



Brain drain syndrome in the academia: An impediment to quality research output among universities lecturers in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined brain-drain syndrome in academia: an impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in south-south, Nigeria. The student answered three research questions with a descriptive survey design. A population of 119 respondents that comprised of Vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, professors, and senior lecturers from universities in Cross River State, River State, Delta State, Akwa Ibom state, and Bayelsa State. Purposive sampling techniques were adopted in the study and a sample of 102 respondents was drawn for the study. A well-developed instrument Brain-Drain Syndrome and Quality Research Output Questionnaire (BDQROQ) was used for data collection which was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and the reliability was ascertained with split-half reliability with a reliability index of .76 to .83 which proved how reliable the instrument was for data collection. From the descriptive analysis carried out on the research questions (simple percentages and bar charts), the findings revealed that; there is a high rate of Nigerian emigrating from the country due to brain drain some of the factors outlined in the study are responsible for brain drain. Also, the factors stated in this study have a major effect on brain drain on research. It was concluded that brain drain was a major hindrance to our educational system in the country. It was recommended among others that the government should as a matter of urgency stimulate a stable educational environment with limitless Educational Opportunities in terms of increased remuneration, provision of better working conditions, and enhanced fringe benefits.

Keywords: Brain-drain syndrome, academia, quality, and research output

Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that quality research output in the university system is inevitable. This is because the entire activities surrounding the university system are solely dependent on research output. Every university teacher in the academic environment has three core services expected viz; teaching, researching, and community services. Especially in the research sphere where “publish or perish” has become the center for academic excellence and growth on the job. These activities center on quality in research output. Poor quality in research undertakings in most university institutions in Nigeria may be a result of limited academic staff with experience in carrying out research. Research is one major indicator used for ranking higher institutions’ performance. To execute quality research, there is a great need for lecturers’ availability with a high level of experience. Unfortunately, many higher institutions in the country do not have these qualified researchers and professors due to brain-drain problems.

According to the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking for 2023 within the context of Nigeria, both universities of Ibadan and UNILAG share the top spot with 401-500 ranking globally and first spot in Nigeria. Covenant University, the only private university that made the top 10 list comes behind both federal universities, and ranked between 601 and 800 globally.

The statistics show that the University of Oxford has the highest rank for a duration of 7th years consecutively. This is followed by Harvard University; Cambridge University came third. Within the context of Africa, five countries namely Zambia, Namibia Mozambique Zimbabwe, and Mauritius topped Nigeria. All these could be attributed to brain drain syndrome.

In the words of Amobi (2013) ^[6], the university system is expected to provide skilled personnel and credible credentials of social and cultural vitality. This to the author implies that universities are agents of social justice and mobility; contributors to addressing many policy priorities and sources of new knowledge and innovative thinking. For these to be achieved, research output must possess a high level of quality in terms of credibility, legitimacy, and authenticity.

It became serious on 14th February 2022 in the Buhari's administration when the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarked on strike for six months and 13 days (ie 27 weeks and five days) which led to lecturers leaving the country for greener pastures as a result of the prolong academic activities. Also, the poor working condition in many higher institutions in Nigeria is driving most academic and non-academic staff to leave the higher institutions. Ogunode (2020) ^[9] quoted Tribune online paper that reports that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has warned the Federal Government against encouraging brain drain with a lingering strike and nonchalant attitude towards the yearnings of ASUU. Prof. Biodun Ogunyemi (ASUU President) said Ethiopia has already recruited 200 professors from Nigeria while South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, etc have a sizeable number of Nigerian professors. In 2006, Ethiopia engaged the services of 600 professors, according to Olusegun Akinsanya, former Nigeria's Ambassador to Ethiopia. He added that over 3,000 Nigerians were living in Ethiopia and that most of them were professionals who were doing very well in their chosen careers. A few months ago, Ethiopia came to recruit 200 professors from Nigeria. "I don't want to talk of South Africa. Go to Ghana, and Egypt, you will see them there. We treat our scholars with discontent. Each time they step out, they are highly valued and highly-priced (Tribune online, 2020). From the researchers' observation, in the early 70s Nigerian universities use to be an arena for foreign researchers. Pilling for academic jobs in our universities due to the well conducive atmosphere for learning. Then the likes of the university of Lagos, the university of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello university the University of Nigeria, etc where universities are dominated by white due to the motivating factor in our local universities. Most of our leaders who were the opportunity to be tutored by these crops of expert rate have to assess free education from primary to tertiary level. With the indulgence of politics in the country Our educational system in primary and secondary schools is living on its past glory. Leaders and managers of education at the federal level do not see the need to invest in our educational system to make it attractive for lecturers. It has become so humiliating that a medical diction could be appointed as a Minister for labour and productivity which has further increased the problem of brain drain in our universities.

