

Impact of Inflation on Tertiary Institutions' Research Programme in Nigeria

Niyi Jacob Ogunode

Department of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Vincent Kayode Olofinkua

Department of Educational Management, St Augustine College of Education, Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria

Sunmonu, Iyabo Sakirat

Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract: This paper assessed the impact of inflation on the research programme of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Relevant print and online journals, documents, government documents, international reports and conference papers were consulted and are sources of secondary data used in the paper. Content analysis was employed to align the literature to the theme line. The paper concluded that inflation has affected the effective implementation of research programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper identified an increment in research resources, a reduction in the volume of academic paper publications and likely a drop in international ranking as an impact of inflation on research programmes of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on the above findings, the paper recommends the following; increment in the research funding of tertiary institutions by the government and other stakeholders. The government should subsidize research resources to enable research institutions to afford them for research development. The government should increase research funding for academic staff and researchers to enable them to continue with research-finding publications. The government should diversify the economy by increasing local production and empowering private investors with soft loans to increase production locally.

Key words: Inflation, Tertiary education, Research.



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Introduction

Tertiary education fosters individual development and growth as well as impacts positively on society at large (Schrader-King, 2024). The tertiary institution can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of a collection of different people, different cultures, different lifestyles and different values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023). Tertiary education is a planned and

organized educational system designed for the total development of men/women and for the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie 2023). Tertiary education is an instrument for national development. It is a tool for national transformation and manpower production and development.

Tertiary Education is the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Mon technics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI) (FRN, 2013). Tertiary education according to Babatola and Babatola (2021) has therefore become the critical focus for public policy in the globe as the government is putting more energy and resources into the tertiary education sector to address the socio-economic needs and growing concerns in the global economy for a better-trained, skilled and adaptable workforce. Indeed, it is an instrument which the society and nations can use to foster growth, reduce poverty and boost shared prosperity.

Tertiary education programme includes; teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary institutions are to ensure full implementation of these programmes to realize the objectives and goals of tertiary institutions (Ogunode, Ngezack & Usi (2024); Ogunode, Ngezack & Usi (2024); Ogunode, Cletus, & Christiana, 2024). The implementation of these programmes by various tertiary institutions in Nigeria seems to be facing the problem of inflation.

Udi (2024) reported that Nigeria's inflation rate increased to 33.2% in March 2024 according to the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). This represents a 1.5% point increase from the 31.7% recorded in February 2024. The increase in the inflation rate in March 2024 was slower compared to the 1.80% increase recorded in February 2024. On a year-on-year basis, the headline inflation rate increased by 11.16% from 22.04% in March 2023. Additionally, the headline inflation rate for March 2024 was 3.02%, a decrease of 0.10% from February 2024, when it was 3.12%. In March 2024, the food inflation rate reached 40.01% year-on-year, marking an increase of 15.56 percentage points from 24.45% in March 2023. This surge in food inflation can be attributed to rising prices for items such as garri, millet, and akpu among others uncooked fermented (all part of the Bread and Cereals category), as well as yam tuber, water yam, and others. Inflation does not only affect food prices, it also affects the operational cost of both private and public institutions which include education, especially tertiary institutions. The implementation of their programme which includes teaching, community service and research seems to be threatened by the high rate of inflation in Nigeria.

Following the above, it is important to examine the impact of inflation on tertiary institutions' research programmes in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

This study employed the documentary research method, hence relevant print and online journals, documents, government documents, international reports and conference papers were consulted and are sources of secondary data used in the paper. Content analysis was employed to align the literature to the theme line.

Theoretical Framework

This **paper is anchored on role theory that was developed by** Ralf Dahrendorf, Robert K Merton and Gorge Herbert Mead in 1956. The theory's principle hinged on social roles in society. A social role refers to the behaviours and responsibilities expected of individuals in society. Role theory is the theory that an individual's behaviour is the performance of roles that are organized into categories defined by society. Individuals aim to meet these roles, which encompass certain expectations, responsibilities, and behaviours (S.M 2022).

