

# Impact of Economic Hardship on Research Programme Implementation in Tertiary institutions in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper examined the impact of economic hardship on research programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The paper is a review paper that depends on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications. The paper concluded that the research programme implemented has been disrupted by the economic hardship in Nigeria. The study also found out that the cost of conducting research has gone high, physical conference attendance, the rate of local and international paper publication dropped and many research projects have been suspended in the institutions across the country. Based on these points identified, the paper put forward the following recommendations: There should be an increment in the funding of research programmes by the government and private institutions. The government should subsidize the research resources for researchers in the tertiary institutions. The government should provide special palliative for researchers, lecturers and students carrying out research projects in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Economic Hardship, Research programme, Tertiary education

## *Introduction*

Economic hardship in this paper is an economic situation whereby there are difficulties faced by individuals, institutions and organizations due to income loss, unemployment, job instability, and economic insecurity. Economic hardship can also be seen as an economic condition that is characterized by inflation, high unemployment, high debt rate, low income and reduced standard of living of the people. Economic hardship is a condition of economic meltdown where citizens of a country cannot afford their basic needs due to inflation and a high rate of unemployment that is caused by bad leadership, corruption and unstable economic policies (Ogunode, Afolabi, & Adi 2024).

Economic hardship according to Ogunode, Olofinkua, and Sunmonu, (2024) is an economic activity that is constantly decreasing and the decline affects wide economic activities which leads to inflation, unemployment and a high standard of living among the citizens. Economic hardship also implies an economic situation whereby citizens of a country cannot afford to meet up with their economic needs as a result of inflation unemployment, high debt burden, low direct investment and high poverty.

Economic hardship can be seen as the economic challenge people, firms and institutions face because of high inflation, income instability, unemployment and economic insecurity. Economic hardship also known as financial burden, financial distress, financial hardship, financial stress, and financial toxicity is an economic era whereby high inflation, high unemployment rate and high exchange against international currencies affect the economy and the people and institutions negatively. Examples of economic hardship include; instability in economic policies. Inflation, high national debt, high exchange rates against dollars, unstable financial loss incurred by the families and loss of jobs (Ogunode, Solomon, & Idonigie, 2024). Economic hardship sometimes works to negate human security that is expected to ensure that people do not lose their lives as a result of the inability of the government to provide those things that are their responsibilities to the people (Ayeni, Andeshi, & Uzoigwe, 2022).

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Economic hardship is defined as "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting for some time, normally visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production (National Bureau of Economic Research: NBER, 2012). Economic hardship is defined as the inability or struggle to meet reasonable basic living expenses such as food and shelter (Cunningham, 2019). Economic hardship means an onerous and excessive financial burden that destroys reasonable and beneficial use of property and that would amount to the taking of property without just compensation, or failure to achieve a reasonable economic return in the case of income-producing properties (Lawinsider, 2022). The foregoing explanations of economic hardship war against the financial security of citizens, which is expected to enhance the capacity and the ability of people to provide for their survival needs (Ayeni, 2024).

Following the above, it becomes imperative to investigate the impact of economic hardship on research programme implementation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The paper is a review paper that depends on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications.

### ***Research Programme***

Research is often based on two types of definitions: conceptual definition and operational definition according to the National Open University (2020) and they include the following;

- i. Conceptual definitions are definitions that describe concepts by using other concepts. As an example, a conceptual definition for "political violence" might be "aggressive behaviour toward political institutions and persons occupying political roles." One conceptual definition of "intelligence" might be "the ability to think abstractly." Another might be "the ability to solve problems."
- ii. Operational definitions attempt to bridge the gap between the theoretical-conceptual level and the empirical observational level. An operational definition involves a series of instructions describing the operations that must be carried out by a researcher to demonstrate the existence, or the degree of existence, of an empirical occurrence represented by a concept.

Research can simply be defined as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Research is an important tool for advancing knowledge promoting progress, and enabling scholars to relate more effectively to the environment, to accomplish their objectives, and to resolve conflicts (National Open University 2020). Research involves the identification of problems, gathering new data, and finding solutions to a problem through carefully designed procedures and logical analysis (Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu & Ajape 2020). Research according to Echono, (n.d) is an intensive and extensive search for solutions to problems in a society. Others have defined research as the search for knowledge, truth, similarities, and relationships and finding solutions to problems through the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.

Ogunode and Abubakar (2020) submitted that research is the second cardinal programme of higher institutions. Research is very important to the development of the society. Research is conducted mostly in the higher institutions environment to solve problems affecting society. The academic staff is saddled with the responsibility of carrying out research in the universities. Conducting research is one criterion for measuring their performance. Paul (2015) submitted that the conduct of research is one of the basic functions of tertiary institutions, which comprise Universities, Polytechnics, Monothechnics and Colleges of Education. The academic staff of these institutions are compulsorily required to carry out research activities as their promotions are primarily based on their research outputs. Apart from the academic staff being promoted through research publications, research activities enhance their credibility, and status, and also add value both to their immediate community and the larger global community. Research is known to be an engine room of development, but the absence of economic development in Nigeria has produced strong leaders that conflict against access to education (Ayeni, & Abdullahi, 2024). The conflict against access to education hurts research in countries where many people experience hardship owing to the absence of economic development as noted by the above



scholars. The prevalence of hardship further affects the chance of research as security which is **supposed to be the state of not being financially, emotionally, psychologically and materially threatened (Ayeni & Beji, 2018).**