In 2023, the Minister of Interior Rauf Aregbesola attributed the high demand for passports in the past few years to the massive exodus of Nigerians out of the country in search of greener pastures the minister disclosed in Abuja on Thursday at the 64th session of the State House Ministerial briefing

organized by the Presidential Communications Team at the Aso Presidential Villa. According to the minister, 9.31 million passports were processed and issued by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) from 2015 to 2022, with over 1.8 million passports recorded in 2022 alone. The service processed and issued 941,995, in 2015 while 1,035,668 were issued in 2016. The number of passports for 2017 was 1,136,855. A total of 1,242,953 and 780,047 passports were issued respectively in 2018 and 2019, while 1,056,422 and 1,899,683 passports were processed and issued in 2020 and 2021 (Daily Post, 2023).

According to Study. Com (2019) brain drain occurs when a country persistently loses its most educated and talented workers to other countries through migration. It has been seen as a major problem in our educational system because most highly skilled and competent individuals leave the country, and contribute their expertise to the economy of other countries. The country they leave can suffer economic hardships because those who remain do not have the 'know-how' to make a difference in the academic environment. To this end, brain drain is described as a situation in which our educational institutions lose some or a significant number of their qualified academic staff to other sectors of the economy or other countries. This implies that it is the widespread migration of academic staff from universities in the country to overseas universities or equivalent institutions where their services are better rewarded.

National University Commission (2020) explains brain drain as a situation whereby overseas institutions or equivalent institutions receive academic staff from other countries whom they offer better rewards for services rendered Brain drain is synonymously referred to as brain waste or human capital flight Basically, brain drain entails the transfer of knowledge, experience, skill, and expertise from one region, country or geographic location to another. Brain drain has grown in scale due to recent developments in modern electronic information technology, the widening of the gap between the South and the North, and the spread of corporate globalization, increasing political instability, civil wars, and social. The term, brain drain, is also known as human capital flight. It means large-scale movement or migration of top-flight manpower from various developing countries (predominantly African countries) to more developed countries notably the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Holland, New Zealand, and Australia.

Tefera (2019) offers a similar definition of Brain drain. However, he approached it from the perspectives of remuneration and gain. In his word: "Brain drain is defined as the migration of educated laborers from low-income countries to high-income countries whereas brain gain is when the reverse happens" (para.1). The striking feature of this definition is that it highlights the difference between developed and underdeveloped countries. It is not out of place to know that in developing countries, the income is not as high as that of developed countries. Thus, people leave their home countries to get better pay and better life elsewhere. Be that as it may, in the course of the brain drain, some of the talented citizens of a particular country are lost, and such people become very useful in their host countries.

A study by Mustapha and Abdul (2022) ^[1], examined the insecurity and the challenges of brain drain syndrome in Borno State, Nigeria. The population of the study is thirteen thousand five hundred and seven (13507) respondents and a

sample of four hundred (400) was used. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The survey method was used to obtain data through the use of a structured questionnaire measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The findings of this study reveal that there is a significant influence of brain drain in the Health and Education sector in Borno state.

Agbakwu (1999) ^[3] study investigated the factors that are associated with brain drain in Nigerian universities. Ten hypotheses were formulated for the study. The first four hypotheses were concerned with determining the differences in the perception of income, non-salary conditions of service, area of expertise and individual value system as significant factors in brain drain between academics who have remained and those who have left the university system. The fifth hypothesis was concerned with the ranking of the various individual values by the two groups of academics while the other five tested the relationship between brain drain and respondents' biographical characteristics. A descriptive research design was employed. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select nine participating Federal universities from across Nigeria. The sample consisted of 360 subjects - 180 academics drawn from the nine universities and 180 academics who have left the university system. Two research instruments were used to generate the relevant data. The brain drain phenomenon instrument solicited biographical data about the respondents and as well contained twenty-one items that sought information on income, conditions of service and area of expertise as possible explanations for brain drain. The individual value system, instrument contained twelve items that measured the relative strength of six individual values, namely, theoretical, aesthetic, economic, political, social and religious. In analysing the data, the student test for independent sampling was employed to test the first four hypotheses while data relating to the fifth hypothesis were analysed using sex separate one-way analysis of variance. The study revealed that there were significant differences in the consideration of the area of expertise and individual value system as significant factors in brain drain between academics who have remained and those who have left the university system. Academics that have left the universities in Nigeria were significantly higher than those who have remained in their rating of area of expertise as well as an individual value system as the major determinants in their decision to remain within or leave the university system. Based on the comparison of the ranking of the various individual values, academics that have left the university system were found to be significantly higher on economic and religious values while those who have remained were significantly higher on aesthetic and social values.

