

Impact of Corruption on Research Programme Implementation in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper explore the impact of corruption on research programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The paper is a position paper that depends on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications. The paper revealed that corruption has affected the development of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study also disclosed that corruption has led to a shortage of research funds, research facilities, shortage of research resources and has slowed down the implementation of research programmes in the tertiary institutions. Based on these findings, the paper recommends that the government should deploy technological tools in the administration of research programmes to contain corruption practices in the system. Government and private institutions should ensure that all funds released into tertiary institutions are disclosed to all stakeholders to enhance accountability and transparency in the system.*

Keywords: *Corruption, Research programme, Tertiary education.*

Introduction

Tertiary Education is the type of education that a person undergoes after the basic secondary education. It could be in a University, Polytechnic or college of education. Tertiary education is post-secondary and this is where students specialize in the core area of their pursuit which could be sciences, arts and vocational (Johnstone, Arora & Experton, 1998). Tertiary education is to prepare the individual for the world of work with a study of the proper theories and relevant hands-on experience. The curriculum of tertiary institutions is developed to ensure that students can meet the challenges of the workplace and also ensure that all the relevant materials necessary for this are available for effective training and experience (Mgboji, Uzoegwu, & Onah, n.d).

Tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education can also be viewed as post-basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced teaching, research and community service (Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023). Tertiary education before now was purely government-sponsored but with the advent of private universities, there has been an improvement in the quality of tertiary education and also in the

competition amongst their graduates. Private Universities like Covenant University have shown consistency and also tried to stay at the forefront of education advancement with the results from the webometric ranking and Times Higher Education ranking (Mba, 2019). Tertiary education in this paper is seen as higher educational institution saddled with the responsibilities of transforming the individual and the society through active engagement in teaching, research and provision of community services.

The cardinal programmes in tertiary education are teaching, research and community services. Tertiary education's second-ranked programme is the research programme. Ogunode, Olofinkua and Sunmonu, (2024) observed that the research programme is one of the major programmes of the universities. It is a key to the university's development. The research programme of the universities is one of the key indicators used to measure the performance of the universities. The three cardinal programmes of the universities are teaching programme, research programme and community services. The research programme is the second cardinal programme of the universities. It is among the criteria used for measuring the performance of the universities. The research programme of the universities aims to aid the social, economic and technological advancement of the country. Corruption appears to be hampering the development of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

It is based on this that this study seeks to examine the impact of corruption on research programme implementation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The paper is a position paper that depends on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications.

Literature Review

Corruption

Corruption has been defined by different people at different times but the most conspicuous of all these definitions is that corruption is the abuse of public office for personal gains (Mgboji, et al n.d). Transparency International (2010) defined corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption can be further explained as the fraudulent activity that is done by any working member of the organization so that he/she can gain some external financial or other profits (Reddy, 2012). Corruption in the education system in Nigeria itself has created a vicious circle of deficit culture so intensive, that virtually all good plans, moves and budgetary provisions for improved facilities in the education system ended up being misappropriated without corresponding provisions of the infrastructure being budgeted for (Nwaokugha & Ezeugwu, 2017). World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of 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 offices and processes for competitive advantages or profit (Osakede, 2015). According to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Corruption continues to be a top priority for the Nigerian government and its people. Corruption impacts all elements of public life, continues to damage the country's social, economic, and political progress, and is a key impediment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. (Anazodo, 2015).

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), (2003) sees corruption as an insidious plague having several corrosive effects on nations. Accordingly, UNCAC stressed that corruption undermines the rule of law, quality of life and democratic principles, leads to violation of human rights, threatens human security and distortion of markets. According to Gorai (2016), corruption is the abuse and misuse of power and authority. It could take various forms which include, bribe-induced corruption, and selfish reason corruption, such as a president sitting at a national airport in his village, and so on. Adebajo (2014) opined that corruption is an immoral and criminal act, a mindset to do wrong and a disposition to exhibit dishonest behaviour by committing an offence against morality, the law and the ethical norms of the society. Ojiade (2000) defines corruption as any systematic vice perpetuated by

individuals, society or the State in forms of favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, undue wealth, power, and position among other things at the detriment of the public while Heyheman (2004) argues that education corruption includes the abuse of authority for personal and material gains. Corruption in this paper is any form of actions that is immoral and is against an acceptable value of the society.

