



# STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION ON UNIONISM AND CORRUPTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY WUKARI, TARABA STATE.

## \*OBIWELUOZOR, Nkechi

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.

# **AMAECHI, Appolus Azunwanne**

General Studies Unit, Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.

#### ABSTRACT

It is true that corruption in the education industry is a practice that has multiple capabilities of undermining the national development of any nation. This paper examined stakeholders' perception on Unionism and Corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria. The researchers adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 1970 academic and non-academic staff of the university and 5657 students of the institution. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 240 staff members stratified along academic and non-academic, while a sample size of 120 was selected from student population, making a total of 360 respondents who participated in the research. A 15-item researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Stakeholders Perception on Unionism and Corruption in Higher Education Questionnaire (SPUCHEQ)" was used as an instrument for data collection. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and percentage scores. The Chi-square statistic was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that unionism is used by the management of higher education in Nigeria to perpetrate corruption. Conclusion was drawn, and it was recommended that Unionism in Higher education should be independent, free of interference from the university management.

**KEYWORDS:** Perception, unionism, corruption, higher education.

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: OBIWELUOZOR Nkechi.** Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.: E-mail: <a href="mailto:nkobiweluozor@yahoo.com">nkobiweluozor@yahoo.com</a> Tel: +234 (0) 7015204355





## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the concept of trade unions started during the industrial revolution era, when people left farming as an occupation and began to work for employers, often in poor conditions and for low wages. Initially, the employers were hostile to labour unions. Unions were illegal for many years in most countries, and there were severe sanctions for attempting to organize unions (Durosaro and Akinsolu cited in Efanga, Okon, & Ifejiagwa, 2014). In Nigeria, labour unionism has uneven history of confrontation, proliferation, centralization and decentralization (Maduemezi cited in Mhenbee & Nguhunden, 2019). The first trade union of workers in wage employment was Nigerian civil service union, organized in 1912 and concerned with the Nigerianization and efficiency in the civil service. This eventually became a pressure group in the 1940s. The railway workers union was formed in 1932, while Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) entered education industry in 1931. The growth of unionism was further enhanced by the enactment of the Trade Union ordinance of 1938 (Efanga, 2009).

In Nigeria, there is a university and college union recognized nationally, and by individual institutions for purposes of negotiating salaries and conditions of service. Some powerful staff unions that exist in Nigeria tertiary institutions, according to Mhenbee and Nguhunden (2019) includes: The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Association of Nigeria University Professional Administrators (ANUPA), Polytechnic Senior Staff Association (POSSA), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnic (ASUP), College of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Senior Staff Union of Colleges of Education in Nigeria (SSUCOEN), and Non-Academic Staff of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU). Also, there is National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) in the universities. These unions are officially recognized by stakeholders in Nigerian education industry, and they are involved in collective bargaining to achieve their objectives. Recently, there seems to be some legal constraints to unionism at the Nigerian tertiary institutions. With the advent of Trade Union (Amendment) Act 2005, some radical reforms have been introduced to labour unionism. Significantly, the Act seeks to ensure that membership of Trade unions is voluntary and not mandatory.

The roles of the union in management of higher education include maintenance of peace and making positive contributions in time of crisis. It is often not realized that the benchmark of unionism involves bargaining, consultation and reconciliation. These are healthy measures aimed at ensuring industrial peace between employees and various layers of authorities in the educational sector. The student unions, student union government, student senate or student association as may be sometimes called, is an organization of students for the purpose of serving the collective interest of student with respect to general welfare matters, student union should be great both in quality assurance and productivity of the education industry. Certain negative tendencies sometimes arise as a result of students' involvement in unionism, particularly one institution would affect the whole country, leading to strike actions, which impedes the academic students' behaviour. In some situations, most student leaders give up their intellectual pursuit in preference for quick money, by engaging in political activities which adversely affect their academic productivity.





#### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of trade unions has attracted variety of definitions from scholars. All these definitions however centre on workers and their welfare. Fajana in Nchuchuwe and Ajolor cited in Mhenbee and Nguhunden (2019) defines trade union as "an association of wage or salary earners formed with the object of safe guarding and improving the wage and employment conditions of its members and to raise members' social status and standards of living in the country". Aremu cited in Mhenbee and Nguhunden (2019) also defines trade union as a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving their working conditions.