Similarly, Femi (2009) ^[4] examines the influence of brain drain syndrome on learning outcomes among undergraduates in Nigerian Universities. From the conceptual perspective, the paper analyses the causes and effects of brain drain on

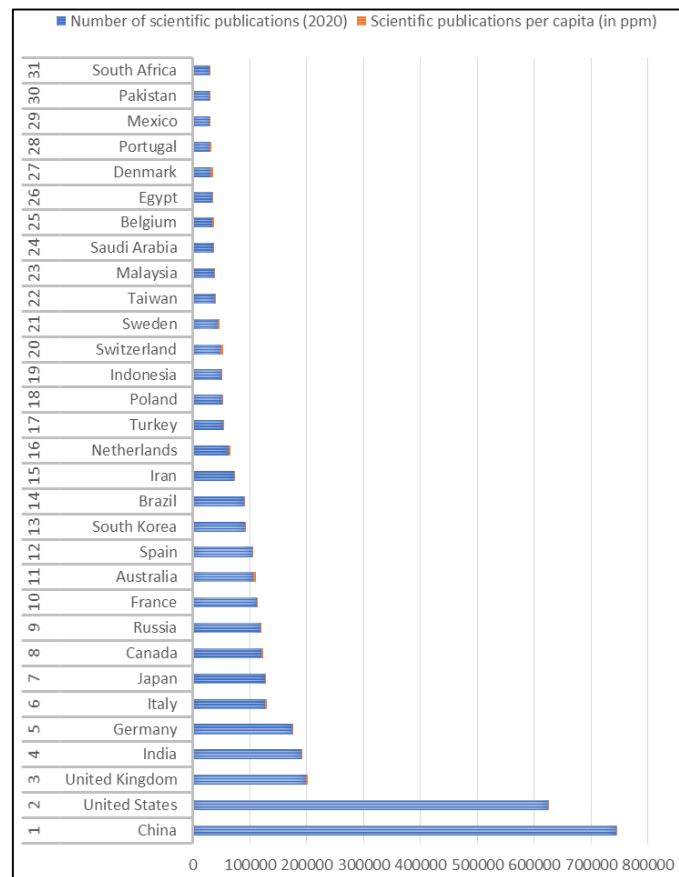
how it affects the learning outcome of Nigerian University undergraduates. Three research questions and three hypotheses were drawn to direct this investigation on the methodology. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents in all cadres of lecturers in three Universities in South West Nigeria. Data were collected through primary and secondary processes. Data collected were subjected to statistical analyses with the use of descriptive statistics. Results obtained held that brain drain promotes the migration of intellectuals to other institutions/sectors in Search of greener pastures thereby creating a vacuum in the home institution. It also revealed that brain drain adversely affects the academic performance of students which invariably reduces the productivity of the potential labour force in the country. The academic brain drain pattern and destination were also clearly illustrated. It was recommended that Educational planning, need to be defined in conformity with social strategy, manpower needs and supply, and the structure of skills required for national development. Thus, the need to conduct a study on brain-drain syndrome in academia: An impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in south-south, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of poor research output among lecturers in the university system in south-south, Nigeria has generated mixed reactions as to the reliability of our tertiary institutions' research output Previous and recent studies have revealed that a key driver of an intellectual and professional exodus from Nigeria is the harsh economic condition under which most intellectuals and professionals work. The problem has also generated negative feelings as the level of academics in the profession and their research output is in terms of quality, not quantity. Observation has shown that from the survey carries out by www.scimagojr.com. Retrieved 2022-02-05 presents a picture of 31 countries with their various research output. A close look revealed that only south Africa occupies the 31st position with Nigeria conspicuously absent from the list even if she is regarded as the giant of Africa. The reason for this ugly situation may be due to the brain drain caused by the government's inability to leverage our educational system. A cursory look at Table 1 and figure 1 shows 31 countries with great research output from 2020-2023. The reason for Nigeria's conspicuous absence to make the list may be attributed to the fact that brain drain has been on the increase in recent times. This is seen as lecturers who received sound education are seen leaving the country geometrically may have resulted in the continuous decline in our research output. It is in line with this study that the problem sought to examine the level of Brain Drain Syndrome in academia: An impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in south-south, Nigeria.