Research programme

Research involves organized activities meant to solve problems in societies. Research are programme of tertiary institutions, carried out by academic staff, students and researchers. Research encompasses a range of activities aimed at identifying problems, gathering new data, and finding solutions through carefully designed procedures and logical analysis. It represents an intensive and extensive search for solutions to societal issues, including those within the realm of education (Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu & Ajape, 2020). Ogunode, & Ayeni, (2024) noted that the academic staff of these tertiary institutions are compulsorily required to carry out research activities as their promotions and grading are primarily based on their research outputs. Apart from the academic staff being promoted through research publications, research activities help us to know ‘best practices in other parts of the world and also add value both to our immediate community and the larger global community. Research can simply be defined as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Research is an important tool for advancing knowledge promoting progress, and enabling scholars to relate more effectively to the environment, to accomplish their objectives, and to resolve conflicts (National Open University 2020).

According to IbidapoObe (2010), research refers to creating new knowledge or new insights into knowledge, or unlocking knowledge. Falola (2022) noted that universities are referred to as research and development centres which means that, from a distant and close look, the university has an unending obligation to drive research and development for academic or educational upliftment and to proffer solutions to society’s core problems. Ogunode, Tseveda, and Atim (2024) and Ohaeri, Olayinka & Ogunode (2023) observed that the traditional roles of universities include research and instruction to provide solutions to the community’s problems.

Impact of Corruption on Research Programme of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Tertiary institutions receive subventions in societies where the government sponsors education and others generate funds from tuition and all other fees payable by the student. There have been a lot of issues with how these funds are managed and deployed and there have been cases of complaints of improper allocation or management of these funds. These complaints have not received the required attention from the relevant authorities. Thus, it has been noted that these leaders can either enhance national development or retards development by employing bureaucratic bottle-neck (Asaju & Ayeni, 2020). Following the attitude of leadership towards corruption, it has been noted that there is the failure of leadership in Nigeria that has made federating units clamouring for fiscal federalism (Ayeni, 2018). Some tertiary institutions have experienced gridlocks and a halt in activities when the funds are exhausted and when proper checks are done, it is discovered that the funds were not properly managed and this mismanagement could be traced to the Chief Executive Officers and chief accounting officers. Some examples of mismanagement of funds could include incessant travel, starting projects with no plans for completion, purchase of vehicles that are not necessarily needed, and living extravagant lifestyles (Mgboji, et al n.d). This has affected the development of a research programme that depends on the availability of funds, facilities, a conducive environment and stable policies.

Corruption affects the completion of research facilities such as research centres, laboratories and workshops. The foregoing consequently affects other things in the society. Thus, scholars have opined that the problems facing peacebuilding in Nigeria are characterized by high levels of corruption and poor infrastructural facilities that have damaging effects on the welfare of Nigerians (Ayeni & Sani, 2021).

The issue of contract inflation is another major corruption channel globally. Contractors are invited to bid for jobs and the contract is awarded to the contractor who can give kickbacks and bribe the officials involved. The contractors are encouraged to inflate the cost of the project without any special scrutiny as long as the necessary settlements are done (Tanaka, 2001). For example, a contract that should not exceed 10 million might be quoted for 30 Million and in most cases, the money is fully released and the contracts not fully executed or abandoned. The parties that should check compliance most times have been compromised and are handicapped to do anything to avoid being exposed and their jobs lost in the process (Mgboji, et al n.d). These actions according to affect the development of research because infrastructure facilities that are supposed to be available to aid the conduct of research are not available on the ground as a result of corruption in the system. Handling of projects which cut across various aspects in tertiary institutions is another corruption conduit. It could be a building project, road construction, or renovation project with its start and finish date. Such projects are marked with due approvals and the expectation is that these projects will alleviate the suffering of staff and students. The contractors most times will abandon these projects halfway or abscond without executing the project at all (Iyayi, 2010; Ogunode, Ohunene, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022). On the other hand, projects which will be beneficial to the institution are sometimes left unattended and projects that will bring undue gains to the officers involved are hastily approved and given all the necessary support. Corruption has led to a situation that scholars refer to as a threat to human security owing to the inability of political authorities to provide people with basic needs (Ayeni, Sani, & Haruna, 2023).

