



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

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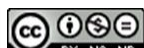
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ABSTRACT

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 academic members. The three core functions of the academic staff are 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 indicates 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 the government does not prioritise education, which makes its budgetary allocation to the sector very ridiculous.



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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, provides support services which include administrative and technical functions.

The academic members perform three cardinal functions, including teaching and instructing undergraduate and graduate students. Members of the public generally hold the view that teaching is the only role performed by academics. This view is not correct. Academics also 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 academic research output also forms part of the requirements for 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 areas 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. In summary, community service is rendered by academics to the town, that is, members outside the campus community, whether in the host community or beyond (Antiabong, 2018).

It is generally believed that the working conditions of employees in any work setting have 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, and administrative service. Ajadi and Fasanmi (2018) further noted in the study that one of the major reasons for labour union disputes in organizations is the issue of poor working conditions for employees. Academic institutions are not left behind as they face 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 promises upon promises without any action taken on the promises; workers then, through their labour unions, embark on strike action to get the government's attention. 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 when the workers go on a strike action, 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 that 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 educational budgetary allocation (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. Still, the government complains of a 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 university without external interference. This has not been the case as the political class has politicised the appointments of vice-chancellors and other management staff. 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. 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 is unfortunately not compensated, for the delay.

One of the most recent forms of academic abuse that 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 (Shoki, 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 government's attention to issues of the revitalization of university education and the improvement of the working conditions of academics. Instead of addressing the matters raised, the government stopped the salaries of academics a month into the strike action 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). Upon reading the message, the project students circulated it on social media, and it went viral. The content and tone of the message speak volumes about the state of mind of the lecturer, which led him to make such a decision. Another case was when a female lecturer at another university was forced to sell food 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, 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 a 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-meditated treatment that is unpleasant, unruly, and unguarded, which usually affects 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 discourse context, abuse refers to the misuse of something because of some power 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.

Abuse of Academics can be described as any form of unjust, unpleasant, or demeaning treatment administered to academics while carrying out their obligations (Fasanmi & Adeyemo, 2023). It could come from heads of units, university management, the proprietor of the university in the case of private universities, or 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 lecturers' salaries 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 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 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, academics were still working on their research functions as well as community service. Another form of abuse on the academic community in Nigeria that is worthy of note is that the Federal Government compromises expertise for political consideration in appointing 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 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 whether the position was occupied by a trained academician or educationist. Such a person would have, on one hand, understood the importance of the demand of the union, which was centred on the revitalization of university education and other vital demands, and on the other hand, understood that academics perform a tripartite function of teaching, research, and service. Therefore, only the teaching functions were suspended during strike actions, and academic members still performed the two other roles. As such, it would have been unjust to withhold their salaries altogether.

While searching the literature, there were not many writings on academic abuse, the 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 desirable. Respondents who are lecturers in one of the Nigerian universities later in this study identified other forms of academic abuse in Nigeria.

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, normalized, or accepted as part of societal and organizational 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 categorized 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 criminal boundaries (Hillyard & Tombs 2007). It was further noted that harms are not inevitable but are determined by the forms of organization our societies take. Pemberton (2015) further introduced the notion of ‘capitalist

harm' as harms that are inherent to the capitalist form of organization and developed a helpful typology of harm reduction regimes, which draws upon, but supplements, 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 victimization. The term social harm has equally been described as an aspect of crime and criminology with 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 that permits it to be defined as a crime. The authors described crimes and criminals as 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 Edwin Sutherland's 1945 work entitled '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 by 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 academic abuse, identify the causes, forms, and consequences of academic abuse, and ascertain ways to mitigate it 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 the 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 on being the pioneer of academic programmes such as pharmacy in the country. OAU is equally noted for vibrant unionism among students and staff members.

Thirty academic staff members were selected from thirteen departments across eight faculties of the University. Thirty participants were interviewed: seven full Professors, six Associate Professors, eight Senior Lecturers, and nine Lecturers. The participants were 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 lens of social impact, this research notes that the respondents are lecturers from various cadres ranging from Professor to Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, and Lecturer I from one of Nigeria's first-generation universities, Obafemi Awolowo University, located in Ile-Ife, in the west. These academic abuses have occurred at this university since the 1980s during the military regime.

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 threatened to evict lecturers from the staff quarters facilities across federal universities because lecturers made some legitimate demands on the government. The professors reflected that three of them were young lecturers in the same department then. They recollected that their Head of Department opened the attendance register at the instance of the military government. Anyone who failed to sign the attendance and teach due to the lecturer' union strike action would 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. 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)

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 was 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 outstanding undergraduate about two decades ago, he was very close to his Part Adviser who took a special interest in him due to his performance, his level adviser and a lecturer at that time usually shared some of her experiences on the job with him. She coordinated about six other programs then and usually lamented the stress she went through to compute the results of about four hundred students manually without any ICT support facilities. After manually computing the results, she would still have to process the results by presenting them before various committees and sometimes to the Senate in the case of graduating results, and she needed to combine all these with teaching and research.