Table 1: Countries and their scientific publication (research output) in the world

Rank	Country	Number of scientific publications (2020)	Scientific publications per capita (in ppm)
1	China	744042	527
2	United States	624554	1875
3	United Kingdom	198500	2959
4	India	191590	138
5	Germany	174524	2097
6	Italy	127502	2159
7	Japan	127408	1016
8	Canada	121111	3184
9	Russia	119195	819
10	France	112838	1664
11	Australia	106614	4109
12	Spain	104353	2202
13	South Korea	91030	1762
14	Brazil	89241	416
15	Iran	71894	863
16	Netherlands	62512	3534
17	Turkey	53802	635
18	Poland	51994	1364
19	Indonesia	49160	181
20	Switzerland	47607	5461
21	Sweden	43270	4141
22	Taiwan	39201	1677
23	Malaysia	37099	1135
24	Saudi Arabia	36301	1037
25	Belgium	34575	2976
26	Egypt	34575	298
27	Denmark	29982	5110
28	Portugal	29189	2821
29	Mexico	29089	231
30	Pakistan	28525	127
31	South Africa	28365	472



Sources: SPSS output, 2023

Fig 1: Countries Research Output Ranking From (2020-2023)

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine brain-drain syndrome in academia: An impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in south-south, Nigeria specifically, the study intends to:

1. Examine the rate of Nigerian emigrating from the country due to brain drain
2. Determine the perceived factors responsible for brain drain
3. Ascertain the perceived effect of brain drain on research.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to be answered in the study

1. What is the rate of Nigerian emigrating from the country due to brain drain
2. What are the perceived factors responsible for brain drain
3. What are the perceived effects of brain drain on research output

Methods and Procedures

The study was conducted to examine brain-drain syndrome in academia: An impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in south-south, Nigeria. The student was guided by three research question using a descriptive survey design. A population of 119 respondents that comprised of Vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, professors, and senior lecturers from universities in Cross River State, River State, Delta State, Akwa Ibom state, and Bayelsa State. Purposive sampling techniques were adopted in the study and a sample of 102 respondents was drawn for the study. A well-developed instrument Brain-Drain Syndrome and Quality Research Output Questionnaire (BDQROQ) was used for data collection which was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and the reliability was ascertained with split-half reliability with a reliability index of .76 to .83. the data analysis was carried out with descriptive statistics (simple percentages and bar charts).

Results and Discussions

The study presents the results based on the tested research questions as presented below

Research question 1

What is the rate of Nigerian emigration from the country due to brain drain.

In answering this question, bar a chart was employed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: level of emigration of Nigeria due to brain drain

Year passport was processed	Nigerians were issued international passports and left
2015 issues in 2016	1,035,668
2017 issues in 2018	1,242,953
2018 issues in 2019	780,047
2019 issues in 2020	1,056,422
2020 issues in 2021	1,899,683

Sources: Daily Post 26, January, (2023)

From the data gathered from the daily post on 26 January 2023 shows that the level of Nigerian out-migration or

emigration is high from 2016 to 20 21. as shown in Table 2.

