academics.

Associate Professor D, A, C and B: (Similar responses merged). The lecturers in this category noted that some academics today joined because of passion for it, some of such had the opportunity to travel abroad and pick a job as a lecturer but did so because of their passion for teaching and their country. However, some younger colleagues came in because they thought that being a lecturer in Nigeria was a big thing, when they came in, they saw that, that was not the true picture of the existing situation.

Senior Lecturer I: One of the sampled lecturers noted that many people think lecturers in Nigerian universities are well treated but when they come in, they discover that is a misconception, the respondent further shared a conversation that a non-teaching staff who crossed from the administrative section to academics in the sampled university because she felt to be an academic staff is better, when she has successfully crossed and saw the true situation with academics, she was said to be lamenting that if she had known, she could have remained in the non-teaching line. Some of the source of her lamentation was that the pay does not justify the volume of work an academic does, secondly, she noted that it is unfair for academics to use part of their meagre pay to do research for the university and to publish in foreign journals doing all of this without any support from the university, TETFund which is supposed to be an intervention in this regard has unfortunately been politicized.

From the above witnesses and participants’ accounts, it can be deduced that abuse of academics has been an age-long issue in Nigerian universities and from the accounts of respondents, it is taking different dimensions from time to time.

The causes, forms, and perceived consequences of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities

The immediate past section presented the responses of the participants of the study on the history of abuse of Academics in Nigerian Universities. There is always a cause of something. This section will begin by presenting the responses of the sampled academics, on what the causes of abuse of academics are. The responses of respondents on the causes of academic abuse are presented as follows.

Associate Professor E: This respondent noted that his experience as an academics in Nigeria is found that there is little value for knowledge and scholarship, Nigeria is a money driven society. In Nigeria, politics appears to be the most lucrative venture. Academics are not treated with dignity, it is the Politicians that owns the day because of the money they have taken from the Nation’s commonwealth. The salary of average Politicians is more than the salary of a University Professors. This can be corroborated by a report by Peoples’ Gazette in 2021 that the
Media aide responsible for helping to post news on social media for the immediate past Nigerian President earns N876,738 after statutory deductions apart from allowance while the highest paid university Professor earns N416,000 (Akintade, 2016). This shows that little value is given to scholarship and excellence while greater attention is given to support the exuberance of the ruling class.

**Senior Lecturer H:** The respondent in this category expressed with concern that, in Nigeria, budgetary allocation to education is highly ridiculous and consequently results in poor remuneration of academics. Education is not on the priority list in Nigeria. Budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria in the past ten years has been below 10%. Allocation to education in the current fiscal year is just about 7.2%. A country that cannot budget 10% of its annual budget is not a serious one. The response was corroborated by the Premium Times Nigerian News which reported in 2022 that the highest budgetary allocation to education in the last seven years was 7.9% and that was in 2016 (Suleiman, 2022).

**Associate Professor F:** Successive governments have always complained that paucity of fund is responsible for low spending on the education sector, however, the money that is said not to be available to meet education needs are available for the members of the ruling class and that is why a lot of academics today lobby for political appointments where they know they will get that which they could not get as a teacher within a very short period of time.

**Lecturer G:** Some of the forms of abuse of the academic freedom and autonomy of the university were identified as interference in the recruitment process of academics, the recruitment process of academics in Nigerian public universities which is expected to be strictly based on merit are unfortunately being compromised. Academic freedom is threatened in Nigerian universities, the freedom of academics to determine how, what and when to teach is eroded.

**Professor B, F, C, A:** (Similar responses merged). Another identified form of abuse is delayed promotion of deserving academics due to politics and institutional bureaucratic bottlenecks. There are cases of Readership and Professorship of academics which is also experienced which are delayed for between five to ten years due to some administrative bottlenecks and the present payment platform in universities that is, the Integrated Payroll and Personnel information system (IPPIS) does not make provision for payment in arrears. It is also of concern that academics are poorly remunerated. The highest paid Professor in Nigerian universities earns less than 1000USD per month.

