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## Factors Responsible for Students' Unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Implications for Counselling Practices

**ABSTRACT:** This study, thus, investigated the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. Further investigation was also done based on moderating variables of age, gender, and religion if they would have any bearing on the participants' views. The study was descriptive in nature. The sample consisted of one thousand and two hundred undergraduates, who were selected in six Universities in Nigeria using purposive, simple random, and systematic random techniques. A new questionnaire labelled FRSUQ (Factors Responsible for Students' Unrest Questionnaire) was developed and used to collect data. The results showed that the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions are unfavorable Government policies; poor staff-students' relationship; poor teaching-learning facilities; high tuition fees; and non-responsiveness of University authorities among others. Results also showed that there were no significant differences in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian Universities based on age, gender, and religion.

**KEY WORD:** Factors Responsible for; Students' Unrest; Nigerian Tertiary Institutions; Counsellors.

**ABSTRAKSI:** "Faktor-faktor yang Bertanggung Jawab atas Keresahan Mahasiswa di Lembaga Pendidikan Tinggi Nigeria: Implikasi bagi Praktek Konseling". Penelitian ini, dengan demikian, menyelidiki faktor-faktor yang bertanggung jawab atas keresahan mahasiswa di Lembaga Pendidikan Tinggi Nigeria. Penyelidikan lebih lanjut juga dilakukan berdasarkan variabel moderasi usia, jenis kelamin, dan agama jika mereka memiliki pandangan yang berbeda terhadap peserta. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif. Sampel terdiri dari seribu dua ratus mahasiswa, yang dipilih di enam Universitas di Nigeria menggunakan teknik sampel acak bertujuan, sederhana, dan sistematis. Kuesioner baru berlabel FRSUQ (Kuesioner Faktor-faktor yang Bertanggung Jawab atas Keresahan Mahasiswa) dikembangkan dan digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor yang bertanggung jawab atas keresahan mahasiswa di Lembaga Pendidikan Tinggi Nigeria adalah kebijakan Pemerintah yang tidak menguntungkan; hubungan staf-mahasiswa yang lemah; fasilitas belajar-mengajar yang buruk; biaya kuliah yang tinggi; serta tidak responsifnya pihak otoritas Universitas antara lain. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan signifikan dalam faktor-faktor yang bertanggung jawab atas keresahan mahasiswa di Universitas Nigeria berdasarkan usia, jenis kelamin, dan agama.

**KATA KUNCI:** Faktor-faktor yang Bertanggung Jawab atas; Keresahan Mahasiswa; Lembaga Pendidikan Tinggi Nigeria; Pembimbing.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tertiary Educational Institutions in Nigeria are established to give its students sound education, to be able to function appropriately in any situation, to be productive, attain self-actualization, and be self-fulfilled (Ajibade, 2014). To realize all these goals, the NPE (National Policy on Education), in 2010, has its policy to: (1) the acquisition, development, and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society; (2) the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment; (3) the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; and (4) the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments (*cf*FGN, 2009; David, 2010; and NPE, 2010).

It is expected that these goals are met through: teaching and learning of skills; carrying out research to discover knowledge; dissemination of existing and current information; and rendering community service and training professionals for the development of intermediate and high-level manpower (Yusuf, 2017). These goals are key to national development. However, research by scholars, such as B.M. Taiwo (2012); D. Ajibade (2014); and K.U. Davies, G.E. Ekwere & U.U. Uyanga (2015), have shown that many Nigerian Tertiary Institutions are finding it difficult to attain the expected goals, due to many challenges facing them (Taiwo, 2012; Ajibade, 2014; and Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015). One of those challenges is students' unrest (Adeyemi, 2009; Etadon, 2013; Ajibade, 2014; and Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015).

Students' unrest in the institutions of higher learning is prevalent in recent years. This unrest occurs in the form of riot demonstration, protest, boycotts, harassment, strike and burning of properties, and killing (Mjema, 2013). Today, students'

unrest has been identified as one of the most visible perpetual challenges of significance in Nigerian educational institutions. Worse still, one can rightly predict that students of tertiary educational institutions will riot in any academic session. Students' unrest has, however, lead to continuous closure of schools, which adversely affect the coverage of the curriculum in each academic session (Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015).<sup>1</sup>

An observation of the Nigerian universities shows that many factors underpin student unrest' in recent times. These factors include students' not taking part in decision-making processes in the university. Accordingly, the degree of students' involvement in the decision-making processes has been noted to be indirectly related to the rate of student unrest. Hence, when students are more involved in decision making, the frequency of unrest will probably reduce (Omonijo, 2013; Oni & Adetoro, 2015; and Oluwasanmi, Akande & Taiwo, 2016).

