

Unemployment and Students' Commitment to Studies in Delta State Tertiary Institutions

Okpilike, Felix E. M (Ph. D)
Department of Educational Administration & Policy Studies
Delta State University, Abraka-Nigeria
Email: femokpilike@yahoo.com

Atoi, Bruce Ngozi (M.Ed)
Delta State Institute of Continuing Education

ABSTRACT

This research was a survey that investigated the influence of unemployment on the commitment of tertiary institution students to studies in Delta State, Nigeria. Two questionnaires, one administered to a random sample of 108 lecturers, and the other to a random sample of 2823 students were used to generate data for the study. Data were sorted out into 'Agree' and 'Disagree' frequency counts and analyzed using percentage and the chi-square. The findings were that 35% of lecturers perceive that unemployment reduces students' commitment to studies, whereas 65% of lecturers perceive that unemployment does not reduce students' commitment to studies. These two perceptions were subjected to a statistical test of significant difference using the chi-square, and it was found that the difference was significant, or not due to chance. The conclusion was that lecturers perceive that unemployment has no significant demotivating influence on students' commitment to studies. 4% of the students believe that unemployment reduces students' commitment to studies, whereas 96% believe that unemployment does not reduce students' commitment to studies. These two beliefs were again subjected to a statistical test of significant difference using the chi-square, and it was found that the difference was significant, or not due to chance. The conclusion was that students believe that unemployment has no significant demotivating influence on students' commitment to studies. The finding implies that these students value education beyond the job opportunities it offers. This is a motive that promotes the acquisition of the desired skill and knowledge that education bestows. It was recommended that government should reduce the cost of producing goods and providing services by ensuring regular power supply and by providing good roads. This will create a better economic environment for these students to put their skills and knowledge to use in that on graduation, they will find it easier to be self-employed and even create jobs for others. It will also give existing business concerns leverage to generate more jobs.

Keywords: Students- Commitments; Unemployment; Delta State ; Economic Environment; Graduation; Self-employed

Introduction

One of the purposes of education is to make individuals economically viable through gainful employment. Durkheim in Haralambos and Horlbon (2008) stated that education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations. One goal of the National Policy on Education (NPE) of Nigeria is to make the individual "acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable him to be self-reliant and a useful member of the society". Though this policy seeks to make the individual self-reliant, which has a connotation for self-employment; modern education is not like indigenous education, where, according to Oroka (2005), employment was fully guaranteed. The large majority of tertiary institution students in Nigeria must, of a necessity, seek employment on graduation. Tertiary institutions are educational institutions that award certificates higher than ordinary level Only few of them can be self-employed, i.e. those of them who have the money to start their own private enterprise. Heanacho (2008) stated that Nigerian graduates have little chance of getting employed, attributing this to a weak economy that is hardly able to absorb an optimal proportion of the products of the nation's education system. Edukugho (2008) reported in *Sunday vanguard newspaper* that covenant university Chancellor, Dr. David Oyedepo had, at the 21st Covenant University Public Lecture Series, said that the glut of graduates may lead to Nigeria's doom as the nation is producing graduates without employment opportunities for them. Lamenting about this phenomenon, the West African Examination Council, WAEC, (2007) stated:

It is easier for the camel to go through the needle's eye than for a graduate to secure a job. What is responsible for this state of affairs? Where have the jobs gone? Very many institutions of learning have been established over the years – universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and technical college.... Every year these institutions turn out thousands and thousands of graduates who go into the over- saturated labour market to search for non- existent Jobs. The problem is that as the educational opportunities are being expanded at a rapid rate, little or no thought is given to the provision of employment. So, most of the graduates roam the streets.

The world fact book, (2008) published by the Central Intelligence Agency puts the unemployment rate in Nigeria at 5.8%. Their estimate was done in 2006, as reflecting the 2007 and 2008 rates. Going by this estimate, Nigeria ranked 69 out of 199 countries contained in the CIA list in ascending order of unemployment rate. But Nairaland (2006) doubted the credibility of CIA's figure, stating that it was a gross underestimate of the problem. It observed that most educated people are involved in menial jobs that the CLA could have mistaken for full gainful employment.

