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ACADEMIC RANK AND BRAIN DRAIN PATTERNS OF UNIVERSITIES LECTURERS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated academic rank and brain patterns of Universities in South-South Nigeria. One research question was answered to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a population of 9,714 lecturers drowned from 12 (5 federal and 7 states) universities in south-south states. The sample of the study comprised of 7,571 from 7 (3 federal and 4 state) universities selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was lecturers inventory checklist (LIC). Results showed that, the higher the rank, the lower the level of brain drain among the universities lecturers in south-south Nigeria and vice-versa, it was recommended that university management should identify and address systematic barriers that contribute to brain drain such as lack of resources or opportunities and government should look into the welfare of lecturers by renegotiating their salaries in line with other countries.
Keywords: Academic rank, brain drain, Universities lecturers.

Introduction

University education aims to produce knowledge, this requires well-trained teachers at the highest level of academic preparation, unfortunately, a good number of lecturer's wo could have helped the university to play it fundamental roles, may have been lost to brain drain problem. Consequently, a sizeable proportion of them seem to have left the academia for better opportunities abroad or in private sector. Lecturers who find better opportunities

outside the country or in the private sector most times motivate and encourage their colleague to follow suit. Academic rank is another important factor that can cause variation in the rate of brain drain. Higher-ranked academic is sought after for their expertise and experience by institution and countries that can offer better opportunities. Professors and researchers with higher academic ranks (e.g full Professor) are often more attractive to other institution and countries due to their established reputation, research output and potential to attract funding and student. Consequently, losing talented academics could lead to decline in the quality of research and education as departing academics take their expertise and knowledge with them, which will result to difficulties in filling vacant position as institution struggle to attract and retain top talent.

The disparity in salaries and benefit between home countries and other countries could cause brain drain especially for those in higher academic ranks who are more likely to receive higher salaries in the first place. Institution and countries offering better salaries, research funding, working conditions and career advancement opportunities may actively recruit these highly ranked academics. The loss of this highly ranked academics can significantly impede the research and development capabilities of the home country, hindering innovation and economic growth.

Academic rank refers to the hierarchical position of faculty members and researchers within a university or research institution. These ranks indicate relative importance and power within academic, and thy can vary slightly from country to country. Among the common ranks are professors, associate professors (readers), Senior lecturers, lecturers one (1), and lecturer two (2). Academic rank and brain drain are connected as high position, particularly in field with high demand or better opportunities in other countries, can lead to skilled individual migrating to those countries, thus causing a brain drain. Attaining the rank of full professor in the Nigerian University system is one of the most stringent process in Africa and when global comparisons are made the minimum standards are comparable to what is obtains in the older university system in Europe and North America.

The first level qualification is to have a doctorate in the area of specialization. For medical scientists, a recognized professional fellowship is generally accepted although in recent years, insistence on a doctorate in the special area of medicine forms the acceptable minimum. The second filter is to have at least three years of teaching (in a university or other tertiary-level institution), research, and community service at each level of lectureship. There are four such levels – lecturer grade 2, lecturer grade 1, senior lecturer, and associate professor. Hence, before being considered for promotion or appointment to the rank of full professor, the academic/scholar would have put in a minimum of twelve years of university teaching and research.

The third and most important is the assessment of scholarship. This involves the evaluation of the published names of the full professional candidate by seasoned (senior) full professors in the field of the candidate. Typically, a minimum of 60 internationally–

published names (about 80% being articles in high-impact international journals) with the quality of a candidate to receive a positive assessment. At least one of the assessors is expected to be from a well – ranked university outside Nigeria, preferably, from Europe or North America. At least two positive assessments with quality, the candidate for the final step which is screening via a rigorous oral interview. The interview is a composite assessment of the candidate on teaching (length and quality) research (scores returned by the assessors) and community service (internal and external). With an overall score exceeding a set minimum by the university, the candidate is then processed to the university council for appointment. The variations from one university to another in Nigeria are marginal although the older universities would appear to pitch higher than these minima.

