



Managing brain drain for student's academic performance in Nigerian universities: A case study of Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated Managing Brain Drain for Students Academic Performance in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study of Rivers State. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. A sample size of 348 academic staff was drawn from the three universities in Rivers State, using stratified sampling technique. A structured 12-item instrument titled managing brain drain for students' academic performance questionnaire (MBDSAPQ) was used for data collection. The test re-test method was used to obtain reliability of the instrument. The reliability index was established at 0.73. The mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and Z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities are economic incentives, motivation, funding. Brain drain causes loss of talented lecturers, reduction of the standard of education and the ways of managing brain drain are better salaries, collaboration with international universities for knowledge exchange. The study inter alia recommended that government should ensure that lecturers are well paid, provide grants to lecturers for quality research and partner with private sectors.

Keywords: Brain Drain, Academic Performance, Nigerian Universities

Introduction

Nigerian universities have long been confronted with the challenge of brain drain, which refers to the loss of high skilled and educated individuals to opportunities abroad. This phenomenon not only depletes the intellectual capital of the nation but also affects the quality of education and research in local universities.

Several factors contribute to the brain drain in Nigerian universities. Economic incentive is seen as one major factor. Higher salaries and better employment opportunities abroad are strong motivators for academic and professionals to leave Nigeria (Okafor, 2007) ^[7]. According to Okafor, when people are motivated, they are likely to move the direction of the motivation. Also, the issue of uncertainty in the political landscape and inadequate governance often drives individuals to seek a more stable environment (Chete, 2010) ^[6].

Universities in Nigeria have limited research facilities and the insufficient research infrastructure and funding opportunities hinder the professional growth of academics (Ogunbameru, 2014) ^[13]. Ogunbameru is of the view that this factor has also contribute to brain drain. A lack of recognition and appreciation for academic achievements and innovations discourages scholars from staying (Adams, 2019) ^[1].

The concept of brain drain is used both in academic and non-academic sectors. In academics, it is the migration of intellectuals out of the underdeveloped or developing nations to developed or industrialized nations to sell their labour. In the non-academic literature, the term is generally used in a narrower sense and relates more specifically to the migration of engineers, physicians, scientist, and other very highly skilled professionals with university training (Dodami & Laporte, 2020) ^[8]. Similarly, defined brain drain to be human capital flight of top manpower from various developing countries to more developed countries.

Furthermore, physicians for Human Rights (2014) recognized the absence of good governance as a major contribution to brain drain in developing countries. In their own view, Gbamwuan and Agidi (2022) [4] noted that insecurity is a great challenge to Nigeria and education sector. According to the duo, insecurity is another major cause of brain drain in Nigerian universities. In his study, noted that factors responsible for brain drain in Nigerian public universities include, uncondusive working environment, poor motivation, insecurity, underfunding and political interference. According to him the implications of brain drain in Nigerian public universities are shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio.

Again, Ogunode, Jegede and Musa (2021) [15] observed that poor capacity development is another problem facing majorities of the academic staff of Nigerian universities. Many lecturers in the Nigerian universities are not given the opportunities to access fund to develop themselves. Managing brain drain is essential to retain and also regain the lost glory of tertiary institutions. In this regard, Hilden and Wende (2020) [10] suggested that using ICT to transfer knowledge from diaspora lectures. They are of the view that diaspora lecturers could be contracted and appealed to for virtual lecturers in our universities.

Increasing faculty salaries and providing research grants can retain and attract talent (Ibukun, 2012) [11]. Offering opportunities for research, training and career advancement can motivate academics to stay (Ogunyemi, 2017) [17]. Establishing partnerships with international universities can facilitate knowledge exchange and faculty development (Nwadiani, 2009) [12]. Similarly, Baridam and Baridam (2020) [5] suggested that universities should make the lectures abroad visiting lecturers in Nigerian universities. And they should be well paid for them to accept and stay. Acknowledging and rewarding academic excellence can motivate scholars to contribute to the institution and the nation (Daramola, 2016) [7].

