Fairness and Responsibility as Predictors of Academic Integrity among Lecturers in Public Universities in Oyo State

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate fairness and responsibility as predictors of academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. Five hundred participants constituted the study's sample, out of whom only 485 were used after data administration. Both the independent and dependent variables were measured with validated instruments with 0.87 reliability co-efficient and the data obtained was analysed using the Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) statistical method. Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between fairness and academic integrity among university lecturers ($r = .774$; $p < 0.05$) as well as between responsibility and academic integrity among university lecturers ($r = .459$; $p < 0.05$). The implication of this showed that fairness and responsibility had significant impacts on academic integrity among university lecturers. In view of these findings, it was recommended that educational stakeholders should intensify their effort to institute a culture of fairness in the institution so as to improve on the level of academic integrity among lecturers.

Keywords: Fairness; Responsibility; Academic integrity; University lecturers

Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged on a worldwide scale as a fundamental tool for achieving economic, social and political advancement within any given society. It is often regarded as the fundamental cornerstone upon which any country is built. The socio-economic progress of a nation is heavily contingent upon the quality of its educational system. In order to advance in human resources, unity, peace, democracy and economic growth, every country must prioritise the provision of comprehensive education to its citizens. The importance of integrity or honesty in the acquisition of academic information inside educational institutions has been emphasised by Adeniyi and Taiwo (2011). The Nigerian educational system has been shown to experience instances of academic integrity violations, posing a significant obstacle to the attainment of academic integrity objectives. The challenge of establishing a culture of integrity within academic institutions in Nigeria may stem from the presence of varying viewpoints and interpretations about the definition and parameters of academic integrity (Adebayo & Abdhamid, 2014).

The Nigerian academic sphere needs a comprehensive and integrated perspective in order to attain integrity. Academic integrity refers to the ethical principles and values that underpin honest behaviour in many aspects of academia, including teaching, learning, evaluation and the overall administration of the educational process (Anulika et al., 2014). Contemporary higher education institutions are confronted with a multitude of issues. The aforementioned issues include various forms of academic dishonesty, student enrolment challenges, insufficient resources, and several more concerns (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). Among

the several challenges examined, it was determined that academic dishonesty represents a significant issue that undermines the ethical conduct of those who have completed their studies at the university level (Winrow, 2015; LaDuke, 2013). Academic misconduct, such as cheating and plagiarism, is seen among university professors (Muraina & Issac, 2017; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). These actions lead to unethical conduct and corruption within the academic community.

Individuals that exhibit such behaviours throughout their tenure as university students often tend to perpetuate these negative tendencies in their professional environments owing to their deeply ingrained nature. The need to initiate reforms inside higher education institutions and address various unethical practices has been recognised (Winrow, 2015; LaDuke, 2013). In order to achieve this objective, a range of actions will be used to augment leadership inside our academic institutions. Several steps have been implemented, such as the establishment of leadership centres and the provision of training for academic leaders, among other initiatives, in Nigeria. Despite the use of several measures and interventions to strengthen academic integrity, there exists a subset of factors that possess insufficient adaptability of leadership positions and lack the necessary skills to proficiently and effectively manage resources for enhanced academic integrity (Anulika et al., 2014; Winrow, 2015).

As a consequence, their capacity to effectively foster transformative behaviour inside our academic institutions has been compromised. The lack of effective leadership within the academic community has resulted in several lecturers adopting an unscrupulous approach towards their professional responsibilities. Academic institutions are sometimes marred by instances of dishonest conduct, which include a range of problematic behaviours such as mistrust and partiality, among others (LaDuke, 2013; Payan et al., 2010). According to Higbee and Thomas (2002), this phenomenon subsequently leads to the manifestation of unethical conduct among academic staff in university settings. Fairness and accountability are among the key determinants of academic integrity and job commitment (Payan et al., 2010; Moshashai et al., 2020). They are often acknowledged as the fundamental principles or foundation upon which further values are constructed.

