

Original Article

Perception of Academic Staff on Reasons for Abscondment of Sponsored Government Scholars from Nigerian Tertiary Education

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Abstract: This paper assessed the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research. The population comprises all academic staff in tertiary institutions in FCT. The sample size of this study was made up of 150 academic staff selected from three tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Development Territory, Nigeria. A stratified sampling technique was adopted for this study. The stratified sampling technique became appropriate because of the different strata of tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Development Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The instrument used for this study was a developed questionnaire entitled Perception of Academic Staff on Reasons for Abscondment of Sponsored Government Scholars from Nigerian Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (PASRASGSNTIQ). The instrument was made up of three sections A, B and C. To ensure that the instrument measures what it purports to measure, it was subjected to content validity by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha reliability method at .87 and .86. Generated data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The paper concluded that reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions include; weak bonding agreements, better job opportunities offered abroad, poor work environment at countries' institutions, lack of research grants in country institutions, lack of research grants in country' institutions, poor salaries in country' institutions, lack of modern facilities at country' institutions, poor economic outlook at country home, insecurity problems at country home, problem of strike at country' institutions and lack of motivation at country' institutions. The result also revealed resource wastage, poor tertiary institutions development in Nigeria and discouragement of government from embarking on international sponsorship programmes are the implications of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on the above findings, the study recommended the following policy options: Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) should direct tertiary institutions to review sponsorship agreements to include the following options. Sponsor tertiary institutions shall be responsible for collecting certificates of sponsored academics after graduation. Training institutions whether local or foreign shall be informed to send the certificate of the students to the institutions where the academic came from. Academics who want to stay back after completion of their study shall refund 100% of the funds used for the training.

Keywords: Academic Staff, Scholars and Tertiary Institutions, Abscondment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Training is an ongoing process that is essential to the growth of human organizations. It is believed that training is essential to raising both an individual's and an organization's performance levels in terms of output quality and quantity. In addition to trying to increase productivity, training also tries to improve employees' effectiveness at work by making up for any shortcomings in human labor. Humans are the focus of training. Organizational employees receive organized training. (Ogunode, Kasimu, & Sambo, 2023a). Training is classified into local/domestic and foreign/international training. Local/domestic training is special training a trainee receives in his or her country. Local/domestic training is a form of training done locally to improve the skills or knowledge of personnel. Foreign training also known as international training, oversea trainings is an organized training done abroad with the purpose of human resources development.

Foreign training is an organized training programme received in another country for career development. Foreign training is a form of training that exposes the receiver to a new form of exposure, education and experience nationally and internationally. Foreign training is a form of international training received by a trainee to expose the trainee to a new level of



education. Foreign training is one of the effective and tested means for career enlargement, enrichment and performance enhancement as well as skills and knowledge upgrade of the trainee. Foreign training is the provision of different kinds of training for personnel from an external institution. The nature and purpose of foreign training differ.

The goal of overseas training is to introduce the student to new types of knowledge and skills. The majority of international training programs are specifically made to capitalize on the student's professional network and concentrate on establishing the ideal environment for learning and sharing in order to expand the student's horizons and enable them to understand novel strategies used by professionals abroad. The goal of international and foreign training programs, according to Nigerian seminarsandtrainings.com (2023), is to assist managers at all levels in familiarizing themselves with innovations, developing technology, and worldwide best practices. It is impossible to overstate the necessity for managers to have the managerial and technical skills necessary to handle worldwide assignments and competition in light of growing globalization and the quick development of new technologies that expose local enterprises to a greater degree of international rivalry. Ict.co.uk (2023) He out that one of the key benefits of receiving training abroad as opposed to domestically is that participants are essentially placed into a mash-up of diverse industries, backgrounds, and cultures, which creates the ideal setting for them to obtain fresh insight into their work. A wide range of institutions, including governments, employ this strategy. The employment of foreign training by the Chinese government as a component of its modernization efforts is one instance that has drawn notice from the world media. The Renmin University of China's Mao Shoulong, director of administrative management, called the deployment of staff overseas "necessary," noting that the advantages greatly exceed the drawbacks.