A theoretical framework that this study can be hinged on is the *Theory of Relative Deprivation*. The theory states that people have needs that they strive to meet. When there is a loophole between what people want and what they get in reality, relative deprivation begins to play (Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015). The theorists also stated that when individuals' condition improves, there was higher expectations which in turn lead to frustration, when those expectations are not met. This means that the higher the expectation, the higher the deprivation and frustration emerge (*cf* Dzuverovic, 2013; Saleh, 2013; and Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015).

The theorists also believed that even though there are downturn changes in the economic condition, which is capable of leading to riot, riot is often caused by the

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<sup>1</sup>See also, for example, "Curbing Campus Vices" in *The Nation* [newspaper]. Nigeria: 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

perception of the low economic condition. The *self* is, therefore, prone to reacting towards frustration in the environment to get over deprivation, anxiety, pain, and frustration. A careful look at fresh students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria will reflect that many of them have high expectations as to what the University holds for them. Due to high expectations, many of their preconceived ideas do not materialize. Frustration, however, sets in which leads to unrest to wade off pain and deprivations (Dzuberovic, 2013; Saleh, 2013; Greenberg, 2014; Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015; and Bhui *et al.*, 2016).

**Statement of the Problem.** It is disheartening that hardly in any tertiary institution in Nigeria that students will not protest. This unrest has cost the nation, institutions, students, and the society at large irreparable losses, such as vandalization of properties; waste of time and energy; fear among students and non-students; and life-long injury and even death. Although many researchers have been conducted in the past, which includes but not limited to that of T.O. Adeyemi (2009), and other scholars, who researched on causes, consequences, and control of student's crises in public and private universities in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2009; Akeusola, Viatonu & Asikhia, 2012; and Orunbon *et al.*, 2018).

E.E. Chukwuemeka & V.N.O. Agbara (2010) studied Niger Delta youth restiveness and socio-economic development of Nigeria. Also, B.M. Taiwo (2012) studied students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions: age and sex as determinants. Unfortunately, students' unrest is still the order of the day in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is based on this reason that this study, further, explored the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions (*cf* Aluede *et al.*, 2005; Chukwuemeka & Agbara, 2010; Taiwo, 2012; Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015; and Fayankinnu, 2015).

Based on the purpose of this study, a research question was raised, thus: "What are the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions?"

**Research Hypotheses.** The research hypotheses are able to be stated as following here: (1) *There is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on age, gender, and religion;* (2) *There is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on gender;* and (3) *There is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on religion.*

## METHODS

A study of this nature was set out to describe the factors that cause students' unrest in universities in Nigeria; thus, the descriptive survey method of research design was considered suitable. It is a research method that allows the researcher to explain vividly, events, and ideas surrounding a phenomenon. Similarly, the descriptive survey research method allows room for generalization of the entire population in which sample was drawn. It is in view of these that the researchers considered the descriptive method as appropriate for this study (Williams, 2007; Polit & Beck, 2010; and Sileyew, 2019).

The population for this study consisted of all undergraduates students in Nigerian universities. However, the target population comprised undergraduates in selected Federal Universities in Nigeria. There are six geopolitical zones in Nigeria; in each geopolitical zone, a State was purposively chosen due to the likely occurrence of students' unrest. The States chosen were Cross-River, Lagos, Abia, Plateau, Borno, and Kano. In each of these States, a Federal University was again purposively chosen.

In the Universities, four Faculties were

**Table 1:**  
Mean and Rank Order on the Factors Responsible for Students Unrest  
in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Item No.	In my opinion, factors responsible for students' unrest are:	Mean	Rank Order
5	Unfavorable government policies.	3.81	1 <sup>st</sup>
1	Poor staff-students' relationship.	3.80	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2	Poor teaching-learning facilities.	3.76	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3	High tuition fee.	3.74	4 <sup>th</sup>
6	Poor students' welfare.	3.70	5 <sup>th</sup>
12	Unsupportive students' unionism.	3.67	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Non-responsiveness of school authority.	3.65	7 <sup>th</sup>
11	National issues e.g. fuel scarcity.	3.60	8 <sup>th</sup>
10	Uncooperativeness of the community.	3.62	9 <sup>th</sup>
9	Cultism on campus.	3.61	10 <sup>th</sup>
8	Non-availability of basic amenities e.g. water supply.	3.60	11 <sup>th</sup>
4	Low-commitment of students towards schooling.	3.54	12 <sup>th</sup>

randomly chosen using simple random sampling procedure; in the Faculties, the systematic random sampling technique was adopted to select fifty respondents. This made a total of 200 undergraduate students that were selected in each University. In all, a total of 1,200 students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria were chosen to participate in the study.