At the local level, Uzendu (2007) reported in *Daily Champion* newspaper that National Directorate of Employment (NDE) had registered over 3.3 million unemployed persons in Nigeria. In a statement credited to the Director-General of NDE, Engr. Samuel Adelogun, the figure was arrived at after a nation- wide survey it conducted in July, 2007 Grouping the data on the basis of the six geo-political zones of the country, the unemployment figure reads:

North West	846, 872
South West	718, 789
North East	547, 759
South East	430, 845
South South	401,234
North Central	386, 590

This leaves the exact figure at 3, 323 089. Of this number, 17% were graduates. Expressed in figure, NDE survey showed that by July, 2007 there were a total of 566, 455 unemployment graduate in the country. But Bello (2003) expressed doubt over official statistics on unemployment stating that there is always a sharp disparity between the official statistics on the phenomenon and the reality on ground. This, according to him, "is because of the nature of unemployment in the country where many job seekers do not see the need for registration as unemployed due to expression of futility in the exercise" Hogan (2006) observed that a large number of workers especially women do not register when made redundant. Even the Director- General of NDE stated that this July 2007 survey was limited in credibility "due to inability of some people to ascertain their employment status, cultural and religious barriers, and lack of information." The implication of their observations is that the rate of unemployment in the country is certainly higher than the official figure of the CIA and NDE.

This is a very serious issue. Weller (2005) stated that incentives motivate learning. The prospect of getting a well-paid job on graduation is a strong incentive for tertiary institution students to study hard. With their predecessors facing this unemployment trauma, the tertiary institution students can only see a bleak future in the employment market. It is most likely that will demotivate them to study hard.

Statement of the Problem

The prospect of a well- paid job is an incentive to seek higher education, but the rate of graduate unemployment is high in Nigeria. Okubanjo (2008) found in his study that Nigerian undergraduates have fear of unemployment hidden up in their subconscious minds. He observed that this could damage their morale and thus lead to negative attitude towards learning. Many of them will manage to graduate and so will not acquire to a desirable degree, those skills envisioned by the National Policy of Education. This set of students will constitute a weak work force, and a weak work force can only weaken the economy. To this end, this research addresses itself to the following question: what is the influence of unemployment on the commitment of tertiary institution students to studies?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate if unemployment demotivates higher institution students to study hard.

Research Questions

1. Do lecturers perceive that unemployment reduces tertiary institution students' commitment to studies?
2. Do students believe that unemployment reduces tertiary institution students' commitment to studies?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the expected and the observed in lecturers perception that unemployment reduces tertiary institution students' commitment to studies.
2. There is no significant difference between the expected and the observed in students' opinion that unemployment reduces tertiary institution students' commitment to studies.

Significance of the Study

This study will document the perception of lecturers and the belief of students as regards a supposedly lesser commitment of students to studies due to high rate of unemployment. Commitment to study correlates with academic performance. The study may identify unemployment as a contributing factor to student's poor academic performance, and thus corroborate Okubanjo's suggestion. The findings may thus help the government and educationists, especially counselors in their bid to improve the academic performance of students.

Method and Procedure

The population of study was lecturers and male and female students of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. The institutions' final year students and lecturers of the rank of senior lecturer and above were chosen. To further reduce the population to a manageable size, institutions that had a full-time final year student population of 1500 and above were chosen. The institutions were Delta State University, Abraka, College of Education, Agbor and College of Education Warri. Total population was 9411 for students and 361 for lecturers. Of this population, stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Lecturer sample size was 108, while students sample size was 2823.

