



Inflation, Academic Staff Job Performance and Students' Academic Work in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: Purpose: This study examined the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Method: The paper is a review study. The paper depended on secondary data that was collected from government documents, print resources and online publications. Content analysis was used to narrow the literature to the theme of the study.

Findings: The paper found that inflation in Nigeria has negatively impacted on the academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper also revealed that inflation has affected students' academic works in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Recommendations: Government should increase the salaries of academic staff in all the Nigerian tertiary institutions to enable them to cope with the high cost of living and school buses should be provided in all tertiary institutions for both staff and students. Government should implement the students' loan programme and state government and local government should implement bursaries programme for their students nationwide.

Keywords: Inflation, Academic staff, students' academic work, Tertiary Education.



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Introduction

Nigeria's headline inflation rate accelerated to the 17th straight month of 33.95% in May 2024 from 33.69% in the prior month, marking the highest reading since March 1996. The latest figures came amid a further rise in fuel prices after the government removed subsidies and currency weakness. Food inflation which accounts for the bulk of Nigeria's inflation basket surged to a record high of 40.66% in May, compared to April's reading of 40.53%, boosted by rises in all food commodities, down to the commonest of foods. Additional, upward pressure came mostly from prices of housing and utilities (29.64% vs 28.77%), clothing and footwear (16.60% vs 16.47%), and transportation (25.62% vs 25.39%), attributed to the recent increase in electricity tariffs and fuels (petroleum products). The annual core inflation rate which excludes farm produce and

energy soared to a new record peak of 27.04% in May. On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose by 2.14% in May, the least in six months, easing from a 2.29% gain in April (Trading Economics, 2024).

Inflation is a sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. To break it down, it means that the value of money decreases over time, causing the prices of goods and services to go up the roof. Basically, the same amount of money can buy fewer goods and services than usual (Pans pressui (2024). Inflation which is defined as the sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy though can be beneficial to some areas of the economy; like stimulating economic growth. It can also cause some serious problems; especially when it comes to the cost of feeding, acquiring teaching and learning materials, tuition fees, salaries of teachers and transportation costs of both students and teachers (Ahmed & Tochukwu, 2024).

Inflation is the continuous fall in the purchasing power of money. In that, more money chases fewer goods and services, which adversely affects negatively on the economy and reduces the standard of living of the population (Ogbebor, Oguntodu, & Oyinloye, 2020). Femi (2022), stated that inflation occurs when a lot of money can only be used to buy a small number of products or services. Inflation is an increase in general level of goods and services over a given period across boards resulting to a fall in the purchasing capacity of the fixed wages and income earners (Hages, 2016). The increase in the prices of commodities reduces consumer's marginal propensity to save, which adversely affects the peoples standard of living. The uncertainty in prices of goods and services had made individuals to desire to earn more income by getting engaged in more income generating jobs, multiple jobs, sometimes at the expense of their health in a bid to maintain a minimum standard of living (Farid, Khan, Warriach, & Warriach, 2012).

Inflation in Nigerian economy has impact on educational institutions (Nwankwo, 2018, Ogunode & Aregbesola, 2023; Ogunode & Ojochenemi 2023; Ogunode & Ukozor, 2023 and Olufeme, 2024). Tertiary institutions can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of the collection of different people, different culture, different life style and different value (Ogunode & Odo, 2023). Tertiary education is a planned and organised educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and for the total transformation of the society through the utilisation of teaching, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie 2023).

Tertiary education comprises of many stakeholders like the academic staff and students. The academic staff are the implementers of the curriculum while the students are the learners in the tertiary institutions. It appears that inflation affects the academic staff and the students in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Ahmed, et al (2024) opined that the cost of educational materials, tuition fees and other associated costs are all increasing, meaning that fixed salary earners are struggling to afford the cost of education for their children. This is further compounded by the fact that many of these families have multiple children, meaning that the cost of education is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. It is based on this that this paper aimed to examine the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is hinged on system theory. The theory offers an alternative approach to the planning and management of education like Basic Education. The system's management theory proposes that education can be likened to the human body that has a goal to attain and consists of multiple components that work harmoniously so that the larger system can function optimally. According to the theory, the success of an educational system depends on several key elements: synergy, interdependence and interrelations between various subsystems. The realisation of the education goals depends on the effective relationship between the subunit or component in the system. Every component is important and its role is very vital to the attainment of the institution's goals.

Therefore, the failure of the governance system to perform its responsibility is affecting the educational system (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Olorundare, 2024; Ogunode, Cletus, & Tswenji, 2024).