The instrument titled "FRSUQ (Factors Responsible for Students' Unrest Questionnaire)" was developed and used to collect data to address the research question and hypotheses. FRSUQ contained 12 items that sought information on the factors Responsible for Students' Unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. The validity of FRSUQ was conducted by giving the instruments to team of experts in the Universities of Ilorin, Nigeria. These experts corrected and made suggestions that improved on the instrument; they affirmed that the instrument had face and content validity (*cf* Okwakpam & Okwakpam, 2012; Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015; and Dutt, Chen & Nair, 2016).

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through a test re-test reliability. This was affirmed by administering the instrument on 20 students of a tertiary institution in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, twice at

an interval of 3 weeks. These students have similar characteristics as the respondents of this study, but they did not partake in the study. The two sets of score were correlated using Pearson's Moment Correlation formula and a reliability co-efficient of .81 was gotten; this affirmed that the instrument was reliable for the study (Bolarinwa, 2015; Chiwaridzo *et al.*, 2017; and Lee, Yim & Kim, 2018).

The mean score for taking decision is 2.5; therefore, any item with mean score 2.5 and above was adjudged the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The data and hypotheses were analysed and tested using frequency counts and percentages, means, t-test, and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) at 0.05 alpha level (Garth, 2008; Greenland *et al.* 2016; and Marshall, 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Results.** The data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages, means, t-test, and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). See table 1.

Since all the items on the tables have mean scores above 2.5, which is the bench mark for making decision for the factors responsible for students' unrest in

**Table 2:**  
Mean, Standard Deviation, ANOVA, and t-value on the Factors Responsible for Students' Unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions Based on Gender Age and Religion (N=1200)

Gender:	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. T-value	Crit. T-value	Decision
Female	552	57.18	13.53	1198	1.03	1.96	Not rejected
Male	648	64.01	18.06				
Source	df	SS	Mean Squares		Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value	
Age:							
Between Groups	2	2345.250	1172.625		1.91	3.00	Not rejected
Within Groups	1197	734559.399	613.667				
Total	1199	736904.649					
Source	df	SS	Mean Squares		Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value	
Religion:							
Between Groups	2	2491.210	1245.605		2.03	3.00	Not rejected
Within Groups	1197	734056.659	613.247				
Total	1199	736547.779					

Nigerian tertiary institutions in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the factors responsible for students' unrest are: Unfavorable government policies; Poor staff-students' relationship; Poor teaching-learning facilities; High tuition fees; non-responsiveness of school authority among others. See, then, the table 2.

Table 2 shows the t-value and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) value of factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. On the table, the t-value of 1.03 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis based on gender is not rejected. The table also shows that for age, the critical F-value of 1.91 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00. Therefore, the hypothesis based on age is not rejected. Similarly, the table also shows that for religion, the critical F-value of 2.03 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00. Therefore, the hypothesis based on religion is not rejected.

**Discussion.** The findings of this study revealed that the factors responsible for students' unrest are: Unfavourable government policies; Poor staff-students' relationship; Poor teaching-learning facilities; High tuition fees; and Non-responsiveness of university authorities

among others. This finding is consistent with that of O. Akeusola, O. Viatonu & O.A. Asikhia (2012) and Mashauri Mwangasha Mjema (2013), who found that the factors responsible for students' unrest are: unfavourable government policies; poor staff-students' relationship; and poor teaching-learning (Akeusola, Viatonu & Asikhia, 2012; and Mjema, 2013).

The shortage of funds been allotted to Nigerian tertiary institutions has been responsible for high tuitions, moribund library, social and laboratory facilities, which result to students' unrests in most tertiary educational institutions in the country. In this context, H.T. Ekundayo & I.A. Ajayi (2009) and O. Akeusola, O. Viatonu & O.A. Asikhia (2012) noted that the Nigerian government over the years has not met the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) recommendation of 26% of the total budget allocation to education sector (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009; and Akeusola, Viatonu & Asikhia, 2012).