Corruption in tertiary institutions has led to a shortage of research funds. This is against the backdrop that fund is the lifeblood of every organisation (Ayeni, 2017). Kola, Abdulrahman, Sunday and Tayo (2021) noted that corruption is one of the enemies of research development in Nigeria's higher education. The TETFund would have made the same impact the National Research Foundation of South Africa made in funding research if not for corruption. Most heads of Nigerian institutions collaborate with lecturers to divert research funds. Many lecturers collect money for conferences but fail to attend such meetings. Corruption in Nigeria has been a source of burden as it affects the national economy (Amaechi, Ayeni, & Madu, 2019). Institution-based research (IBR) does not thrive well in most institutions because it fails to utilize research funds after collecting the capital. Some Provosts and Rectors do not adequately release the funds to the researchers who submitted the proposal to the TETFund after approval. Ogunode *et al.* (2021) concluded that corruption is another problem that is preventing the administration and development of research in Nigerian public universities. Funds released by the government for the administration and development of research programmes in public universities have been mismanaged and misappropriated. Some funds are been looted by the researchers or lecturers. Ogunode *et al.* (2021b) submitted that corruption in the university system has affected the volume of funds allocated for research programmes. The above is further affirmed by scholars who noted that corruption is almost the second name of political officeholders in Nigeria (Muhammed, & Ayeni, 2018; Godwin, Ayeni, & Peter, 2021).

Corruption in tertiary institutions has led to poor conduct of research and poor quality research by students. Corruption in tertiary institutions has its roots in Nigerian society. For instance, it has been argued that governments at various levels in Nigeria are corrupt they can no longer provide basic social amenities for the citizens to enjoy (Ayeni, Tusayi, Joseph & Obatayo, 2018). The corruption in the environment that housed tertiary institutions in Nigeria affected those institutions. Kola, Abdulrahman, Sunday and Tayo (2021) noted that the case of postgraduate supervision in Nigerian universities is a fundamental issue requiring every stakeholder's education attention. Many doctoral students have been frustrated out of the program because of their supervisors. The corruption in Nigerian politics has found its way to academics through students' supervisors and lazy students. Most Nigerian students are not serious about postgraduate study, even the doctorate: these students induced some supervisors with gifts to have their ways. Unfortunately, students who cannot afford such assistance suffer severe setbacks in their studies (Kola; Abdulrahman, Sunday & Tayo 2021). According to Lamido (2013), the level of

corruption in the country has assumed a threatening dimension which is also disastrous and destructive to higher education. This has negative effects on education and research. Corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of the national life that even the education sector is not spared. Ultimately, this has affected the quality and quantity of scientific findings, up-to-date equipment infrastructure and facilities for good research. Corruption in the educational system in Nigeria especially in the higher institutions has led to poor quality of education, research and poor academic performance (Ogunode, & Stephen, 2021; Ogunode, & Johnson, 2021).

Seminars, and workshops intended to re-strategize and introduce new approaches to effective delivery of educational programmes as well as update teachers and practitioners in the educational sectors are used as mediums to siphon allocations (Kanibin, 2019).reported that many researchers and lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been accused of diverting research grants for local or international conferences. It can therefore be deduced that rather than the workshop serving as a means to improve the educational sector through innovative brainstorming, it was used as a means to line the pockets of those in charge of organising the seminar (Kanibin, 2019).

Findings of the Study

The study showed that corruption has affected the development of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study also disclosed that corruption has led to a shortage of research funds, research facilities, shortage of research resources and has slowed down the implementation of research programmes in the tertiary institutions.

Coclusion and Recommendation

This paper discussed the impact of corruption on research programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The paper revealed that corruption has affected the development of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study also disclosed that corruption has led to a shortage of research funds, research facilities, shortage of research resources and has slowed down the implementation of research programmes in the tertiary institutions.

Based on these findings, the paper recommended that the government should deploy technological tools in the administration of research programmes to contain corruption practices in the system. Government and private institutions ensure that all funds released into tertiary institutions are disclosed to all the stakeholders to enhance accountability and transparency in the system.

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