**Senior Lecturer G:** Heavy workload of academics which constitutes distractions for them from focusing on teaching and research. Such distractions include result processing and too many administrative functions. Insufficient number of academics in departments as a result of embargo on employment by government, instead of recruiting enough hands they introduce the idea of excess workload. Non-payment of excess workload allowance called Earned Academic Allowance (EAA). The EAA is supposed to be paid for excess work done by academics every session, but the government has not been paying it as and when due. The demand for the backlog of payment has always been part of the reason for strike actions by the academic staff union.”

**Associate Professor G:** Non-payment of salaries of academic staff for eight months because of the withdrawal of their teaching function while they still carried out their research and community service functions. The enforcement of “No work, No Pay” was justified by the then government out of their ignorance of the fact that an academic performs a tripartite role of teaching, research and community service. During the strike action, it was only the teaching function that is withdrawn. Research engagement still goes on as well as service functions. And that is why during the 8-month strike action in 2022, Deans, Heads of Departments and academics who are involved in results processing were working even though the strike action was on, while a lot of lecturers had a lot of publications to their credit.

**Lecturer C:** As for me, the non-payment of salaries of academic staff for eight months is a high-level abuse of academics. The academic staff union had to embark on the strike action when every available means have been employed. Over time, it has been observed that the only language the government understand is strike action.
Senior Lecturer B, A, E, D: (Similar responses merged). Four members of academics on the Senior Lecturer cadre noted that the burden of administration such as headship of departments taking the time of teaching and research of academics. In Nigerian public universities, when a lecturer assumes the position of a head of Department, he or she no longer have time for research and sometimes teaching as the burden and pressure of the headship position. Most of our Professors do not like to take up the task even though the university permits them to do so. The burden is usually on some of us who are Senior Lecturers because no cadre below that can be appointed to such office.

Senior Lecturer B: The respondent noted that as an academic Staff Union of Universities, a strike action is usually the last resort. The 2022 strike action did not happen suddenly. The Union had engaged the government severally, but nothing happened because the only language the government understood was a strike action. The refusal of government to pay lecturers’ salary during the strike action is unfair because out of the three functions of an academic staff of teaching, research and service, only the teaching function was withdrawn during the strike action. The research and community/administrative roles were still be performed. Deans and Heads of Department were carrying out their official duty while lecturers were doing research and turning out publications in local and international journals.

Associate Professor G and F: (Similar responses merged). A serious form of abuse on academics is the usurpation of the powers of the Governing Council and erosion of university autonomy. The Federal Government of Nigeria usurped the powers of the Governing Council of the university to forcefully enroll academics in Federal Universities into the IPPIS platform which is corruption driven. The Nigerian Court of Appeal in its judgement recently has faulted the action of the Federal Government in this regard. The then Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, was said to have misappropriated about 80billion through the IPPIS platform. Above were personal experiences and witnesses’ account in form of responses of sampled academics on the forms of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities.

Responses on the consequences of abuse of academics were presented as follows.

Lecturer E, F, A, I: (Similar responses merged). Abuse on academics is consequential, these include brain drain; a lot of Nigerian academics are migrating en masse out of the country seeking for greener pastures. The situation was further aggravated by the 2022 ordeal of non-payment of salaries of academics for eight months while on strike action. In a department in one of the Nigerian Universities, 16 members of academic staff left as a result of the treatment melted on academics during this period. There were other departments where academics left in varying magnitude. An average person among us as young lecturers is ready to leave the system at any slightest opportunity.

Professor C and F: (Similar responses merged). The respondents here noted that as professors, their heart bleeds with the untimely death of academics and intellectuals who are supposed to be assets to the nation. In a department in OAU, two Professors died during the strike action. The death was connected to the non-payment of salaries. Another university in the south-eastern part of the country lost a total of 10 Professors to the Strike action. It was reported that most of them were managing certain ailments and could not afford to get regular drugs due to non-payment of salaries. It is disheartening that individuals who have committed their lives to nation building could be allowed to die just like that. Very unfortunate!