Similarly, the finding of this study corroborates that of H.T. Ekundayo & H.O. Alonge (2010), and other scholars, that found that students' unrest in Nigerian universities occurs, due to extreme rules

and regulation; non-provision of basic amenities; and prominent level of students' involvement in cult activities on campus (cf Adeyemi, Ekundayo & Alonge, 2010; Ekundayo & Alonge, 2010; and Odu, 2013).

Hypothesis one which stated that "*there is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on gender*" was not rejected. This implies that whether the respondents are male or female, does not affect the expression of factors responsible for students' unrest. It also means that both male and female respondents have the same expression about the factors responsible for students' unrest.

This finding validates the findings of B.M. Taiwo (2012); F.I. Etadon (2013); Onyike Margaret Odu (2013); and other scholars, who found that gender had no significant difference in the expression of factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This finding could be that students irrespective of gender have needs and like the human need theory explained, they would strive to have their needs met (Taiwo, 2012; Etadon, 2013; Odu, 2013; Olibie, Eziuzo & Enueme, 2013; and Bulut, 2018).

Hypothesis two which stated that "*there is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on age*" was not rejected. This implies that all respondents regardless of their ages did not have different expressions on the factors responsible for students' unrest.

This finding tally with that of B.M. Taiwo (2012); K.U. Davies, G.E. Ekwere & U.U. Uyanga (2015); and other scholars, who found that age does not affect the expression of factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The reason for this finding could be that even though the respondents were of varied ages, they are all students and they have the same experience about

the issues causing unrest (Adeyemi, 2009; David, 2010; Taiwo, 2012; Davies, Ekwere & Uyanga, 2015; and Fayankinnu, 2015).

Hypothesis three which stated that "*there is no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on religion*" was not rejected. This means that the religious belief of the respondents does not come to play in the expression of factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

This finding supports the finding of T.O. Adeyemi (2009); Mashauri Mwangasha Mjema (2013); and other scholars, who found that religion has no significant difference in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This finding could be that despite the respondents do not share the same religious faith, they are all students of Nigerian tertiary institutions and could all express the issues that could lead to students' unrest (Adeyemi, 2009; David, 2010; Mjema, 2013; Fayankinnu, 2015; and Sulaiman, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions are: Unfavourable government policies; Poor staff-students' relationship; Poor teaching-learning facilities; High tuition fees; and Non-responsiveness of university authorities among others. No significant difference existed in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on age, gender, and religion.

Implications of the findings for counselling practices are: the finding of this study implies that counsellors should persuade Nigerian government to adequately fund education sector. This will help Nigerian tertiary institutions to acquire updated teaching-learning facilities and put in place sufficient infrastructural facilities. Similarly, counsellors should also encourage

Nigerian government to make favourable policies, such as to reduce high school tuition fees and not the policies that harsh and capable of pushing students towards crisis.

Provision of infrastructural facilities, teaching-learning, and university authorities should be counselled to be responsive to request or complaint of students. When students give complaints and the school authority is indifferent about it could promote anger and frustration in the students. Counsellors should organize continuous seminars for lecturers to facilitate friendly staff-student's relationship. Skills of tolerance and human relationship should be widely taught to both staff and students to promote peaceful coexistence in tertiary institutions.

Students should be counselled to say "No to Violence". This can be done for fresh students during orientation programmes. Other students could be taught conflict resolution skills to resolve issues without necessarily fighting. Security agencies in the country should also be educated and encouraged to help keep cultism in tertiary institutions at bay as it has been noted that the existence of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions is one of the factors responsible for students' unrest. Lastly, counsellors should strive to be peace advocates between students, university authorities, Nigerian government, and the Nigerian society at large.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>**Statement:** I, hereby, declare that this article is my original academic work, and it is not the result of plagiarism. All the sources cited in the analysis and discussion, I include clearly and completely in the Reference list. This article has also not been submitted, reviewed, and published by other scientific journals. I am willing to be academically sanctioned, if what I declare turns out to be, later on, it is not true.

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**Students' Unrest in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**  
(Source: <http://www.nigerianeye.com>, 22/6/2018)

The factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions are: Unfavourable government policies; Poor staff-students' relationship; Poor teaching-learning facilities; High tuition fees; and Non-responsiveness of university authorities among others. No significant difference existed in the factors responsible for students' unrest in Nigerian tertiary institutions based on age, gender, and religion.