Hence, the International Centre for Academic Integrity (2021) posits that it is imperative for academic communities to establish rules that disapprove of dishonest conduct or disposition. Hence, it is essential to approach acts of dishonesty, such as result fabrication and fraudulent behaviour, with a profound feeling of gravity. After establishing a foundation rooted in principles of justice, the subsequent progression is cultivating a sense of responsibility. Collaboration, idea-sharing and successful interaction between lecturers and students are considered important characteristics of academic integrity (Muraina & Issac, 2017). Fairness, seen as a fundamental tenet of academic integrity, encompasses the equitable treatment of all individuals within the academic milieu. Fairness is seen in the practice of conducting transparent interactions with colleagues, students, grading procedures, student assessment methods, university rules and several other matters pertaining to the facilitation of teaching and learning within academic institutions. The achievement of equitable treatment of individuals within an academic setting is anticipated to foster harmonious cohabitation, hence facilitating the realisation of universities' objectives (ICAI, 2021; Muraina et al., 2022).

Moreover, the cultivation of accountability is vital in the pursuit of academic integrity inside educational establishments. Academic honesty is widely acknowledged as a key trait. This entails engaging with faculty members, students, alumni, business entities and parents in a manner that upholds a sense of dignity (Payan et al., 2010; Moshashai et al., 2020). Every person is entitled to assume responsibility for their acts. Hence, it is important to allocate responsibilities to stakeholders within an academic setting to provide a conducive climate for all individuals involved (Anulika et al., 2014). The concept of accountability, which is considered a basic aspect of academic integrity, necessitates that all individuals involved in the academic community have a duty to defend and promote the principles of integrity consistently (Muraina & Issac, 2017).

The persistent display of integrity by lecturers has the potential to have a significant effect on their followers, therefore impacting the ethical behaviour of these followers. The findings of a a study by Rabie and Abdul Malek (2020) demonstrate a noteworthy correlation between ethical leadership and the ethical behaviour shown by those who follow within the confines of an organisational setting. The scholarly

community is not immune to this phenomenon. Hammed and Muraina (2016) and Gonaim (2019) suggest that the adoption and execution of comprehensive institutional integrity rules inside universities may provide favourable outcomes in terms of fostering ethical behaviour among students.

The reason for this phenomenon lies in the tendency among students to see their instructors or lecturers as influential figures, leading them to embrace and imitate their commendable traits and ethical conduct. Furthermore, the adoption of legislation pertaining to institutional integrity has the potential to facilitate the transformation of unethical behaviour among students, so promoting their growth as conscientious and morally upright individuals within the broader societal context. Muraina et al (2022) argue that the cultivation of academic integrity may serve as an effective means of promoting fairness and responsibility among students, hence discouraging their engagement in cheating or other unethical behaviours.

Moreover, Brimble (2016) highlights the significance of the prevalence of unethical conduct among educators and its subsequent influence on pupils, which may be linked to both the insufficiency of integrity policies and the shortcomings of the persons involved. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen institutional regulations in order to restore ethical values such as fairness and responsibility among students. Moreover, Muraina et al. (2022) propose that an awareness of the possible repercussions associated with participating in unethical conduct would work as a driving force for educators to embrace ethical principles and abstain from engaging in dishonest activity (Gonaim, 2019). Additionally, this measure would effectively regulate instances of academic dishonesty, such as cheating, and foster a sense of integrity and fairness among students in their academic pursuits. Additionally, motivation plays a crucial role. The demonstration of strong integrity by faculty members and policy leaders has the potential to inspire students to adopt a more ethical approach to their behaviour, so benefiting both themselves and their community.

Statement of the Problem

Education is widely acknowledged on a worldwide scale as a fundamental tool for achieving economic, social and political advancement within any given society. The implication of this argument is that institutions of higher education have the burden of eliminating ignorance within a country and supplying the necessary competent human resources to achieve sustained growth and development. In order for these institutions to successfully achieve their objectives, the presence of competent lecturers who possess qualities of honesty and leadership is of utmost importance. Academic leaders in higher education institutions are tasked with the obligation of maintaining and promoting a culture of honesty among faculty and students. Neglecting to adhere to this practice might impede the achievement of academic objectives at institutions of higher education. Instances of academic integrity violations in the Nigerian educational system have been documented, and such violations pose a significant obstacle to the pursuit of academic integrity. This research aims to investigate the role of fairness and accountability as potential predictors of academic integrity among university instructors in Oyo State.