The role theory applies to this paper because the federal and state government has a great role to play in the stabilization of prices that have a direct impact on the production of goods and services across the country. The government has a cardinal function to ensure economic climate favours the production of goods and services in the Country. All tertiary institutions in Nigeria are operating as a service provider and they need a favourable environment to realize their objectives. It is the role and responsibility of the government to design economic policies and measures to ensure tertiary institutions operating in the country operate at an optimal level.

Conceptual Terms

Research Programme

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. Research can also be referred to as the search for knowledge, truth, similarities, and relationships and finding solutions to problems through the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.

Research is seen as a means to stimulate economic development and spur innovations and advancement. It is a major tool for human advancement. Most of the new products and services that people are enjoying at present are the research outcomes of leading universities. Through research, many countries have developed and advanced in technology (Onwuchekwa, 2016). Research is the systematic study of materials and sources to establish facts and reach new conclusions (National Open University, 2012). Research is viewed by Ibidapoobe, (2010) as the process of creating new knowledge or new insights on knowledge, or unlocking knowledge. Research ranges from physical things, an event, a process, a social institution of a social condition, biological conditions, et cetera. Irrespective of the subject, the research seeks to understand what is being researched through observation, experimentation and analysis to arrive at a better understanding or a definite conclusion on the subject matter (Adebola, 2009). Research according to Fawoel, Egbokhare, Itiola, Odejide and Olayinka (2006) is a systematic investigation including development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. They further asserted that research is a curiosity-driven activity that has the purpose of discovery and advancement of knowledge.

The research programme is one of the major programmes of the universities. It is a key to the university's development. The research programme of the universities is one of the key indicators used to measure the performance of the universities. The three cardinal programmes of the universities are teaching programme, research programme and community services. The research programme is the second cardinal programme of the universities. It is among the criteria used for measuring the performance of the universities. The research programme of the universities aims to aid the social, economic and technological advancement of the country.

Worthwhile research findings transform society positively and also improve the overall quality of life. Without research, old knowledge will only be recycled and at a point will become anachronistic. Research work must show the novelty of ideas and not repetitive but repetitive to have an impact on the life of the society. The variety of results that come from the research will expose facts, provide evidence, discover the unknown and ultimately, expand the frontier of knowledge in the different areas of studies (Ohaeri, Olayinka & Ogunode, 2023; Paul, 2015; Emunemu, 2009).

There are different forms of research conducted in tertiary institutions. Research in tertiary institutions according to Yusuf (2012) includes;

- i) **Individual research:** This is initiated and conducted by an individual researcher or a team of researchers who may seek funding from the University Board of Research or alternative funding agencies, including international organisations, NGOs and the private sector.
- ii) **Institutional research:** This is initiated and supervised by the institution or a unit of the institution (faculty, department et cetera) and usually involves a team of researchers. Funding is internal, except where assistance is obtained from external sources.
- iii) **Commissioned or contractual research:** This is carried out at the instance of an external body, which may be the government or a government organ, the private sector, NGOs et cetera, which also funds the research. The sponsor has the right of ownership of the research results.
- iv) **Collaborative research:** This is a joint research effort with common objectives or goals and involves the sharing of ideas, methodologies, facilities et cetera between individual researchers or research teams, from the same or different institutions, organisations, countries or regions of the world.
- v) **Student research:** This is an undergraduate or postgraduate research project undertaken by a student, supervised by the student's department, and the results of which are reported in the student's thesis or dissertation. Student research is usually funded by the student himself (or his sponsor) and his department.

Research programme implementation in the tertiary may likely be affected by factors such as insecurities, poor funding, shortage of facilities, unstable power supply and internet services, corruption, political instabilities, and economic crises like recession and inflation.