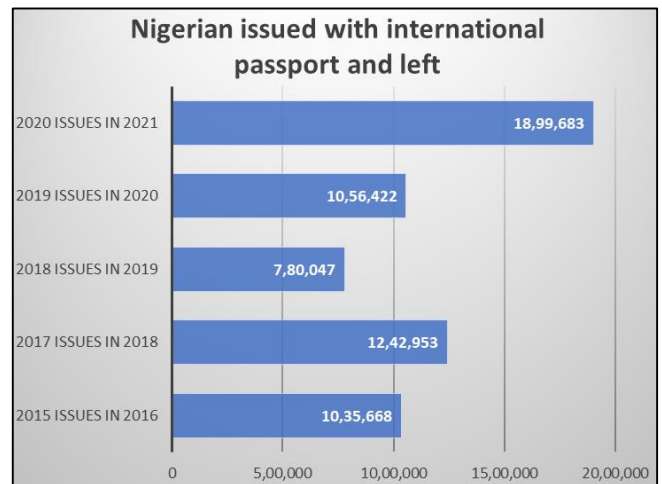


Fig 2

Research question one

What are the perceived factors responsible for brain drain

To examine the perceived factors responsible for brain drain simple percentages and bar charts were employed and the results are presented in Table 3 figure 2

Table 3: Perceived factors responsible for brain drain in universities (n=101)

s/n	Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Lack of mentorship	13	2.6	88	87.2
2	Poor funding	76	85	25	25
3	Poor infrastructural facilities	85	84	16	16
4	Persistent strike actions by the universities unions	76	85	25	25
5	Mismanagement of funds	89	88	12	1.8
6	Insecurity problems	99		2	
7	Weak administrative strategies	89	88	12	1.8
8	Bureaucratic issues	65	65	36	35
9	Political interference in the universities' administration	78	77	23	23
10	High-level private universities	76	85	25	25
11	Universities autonomy dilemma	89	88	12	1.8
12	Poor management of internally Generated Revenue (IGR)	58	57.43	43	42.57

From 2, it is obvious that the majority of the respondents in the study area affirmed the fact that factors responsible for brain drain, poor funding, poor infrastructural facilities, persistent strike actions by the universities unions, mismanagement of funds, insecurity problems, weak administrative strategies, bureaucratic issues, political interference in the universities' administration, high level of private universities, Universities autonomy dilemma and poor management Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) accounts for a high percentage of brain drain with percentages of 85%, 84%, 85%, 88%,88%, 65%, 77%,85%, 88%, and 57.43% respectively. However, for the lack of mentorship majority, 88% of the respondents disagreed that it does not constitute a brain drain in the study area. The results are also presented in Figure 3.