Purpose of the study

This purpose of this study is to examine the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The specific objectives includes;

1. to find out the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria; and
2. to find out the impact of inflation on students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following questions were formulated:

1. What is the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
2. What is the impact of inflation on students' academic work in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

Conceptual Terminology

Academic staff job performance

Academic staff are faculty members that are key components of tertiary institutions, especially the universities. The role of academic staff in the development of higher institutions cannot be underestimated because the academic staff are the implementers of instruction in educational institutions. Academic staff as the name implies are professionals who handle the teaching and research programmes of higher institutions and also perform other academic services (Ogunode, Jegede, & Abubakar, 2020).

Academic staff job performance is the total performance of teaching, research and community services or responsibilities an academic staff carries out in the institutions where he or she works at a particular time. Academic staff job performance is the general record of tasks carried out by an academic staff to be compared to the assigned responsibilities and functions given to them (Ogunode & Ibrahim, 2023). Academic staff job performance can also be seen as the measuring of a specific and general tasks given to faculty in an institutions and they are expected to carry them out within a specific timeline (Ogunode, et al 2023).

Academic performance from a societal stand point-the authors worked on examining strong link between academic staff performance and the quality of society. Academic staff performance as a function of excellence leadership on the part of the university management. Achieving both individual and organization excellence is a pathway through which the society and members therein accomplish their goals (Simon, 2002). Academic staff job performance constitutes all activities and functions that are expected of an academic to execute within a specific time (Ogunode, ThankGod & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

Students' academic work

The students are recognised as one of the most important factors in the tertiary education. Ogunode, Audu, & Ahaotu (2020), observed that students are learners in educational institutions. Studentship started from the early child education to basic education to secondary school education and ends in the higher institutions. Higher institutions students are learners in the higher institutions. Higher institutions students are mature learners. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN 2009), observed that students are the focal point of school administration.

Students in higher institutions are aged from 18 years and above. Students of higher institutions are ready for learning and research. Some of the students of higher institutions are dependent while others are independent. Students in higher institutions are either doing first degree, second

degree or third degree (Ogunode, Audu, & Ahaotu, 2020; Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021). Students in tertiary institutions are made to carry out academic work that aid them to graduate and obtain certificates after their school programme.

Students' academic work refers to all activities that students engage in the educational institution to obtain a certificate. Students' academic work is the sum of academic activities the students carries out in the schools to achieve the objectives of schooling. Students' academic work constitutes all learning, research and extra-curriculum activities or functions students are made to carry out in schools.

Students' academic work involves series of academic works that includes: researching, reading, writing test, examinations, attending classes, doing assignments and going for excursion. Students' academic work involves movement from one place to another. Students' academic work is financially inclined and resources engaged.

Students' academic work is affected by many factors such as students' health status, family background, peer group, school environment, facilities availability, teachers' qualifications and experiences, motivation and economic status like recession and inflation.

Method

Impact of inflation on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a position paper because of this secondary data were collected and used to support various points raised in the paper. The secondary data were sorted from both online and print resources. Content analysis was adopted to select the literatures.

Impact of inflation on Academic staff job performance and Students' academic work

There are many impacts of inflation on tertiary institutions stakeholders such as academic staff and students.

Q1. What is the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

The job performance of lecturers in the Nigerian tertiary institutions is affected by high cost of things (inflation) in Nigeria. Many academic staff cannot effectively carry out their academic functions in their respective institutions across the country due to the inflation problems. Omoru (2021), asserted that lecturers and teachers are presently worse hit by the current inflation. The steady rise of prices for goods and services for some time now has really affected lecturers/teachers with concomitant effect on our school children. If lecturers'/teachers' income are fixed, definitely inflation would be a bad omen in running their affairs. When the general price level rises, each unit of currency buys fewer goods and services; consequently, inflation corresponds to a reduction in the purchasing power of money that are in the pockets of teachers. Also, Anagor-Ewuzie (2024), concluded that academic staff in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are battling to keep their heads above water amid soaring living costs, which have continued to escalate since President Bola Tinubu introduced economic reforms that led to the removal of both petrol and forex subsidies in June 2023. The surging inflation has battered many academic staff and made it near impossible for them to put food on the tables for their families. Many staff in tertiary institutions are seriously under pressure and they are finding it difficult to survive as the surging inflation keeps eating deep into their little income. Drake et al., (2018) and McCarthy (2017) suggest that inflation has a significant influence on the salaries of teachers. This implies that the cost of tuition and other education expenses of teachers increase as the rate of inflation increases.

In addition, Omoru (2021), noted that most teachers in the schools now find it very hard to concentrate and often times now sleep off spasmodically in class. What is majorly responsible for this is insomnia that is occasioned by fatigue. This is as a result of much thinking, usually associated with the economic reality in the country. Our teachers are worse hit and this now affects their total concentration. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

(OECD) conducted a study in 2018 in which they found that countries with higher rates of inflation tend to have lower enrollment rates in both primary and secondary education. The report states that the rising cost of tuition, books, and other educational expenses can place a financial burden on students and their families, making it difficult for them to afford an education. The report also found that higher inflation rates can lead to a decrease in the availability of scholarships and other financial aid, which can further reduce enrollment. Ahmed, et al (2024) concluded that inflation has a very significant influence on the salaries of teachers, cost of tuition and other education expenses, quality of education within the system and on enrollment in educational institutions. Rising cost of living, increasing demand for higher education, and decreasing purchasing power of currency, which all contribute to the increasing cost of education.