Inflation

Inflation is an economic period when there is much money in circulation that can only buy a few goods and services. Inflation occurs when the purchasing power of money is lost or low to buy what it used to or normally buy before. It is when a large sum of money is chasing only a few goods and services during a given time (Ogunode, Olowonefe & Olumodeji 2024). Inflation which is defined as the sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy though can be beneficial to some areas of the economy, like stimulating economic growth, it can also cause some serious problems, especially when it comes to the cost of feeding, acquiring teaching and learning materials, tuition fees, salaries of teachers and transportation costs of both students and teachers (Ahmed, & Tochukwu, 2024). Inflation is the value of money decreases over time, causing the prices of things to go up the roof. The same amount of money can buy fewer goods and services than usual (Pans pressui, 2024).

Inflation is one of the most frequently used terms in economic discussions, yet the concept is variously misconstrued. There are various schools of thought on inflation, but there is a consensus among economists that inflation is a continuous rise in prices. Simply put, inflation depicts an economic situation where there is a general rise in the prices of goods and services, continuously. It could be defined as a continuing rise in prices as measured by an index such as the consumer price index (CPI) or by the implicit price deflator for Gross National Product (GNP)'. Inflation is frequently described as a state where "too much money is chasing too few goods". When there is inflation, the currency loses purchasing power. The purchasing power of a given amount of naira will be smaller over time when there is inflation in the economy. For instance, assuming that N10.00 can purchase 10 shirts in the current period if the price of shirts doubles in the next period, the same N10.00 can only afford 5 shirts (Obiakor, 2021).

Nigeria's inflation figure has reached a new high, hitting 34.19 % for June 2024, according to the latest data from the National Bureau of State Statistics (NBS) as reported by Channelstv (2024). This is an increase of 0.24% points when compared to the inflation figure for May 2024 released by the NBS. In June 2024, the headline inflation rate increased to 34.19% relative to the May 2024 headline inflation rate which was 33.95%. Looking at the movement, the June 2024 headline inflation rate showed an increase of 0.24% points when compared to the May 2024 headline inflation rate, the NBS said in its Consumer Price Index (CPI) – which measures the average change over time in the prices of goods and services consumed by people for day-to-day living – released on Monday. On a year-on-year basis, the headline inflation rate was 11.40% points higher compared to the rate recorded in June 2023, which was 22.79%. According to the NBS, the headline inflation rate, year-on-year basis, jumped in June 2024 when compared to the same month in the last year. It said on a month-on-month basis, the headline inflation rate in June 2024 was 2.31%, 0.17% higher than the rate recorded in May 2024 (2.14%). This means that in June 2024, the rate of increase in the average price level is higher than the rate of increase in the average price level in May 2024 (Channelstv, 2024).

Review of Literatures

Impact of Inflation on Research Programme of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Research can be hampered by different factors of which inflation can be one of those factors. Echono, (2023) observed that research is like every other activity of the tertiary institutions that is not immune against economic crises like inflation and recession. Ogunode, Eze, and Olumodeji, (2024) noted that since the research programme is part of the society it can be affected by factors like funding, infrastructure shortage, corruption, political instability, insecurity and inflation. The submission that corruption is one of the things that affect research programmes has been aptly said by scholars who argued that another dimension of corruption is when the ruling elites use laws and politics to rule Nigeria for their interest, by providing stomach infrastructure, instead of things that can provide long term satisfaction (Godwin, Ayeni, Peter, 2021; Ayeni, Doosuur, & Kefas, 2021). Corruption and the pursuit of personal interest can trigger inflation, a development that affects every aspect of the tertiary institutions' programmes, including research programmes.

Research programmes carried out by scholars saddled with the responsibilities of carrying out research in Nigeria seem to have been affected by inflation. Research in tertiary institutions has been carried out by students, academic staff and researchers (Ogunode, & Ade, 2023). Inflation is when there is much money chasing fewer goods and services as a result of the absence of economic development that war against technological advancement, and access to education among others (Ayeni, & Abdullahi, 2014). This phenomenon called inflation has negatively affected the financial security of individuals. Thus, it has been aptly said that the “financial security of a people in a country is coterminous with the level of economic development of that country” (Ayeni, 2024, p. 1227). The absence of economic development often encourages inflation because of the inadequacy of goods and services in society.