Instrument

The instrument consisted of two questionnaires, namely Lecturer's Perception Questionnaire (LPQ) and Students' Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ). The questionnaires were made of 25 items each which touched on student's attitude to lectures, tests, private studies and value placed on the entire educational system. Test-re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. The LPQ had a coefficient of 0.71, while SAQ had a coefficient of 0.77. The instrument was therefore deemed reliable, and was administered face to face to the respondents.

Collection and Analysis of Data

Data was collected using the instruments in which respondents indicated if they agreed or disagreed with the statements made in them. The research questions were answered after subjecting the data obtained for agreed and disagreed to statistical tests of significant difference using chi-square (Goodness of Fit). The level of significant difference chosen was 0.05. The data were also converted to percentages and reported in the result.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1

Do lecturers perceive that unemployment reduces students' commitment to studies?

Table 1

Table showing lecturers' responses to question 1

Because of worsening unemployment in the country, students	Agree		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%
1. have been irregular to lectures	27	25	81	75
2. have been averse to doing assignments	26	24	82	76
3. Hardly pay attention during lectures	30	28	78	72
4. hardly put in reasonable time into their studies	24	22	84	78
5. think that lecturer who advise them to study hard are talking nonsense	31	29	77	71
6. hardly prepare adequately for examination	24	22	84	78
7. question the use of attending higher school	33	31	75	69
8. see the entire education project as mere deception	29	27	79	73
9. Consider their efforts at school a waste	32	30	76	70
10. Pay attention to social matters more than academic work	28	26	80	74
11. hardly feel upset when they perform badly in	36	33	72	67

examination				
12. Could not have entered higher school if they had a viable economic alternative to higher education	52	48	56	52
13. have low value for their lecturers	28	26	80	74
14. hardly resume lecturer promptly after break	68	63	40	37
15. at times, drop out of school	31	29	77	71
16. are unruly during lecture	12	11	96	89
17. openly express frustration and despondency in their educational pursuit	31	29	77	71
18. consider their financial investment in education a waste	30	28	78	72
19. hardly show interest to understand when concepts appear difficult to them.	34	31	74	69
20. are discouraged because they feel that they may never get a job all their life	28	26	80	74
21. are generally lukewarm in attitude to the whole academic work	31	29	77	71
22. go through the educational process with pain	74	69	34	31
23. feel duped because besides the good job higher education affords, they do not see its use	52	48	56	52
24. are not encouraged to study hard by the fact that some graduates find a job after some time of seeking	24	22	84	78
25. hardly buy books to aid them in study.	71	66	37	34
Total	934	35	1766	65

In table 1 above, 35% of lecturers perceive that unemployment does not reduce the commitment of students to studies. This is against 35% of lecturers that perceive that unemployment reduces the commitment of students to studies. The difference in perception was subjected to a statistical test of significance using chi-square and the result is presented in table 2 below.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the expected and the observed in the lecturers' perception that unemployment reduces students' commitment to studies.

Table 2

Chi-Square Analysis of Lecturers' Perception

Frequency	Agree	Disagree	Total	D/F	χ^2	$\chi^2 .05$	Result
Observed	934	1766	2700	1	256.38	3.84	Significant
Expected	1350	1350	2700				

In table 2 above, the observed frequency of those who agree is 934, whereas that of those who disagree is 1766. The expected frequency is 1350. The calculated value of chi-square is 256.38 while the critical value is 3.84. The calculated value is higher than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies in the perception of lecturers that unemployment reduces students' commitment to studies. The implication is that lecturers perceive that unemployment does not reduce students' commitment to studies.

Research Question 2

Do students believe that unemployment reduces their commitment to studies?