### ***Impact of Economic Hardship on the Research Programme***

Economic hardship has affected the tertiary institutions in Nigeria in Nigeria ( ). The hardship mostly affected the academic staff that uses economic resources to execute their academic functions. ....lamented that the inflation, economic hardship and naira-to-dollar exchange rate have negative implications on the lecturers' job performance. Wajim (2024) noted that academics are often left struggling with how to pay rent, feed their households, or send their children to school, forcing many to take on additional jobs or side hustles just to survive. These economic struggles have long-term implications, as the energy and time that should be devoted to teaching, research, and intellectual development are consumed by the fight for daily survival. He further maintained that beyond inadequate salaries in the era of economic hardship, academics must shoulder the exorbitant costs of publishing research papers—an essential requirement for career progression. These publishing fees often demanded in hard currency, are increasingly out of reach due to the worsening naira-to-dollar exchange rate. As a result of economic hardship, many academics face stagnation in their careers, their inability to publish robbing them of opportunities for professional advancement. He also pointed out that economic hardship and inflation have created a significant challenge in attending conferences, which are critical for networking, professional growth, and staying updated on advancements in their fields. Most Nigerian academics cannot afford the cost of flights for self-sponsored conferences within Nigeria, let alone abroad, despite the importance of these events to their careers. The financial burden is exacerbated by the country's widespread insecurity, making travel both expensive and dangerous". Economic hardship is the opposite of financial security the government is supposed to create a conducive environment for people to have the ability to provide for their needs (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024).

Ogunode, Olofinkua, and Sunmonu, (2024) concluded that inflation has affected the effective implementation of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper identified increment in research resources, reduction in the volume of academic paper publications and likely drop in international ranking as the major impacts of inflation on the research programmes of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Following the above, it has been validated that inflation has direct and indirect consequences on the performance of students in secondary school (Ukozor, Ayeni, & Andeshi, 2024). Not only that, during hardship, good welfare packages and the provision of social amenities that ought to make life easy are sacrificed for stomach infrastructure that cannot bring about sustainable development (Ayeni, Tusayi, Joseph & Obatayo, 2018). Hardship tends to make life more difficult for people now and in the future, as some infrastructures that ought to be provided during hardship might be sacrificed for the sharing of food to keep body and soul together for a short time. This development affects sustainable development which means the process of meeting the needs of the present generation without undermining the future generation (Ulu, & Ayeni, 2019, p. 414). Following the above, it has been noted that leaders can either enhance national development or retards it (Asaju & Ayeni, 2020).

Inflation may also affect the volume of research publications in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Many academic staff, non-academic staff and post-graduate students may have reduced their level of publication because of the impact of inflation on their salaries. Project Clue (2023) noted that due to the removal of subsidies, which led to inflation in Nigeria, some academics may lose interest in research because they do not have enough funds to take care of their daily needs, let alone enough funds to buy fuel to write research in this period of spiral inflation (Ogunode, & Ukozor, 2023). This is even though a democratic society is capable of bringing about political development where there is happiness for the greatest number of citizens (Ayeni & Sani, 2021). Following the foregoing, it is clear that democracy has not been able to stop hardship or enhance the low purchasing power of money.

In other words, the purchasing power of a given amount of money will be smaller over time when there is inflation in the economy (Giami, 2023). The implication is that many researchers in Nigerian



tertiary institutions will publish less during inflation because of the impact of inflation on their salaries. Also, the cost of carrying out research has increased due to inflation. The cost of printing questionnaires, typing and binding has increased (Ogunode, et al 2024).

Laboratory fees were jacked up in most of the tertiary institutions because of an increment in the prices of research resources as a result of inflation with the floating of the naira leading to major losses in its value compared to international currencies such as the dollar or pound. The majority of research resources used for conducting research are imported and moved from state to state for distribution. Inflation has led to an increase in the prices of research resources. The price of research resources has increased due to the elevated costs of transporting necessary supplies. Also, Project Clue (2023) asserted that subsidy removal has led to inflation and a reduction in the attendance of seminars, paper presentations, and conferences because of the high cost of transportation and other extra costs of making such regular academic exercise possible. The prevalence of hardship that has affected every sphere including research has been attributed to a situation when a structure is not performing its function optimally (Joseph, Cinjel & Ayeni, 2017). To explain the above further, scholars have noted that there is a failure of leadership in Nigeria (Ayeni, 2018). To say that economic hardship that has badly affected research programme implementation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has its roots in leadership failure is not out of place.

### **Findings**

The study revealed that the research programme implemented has been disrupted by the economic hardship in Nigeria. The study also found out that the cost of conducting research has gone high, physical conference attendance, the rate of local and international paper publication dropped and many research projects have been suspended in the institutions across the country.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper assessed the impact of economic hardship on research programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The paper concluded that the research programme implemented has been disrupted by the economic hardship in Nigeria. The study also found out that the cost of conducting research has gone high, physical conference attendance, the rate of local and international paper publication dropped and many research projects have been suspended in the institutions across the country.

Based on these points identified, the paper put forward the following measures; increment in the funding of research programmes by the government and private institutions. The government should subsidize the research resources for researchers in tertiary institutions. The government should provide special palliative for researchers, lecturers and students carrying out research projects in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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