Nwadiani and Ogboro's (2017) study on the deployment and utilization of graduate teachers and performance in Nigeria, observed that the utilization of teachers in their subject area is critical to perform survival at all levels of education, therefore, school administration should carry out an analysis to fill the areas of scarcity rationalized distribution of teachers and ensure there is a balance in their deployment. In a study carried out by Tettey (2010) found that variation exist among university lecturers brain drain based on academic rank. The lower rank had a brain rate of 35.11 percent while that of higher rank has 12.21 percent. By implication, the lower rank had a higher brain drain rate than the higher ranks. Jons (2009) in his study on brain circulation at Germany Universities found very substantial variation between academic ranks of lecturers. The study revealed the brain drain rate expressed in terms of lecturers' years to range from 17.22 percent for lower ranks to 4.18 percent for the higher ranks. The implication was that the lower rank incurred a higher rate of brain drain than the higher rank. Turner (2017) in his study too found that the numbers of years and age of the lecturers are the courses of variation in academic rank.

Teaching staff engagement in the social aspects of schooling which may make them stay in the profession or leave is often overlooked. A study suggested that the prospects for academic's retention increase when the schools are organized for productive collegial work under effective leadership (John et al, 2008). There is also evidence that academics value the collegial work system in the university system (Kardos, 2004) where the academics are unhappy with the school's climate, it will lead to different rates of teaching staff brain drain. In recent times, a great deal has been learned about the benefit of academia working with colleagues with collaboration in helping to increase a sense of efficiency in the academic work, promoting satisfaction and by influence, reducing teaching staff brain drain.

Mirkamaliane and Thari (2011) studies on academic rank variation based on quality of work life, found out that, they is a relatively unfavorable quality work life conditions and there is a significant difference in the level of quality work life among faculty members of the universities, however, there is a small difference in social integrity and cohesiveness between the ranks. Thy findings also revealed that quality of

work life among academic rank is one of the most significant and efficient tools of brain drain management. Pandey and Jha, (2014) equally found out that academic rank encourages employees to have an interest in the work, make a balance among professional, personal, and social life and ultimately enhance employees' job satisfaction.

A salary structure that does not satisfy physical needs, such as providing recognition, a sense of accomplishment, and attracting desired social structure will demotivate workers may enhance brain drain among university lecturers. Therefore, a sound salary structure that will attract and retain personnel quantitatively and qualitatively ought to be the prime mm target of any university. The principle of fair wages (wages that are equal to that received by workers performing work of equal skill, difficulty, or unpleasantness) and incentive wage (amount of remuneration paid to a worker over and above the normal wage as an incentive for an employee's contribution to the increased production or saving in time or material must be applied when structuring teaching staff salary).

Wage differentials of academic rank perform important economic functions like labor productivity, attracting people to different jobs, attracting efficient workers, maximization of employee commitment, development of skills and knowledge utilization of human resources, and maximization of productivity. The wage differential is an incentive for labor mobility among professions and different regions. Another method of retaining university teaching staff in the profession is by making use of wage differential in salary structure because of its economic functions. It can be perceived that wage differential is not presently in use in the structuring of academic's salaries, since its pivotal role in a planned economy which allows the skilled human force like teaching staff on the priority list is far from being fetched. The shortage of technicians and skilled personnel just as it is being experienced in the education industry can be reversed through national wages policy that is driven by wage differentials. A complete uniform national wage policy is also impracticable and undesirable, and likely promoter of university teaching staff brain drain among academic ranks.

A salary survey ought to be done when structuring academics' salaries to be able to employ and retain resourceful academics and the importance of bonuses cannot be over-emphasized as a strategy to retain developed human resources such as academics. John, berg, and Donaldson (2008) observed that higher pay is not the only force that will improve and retain quality teaching force. But many options about how additional pay might be used to attract and retain new entrants to teaching, retaining teachers with different levels of experience or kinds of credentials. All these approaches require an understanding of how teachers' pay is currently structured. Implicit in this structure is the need to find out if there is direct evidence of merit in the teaching staff structure. It ought to be known that teachers improve with experience Johnson et al (2005), in which vertical lanes in the natural location of the school and ownership, play a lot of roles in the academic salary scale which ought to be downplayed to guide against

mobility. There is also the need to scale academics' salaries along horizontal lanes, which is rewarding academics for completing additional degrees or course works (Leonard and Reininger, 2004). This can also be expanded to inventions or breakthroughs in research.