Foreign training takes different forms. There are three forms of foreign training. Individual sponsored foreign training, Private sponsored foreign training and Government sponsored foreign training. Individual Sponsored Foreign Training: This is the type of training that the individual bears the cost of training. Private Institutions Sponsored Foreign Training: This is the type of training that the private institutions bear the cost of training their staff. Government-Sponsored Foreign Training: This is the type of training that the government through its agencies bears the cost by sending its citizens for foreign training.

Research revealed that developed and developing countries annually send their personnel or citizens for international training to improve the social economic and technological development in their respective countries. Scholars generally observed that such training includes; Arts, social sciences and sciences courses such as ICT, technology, health, HIV/AIDS, peace and conflict (herder-farmer), (in) security (terrorism and insurgency), demography, climate change and environmental challenges, youth and urban planning among others. In Nigeria, there are many public institutions and agencies established by both the federal and state governments to handle the issue of international training.

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) is a body set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria ostensibly to arrest the rot and deterioration in the educational infrastructure occasioned by long periods of neglect and very poor resource allocation. The principal reason for establishing TETFund is germane to socio-economic development, hence the reason why infrastructural development has played an important role in providing support for societal development all over the world (Ayeni & Beji, 2018). The above importance of infrastructure is aptly corroborated in this manner, physical infrastructure is crucial in every society because of its capacity to empower people (Ayeni, 2017). The Education Tax Act No. 7 of 1993 (as amended in 1998) created the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, formerly known as Education Trust Fund, ETF, as an Intervention Agency. This law gave the ETF the authority to interfere in public institutions at all educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The ETF Act No. 16 rebranded the Education Trust Fund, ETF in 2011 as TETFund, and refocused it to solely intervene in public tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education) in order to maximize its impact. A two percent (2%) education tax is levied on the profits of all registered businesses operating in Nigeria under the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act, 2011 (Ogunode, Kasimu, & Dahiru, 2023b).

The management, distribution, and oversight of Nigeria's public tertiary institutions' education tax is within the purview of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund. The act's Tertiary Education Trust Fund is responsible for managing the levy and allocating funds to both federal and state tertiary educational institutions. The primary goals of the TETFund are to supply the desperately required funding for postsecondary education as well as grants and scholarships for faculty members to improve the caliber and productivity of higher education. The following areas serve as the foundation for TETFund interventions: regular intervention, library intervention, research grants, academic staff development & training, journal publication, manuscript development, and conference attendance. Ogunode, et al (2023b) observed that Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) objectives include delivering appropriate and adequate intervention programmes with due regard to the sensitivities of

beneficiaries and stakeholders. To promote cutting-edge technologies, ideas and organizational skills in education, and ensure that projects are forward-looking as well as responding to present needs.

Research has it that since inception, the funds have provided training opportunities for both academic and non-academic Nigerian tertiary institutions to study both at home and abroad. Ogunode et al (2023a) and Ogunode, et al (2023b) asserted one of the cardinal programmes of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) is to provide scholarships to tertiary institutions scholars for Masters and PhD for local and abroad. The report showed that Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has successfully sponsored over 37,000 scholars for both foreign and local PhDs, Masters, Bench Work, and Postdoctoral programs in various institutions within and outside Nigeria.” Also, another report disclosed About 35,000 scholars have benefited from the scholarship since the introduction of the TETFund Scholarship for Academic Staff Intervention programme in 2008, Punch reported on 17 July 2022. According to the latest (2021) TETFund annual report that was released in March 2023, 664 Masters Students and 1,183 PhD students benefited. The report does not provide a breakdown of local and foreign placements. The 2020 report indicated that the TETFund sponsored 539 scholars abroad and 2,027 locally.

