

Economic Hardship and University Administration in Nigeria

Okani Doris Ugo-onyeka¹, Eze, Ifeoma Nonyelum², Niyi Jacob Ogunode³

¹ Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria

² Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria, Nigeria

³ Department of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract:

This paper x-ray the impact of economic hardship on university administration in Nigeria with focus on staff and students. The paper is a position paper. Secondary data were used to support every points raised in the paper. The secondary data were collected from relevant books, seminar papers, workshop papers, articles, etc. The paper established that economic hardship has negatively impacted on the universities administration by reducing the internally generated revenue and has affected the staff and students by increasing their cost of living. Economic hardship has directly affected teaching, learning, research and administrative functions of the university system in Nigeria. Based on this findings, the paper recommends the following: Government should increase the funding of universities in Nigeria. This will enable universities administrators to cope with the high running cost of the respective universities across the country. Government should increase the salaries of academic staff in all the public universities in Nigeria. This will help them to address the problem of high cost of living. Government should provide palliative for students and provide school buses to convey the students from campuses to their respective hotels.

Keywords: Economic Hardship, University administration.

Introduction

University administration refers to the application of the universities' resources to implement the programme of the universities with the aims of realizing the objectives of the universities. University administration is the mobilization and arrangement of both human and materials resources for the achievement of the university's goals. University administration is the effective

use of the resources of the university to implement the teaching programme, research programme and the community service programme of the universities. University administration is the deployment of the universities' resources to accomplish the universities' programme (Ogunode, 2020).

The objectives of university administration include: to implement the programme of the universities as defined; to allocate resources for the implementation of the universities programme; to ensure implementation of teaching programme, to ensure implementation of research programme; to ensure delivery of quality community services programme, to ensure effective staff development, to ensure effective student administration, to ensure smooth implementation of academic calendar and to ensure quality education (Ogunode, 2020).

Universities administration in Nigeria appear to be affected by the economic hardship. This revelation, confirms that the rise in inflation had increased geometrically, and had reduced the standard of living that had inadvertently affected the education sector where the teachers are the centre of focus in the implementation of educational policies for the attainment of predetermined goals and objectives. The situation becomes more pathetic with the steady decline in the budgetary allocation to the education sector in the past years. This had resulted to the near lack of provision of instructional materials, facilities and equipment, stagnated salaries, no promotion and payment of increment arrears, poor working condition, and unconducive teaching and learning environment among others. All these put together are strong indicators that may affect school management (Giami, 2023). Ogunode, Eze, and Olumodeji, (2024) noted that inflation in Nigeria has led to an increment in the fees of tertiary institutions especially the universities across the country. Premium Times (2023), observed the fee hike, which has become an established trend among Nigerian public universities. Some of the public universities that recently increased school fees include the University of Maiduguri, the University of Benin, Hamada Bello University, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, the University of Lagos and the University of Abuja. Leadership (2023) concluded that the fee hike coincides with a period of dwindling disposable incomes for families, primarily due to galloping inflation in the prices of goods and services across the nation triggered by the removal of the petrol subsidy. Inflation in Nigeria has made it difficult for university administration to operate and administer the universities effectively. It is based on this that this paper seeks to discuss the impact of economic hardship on universities administration in Nigeria.

Concept of Economic Hardship

Economic hardship is defined as "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting for some time, normally visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production (National Bureau of Economic Research: NBER, 2012). Economic hardship is defined as the inability or struggle to meet reasonable basic living expenses such as food and shelter (Cunningham, 2019). Economic hardship refers to the perception of a deficit of resources compared to others. Those who suffer from economic hardship are competitively disadvantaged, with resultant consequences for survival and reproduction. The perception of economic hardship may motivate individuals to adopt different behavioral strategies including both increased conflict behaviors and increased cooperation (Refaie & Mishra, 2019)