A performance-based pay, merit-based pay, and financial award that can be granted as a one-time bonus for teaching staff who take up challenging assignments will be quite motivating to academics in the school system. Johnson et al (2005) simulation conducted in Wisconsin suggested that it would take a salary increase of at least 15 to 200% to reduce urban school staff brain drain rate to the level observed in suburban institutions. Also, the influence the difference in non-academics to academic's wages affects the teaching staff's decision to exit teaching. Ondrich, Pas, and Yinger (2008) found a modest positive relationship between the wage differential and teaching staff brain drain. It can be argued that if academics could earn higher pay both at the point of entry and overtime, resourceful staff would be attracted to the profession and more efficient staff might be retained since pay will continue to be an important factor in academic initial choice, its interaction with sound working conditions cannot also be played down.

Purpose of the Study

i. to investigate if there is variation in the rate of brain drain among university lecturers in south-south Nigeria based on academic rank.

Research Question

i. is there variation in the rate of brain drain among university lecturers in south-south Nigeria based on academic rank?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research. The choice of this research design is because it involves the collection of existing data and analysis of data using a simple size representation of the entire population without manipulating any variable or data. The population of the study comprised 9714 lecturers from 12 (5 federal and 7 States) Universities in South South State which include, Dalta, Edo, Bayelsa, Cross Rver, Akwa-Ibom and Rivers State. The sample of the study consist of 7571 lecturers from 7 (3 federal and 4 State universities in 4 (Cross River, Rvers, Akwa-Ibom and Edo) States which were selected by the researcher using multi-stag sampling technique.

Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a checklist divided into two sections; Section A contain the demographic data of lecturers while section B contain general lecturers' inventory who are on full time employment from 2017 – 2022.

Data Analysis

Data collected to answer the research question was descriptively analyzed, using percentage, mean and rates. Charts was used to illustrate the result.

Result

The result of the study is presented below based on the research question of the study;

Research Question

ii. is there variation in the rate of brain drain among university lecturers in south-south Nigeria based on academic rank?

Table 1: Percentage rate of Brain Drain among University Lecturers in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria based on Academic Rank from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022

Rank	Academic Year									
	Lect. Avail. (2017/2018)		Lect. Avail. (2018/2019)		Lect. Avail. (2019/2020)		Lect. Avail. (2020/2021)		Lect. Avail. 2021/2022)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professor	80	5(6.25%)	95	4(4.21%)	195	8(4.10%)	125	6(4.80%)	170	11(6.47)
Associate Professor	394	8(0.86%)	964	10(1.03%)	934	11(1.17%)	832	9(1.08%)	890	15(1.6%)
Senior Lecturer	1180	11(0.93%)	1207	9(0.74%)	1257	14(1.11%)	1179	11(0.93%)	1209	23(1.90)
Lecturer 1	1320	13(0.98%)	1370	13(0.94%)	1460	18(1.23%)	1376	13(0.94%)	1416	27(1.90)
Lecturer 2	1247	15(1.20%)	1327	18(1.35%)	1607	31(1.92%)	1559	22(1.41%)	1654	32(1.93)
Assistant lecturer	1640	21(1.28%)	1710	28(1.63%)	2024	23(1.13%)	1904	26(1.36%)	2034	37(1.81)
Graduate assistant	110	27(24.5%)	140	21(15.0%)	210	27(12.8%)	160	31(19.3%)	198	38(19.1)
Grand total:	6511	100	6813	103	7687	132	7135	118	7571	183