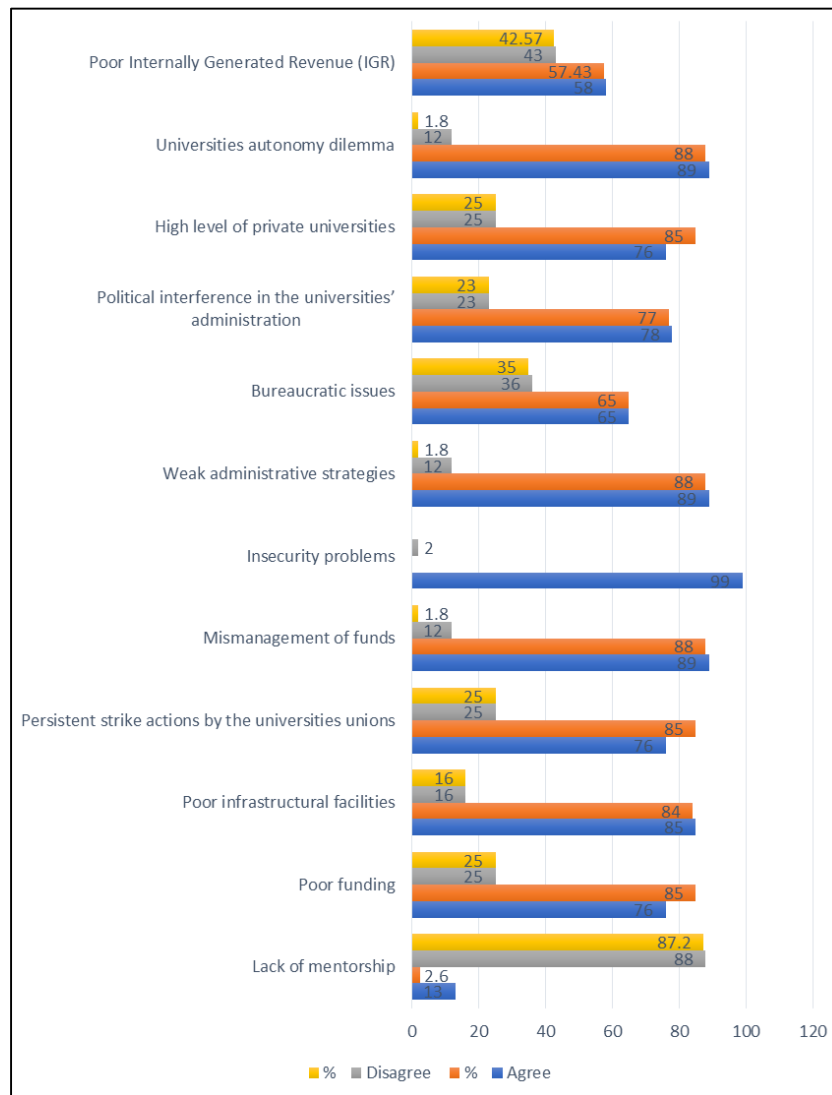


Fig 3: Perceived factor responsible for brain drain in universities

Research question three

What are the perceived effects of brain drain on research output

In answering this research question, simple percentages, and bar charts were employed as shown in table 4 and figure 3.

Table 4: Perceived effect of brain drain in universities (n=101)

S/N	Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%
13	Poor university output	96	95	5	4.95
14	Poor research development output	87	66.14	14	13.86
15	Reduced rate of academic staff	95	94.06	6	5.94
16	Poor administration of universities	72	71.29	29	28.71
17	High student-teacher ratio	3	2.97	98	97.03
18	Poor quality of education	83	82.18	18	17.82
19	Increase university ranking	12	11.88	89	88.12

It is glaring from Table 3 that with for perceived effect of brain drain in universities which was measured with items 13-19, most of the respondents agreed that poor university output, poor research development output, reduced rate of academic staff, poor administration of universities and poor quality of education were some of the major effect of brain drain in universities in south-south Nigeria with a high percentage rate of 95%, 66.14%, 94.06%, 71.29%, and

82.18% respectively. While only items for high student-teacher ratio and Increase university ranking have high percentages of respondents who disagreed (98% and 89%). This implies that the perceived effect of brain drain in universities listed in items 13-19 are significant determinates of the effect of brain drain in universities in south-south, Nigeria. See the graphical presentation in the bar chart in figure 4.

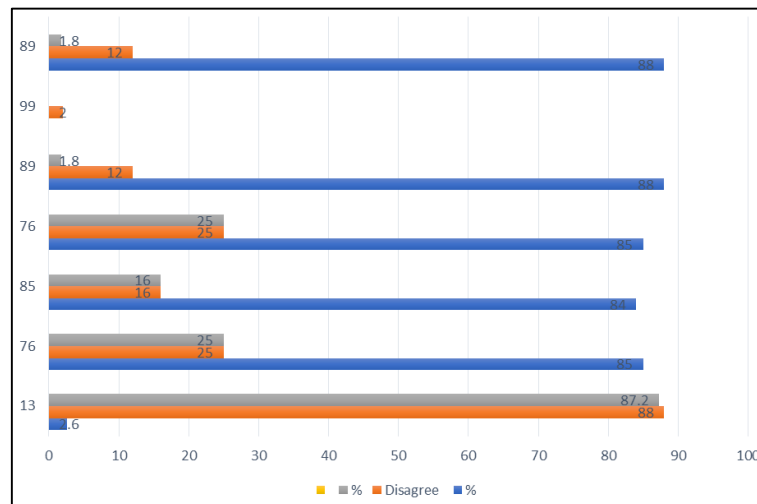


Fig 4: Perceived effect of brain drain in universities in south-south Nigeria

Discussions of Finding

The findings are discussed based on the research questions shown below

From the results of what is the rate of Nigerian emigrating from the country due to brain drain it was found that most Nigerian have out-migrate from the country due to brain drain and the quest for greener pasture. The possible reason for this could be based on the fact that the government have neglected its citizen.

The results for research question two revealed that perceived factors responsible for brain drain are poor funding, poor infrastructural facilities, persistent strike actions by the universities unions, mismanagement of funds, insecurity problems, weak administrative strategies, bureaucratic issues, political interference in the universities' administration, high level of private universities, Universities autonomy dilemma and Poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) accounts for a high.