Economic hardship means an onerous and excessive financial burden that destroys reasonable and beneficial use of property and that would amount to the taking of property without just compensation, or failure to achieve a reasonable economic return in the case of income-producing properties (Lawinsider, 2022). Economic hardship and economic activities decrease substantially, and the decline affects wide portions of the economy and it has some permanence (Sabitu, 2023). "Economic hardship in this paper is an economic situation whereby there are difficulties faced by individuals, institutions and organizations due to income loss, unemployment, job instability, and economic insecurity. Economic hardship can also be seen as an economic condition that is

characterized by inflation, high unemployment, high debt rate, low income and reduced standard of living of the people. Economic hardship is a condition of economic meltdown where citizens of a country cannot afford their basic needs due to inflation and a high rate of unemployment that is caused by bad leadership, corruption and unstable economic policies” (Ogunode, Afolabi, & Adi 2024). Economic hardship according to Ogunode, Olofinkua, and Sunmonu, (2024) is an economic activities that is constantly decrease and the decline affects wide economic activities which leads to inflation, unemployment and high standard of living among the citizens. Economic hardship also implies an economic situation that whereby citizens of a country cannot afford to meet up with their economic need as a result of inflation unemployment, high debt burden, low direct investment and high poverty. From the above, economic hardship is an economic situation whereby citizens find it difficult to carry out economic activities and to enjoy a stable standard of living and cost of living. Economic hardship is an economic situation that is characterized with inflation, high cost of living, high unemployment and decreased economic activities that makes lives unbearable for the citizens.

Impact of Economic Hardship on University Administration

The economic hardship in Nigeria has affected educational institutions operation especially the universities education in Nigeria. The economic hardship has affected universities administration, staff and students of Nigerian universities.

University Administration

The university administration involve the series of activities aimed at systematically realizing the objectives of the universities system through prudent management universities resources. The activities have been affected by the economic hardship in Nigeria. The economic hardship has direct impact on the finances of the universities and this has affected the level operation and provision of academic services in all the universities across the country. The economic hardship has affected the income level of the citizens which has implication on their spending on education of their wards in educational institutions like the universities. Ogunode and Ukozor, (2023) has observed that the recent removal of subsidy has affected the prices of educational resources that are deployed for the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The tertiary institutions need stationaries to carry out administrative functions. The prices of these stationaries have increased due to inflation that was caused by the removal of subsidies from petroleum products in Nigeria. The recent announcement by the Nigerian government to remove fuel subsidies in Nigeria has led to inflation and also led to an increment in the operational cost of various tertiary institutions in the country.

The internally generated income of many universities has dropped due to harsh business environment caused by the economic hardship. Most Nigerian universities depends on school fees to generate revenue and other commercial business such as bakery, pure-water companies, consultancy services etc. The economic hardship in Nigeria has disrupted all these sources of income. Many Nigerian tertiary institutions students cannot afford to pay their school fees because of their parents’ inability to provide it for them due to inflation and high cost of living in Nigeria (Giami, 2023).

The economic hardship that comes with inflation has led to increment in the administrative cost of running the universities in Nigeria (Okeke, 2024). More funds are needed during inflation to operate the higher institutions. Inflation has led to high prices of educational resources especially resources needed to provide academic services in the universities.

Academic Staff

The economic hardship has also affected the academic staff of Nigerian universities. Ogunode and Adamu (2021) defined Academic staff as the teaching staff in the higher institutions. Academic staff are the implementer of the school curriculum and lecture presenter. Academic staff are the teachers and deliver of instruction in the higher institutions. Ogunode, et al (2020) noted that

Academic staff are professional personnel in charge of teaching or lecturing in the higher institutions. The Academic staff members are the teaching staff of the tertiary institutions. Maduka, (2024) and Afolabi (2024) submitted that the inflation in Nigeria has affected the living standard of lecturers.

The main duties and responsibilities of academic staff according to Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar, (2020) in the higher institutions include: a. To teach at undergraduate and graduate level in areas allocated by the Head of Department and reviewed from time to time by the Head of Department; b. To carry out research and produce publications, or other research outputs, in line with personal objectives agreed in the Staff review process; c. to obtain research funding support; d. To engage with the broader scholarly and professional communities; e. to supervise or assist with supervision of undergraduate, taught graduate (Masters) or research graduate (MPhil/PhD) students; f. to contribute to the development, planning and implementation of a high quality curriculum. g. to assist in the development of learning materials, preparing schemes of work and maintaining records to monitor student progress, achievement and attendance. The economic hardship has affected the Nigerian academic staff. The hardship that brought inflation has affected the salaries of academic staff.