The brain drain phenomenon negatively impacts academic performance in Nigerian universities. The departure of qualified faculty members leads to faculty shortages,

affecting the student-teacher ratio and the quality of education (Akanle, 2015) [3]. Brain drain results in reduced research and innovation, hindering academic and technological advancements (Okebukola, 2006) [18]. The loss of talented individuals deprives students of exposure to diverse perspectives and up-to-date knowledge (Okediji, 2018) [19].

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study included all the academic staff of three universities in Rivers State. The universities are: University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. There are 1558 academic staff in University of Port Harcourt, 1058 academic staff in Rivers State University and 884 academic staff in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The population of the study is 3,500 academic staff of the three universities in Rivers State. This information is derived from the Personnel Academic Office of the three universities in Rivers State by 2023.

A sample size of 348 academic staff was drain from the three universities in Rivers State, using stratified sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled, Managing Brain Drain for Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (MBDSAPQ). The instrument was validated by using the professional critique of two educational measurement and evaluation specialists. Reliability of the instrument was obtained through test re-test method, and the reliability index was established at 0.73.

The instrument was administered by the researcher and 2 research assistants through direct delivery method. The mean and standard deviation of the responses to each item was calculated and used to answer the research questions, using the criterion mean of 2.50, while the z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

Results

Research Question I: What are the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Mean scores of male and female lecturers on the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities

S/No	Items	Male Lecturers		Female Lecturers		XX	Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
1.	Economic incentive and motivation could be a major cause of brain drain in Nigerian universities	3.01	.84	2.99	.80	3.00	Agree
2.	Insufficient research infrastructure and funding is another factor that can also lead to brain drain	2.80	.75	2.90	.79	2.85	Agree
3.	Lecturers in Nigerian universities run to other countries because of the insecurity in Nigeria	2.85	.77	2.83	.78	2.84	Agree
4.	Political interference is also a cause for the movement of lecturers from Nigeria to other countries	2.65	.68	2.70	.70	2.68	Agree
	Aggregate mean	2.81		2.85			

and 4 are $\bar{X} = 3.00$, $\bar{X} = 2.85$, $\bar{X} = 2.84$ and $\bar{X} = 2.68$. the mean scores are all above the criterion mean of 2.50. This revealed that economic incentive, motivation, insufficient research infrastructures, funding, insecurity and political interference are the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities.

Research Question 2: What are the consequences of brain drain on student's academic performance in Nigerian universities? The result of research question 2 in table 2 show that the mean scores of items 5, 6, 7, and 8 are $\bar{X} = 3.08$, $\bar{X} = 2.96$, $\bar{X} = 2.87$ and $\bar{X} = 2.73$. The mean scores are above

the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that the consequences of brain drain on student's academic performance are shortage of lecturers, loss of talented lecturers depriving students of exposure to diverse perspectives and knowledge, reduction in research and innovation thereby hindering students academic and technological advancement; and the reduction of the academic standard of Nigerian universities.

Research Question 3: In what ways can brain drain be managed to improve students academic performance in Nigerian universities?

Table 2: Mean scores of male and female lecturers on the consequences of brain drain in Nigerian universities

S/No	Items	Male Lecturers		Female Lecturers		XX	Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
5.	Brain drain has lead to shortage of lecturers in Nigerian universities	3.10	.92	3.07	.90	3.08	Agree
6.	There is loss of talented lecturers which has deprived students of exposure to diverse perspectives and knowledge	3.01	.84	2.93	.82	2.96	Agree
7.	Brain drain has also reduced research and innovation, hindering student’s academic and technological advancement	2.84	.77	2.90	.79	2.87	Agree
8.	Brain drain has also reduced the academic standard of Nigerian universities	2.77	.73	2.70	.70	2.73	Agree
	Aggregate mean	2.93		2.90			

Table 3: Mean scores of male and female lecturers on the ways brain drain can be managed to improve student’s academic performance in Nigerian universities

S/No	Items	Male Lecturers		Female Lecturers		XX	Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
9.	Better salaries of lecturers in Nigerian universities can help to reduce brain drain	3.15	.94	3.12	.93	3.13	Agree
10.	Collaboration with international universities for knowledge exchange can help to enhance students academic performance	3.19	.95	3.09	.91	3.14	Agree
11.	Provision of grants and finance for research can help to reduce brain drain	3.13	.92	2.98	.80	3.00	Agree
12.	Provision of appropriate security measures for lecturers can reduce brain drain	2.90	.79	2.92	.81	2.91	Agree
	Aggregate mean	3.09		3.02			