Research question three showed the perceived effects of brain drain on research output constitutes poor university output, poor research development output, reduced rate of academic staff, poor administration of universities and poor quality of education were some of the major effect of brain drain in universities in south-south Nigeria. these research findings aligns with the studies of Agbakwu (1999) [3] and Femi (2009) [4] whose collective findings revealed that there were significant differences in the consideration of area of expertise and individual value system as significant factors in brain drain between academics who have remained and those who have left the university system. Academics that have left the universities in Nigeria were significantly higher than those who have remained in their rating of area of expertise as well as individual value system as the major determinants in their decision to remain within or leave the university system.

Summary of the Study

The study has made it glaring that most Nigerian experts in different fields of knowledge scores of Nigerian professionals such as lawyers, professors, and engineers are present abroad for better opportunities. Most of them still have the love of the country (Nigeria) and are willing to come back to their fatherland if the right environment is maintained. It is the basic responsibility of stakeholders in the country to reorientation themselves to the dangers of brain drain to the

overall technological advancement of the country, especially in the 21st century where all human endeavors have been digitalized. Most discoveries in the world have been done by Nigeria. For instance, Yemi Adesokan predicted the first HIV integrase/viral DNA binding pattern and spearheaded, developed, and implemented the Bio weather map project. Also, Ndubisi Ekekwe has made significant contributions to major fields in technology. Among his list of inventions is his creation of an invasive medical robot purchased by the U.S. Again, Chike Ofili was 12 years old when he developed a new method of solving mathematical problems through the divisibility of the number seven. More so, Philip Emeagwali who commended for aiding a discovery that gave rise to the development of the internet. These and a lot more are the grand breaking records of Nigerians in the diaspora. Thank god that they were not in Nigeria. The researcher is too sure that their dreams may be shattered.

This indicates how the country is blessed with individuals with high Intelligence Quotient (IQ). The country cannot continue to breed quality products for the betterment of other countries. As a Nigerian, it is so disheartening to say that we are the Giant of Africa yet we cannot afford to boast of high technology due to brain drain. The previous and present administration especially under the watch of President Goodluck Ebele Jonatan and Mohammad Buhari respectively has not invested enough in education which has promoted brain drain in virtually all sector of the economy. The fear is that what is the future of our teeming youth? Where will Nigeria's educational system be ranked in the nearest future? What has been the role of the president, Minister of education, and minister of labour and productivity including the federal committee on education? Will we all fold our arms to see our educational system dying? Yes! Most of these persons mentioned indeed have their children studying in the best schools in the world, but we should be conscious of the fact that most of these individuals had quality education (scholarships) in the past. Posterity may speak against any political leader who does not want to speak the truth on how to leverage our educational system for a better tomorrow.

Research Implication

It is no gainsaying that research is the surest way of fact-finding which can foster intellectual development and socio-economic advancement. Quality research output is sin qua non to the capacity and technological advancement of a

nation. Quality research output (QRO) drives the economy through innovation. That attracts talents that push new products and services even further, expanding the internal market and creating value for export. Without quality research undertaking human existence would have been difficult and discoveries would not have been successfully carried out. To this end, there cannot be development in a country unless such a country strives for quality search for dependable knowledge and skills, for having new ideas and means of establishing gaps that may hinder economic, and social progress.

Recommendations

From the outstanding findings of the research study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. The government should as a matter of urgency stimulate a stable educational environment with limitless Educational Opportunities in terms of increased remuneration, provision of better working conditions, enhanced fringe benefits, and above all better welfare package in terms of pension and gratuities. It has been common thing that most lecturers in the university environment even after retirement seek contracts to continue to remain in the academic environment due to poor retirement benefits and preparation. If their benefits are enhanced they will leave the system with less anxiety which will allow for the recruitment of young brains to help motivate the system.
2. Government in corroboration with other foreign universities including Nigerians in Diaspora should trigger the Nigerian Experts and Academics in Diaspora Scheme (NEADS) which was launched in November 2004 the basic aim was to create an enabling environment to attract academics of Nigerians in the diaspora to contribute their expert rate knowledge to the development of the Nigerian university system. This will help to foster foreign investment in our educational system.
3. Also, the educational system should be free from political interference. This is because one of the major elements killing our educational system is political pokenose into educational matters. Most political holders who are meant to manage the educational sector lack the capacity and passion for education thereby wanting to entice their employer by spending quality time on media houses with flimsy excuses on sensitive educational matters which has led to the incessant strike actions that have crippled the educational system in Nigeria.

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