The economic hardship that comes with inflation and subsidy removal has affected movement of lecturers to deliver lectures in their respective institutions. Okonkwo (2023) submitted that inflation and subsidy removal that has led to increases in the prices of fuel and high cost of transportation has affected lecturer movement which also affected implementation of curriculum. The cost of providing academic service by the lecturers has gone high and this has impact on the level of lecturer' productivities in the various universities (Ogunode & Ukozor, 2023).

The economic hardship has affected teaching, research and community services functions of the lecturers directly because of the increase in the general prices of educational and research resource. Inflation according to Ogunode, Olofinkua, & Sakirat, (2024); Ogunode and Chukwuemeka, (2023) and Ayeni, & Beji (2018) has disrupted the effective implementation of research programmes and affects the budget allocation of various tertiary institutions across the country. Inflation has caused a scarcity of funds in the various tertiary institutions because more funds are needed to procure fewer resources for administrative operations and research programme implementation. Inflation hurts the security and the financial security of people as it hurts people's "financial, emotional, psychological and material well-being". Ogunode, et al (2024) concluded that inflation has affected the effective implementation of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper identified increment in research resources, reduction in the volume of academic paper publications and likely drop in international ranking as the major impacts of inflation on the research programmes of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The economic hardship has affected the health of many lecturers resulting to death. Tolu-Kolawole, (2024) quoted the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Abuja zone, on Monday, lamented the death of some of its members owing to Economic hardship in the country alongside poor remuneration of academics and unfavourable working conditions. The union noted no fewer than 46 academics lost their lives in universities under the Abuja zone, namely the University of Abuja, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State University, Nasarawa, and the Ibrahim Babaginda University, Lapai. The union observed that it recently lost an eminent Professor of Fisheries, Johnson Oyero, of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, due to the inability to afford quality medical facilities.

Students

The economic hardship also affected students in the Nigerian universities. Many of them cannot afford to go for lectures again due to high cost of transportation. The transportation fees from campuses to students' residences has gone high making it difficult for students to attend all lectures

in the week. Bamidele (2023) and Ogunode, Cletus, and Tswenji, (2024) maintained that the increase in the price of fuel has worsened the state of students who have to depend daily on transportation to school. It makes life more difficult as most of them depend on their parents for monetary aid, while the parents themselves are grappling with the situation of source for their livelihood daily. There will be a huge number of parents withdrawing students from schools. The study by Sabitu, (2023) found that economic hardship has a positive correlation with students' motivation, purchase of educational material and classroom attendance of undergraduates of the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The possible explanation for this observed fact could be a result of many variables such as inflation in prices of commodities and services, unemployment on the part of parents and guardians, hunger and food insecurity and lifestyle changes as a result of economic hardship (Sabitu, 2023). Abdullahi (2019) on the impact of students' socio-economic background on academic performance in universities. It could be explained that university undergraduates have limited resources and educational provisions as a result of economic hardship. Most tertiary institutions now avoid classes as a result of the high cost of transportation to campuses. Omoniyi, (2023) concluded that economic hardship in Nigeria has negative impact on students.

Findings

The finding of the study revealed that economic hardship in Nigeria has negatively impacted on universities administration by reducing the internally generated revenue and has affected the staff and students by increasing their cost of living. Economic hardship has directed affected teaching, learning, research and administrative functions of the university system in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper x-ray the impact of economic hardship on university administration in Nigeria with focus on staff and students. The paper is a position paper. Secondary data were used to support every points raised in the paper. The secondary data were collected from relevant books, seminar papers, workshop papers, articles, etc. The paper established that economic hardship has negatively impacted on universities administration by reducing the internally generated revenue and has affected the staff and students by increasing their cost of living. Economic hardship has directly affected teaching, learning, research and administrative functions of the university system in Nigeria. Based on this findings, the paper recommends the following: Government should increase the funding of universities in Nigeria. This will enable universities administrators to cope with the high running cost of the respective universities across the country. Government should increase the salaries of academic staff in all the public universities in Nigeria. This will help them to address the problem of high cost of living. Government should provide palliative for students and provide school buses to convey the students from campuses to their respective hotels.

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