Source: Fieldwork 2023

Key: Lect. Avail. – Lecturers' Available

Data in Table 1 showed percentage rate of brain drain among selected universities lecturers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria based on academic ranks from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 academic session. Details of analysis shows that, out of 100 (100%) university lecturers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria who left in 2017/2018 academic session, 5 (5%) were Professors, 8 (8%) were Associate Professors, 11 (11%) were Senior Lecturers, 13 (13%) were Lecturer I, 15 (15%) were Lecturer II, 21 (21%) were Assistant Lecturer and 27 (27%) were Graduate Assistant. In 2018/2019 academic session, out of 103 (100%) University lecturers who left, 4 (3.9%) were professors, 10 (9.7%) were Associate Professors, 9 (8.7%) were Senior Lecturers, 13 (12.6%) were Lecturer I, 18 (17.5%) were Lecturer II, 28 (27.2%) were Assistant Lecturer and 21 (20.4%) were Graduate Assistant. In 2019/2020 academic session, out of 132 (100%) University lecturers who left, 8 (6.1% were professors, 11 (8.3%) were Associate Professors, 14 (10.6%) were Senior Lecturers, 18 (13.6%) were Lecturer I, 31 (23.5%) were Lecturer II, 23 (17.4%) were Assistant Lecturer and 27 (20.5%) were Graduate Assistant. In 2020/2021 academic session, out of 118 (100%) university lecturers who left, 6 (5.1%) were Professors, 9 (7.7%) were Associate Professors, 11 (9.3%) were Lecturer I, 22 (18.6%) were Lecturer II, 26 (22%) were Assistant Lecturer and 31 (26.3%) were Graduate Assistant. In

2021/2022 academic session, out of 183 (100%) university lecturers who left, 11 (6%) were Professors, 15 (8.2%) were Associate Professors, 23 (12.6%) were Senior Lecturers, 27 (14.8%) were Lecturer I, 32 (17.5%) were Lecturer II, 37 (20.2%) were Assistant Lecturer and 38 (20.8%) were Graduate Assistant. Also the results of analysis using the grand total shows that, out of 636 (100%) university lecturers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria who left from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 academic sessions, 34 (5.4%) were Professors, 53 (8.3%) were Associate Professors, 68 (10.7%) were Senior Lecturers, 84 (13.2%) were lecturer I, 118 (18.6%) were Lecturer II, 135 (21.2%) were Assistant Lecturer and 144 (22.6%) were Graduate Assistant. The results further showed that, the higher the rank, the lower the level of brain drain among the universities in South-South Nigeria and vice-versa.

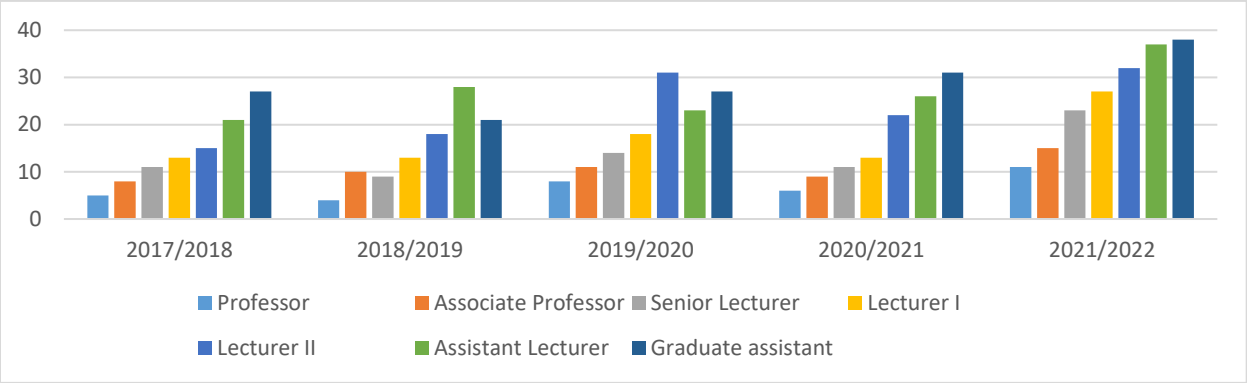


Figure 1: Chart Showing Percentage rate of Brain Drain among University Lecturers in South-South Nigeria from 2017/2018 - 2021/2022 Academic Session

Conclusion

The study concluded that the university management should invest in state-of-art research facilities and equipment and also encourage collaboration between departments and disciplines. The university administrators and the National University Commission, (NUC) should ensure that quality of work life variable are available, such as career growth, collegial work, mentoring, and induction. And to complement these, the length and cost of education and training of teaching staff at the university level should be demanded for and reflected in their salary and wages structures which must also key into the prevailing cost of living.

Recommendation

The study recommended that;

i. The study recommended that university management should identify and address systematic barriers that contribute to brain drain such as lack of resources or opportunities.
ii. Management should create a supportive and inclusive work environment that can act as a catalyst to brain drain.

iii. Government should look into the welfare of lecturers by renegotiating their salaries in line with other countries and also help allocate resources to areas that need improvement.

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