Lecturer E: Lack of motivation for the work which leads to lack of commitment as a result of loss of interest in the job which consequently will have adverse effect on productivity in the areas of teaching, research and service.

Professor C, E, A: (Similar responses merged). It a high level of abuse to impose a centralized payment platform known as the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS) which made it impossible for academics to go to another federal university as a Visiting Professor/lecturer thus eroding the principles of internationalisation and faculty exchange which is practiced everywhere in the world. The consequences of abuse of academics are threats to the
scholarship, knowledge incubation and dissemination that universities as ivory tower are known for.

This section presented the responses of academics on the causes, forms and consequences of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities.

**Suggested ways and means of addressing and mitigating abuse of academics in Nigerian universities**

The respondents who have experienced one abuse of academics or the other suggested some ways and means by which abuse of academics can be addressed and mitigated to the barest minimum. The suggested solutions are presented as follows.

**All categories of respondents:** They strongly suggested that there must be proper/improved budgetary allocation to Education and consequently for the revitalisation of university education. This they said has always been a major reason while the Academic Staff Union go on strike action.

**Associate Professor G:** Improved remuneration of academics such that our take home will indeed take us home and be at par with colleagues in other parts of the world. As regards the issue of paucity of fund, the government must be ready to cut the whopping cost on governance and also block every leakages (financial wastefulness) in the nation.

**Lecturer A, B, C, D, E, F:** (Similar responses merged). Provision of conducive working environment such as office space and office equipment. A situation where a newly employed staff will have to use his/her money to set up an officially allocated office is uncalled for. One of the respondents noted that when he and some other of his colleagues were employed as a Graduate Assistant, all that the university provided was an office, they had to buy a table and some pairs of chairs, an air-conditioner, and had to be responsible for the painting of the office. They were assured that the University will refund of the money spent in equipping the office, the respondent noted that as of this day in 2023, almost about ten years later, they have not been refunded.

**Professor F, C, A:** (Similar responses merged): The three roles of academics (teaching, research and service component) should all form part of promotion requirements and not just the research component alone.

**Senior Lecturer G, B, D, F:** (Similar responses merged): The Management of the TETFund Board and activities must be re-visited and overhauled. Academics who know the operation of research in higher institution should be appointed to oversee the agency and not just appointing non-experts for political reasons.

Presented above are the responses of participants in the study who are members of academic staff across eight faculties and thirteen departments in the selected institution. The responses were analysed and presented thematically using the content analysis procedure.

**CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that education as key to the existence of any nation as such it must treated with utmost priority as the Nigerian universities are failing in this endeavour. The study which was based on three objectives traced the history of abuse of academics in Nigerian universities, established the causes, forms and consequences of abuse of academics in the study area and provided some suggestions on the ways and means of mitigating abuse of academics in the study area with a view to correcting some of the wrongs that abuse of academics has done to members of academics as well as the university system itself. One such suggestion is the need for increased funding of the education sector. The current budgetary allocation to education is not capable of effecting any change in the status quo. The government must be deliberate about the need to show more commitment to the funding of education and also place more value on its academics who represent the body of intellectuals in the nation. These are the people that drive research which in turn drives the development of the nation.

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended among others, the need for increased budgetary allocation which is the first sign of commitment to the education project as well as to the academic community. Teachers at every level must be treated with all forms of
dignity. Efforts must equally be made to change the battered perception of the general public about education. Academics in universities must be properly remunerated. Funds must be made available to support research in universities rather than academics using their funds to fund research which can be very stressful financially. The activities and operations of TetFund must be reviewed to ensure that the agency fulfils its purpose of providing adequate intervention in the area of staff training and development, research and infrastructural development.

One of the limitations to the study is the fact that the study could only cover one university out the numerous public universities in Nigeria. It is therefore suggested that future research in this area be conducted in other public universities in the country.

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