Table 3

Table showing student's response to research question 2

Because of worsening unemployment in the country, 1	Agree		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%
1. have been irregular to lectures	93	03	2730	97
2. have been averse to doing assignments	96	03	2727	97
3. hardly pay attention during lectures	92	03	2727	97
4. hardly put in reasonable time into my studies	94	03	2729	97
5. think that lecturers who advise me to study hard are talking nonsense.	83	03	2740	97
6. hardly prepare adequately for examination	103	04	2720	96
7. question the use of attending higher school	109	04	2714	96
8. see the entire education project as mere deception.	70	02	2753	98
9. consider my efforts at school a waste	99	04	2724	96
10. pay attention to social matters more than academic work	101	04	2714	96
11. Hardly feel upset when I perform badly in examination.	111	04	2712	96
12. could not have entered higher school if I had a viable economic alternative to higher education	152	05	2671	96
13. have low value for my lecturers.	76	03	2747	97
14. hardly resume lectures promptly after break	80	03	2743	97
15. know some students drop out of school	118	04	2743	97
16. are unruly during lecturers	53	02	2705	96
17. am frustrated in my educational pursuit	78	03	2770	98
18. consider my financial investment in education a waste	83	03	2745	97
19. Hardly show interest to understand when concepts appear difficult to them.	104	04	2719	96
20. am discouraged because I feel that I may never get a job all my life	27	03	2751	97
21. am generally lukewarm in attitude to the whole academic work	93	03	2730	97
22. go through the educational process with pain	207	07	2616	93
23. feel duped because besides the good job higher education affords, I do not see its use.	152	05	2671	95
24. am not encouraged to study hard by the fact that some graduates find a job after some time	86	03	2737	97
25. hardly buy books to aid me in study	105	04	2718	96
Total	2510	04	68065	96

In table 3 above, 96% of students believe that unemployment does not reduce the commitment of students to studies. This is against 4% of students that believe that unemployment reduces the commitment of students to studies. The difference in perception was subjected to a statistical test of significance using chi-square and the result is presented in table 4 below.

Hypotheses 2

There is no significant difference between the expected and the observed in students' opinion that unemployment reduces tertiary institution students' commitment to studies.

Table 4
 Chi-Square Analysis of Students' Opinion

Frequency	Agree	Disagree	Total	D/F	χ^2	$\chi^2 .05$	Result
Observed	2510	68065	70575	1	60892.07	3.84	Significant
Expected	35287.5	35287.5	70575				

In table 4 above, the observed frequency of those who agree is 3510, whereas that of those who disagree is 68065. The expected frequency is 35287.5. The calculated value of chi-square is 60892.07 while the critical value is 3.84. The calculated value is higher than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies in students' opinion that unemployment reduces their commitment to studies. The implication is that students opine that unemployment does not reduce their commitment to studies.

Discussion

Both lecturers and students believe that unemployment has no significant demotivating influence on student's commitment to studies. The reasons why unemployment does not demotivate students to study hard can be deduced from the response to the instruments. Students are not only optimistic that they will get a job on graduation, but also value education beyond the good opportunities it offers. The implication is that if students do not study hard, it is not because of discouragement arising from fear that they may never get a job on graduation. Fryer in the job Research (1995) quoted an undisclosed Dutch work as showing poorer school performance in children with unemployment parents. Fryer stated that findings support German investigations which showed that unemployment among German parents brought about a drop in the school marks of two-third of their children. This present study sought to know if the problem of unemployment had made these students question the use of schooling after all, and become demotivated to study hard, with the result that they had performed poorly academically. The findings in this present research shows that if students perform poorly academically, it may not have been because unemployment had discouraged them to study hard, at least in Delta State of Nigeria. Okubanjo had suggested that poor academic performance among Nigeria university undergraduate could be attributed to their fear of unemployment. The finding of this research has disproved this suggestion as it pertains to Delta State of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

1. Lecturers perceive that unemployment has no significant demotivating influence on tertiary institution students' commitment to studies.
2. Tertiary institution students believe that unemployment has no significant demotivating influence on tertiary institution students' commitment to studies.

Recommendation

On the basis of the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Government should reduce the cost of producing goods and providing services by ensuring regular power supply and by providing good roads. This will create a better economic environment for these students to put their skills and knowledge to use in that on graduation, they will find it easier to be self-employed and even create jobs for others. It will also help existing business concerns to create more jobs for these students who are hopeful that they will get a job on graduation .

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