Inflation has disrupted the effective implementation of research programmes and affects the budget allocation of various tertiary institutions across the country. Inflation has caused a scarcity of funds in the various tertiary institutions because more funds are needed to procure fewer resources for administrative operations and research programme implementation. Inflation hurts the security and the financial security of people as it hurts people's “**financial, emotional, psychological and material well-being**” (Ayeni, & Beji, 2018, p. 17). The rate and level by which researches are carried out in the various laboratories across the various tertiary institutions has reduced because of the high cost of research resources and aids like; Microscopes, Test Tube, Beakers, Cylindrical Utensil, Magnifying Glass, Volumetric Flasks, Bunsen Burner, Dropper, Pasteur Pipette, Basic Thermometer, Tongs, Brushes, Weighing Machines, Wash Bottles, Spatulas, Spring Balance, Newton Meter, Burette, **Watch Glass**, Funnel and **Litmus And Filter**

Papers. Also, Chemical Reagents used in the laboratories by students and teachers such as caustic Potash · Caustic Soda · Chlorine Dioxide · Citric Acid · Iodophors · Lysozyme · Ozone · Peroxyacetic acid, *Flammable liquids*: Methanol, Ethanol, Acetone, Xylene, Toluene, Ethyl acetate, Tetrahydrofuran, Ethyl ether, Benzene, Dimethylformamide have increase in prices leading to shortage in supply to laboratories of many tertiary institutions. This directly has affected the practical research work in the various institutions. Ogunode and Chukwuemeka (2023) concluded that the removal of subsidies which has led to inflation has affected the operational cost of carrying out research or conducting research in various tertiary institutions across the country. For tertiary institutions in Nigeria to meet the cost of operation, especially the overhead, the various institutions increased drastically the school fees payable by each student in addition to sundry charges.

Inflation has negatively affected human security, which requires that “people do not suffer loss as a result of the inability of the government to provide those things that are their responsibilities to the people” (Ayeni, Andeshi & Uzoigwe, 2022, p. 264). Specifically, 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. Furthermore, some academic researchers who do not get support from cooperating organizations may even stop researching since they do not have enough funds to fuel cars in their quest to gather relevant information and data from various sources. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) OECD (2016); Nwankwo, (2018); Obiakor, (2021) Ogunode, and Ukozor, (2023) and Ogunode, Cletus, Tswenji (2024) concluded that inflation has affected school programmes which include researches.

Inflation has affected the standard of living of researchers by reducing the values of their incomes. Hages (2016) established this fact when he noted that inflation is the increase in the general level of goods and services over a given period across boards resulting in a fall in the purchasing capacity of the fixed wages and income earners. The increase in the prices of commodities reduces consumer’s marginal propensity to save, which adversely affects the people’s standard of living. This development does not bring happiness to the greatest number of persons. This is because people believe in the capacity of democracy to bring happiness to the greatest number of persons in society (Ayeni, & Sani, 2021). The uncertainty in prices of goods and services had in individuals the desire to earn more income by getting engaged in more income-generating jobs sometimes at the expense of their health in a bid to maintain a minimum standard of living (Farid, Khan, Warriach, & Warriach, 2012). Gagarawa and Mehrotra (2017), observed that for households to maintain their standard of living or meet their expenditures, which always increase during inflation, many households resort to extra income-generating activities, which is a sign of a dip in leisure time, productivity, better social as well as their physical health. This explains the effect of inflation on the level of the living standard of citizens as it reduces the real income of households, thereby compelling them to cut down on their budget and avoid unnecessary expenditure while focusing more on how to increase their income to make ends meet in the challenging period. Inflation in Nigeria has affected the living standard of teachers, researchers and students (Ogunode, & Ukozor, 2023; Ahmed, & Tochukwu, 2024). Inflation creates absolute poverty, a development that does not enhance peacebuilding (Ayeni, Uzoigwe, Sani, & Dubu, 2019). Thus, inflation is a negative communication that does not enhance peacebuilding in organisations and society (Ayeni, Sani, & Uzoigwe, 2019).