Higher education is training obtained at a degree level from universities or similar educational establishments. It is a third-level or tertiary education which is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. Often delivered at universities, academies, colleges, seminaries, conservatories, and institutes of technology, higher education is also available through certain college-level institutions, including vocational schools, trade schools, and other career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certificates (Amaechi, 2020). According to Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013), tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

Stakeholders in this context refer to the management staff, which represents government as the proprietor of these tertiary institutions, academic and non-academic staff of these institutions and students. Perception here will mean intuitive understanding and insight, which means the way in which stakeholders perceive, regard, understand and interpret the activities of unions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. On the other hand, corruption in this context, refer to dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery or misappropriation of funds. Corruption according to Brunnelle-Quraishi cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) is derived from the Latin word corruptus which translates as "to break". For Khan cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017), corruption incorporates any act that deviates from those rules and regulations that govern the behaviour and action of any one in a position of public authority, especially actions that turn such privilege into avenues for personally and privately amassing wealth, power and authority. In the views of Lawal and Tobi cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017), "corruption is any conscious attempt or deliberate diversion of resources from the satisfaction of the general interests to that of the selfish (personal or particular interest). Ojiade cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) is more inclusive in his definition of corruption when he writes that corruption is any systematic vice perpetuated by individuals, society or a state in general, where not-too-good concepts for equality, social harmony and harmonious living e.g. favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undue enrichment, amassing of wealth, abuse of office, power, position etc. become norms upon which the people and the state operate.





It is through the above premise that Olorode (2001) states that the inability of most vice chancellors to effectively manage the resources available to their institutions is due to the fact that these people have acquired almost unlimited power to manipulate university resources according to their whims and caprices; he further opined that this high rate of corruption in higher education system arises from the fact that staff unions are compromised, leading to the absence of democratic control of university administration. Supporting this, Bello (1998) posits that some heads of tertiary institutions become sensitive to criticisms and as such do not necessarily see themselves accountable to any one in their respective institutions; they transform into feudal lords within an environment designed to promote tolerance, freedom, accountability, checks and balances. Union leaders therefore serve as critical watch dogs for higher education, striving to contain the excesses of higher education administrators. In a related development, Arikewuyo (2008) posits that unionism is not new within Nigerian tertiary institutions; they are important stakeholders that cannot be ignored in the management of tertiary institutions. Also, describing the extent of corruption in Nigeria, Okeyim, Ejue and Ekanem (2013:24) write that "corruption is pervasive in Nigeria" and analyzing the consequences of this, Lawal and Tobi cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) note that "Nigeria presents a typical case of a country in Africa whose educational development has been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices". They however opine that if stakeholders are sensitized on social justice and strategies for an innovative curricular and pedagogical system that will eliminate corruption in higher education union leaders should serve as watchdogs.

# Statement of problem

It is a statement of fact that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of every sector of the Nigerian economy, and higher education is not an exception. Recently the federal government asked all federal owned institutions to join the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), as a measure to check ghost workers, in order to cut down government spending through effective and efficient payroll administration, but the committee of vice chancellors vehemently opposed it, for the reason that academic staff of universities do go on sabbatical and or visiting, therefore the IPPIS will not work for universities. To the greatest dismay of stakeholders, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) supported them. It is a known fact that most federal owned institutions have ghost workers on their payroll, some of their staff who died, resigned or terminated, still have their names on the payroll and their salaries are being paid by federal government to date. Most of these institutions have two different payrolls for salaries in each month, one is sent to the federal government, while the other is the actual one with which they pay their staff at institutional level. Corruption is perpetrated in collaboration with banks. Some of the administrators of higher education terminate, suspend, demote and intimidate workers for their personal aggrandizement or ego; all these are tantamount to corruption. In all, these academic and non-academic staff unions that abound these institutions are supposed to be fighting against corruption and defend their members; rather they are adamant, due to the fact that they are complacent, compromised or better still, part of corruption. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine stakeholders' perception on unionism and corruption in higher education in Nigeria: A study of Federal University Wukari.





# Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate stakeholders' opinions on unionism and corruption in higher education in Nigeria, using the Federal University Wukari, Taraba State as a case study. Specifically, this paper sought to:

- (1) Explore stakeholders' views on unionism and corruption in higher education in Nigeria.
- (2) Determine how unionism aid corruption in higher education in Nigeria.
- (3) Ascertain how unionism can be used to check corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

- (1) What are stakeholders' opinions on unionism and corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria?
- (2) In what ways does unionism aid corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria?
- (3) How can unionism in Higher Education in Nigeria be used to check corruption?

# **Hypothesis**

The following Null hypothesis guided the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ho Unionism has no significant impact on Corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consists of 1.970 academic and non-academic staff and 5.657 students of federal university Wukari. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 240 staff, stratified along academic and nonacademic; while a sample of 120 was selected from student population, stratified along with male and female. In all, 360 stakeholders served as respondents in the study. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. A 15-item developed guestionnaire titled "Stakeholders Perception on Unionism and Corruption in Higher Education Questionnaire (SPUCHEQ)" served as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by two experts and it yielded a validation index of 0.89. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; section A contained the sex and category of respondents, while section B contained 15 items on unionism and corruption in higher education developed using four-point Likert modified scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) in which the respondents were requested to respond to the questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation and percentage scores. The Chi-Square (X2) statistic was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. A scale mean of 2.5 was used to determine respondents' perception, this means that a mean of 2.5 and above is high or positive perception, while a mean of 0 - 2.49 is low or negative perception. This enabled the researchers to draw conclusions on the data collected.





## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

# Analysis of research questions

**Research Question One:** What are stakeholders' opinions on unionism and corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of stakeholders' opinion on unionism and corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	Α	D	SD	М	STD	DEC.
1.	Management of Higher Education Institutions always influence the appointment or election of executive members of most staff unions in their institutions for their interest.	186	115	26	21	3.3	0.86	Agree
2.	Management of Higher Education Institutions gets executive members of unions compromised when they want to implement policies that are not workers' friendly.	195	125	13	15	3.4	0.50	Agree
3.	In most Higher Education Institutions where Congress elects executive members that defend their rights and welfare, they are always at loggerhead with the management.	176	134	19	19	3.3	0.81	Agree
4.	Most people who seek leadership of unions in Higher Education Institutions do so for their personal interest, gain and recognition.	150	138	48	12	3.2	0.81	Agree
5.	Most Union leaders in Higher Education Institutions misappropriate funds contributed by members, so they lack moral justification to confront the management of their institutions on corruption cases.	166	138	32	12	3.3	0.78	Agree
	Cluster Mean					3.3	0.75	Agree

Scale Mean = 2.5

Table 1 shows that respondents agreed that management of higher education institutions always influence the appointment and or election of executive members of most staff and students' union in their institutions for their own interest; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.86. They also agreed that management of higher education institutions gets executive members of unions compromised when they want to implement policies that are not workers' or students' friendly; with a Mean of 3.4 and standard deviation of 0.50. Respondents also agreed that there is always conflict between the union executives and higher education





management if the union executive tries to be independent by defending the rights of workers or students; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.81. They further agreed that most people who seek a leadership position in unions, do so for their personal interest, gain and recognition; with a Mean of 3.2 and standard deviation of 0.81. They also agreed that most union leaders in higher education institutions often misappropriate their union funds, and as such lack moral justification to confront the management of their institutions on corruption cases; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.78. With a cluster Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.75 which is above the scale mean of 2.5, it could be concluded that stakeholders' perception is that unionism aids corruption in higher education in Nigeria. Table one shows that the respondents' opinion is that there are several ways unionism is aiding corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

**Research Question two:** In what ways does unionism aid corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria? *Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of stakeholders' opinion on how unionism aid corruption in higher education in Nigeria.* 