Q2. What is the impact of inflation on students' academic work in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

The high rate of inflation in Nigeria is affecting students' academic work. Many Nigerian students cannot execute their academic work in the various institutions due to high cost of living. On these issues, Olufeme (2024), reported that the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), lamented the rising inflation and economic hardship in the country. NANS said the state of the economy is now "a threat to the financial stability of students". Babatunde maintained that the inflation impact is now deeply felt as the cost of imported educational materials, tuition fees, and cost of transport skyrocket, making life more difficult for students. Recall that manufacturers had predicted fresh hikes in the prices of commodities in the market due to the continuous depreciation of the naira against the United States dollar. The naira had plunged to N1,483.00 per dollar at the parallel window of the foreign exchange market. Pans pressui (2024), observed that when prices go up, the cost of living increases, then students, many of which have limited sources of income by the way, have to spend more money just to get the same things they used to buy for less. Budgets are stretched, often times resulting in cutting back on essentials or important expenses like food. Will you prioritise your health over your academics due to inflation? Would you rather buy an egg bun or print slides for your classes? These decisions are becoming more real and challenging for students across Nigeria. Inflation is a tough challenge that impacts everyone, especially students and families struggling to make ends meet.

In a survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2016, it was found that a 1% increase in inflation was associated with a 0.3% decrease in student test scores. Olufeme (2024), quoted Babatunde who noted that the surge in the value of the dollar has cast a shadow, creating ripples that extend far beyond economic circles. The hyperinflation gripping the nation not only inflates the cost of goods and services but is now a severe threat to the financial stability of the very students who are the backbone of the future. He decried the increase in the cost of living which leaves students grappling with financial strain and uncertainty, saying "This is not merely a matter of economic shifts; it's a poignant issue affecting the essence of education". Inflation can have a significant and negative effect on students enrollment in educational institutions as it can make an education more costly and can reduce the quality of the education available (Ahmed, et al 2024). Similarly, a study by the World Bank found that higher inflation rates were associated with lower quality education, including lower student learning outcomes. Inflation affects quality of education (Nwankwo, 2018).

Findings

The study revealed that inflation in Nigeria has impacted negatively on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in the various tertiary institutions across the country. This implies that inflation has decreased job performance and academic performance of lecturers and students in tertiary schools respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The study disclosed that influence affected lecturers' job performance in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. This result is in agreement with the findings of Ogunode, & Ukozor, (2023) and

Ogunode & Agbade (2023). They established that inflation militate against job performance of academic staff in tertiary institutions. Also, Giami, (2023) concluded inflation affects job performance among teachers in public senior secondary schools. He further observed that the rise in inflation had increased geometrically and had reduced the standard of living that had inadvertently affected the education sector where the teachers are the centre of focus in the implementation of educational policies for the attainment of predetermined goals and objectives. Ewa and Agu in Akpomi, et al. (2018), opined that the lives of all citizens suffered economic hardship during the period of inflation. Inflation in Nigeria has led to the devaluation of naira and this had grossly reduced the value of the teachers' fixed income. Inflation is anti workers' economic growth because it allows for arbitrary increase of prices of goods and services to the detriment of workers' fixed income even when it is glaring that their purchasing power is being reduced persistently and which erodes their propensity to save (Giami, 2023).

The study indicated that inflation affected students' academic work in the various tertiary institutions across the country. The findings is in line with the discoveries of Oladipupo & Oluwole (2008) and Okeke & Nwankwo (2011), they revealed that inflation has a negative effect on the educational performance of school-going adolescents in Nigeria. It was found that the higher the inflation rate, the lower the educational performance of students. Another study by Akeredolu in (2022) indicated that 52.5% confirmed that their institution increased tuition fees by 10-30% in the past year and their room and board fees increased by 10-30% in the same period; 47.5% confirmed that the cost of transportation increased by 10-30% while 35% confirmed a 40-90% increase.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the impact of inflation on academic staff job performance and students' academic work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper concluded that inflation in Nigeria has negatively impacted on the academic staff job performance in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper also revealed that inflation have affected students' academic works in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Based on the findings, the paper recommends the following;

1. Government should increase the salaries of academic staff in all the Nigerian tertiary institutions to enable them to cope with the high cost of living.
2. The government should implement the students' loan programme and state government and local government should implement bursaries programme for their students nationwide.

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