Objectives of the Study

The study examines fairness and responsibility predictors of academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State. Specific objectives of the study include to:

1. Examine the relationship between fairness and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.
2. Examine the relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

3. There is no significant relationship between fairness and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.
4. There is no significant relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Literature Review

'Academic integrity' consists of two different words, namely 'academic' and 'integrity'. Winrow (2015) argues that the term 'integrity' was developed by Rogers as a rejoinder to his displeasure with Kohlberg's theory of moral development. The term 'integrity' is vague and sometimes misunderstood by people. Also, Guerrero-Dib et al (2020) conceives integrity as the magnitude at which an individual acts and thinks morally and honestly. Similarly, LaDuke (2013) stresses that the term 'integrity' is related to the ethical behaviour and moral values which leaders' exhibit. Therefore, Winrow (2015) conceives integrity as commitment in action to a morally justified set of values and principles. Without ethical leadership, organisations stand the risk of losing values, principals, and standards.

Integrity can also be applied in an academic setting. Academic integrity refers to the individual's commitment to positive values which will assist him or her in behaving, conducting and conforming to acceptable standards towards creating a viable academic environment (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). These positive behavioural values will enhance a viable character education environment. In order to maintain academic integrity in contemporary higher education intuitions, LaDuke (2013) proposes five core areas which must be looked into, including: ascertaining the academic integrity strategy to be adopted; understanding students' needs; revising institutional policies; addressing assessment practices; and enhancing staff development.

Violation of academic integrity in universities and higher institutions is a global concern. Faculty members and students in Saudi Arabian universities have not been left out of the mess. Restructuring the higher education system in Nigeria has driven some faculty members to work harder and keep up with the pace of global development. This has resulted in academic and intellectual theft among faculty members. In a study by Payan et al. (2010), it was found that students in Saudi Arabian universities display violations of academic integrity like plagiarising other people's work and cheating. In order to overcome the violation of academic integrity in universities and higher institutions in Muslim countries, these institutions must uphold institutional culture as an alternative measure.

Whenever leaders display a high level of integrity, this cascades to the followers and later impact on the followers' ethical behaviour. According to the study by Payan et al. (2010), it was found that ethical leadership affects the followers' ethical behaviour in an organisation. In the same vein, the academic circle is not left out. As Gonaim (2019) argue, whenever universities develop holistic institutional policies on integrity, this will later be reflected by the ethical behaviour of students because these students see their teachers or lecturers as their role models and will be ready at all times to emulate virtues and ethical behaviour from them. Also, institutional integrity policies will help to reform the unethical behaviour in students and make them better citizens. On the issue of fairness and justice, Moshashai et al. (2020) opine that academic integrity will promote these virtues among students and, therefore, prevent them from cheating or engaging in other unethical behaviour.

In addition, Gonaim (2019) stresses that lapses in integrity policies and failure on the part of actors account for academic violations of integrity among students. Therefore, institutional policies should be strengthened to restore ethical values like trust and honesty in students. In addition, LaDuke (2013) argues that awareness of penalties for dishonest acts will stimulate students to act in an ethical manner and shun dishonest acts. It will control students' cheating or engaging in other dishonest acts and make students just and fair in their dealings.

Leaders can make or mar university and higher institution. The leaders in universities and higher institutions and policymakers have a great role to play in promoting good ethics and moral values in various universities and higher institutions. Payan et al. (2010) argue that ethical behaviour in universities and higher institutions starts with the leaders. These leaders are responsible for making ethical decisions, implementing ethical behaviour, and modelling ethical behaviour.

Methodology

The methodology involves the approaches used in carrying out the study. Descriptive research design was used. It was considered appropriate because the study did not require manipulation of variables, but seeks respondents' response to questionnaire on academic integrity among lecturers in public universities

in Oyo State. Public universities were used because the activities were being managed by the government and the attitudes of lecturers in these university are always not satisfactory. The population for this study was 4, 5618 public university lecturers in Oyo State. There were four public universities in the state with 3,932 lecturers as at the time of this study. The sample of this study consisted of 600 selected university lecturers from three universities. The first stage involved use of the simple random sampling technique to select three public universities in Oyo State. The second stage involved use of the stratified random sampling technique to select eight faculties in each university. The third stage involved use of the random sampling technique to select 25 university lecturers from each faculty. The sampling techniques used here give the participants the opportunity to be representative of the whole population without bias. Out of 600 questionnaires distributed, only 485 were retrieved and used for data analysis. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire. The response format ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The instrument was validated and Cronbach's alpha value of 0.87 was obtained. Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data was analysed using the Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) statistics. The PPMC give the researchers the opportunity to establish the relationship among the independent variables (fairness and responsibility) and the dependent variable (academic integrity).