S/N	ITEMS	SA	Α	D	SD	М	STD	DEC.
6.	Union leaders in your university have never presented the issue of staff salary cut to management?	167	150	10	21	3.3	0.80	Agree
7	Union leaders from inception have refused to address the issue of non-payment of promotion arrears since 2016?	163	144	16	25	3.3	0.85	Agree
8.	Union leaders has refused to confront management on the non-remittance of deductions from staff salaries to the appropriate quarters?	211	106	18	13	3.5	0.76	Agree
9.	Due process is followed in the recruitment of staff in your university due to union leaders' intervention?	38	56	101	153	1.9	1.01	Disagree
10	Staff salaries and allowances are paid in full and as when due, through the intervention of union leaders?.	42	68	99	139	2.0	1.04	Disagree
	Cluster Mean					2.8	0.89	

Scale Mean = 2.5

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that union leaders in their university have never presented the issue of staff salary cut to the management; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.80. They also agreed that union leaders have refused to address the issue of non-payment/implementation of promotion arrears since 2016; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.85. They further agreed that union leaders also refuse to confront management on the issue of non-remittance of deductions from staff salaries to the appropriate quarters; with a Mean of 3.5 and standard deviation of 0.76. Respondents however disagreed



that due process is followed in the recruitment of staff in their university through union leaders' intervention; with a Mean of 1.9 and standard deviation of 1.01. They also disagreed that staff salaries and allowances are paid in full through union leaders intervention; with a Mean of 2.0 and standard deviation of 1.04. With a cluster mean of 2.8 and standard deviation of 0.89, it could be concluded that unionism aid corruption in higher education in Nigeria. From table 2, one can see several ways unionism is aiding corruption in higher education. If the rights steps are taken, it could be put under check.

Research Question 3: How can unionism in Higher Education in Nigeria be used to check corruption?

Table 3: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of stakeholders' perception on how unionism can be used to check corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	Α	D	SD	М	STD	DEC.
11	Higher Education Institution administrators ought to collaborate with union leaders to provide adequate welfare for workers.	189	115	17	27	3.3	0.89	Agree
12.	Tertiary institutions administrators need to give unions free hands to appoint or elect their leaders so they can complement each other for checks and balances on corruption.	211	93	28	16	3.4	0.83	Agree
13	There should be mutual cooperation between the management of Higher institutions and union leaders to avoid unnecessary strike actions.	144	150	29	25	3.2	0.87	Agree
14	Union leaders and their executive members should carry out advocacy visits to Higher institutions administrators to make workers' challenges known for proper attention.	154	160	21	13	3.3	0.75	Agree
15	Higher Education administrators should not favour a particular union to the detriment of others on campus to avoid unnecessary tensions.	187	125	19	17	3.4	0.80	Agree
	Cluster Mean					3.3	0.83	Agree

Scale Mean = 2.5

Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed that higher education institution administrators ought to collaborate with union leaders to provide adequate welfare for workers; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.89. They also agree that tertiary institution administrators need to give unions a free hand to appoint or elect their leaders so that they can complement each other for checks and balances on corruption; with a Mean of 3.4 and standard deviation of 0.83. Respondents agreed that there should be mutual cooperation between the management of higher institutions and union leaders to avoid unnecessary strike actions; with a Mean of 3.2 and standard deviation of 0.87. They further agreed that union leaders and their

executive members should carry out advocacy visits to higher institution administrators to make workers' challenges known for proper attention; with a Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.75. They also agreed that higher education administrators should not favour a particular union to the detriment of others on campus to avoid unnecessary tensions; with a Mean of 3.4 and standard deviation of 0.80. With a cluster Mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.83, which is above the scale mean of 2.5, it could be concluded that stakeholders' perception is that unionism can serve as watch dog to check corruption in higher education in Nigeria if the items on table 3 are implemented properly. Table 3 shows that unionism could be used to check corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

# **Testing of Hypothesis**

H<sub>o</sub> Unionism has no significant impact on Corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria.

**Table 4:** Chi-square (x²) test on stakeholders' perception on unionism and corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

SCALE	Frequency	%	X² Cal. Value	X <sup>2</sup> Crit. Value	Remarks
Strongly Agree	2679	51.3			
Agree	1921	36.8			Reject the
Disagree	341	6.5	0.1576	12.592	Null hypo-
Strongly Disagree	279	5.4			thesis
TOTAL	5220	100			

p = 0.05; df = 6

## **Decision Rule:**

If  $X^2$  cal. >  $X^2$  crit. accept Ho

If  $X^2$  cal.  $< X^2$  crit. reject Ho.