Looking at the experiences of Senior Lecturers A, D, C, B, and 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 determines our promotion largely. This makes it challenging for academics to meet 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 stated that some full Professors still worked as Result Processing Officers. Other junior colleagues also had 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 or satisfied with the working conditions of the university teacher, and their 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 them 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 that being an academic staff was better. When she 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 sources of her lamentation were 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 academic abuse has been an age-long issue in Nigerian universities. From the accounts of respondents, it takes 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 study participants on the history of academic abuse 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 academic abuse are. Respondents' responses on the causes of academic abuse are presented as follows.

Associate Professor E: This respondent noted that his experience as an academic in Nigeria found that there is little value in 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 who own the day because of the money they have taken from the Nation's commonwealth. An average Politician's salary is more than a University professor's. 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 supporting the exuberance of the ruling class.

Senior Lecturer H: The respondent in this category expressed concern that, in Nigeria, budgetary allocation to education is highly ridiculous and consequently results in poor remuneration of academics. Education is not on Nigeria's priority list. In Nigeria's past ten years, the budget allocation to education 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 funds is responsible for low spending on the education sector. However, the money that is said not to be available to meet education needs is 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.

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

Professor B, F, C, A: (Similar responses merged). Another identified abuse form is the delayed promotion of deserving academics due to politics and institutional bureaucratic bottlenecks. There are cases of Readership and Professorship of academics, which is also being 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 1000 USD per month.

Senior Lecturer G: The heavy workload of academics distracts them from focusing on teaching and research. Such distractions include result processing and too many administrative functions. An insufficient number of academics in departments as a result of an embargo on employment by the government; instead of recruiting enough hands, they introduce the idea of excess workload. Non-payment of excess workload allowance is 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 academic staff salaries 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 was withdrawn. Research engagement and service functions still went on. That is why during the 8-month strike action in 2022, Deans, Heads of Departments, and academics involved in results processing were working even though the strike action was on, while many lecturers had a lot of publications to their credit.

Lecturer C: As for me, the non-payment of academic staff salaries for eight months is a high-level abuse of academics. The academic staff union had to embark on strike action when every available means had been employed. Over time, it has been observed that the only language the government understands 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 head of Department, he or she no longer has 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 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 several times, but nothing happened because the only language the government understood was a strike action. The refusal of the government to pay lecturers' salaries 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 being performed. Deans and Heads of Departments carried out their official duties while lecturers were researching and turning out publications in local and international journals.

Associate Professor G and F: (Similar responses merged). A serious form of abuse of academics is the usurpation of the powers of the Governing Council and the erosion of university autonomy. The Federal Government of Nigeria usurped the powers of the Governing Council of the university to forcefully enrol 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. Ahmed Idris, the then Accountant General of the Federation, was said to have misappropriated about 80 billion through the IPPIS platform. Above were personal experiences and witnesses' accounts in the 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 of academics is consequential; these include brain drain; a lot of Nigerian academics are migrating out of the country seeking greener pastures. The situation was further aggravated by the 2022 ordeal of non-payment of academic salaries for eight months while on strike action. In a department in one of the Nigerian Universities, 16 academic staff members left due to the treatment on academics during this period. There were other departments where academics were 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. Two professors died during the strike in a department at OAU. The death was connected to the non-payment of salaries. Another university in the southeastern 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 leads to a lack of commitment as a result of loss of interest in the job, which consequently will have an adverse effect on productivity in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

Professor C, E, A: (Similar responses merged). It was 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 Visiting Professors/lecturers, thus eroding the principles of internationalization and faculty, exchange which is practised everywhere in the world. The consequences of abuse of academics are threats to the scholarship, knowledge incubation, and dissemination that universities as ivory towers 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 form of academic abuse or another suggested ways and means of addressing and mitigating it to the barest minimum. The suggested solutions are presented below.

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

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

Lecturer A, B, C, D, E, F: (Similar responses merged). Provision of a conducive working environment such as office space and office equipment. A situation where a newly employed staff member has 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 would refund the money spent on 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, not just the research component.

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 research operation in higher institutions should be appointed to oversee the agency and not just appoint 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 is key to the existence of any nation. As such, it must be treated with utmost priority, as 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 to correct 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 people drive research, which in turn drives the nation's development.

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 and 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 adequately 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 areas of staff training and development, research, and infrastructural development.

One limitation of the study is that it could only cover one of the numerous public universities in Nigeria. Therefore, it is suggested that future research in this area be conducted in other public universities in the country.

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