Recently, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) as an institution of the federal government in Nigeria is faced with many problems that have militated against its scholarship programme. Educeleb (2019); Amazing Time (2021); Blueprint (2022) and Ogunode, Kasimu & Sambo (2023); Ogunode, Ukuzor, & Agbo (2024) reported that Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has observed the growing cases of abscondment among academic staff of various Nigerian universities sponsored for training abroad. TETFund’s Director, of Academic Staff Training and Development (AST&D), Muhammed Sulaiman, submitted some of the lecturers sponsored to foreign countries by TETFund for further studies, who never returned to the country to serve their bond as they abscond. According to him, the foreign training programme was being abused and is slowly becoming a major problem affecting the education system. The refusal of lecturers sponsored by foreign countries to return to Nigeria is an act of corruption that has been the root of incalculable damages which have stagnated national development despite the fight against it (Ayeni & Nwaorgu, 2018).

It is based on the above submission that the study aimed to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions.

A. Statement of the Problem

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), an agency of government responsible for sponsoring academic staff for local and foreign training has been facing the problem of abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. For instance, In 2016, the Governing Council of the Lagos State University (LASU) fired a senior lecturer, Dr. Rufai Raji Odotayo, from the services of the State University for allegedly absconding from duty. A statement from the LASU Centre for Information, Press and Public Relations (CIPPR), noted that the decision was taken by the institution’s governing council’s meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2016, after perusing the report of the disciplinary committee. It said “The council considered the report of the Joint Council/Senate Disciplinary Committee on the allegation of abscondment from duty post and failure to serve the period of bond in the university levelled against Dr. Odotayo.

In 2021, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFUND lamented the growing cases of abscondment of academic staff of various tertiary institutions across Nigeria, according to the director of academic staff training and development. Also, in 2023, the Executive Secretary, of Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFUND, Sonny Echono revealed that over 137 students sponsored on scholarship abroad absconded. He said: “Some of the scholars that have been sponsored, unpatriotically when they go, they enjoy our scholarship, acquire a higher degree, then refuse to come back, it has become a major crisis. The above development where young and energetic scholars refused to come back to Nigeria to serve their fathers’ land is a negation to “the third line of the ‘Nigerian National Pledge’ that end thus: *To serve Nigeria with all my strength* (Muhammed and Ayeni, 2018). It is germane for young people to serve their fathers’ land with all their strength and energy for national progress. The scholars who were sponsored by TETFUND for “higher education” abroad refuse to return to the country after completing their programmes. It is therefore important to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. The specific objectives of this study are to;

- 1) Find out the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- 2) Find out the perception of academic staff on the implication of abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions.

C. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1) What are the reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- 2) What is the implication of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions?

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research. A descriptive survey design is a method for collecting information or data as reported by individual research participants. The population of this study is all academic staff in tertiary institutions in FCT. The sample size of this study was made up of 150 academic staff in the three tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Development Territory, Nigeria. A stratified sampling technique was adopted for this study. The stratified sampling technique became appropriate because of the different strata of tertiary institutions in the Federal Capital Development Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The first stage was to stratify tertiary institutions based on institutional type, and College of Education Zube and the FCT, Nursing School, Abuja, Nigeria. The sample of this study was made up of 50 academic staff from each of the three tertiary institutions in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The instrument used for this study was a developed questionnaire entitled Perception of Academic Staff on Reasons for Abscondment of Sponsored Government Scholars from Nigerian Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (PASRASGSNTIQ). The instrument was made up of three sections A, B and C. To ensure that the instrument measures what it purports to measure, it was subjected to content validity by three experts two in Measurement and Evaluation and one in Educational Administration and Planning University of Abuja. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha reliability method at .87 and .86. The instrument was administered to 150 academic staff and the generated data was analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

A. Data Analysis

Table 1: What are the reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions?

	Reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigeria include	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Weak bonding agreement	3.38	1.98	Agreed
2	better job opportunities offer abroad	3.10	1.65	Agreed
3	The poor work environment at countries' institutions	3.15	1.72	Agreed
4	Lack of research grants at the country's institutions	3.25	1.78	Agreed
5	Poor Salaries at country institutions	3.35	1.91	Agreed
6	Lack of modern facilities at the country's institutions	3.33	1.82	Agreed
7	Poor Economic outlook at the country home	3.08	1.55	Agreed
8	Insecurity problem at country home	3.02	1.39	Agreed
9	The problem of Strike at country' institutions	3.09	1.42	Agreed
10	Lack of motivation at the country's institutions	2.98	1.30	Agreed
	Total Mean	3.35		Agreed

Results collected from Table three revealed that items 1 to 10 had means scores of 3.9, 3.3 and 3.7 with a total cumulative of 4.10 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.5. This means that respondents agreed that reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions include; weak bonding agreements, better offer of placement opportunities, poor work environment at countries' institutions, lack of research grants at country' institutions, lack of research grant at country' institutions, poor salaries at country' institutions, lack of modern facilities at country' institutions, poor Economic outlook at country home, insecurity problem at country home, problem of strike at country' institutions and lack of motivation at country' institutions.

Table 2: What is the implication of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions?

	ITEM	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Resource wastage	3.37	1.99	Agreed
2	Poor Tertiary Institutions Development in Nigeria	3.27	1.83	Agreed
3	Discourage the government from embarking internationally on the sponsorship programme	3.19	1.65	Agreed
4	Total	3.56		Agreed

Results from Table 2 disclosed that items 1 to 3 had mean scores of 3.37, 3.27 and 3.19 and a cumulative mean of 4.02 which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.5. This implies that respondents agreed that resource wastage, poor tertiary institutions development in Nigeria and discouragement of government from embarking on international sponsorship programmes are the implications of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. This result was rated high extent.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result obtained showed that reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions include; weak bonding agreements, better offer of placement opportunities, poor work environment at countries' institutions, lack of research grants at country institutions, lack of research grants at country' institutions, poor salaries at country' institutions, lack of modern facilities at country' institutions, poor economic outlook at country home, insecurity problem at country home, problem of strike at country' institutions and lack of motivation at country' institutions. This result is in agreement with Ogunode, et al (2023b), who identified the following reasons: weak sponsorship agreement, poor salaries, inadequate modern infrastructural facilities, poor working environment, insecurity, poor access to research grants and poor economic outlook as reasons why sponsored academic staff of Nigerian tertiary institutions absconded after the completion of their studies abroad. The above constitutes what is referred to as an enabling environment. The provision of an enabling environment for people to achieve their full potential is germane since this is what makes a nation grow and become a force to reckon with in the comity of nations (Ayeni & Sani, 2021).

The result also revealed resource wastage, poor tertiary institutions development in Nigeria and discouragement of government from embarking internationally on sponsorship programmes are the implications of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. This result is in line with the submission of Musa (2022); Ogunode, Edinoh & Okpunukpang (2024) and Ogunode, Cletus & Christiana (2024) that concluded that training suspension is implications of abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this paper is to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. The specific objectives are to find out the perception of academic staff on reasons for abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions and to find out the perception of academic staff on the implication of abscondment on sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study concluded that reasons for the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions include; weak bonding agreements, better job opportunities offered abroad, poor work environment at countries' institutions, lack of research grants at country institutions, lack of research grants at country' institutions, poor salaries at country' institutions, lack of modern facilities at country' institutions, poor economic outlook at country home, insecurity problem at country home, problem of strike at country' institutions and lack of motivation at country' institutions. The result also revealed resource wastage, poor tertiary institutions development in Nigeria and discouragement of government from embarking internationally on sponsorship programmes are the implications of the abscondment of sponsored government scholars from Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on these findings, the study recommended the following policy options:

- a) **Review of Sponsorship Agreement:** The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) should direct tertiary institutions to review sponsorship agreements to include the following options. Sponsor tertiary institutions shall be responsible to seek for admissions for their staff and collecting certificates of sponsored academics after graduation. Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) through the university shall be responsible for the payment of school fees. Training institutions whether local or foreign shall be informed to send the certificate of the students to the institutions where

the academic came from. Academics who want to stay back after completion of study shall refund 100% of the funds used for the training.

- b) The government should increase funding for tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Provide modern infrastructure facilities. Improve the welfare of academic staff and provide adequate research grants. This will motivate academic staff to stay and prevent brain drain in the tertiary institutions system.

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