Table 4 shows that Chi Square ( $X^2$ ) calculated value is 0.1576 while the Chi Square ( $X^2$ ) critical value at a degree of freedom 6 at 0.05 level of significance stood at 12.592. Going by the decision rule, the  $X^2$  calculated is less than the  $X^2$  critical, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the alternative hypothesis is upheld, which states that unionism has a significant impact on corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal that the opinion of stakeholders' is that unionism in tertiary institutions aids corruption in higher education in Nigeria because most of the union leaders are compromised. This is in agreement with the findings of Olorode (2001) who states that the inability of most vice chancellors to effectively manage the resources available in their institutions is due to the fact that these people have





acquired almost unlimited power to manipulate university resources according to their whims and caprices; he further opined that this high rate of corruption in higher education system arises from the fact that staff unions are compromised, which leads to the absence of democratic control of university administration.

The findings further reveal that unionism aid corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria. For instance, in Federal University Wukari, promotion arrears from 2016 to 2020 is yet to be paid to academic staff. Also as the Federal government introduced the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), the management hurriedly employed many staff to cover for the ghost workers, without following the due processes, also deductions from staff salaries for union dues, National Housing Fund, Staff Cooperative contributions, are not remitted by management. The unions do not do or say anything because they are compromised, or afraid to confront management on issues of staff welfare. This finding is in consonance with Bello (1998) who posits that some heads of tertiary institutions become much sensitive to criticisms, as such do not necessarily see themselves as accountable to anyone in their respective institutions. They transform into feudal lords within an environment designed to promote tolerance, freedom, accountability, checks and balances. Union leaders should therefore serve as critical watch dogs for higher education, striving to contain the excesses of higher education administrators.

The findings also revealed that unionism can be used to check corruption in higher education in Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Arikewuyo (2008) who posits that unionism is not new within Nigerian tertiary institutions, they are important stakeholders that cannot be ignored in the management of tertiary institutions. It is also in agreement with Lawal and Tobi cited in Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) who states that if stakeholders are sensitized on social justice, and strategies for innovative curricular and pedagogical system that will eliminate corruption in higher education, thus union leaders could serve as watchdogs. The findings further reveal that unionism has significant impact on corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

## Implications for theory and practice

The findings of this study have implications for the management of higher education in Nigeria. Tertiary institution administrators and union leaders can get an insight from the findings of this study on how other stakeholders such as staff, students and the general public perceive their roles; and the need to do the right thing so as to have an efficient and effective management that is free of corruption in higher education in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

Unionism should serve as critical watchdogs to check corruption in higher education in Nigeria, on this note, higher education managers should collaborate with unions and encourage students' participation in institutional governance which will lead to organizational effectiveness and sustainability. Policy makers must ensure that there is a strong and implementable social justice measure for higher education stakeholders. This has a potential of limiting the extent to which people indulge in corruption and corrupt practices and accept a direction for making social justice a reality. Attention can be expanded towards providing curricular





and pedagogical innovations for sensitizing stakeholders in higher education to look inwards for the development of workable strategies for eradicating or addressing cases of corruption and corrupt practices in the management of tertiary education in Nigeria. In fact, the education industry in Nigeria must deliberately and systematically initiate curricular and pedagogical measures to eradicate corruption or corruption will systematically and ruthlessly destroy education.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Union members must strive to elect credible leaders, with proven character and integrity, who may not be easily enticed with financial or material gifts, but will discharge the activities of the union without fear or favour, thus earning stakeholders' confidence and reverse their perception.
- 2. Union leaders must genuinely, transparently and with all sense of accountability fight for the rights and welfare of their members through meaningful engagement with management staff, thus the stakeholders' perception would change.
- 3. Management of higher educational institutions must stay aloof from union elections, in order not to influence emerging leaders. This will make the union independent, and will not be seen by stakeholders as aiding corruption in higher education.
- 4. Government must support union leaders through staff motivation by paying their salaries and allowances when due.
- 5. Union leaders must ensure free flow of communication among members to keep them abreast of their activities and struggles. This will help to carry all members along and reverse their perception that unionism aids corruption in higher education in Nigeria.





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