The data in table 3 show that the mean scores of items 9, 10, 11 and 12 are $\bar{X} = 3.13$, $\bar{X} = 3.14$, $\bar{X} = 3.00$ and $\bar{X} = 2.50$. The mean scores are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This portrays that managing the consequences of brain drain to improve students academic performance in Nigerian universities entails better salaries for lecturers, collaboration

with international universities for knowledge exchange, provision of grants and finance for research and provision of appropriate security measure for lecturers.

Hypothesis I: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the cause of brain drain in Nigerian universities

Table 4: Z-test analysis of the significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the cause of brain drain in Nigerian universities

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-critical	Decision
Male lecturers	209	2.81	3.04	346	0.94	±196	Ho I Accepted
Female lecturers	139	2.85	3.07				

Data in table 4 revealed that the z-calculated value of 0.94 is less than the z-critical value of ±1.96 at 0.05 significant level, therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the consequences of brain drain on students academic performance in Nigerian universities.

Table 5: Z-test analysis of the significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the consequences of brain drain on students’ academic performance in Nigeria universities

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-critical	Decision
Male lecturers	209	2.93	3.26	346	0.73	±196	Ho 2 Accepted
Female lecturers	139	2.85	3.07				

Data in table 5 revealed that the z-calculated value of 0.78 is less than the z-critical value of ±1.96 at 0.05 significant level. The hypothesis is thus accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the ways that brain drain can be managed to improve students academic performance in Nigerian universities.

Table 6: Z-test analysis of the significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the ways that brain drain can be managed to improve students’ academic performance in Nigerian universities

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-critical	Decision
Male lecturers	209	3.09	3.15	346	0.81	±196	Ho I Accepted
Female lecturers	139	3.02	3.45				

Data in table 6 revealed that the z-calculated value of 0.81 is less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 significant level. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussions of Findings

The causes of brain drain

The findings of research question one revealed that the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities are economic incentives, motivation, funding, insufficient research, infrastructure, insecurity and political interference. This finding agrees with who noted that factors responsible for brain drain in Nigerian universities are uncondusive working environment, poor motivation, insecurity, underfunding and political interference.

The consequences of brain drain on students' academic performance

The findings of research question two revealed that the consequences of brain drain on students' academic performance are shortage of lecturers, loss of talented lecturers depriving students of exposure to diverse perspective and knowledge, reduction in research and innovation, thereby hindering students academic and technological advancement and the reduction of the academic standard of Nigerian universities. This finding agrees with Okediji (2018) ^[19] who observed that the loss of talented individuals deprive students of exposure to diverse perspectives and up-to-date knowledge. The finding also corroborates Okebukola (2006) ^[18] who stated that brain drain results in reduced research and innovation, hindering academic and technological advancement.

Ways of managing brain drain for improved students' academic performance

The findings of research question three revealed that the ways of managing brain drain are better salaries for lecturers, collaboration with international universities for knowledge exchange, provision of grants and finance for research, and provision of appropriate security measures for lecturers. This finding agrees with Baridam and Baridam (2020) ^[5] who suggested that universities should make the lecturers abroad visiting lecturers in Nigerian universities, and they should be well paid for them to accept and stay. The finding also agree with Ibukun (2012) ^[11] who also suggested that increasing faculty salaries and providing research grants can retain and attract talent.

Conclusion

Addressing the issue of brain drain in Nigerian universities is essential for ensuring students academic performance and the overall development of the country. Also, understanding the causes, consequences and implementing appropriate management strategies can nurture and retain the intellectuals in the higher education sector.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were inter alia made:

1. Nigerian government should try as much as possible to ensure that lecturers are well paid.
2. Government should partner with private sectors to provide research grants to lecturers in the universities to enable them embark on quality research.
3. Universities should try to collaborate with international universities for exchange of knowledge as this will

improve students academic performance.

4. Government should also partner with the universities to provide adequate security for lecturers in the universities.
5. Government should try not to politically interfere with the administration of universities or education.

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