Inflation in Nigeria has grossly reduced the value of fixed-income earners, of which, the lecturers and researchers in tertiary institutions are the worst hit. Inflation is anti-workers economic growth and prosperity because it allows for arbitrary increases in prices of goods and services to the detriment of workers' fixed income even when it is glaring that their purchasing power is being reduced persistently and that eventually erodes their propensity to save. It has been noted that inflation has direct and indirect consequences on the performance of students in secondary school (Ukozor, Ayeni, & Andeshi, 2024). 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.

Inflation can lead to a decrease in the availability of scholarships and other financial aid, which can further reduce research publication. Inflation can affect the salaries of lecturers and researchers in tertiary institutions implying they will have less to spend on research programmes, the cost of carrying out research and other research expenses, and can influence the quality of research output and it affects education generally (Nwankwo, 2018). The presence of inflation is aptly captured by scholars who argued that when a system is not carrying out its task optimally; depravities often appear (Joseph, Cinjel & Ayeni, 2017). The political system or structure and every other structure in society is manned by leaders who can ensure the success or failure of human society (Muhammed, & Ayeni, 2018). These leaders can at times employ bureaucratic bottle-neck to retard the development or do otherwise to ensure national development (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.

The reduction in the volume of research findings of academic staff, non-academic staff and post-graduate may likely affect the ranking of tertiary institutions because research programme output, quality and visibility are used as indicators to measuring the research performance of tertiary institutions by the ranking institutions across the world. Research Income per Staff, this metric is generated by dividing the total subject-weighted research income adjusted for PPP, by the total subject-weighted number of academic staff and is normalised after calculation. Research Productivity, this metric is generated by dividing the total subject-weighted number of papers published in the academic journals indexed by Elsevier's Scopus database per scholar, divided by the sum of the total subject-weighted number of FTE research staff and FTE academic staff. This metric is normalised after calculation. Citations (Research Influence), this examines research influence by capturing the average number of times a university-published work is cited by scholars globally. The data is normalised by Elsevier to reflect variations in citation volume between different subject areas (Isaac & Imade, 2020; THE 2021; Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran 2022). So, if inflation affects research publication in Nigerian tertiary institutions, the implication can result in a lower international ranking because research is one of the critical indicators of measuring performance.

On the part of students, especially post-graduate students, inflation may affect their research work programme because more funds are needed to complete their thesis. Ogunode, Ukozor, and Kware (2023) observed that the major issue that has delayed dissertation and thesis writing for most postgraduate students in Nigerian public universities is the challenges of financing their

dissertation or thesis. Dissertation and thesis writing are financially intensive. A large sum of funds is required daily, weekly and monthly for the literature searching, sorting of materials, consultation, data analysis and production. Many postgraduate students are self-sponsored and a majority of them are family men and women. One of the most serious problems threatening dissertation writing by postgraduate students in Nigerian universities is that of dwindling family and personal income. The financial expenditures associated with a study are another constraint on feasibility. Some of the major areas that involve finance are the production of questionnaires; allowance(s) to research assistant(s); transportation cost; cost of Analysis of Data; office supplies and equipment and Use of computers and required software. This shortage of funds affects the speed at which most of them devote themselves to writing their dissertation. Also, student researchers have less money on them because of the cost of living occasioned by the high inflation in the country (Ola, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper assessed the impact of inflation on the research programme of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper 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.

Based on the above findings, the paper recommends; an increment in the research funding of tertiary institutions by the government and other stakeholders. The government should subsidize research resources to enable research institutions to afford them for research development. The government should increase research funding for academic staff and researchers to enable them to continue with research-finding publications. The government should diversify the economy by increasing local production and empowering private investors with soft loans to increase production locally.

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