Results

Research hypothesis one: There is no significance relationship between fairness and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Table 1: Significance relationship between fairness and academic integrity among university lecturers

Variable	Mean	SD	DF	N	R	p	Remark
Fairness	35.67	8.52					
Academic integrity	43.16	11.23	484	485	.774	.000	Significant

Table 1 above shows that there was a significant relationship between fairness and academic integrity among university lecturers (r= .774; p<0.05). The implication of this is that fairness had a significant influence on academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Research hypothesis two: There is no significance relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Table 2: Significant relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among university lecturers

Variable	Mean	SD	DF	N	R	p	Remark
Responsibility	31.26	6.01					
Academic integrity	45.27	10.31	484	485	.459	.001	Significant

Table 2 above shows that there was a significant relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State (r= .459; p<0.05). The implication of this is that responsibility had a significant influence on academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State.

Discussion

The first hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between fairness and academic integrity among University lecturers. The implication of this is that fairness had a significant influence on academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State. According to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI, 2021), there is a correlation between fairness and honesty, with honesty being recognised as a core principle of academic integrity. It is considered the fundamental foundation upon which other values are constructed. Hence, according to the International Centre for

Academic Integrity (2021), it is essential for academic communities to establish norms that disapprove of dishonest conduct or disposition. Hence, it is essential to approach acts of dishonesty, such as result fabrication and fraudulent behaviour, with a profound feeling of gravity. After establishing a foundation rooted in the principle of fairness, the subsequent phase involves the cultivation of responsibility (Muraina et al., 2022). Collaboration, idea-sharing and successful student interaction are considered important characteristics of academic integrity within the context of higher education. Fairness, as a fundamental value of academic integrity, encompasses the equitable treatment of all individuals within an academic setting. Fairness is seen in the practice of conducting transparent interactions with colleagues, students, grading procedures, student assessment methods, university rules, and several other matters pertaining to the facilitation of teaching and learning within academic institutions. The achievement of equitable treatment of individuals within an academic setting is crucial for fostering harmonious coexistence, thereby facilitating universities in the realisation of their objectives (ICAI, 2021).

The second research hypothesis showed that there was a significant relationship between responsibility and academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State. The implication of this showed that responsibility had a significant influence on academic integrity among lecturers in public universities in Oyo State. This finding aligns with the prior study conducted by Anulika et al. (2014), which posits that accountability plays a crucial role in the achievement of academic integrity inside educational institutions. This entails engaging with lecturers, faculty members, students, alumni, business entities and parents in a manner that upholds a feeling of dignity. Every person is entitled to assume responsibility for their actions. Hence, it is important to show respect to stakeholders within any academic setting to foster a conducive climate for all individuals involved. Nevertheless, Hammed and Muraina (2016) and Rabie and Abdul Malek (2020) argue that the concept of accountability, regarded as a core principle of academic integrity, necessitates that all individuals involved must assume responsibility for preserving the principles of integrity consistently. Hence, it is imperative that all individuals assume the responsibility of upholding integrity in the domains of education, knowledge acquisition, scientific inquiry and academic pursuits. The responsibility for achieving the objectives of the institution should be seen as a collective endeavour.

Conclusion

Education plays a crucial role in the development and advancement of a country across all domains. In this context, the presence of academic integrity inside the educational system is vital. Education plays a crucial role in the process of nation-building, as it assists countries in restructuring their educational institutions to align with the desires, requirements and ambitions of the broader population. The establishment of a robust and stable educational system is vital for any country, as it serves as a catalyst for substantial economic and political progress. The results indicate that there is a favourable correlation and impact between the exhibition of predictors of academic integrity by lecturers and faculty members, and the ethical behaviour of lecturers. Hence, it is essential for lecturers and other members of the faculty to exemplify genuine academic conduct by the adherence to ethical principles and virtues such as accountability and impartiality while interacting with colleagues and students. In the near future, pupils will observe and seek to replicate the admirable qualities shown by their instructors.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward based on the findings of this study:

1. Educational stakeholders should intensify their efforts to institute a culture of fairness in the institutions so as to improve on the level of academic integrity among lecturers.

2. Management of various institutions should endeavour to balance the responsibility of lecturers to avoid sentiments across levels. This is because responsibility itself contributes to the level of academic integrity among university lecturers.

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