Class Representatives' Roles in Exploiting Students in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract
The study adopted survey design to examine class representative's role in exploiting students in Nigerian universities. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, as the sample. The instrument for data collection was self-constructed questionnaire titled "Class Representative and Exploitation Questionnaire (CREQ)", which had a four point likert scale. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by experts in related field. Test-retest technique was used by the researcher to gather data for reliability; and Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the correlation coefficient which was 0.76. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The result indicated that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in universities. The result also showed that there is significant relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in universities. The result also revealed that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization. It was recommended, among many others, that class representatives' power should be reduced or their roles should be spelt out by their Departments to reduce the level of exploitation on their fellow students.
Keywords: class, representative, exploitation, students, universities

Introduction
The Nigerian university system is one designed for the advancement and certification of young school leavers to achieving higher education. Generally, students are positioned to lead themselves while acquiring leadership skills and qualities in institution of higher learning across the country. This is made obvious during convocations and certification period (Lawal, 2009).

The distinctive life exhibited by young students in universities has led to the need for a leader or coordinator to lead and act on their behalf. A class representative is usually the leader of a students' body, or class; and presides over the class or organization within students' settings in any university or higher institution of learning. Class representatives are usually and generally elected by the class, which is a constituency made up of students in a particular grade level (Banyo, 2016).

Unethical behaviours occur when decisions enable an individual or organization to gain at the expense of the larger society (Ogunleye, 2000). Unethical behaviour gives birth to corruption; and the act of corruption especially in the Nigerian society usually involves bribery. The Cambridge dictionary defines bribery as the crime of giving someone, especially someone in position of authority, money or gifts so that they will do something illegal or dishonest in favour of the giver. Unethical behaviours have undermined and brought down the standard and quality of the educational system in Nigeria. Common unethical practices in the educational system includes examination malpractice, acceptance of under-aged children at all levels of education, admission fraud, extortion of cash, cultism, drug abuse, sexual harassment, among others, which are enhanced through lecturers-student's activities.

Students' representation has various threats concerning one's grades. A mild example is unnecessary touching; authors have defined it as an event involving pinching, sexist remarks, leering or ogling by one person or group against another. Thus, in studies of sexual behaviour, including any unwanted harassment/victimization of female students, sexual contact by another individual in universities and colleges against her wish, attempts have been made to differentiate rape or attempted physical force and/or psychological rape from coercive experiences (Ajao, 2017).

According to Edward (2014), the practice of electing or selecting a class representative is found in higher institutions. While a class representative or president acts in diverse capacity including being the liaison between the lecturers and the students and making sure that his fellow students are represented well in different courses, by ensuring access to available course materials, course timetables and other issues bordering on student's welfares. In higher institutions of learning, the functions of class representatives hinge on the support system the university environment gave to them. They are to manage people (mates and students' union members), manage their resources in order to achieve common goals of sound advocacy and leadership. These processes are conscious, intentional and placed on decision-making which evoke intellectual or social skills in use (Ajao, 2017).

It suffices to say that decision-making is the kernel and an essential aspect of an organization, including the school system. It determines the daily operations or activities of an organization. Students' involvement in decision-making is well thought of in Nigerian universities as a result of the organizational structure and bureaucratic nature of the educational system (Adeleke, 2000).

According to Jeruto and Keprop (2011), student representative bodies are organ of student leadership such as school councils, student parliaments and prefectorial bodies. It is also a term used to encompass all aspects of school (or university) life and decision-making where students may make a contribution informally through individual negotiation as well as formally through purposely created structures and mechanisms. It thus refers to participation of students in collective decision-making at school or class level and to

dialogue between students and other decision-makers; but not only consultation or surveying students' opinions.

Students' participation in decision-making in universities is often viewed as problematic, owing to the fact that students may be viewed as minors, immature and lacking in the expertise and technical knowledge that is needed in making decisions regarding the university. Thus, students' participation in decision-making is often confined to issues concerned with students' welfare; with students not being involved in core governance issues (Ajayi & Adeniyi, 1991).

Oke and Okunola (2010) argue that many university administrators do not allow their students to participate in decision-making in their universities. They assert that the major problem confronting their universities is the alienation of students from decision-making. This present situation in the universities is described by Fletcher (2004) as "tokenism and manipulation" where students are given a voice but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. There is no meaningful involvement of students in deciding some of the issues that affect them directly. Despite the usefulness and relevance of students' participation in decision-making in university management, it has been established that not all university administrators encourage and practice students' involvement in decision-making in their university.

The Nigerian students' unions thus often complain about the lack of involvement of students in decision-making. Consequently, wrong decisions are made on issues involving students' admission, students' housing, tuition fees, allowances, students' general welfare, and disciplinary matters. Buttressing the need for involvement of students in decision-making, Alani et al. (2010) highlight the need to include students in the school's decision-making process. They further argue that failure to involve students in decision-making in the schools can lead to difficulty in the planning and implementation of school goals, which can degenerate into inadequacies in respect of human, material, financial and physical resources.

Representation of students in university decision-making, according to Ogunbameru (2013), is one of the main ways in which universities engage with students, listen to them, and involve them in their internal decision-making processes. The class representatives usually and only represent the school specific grade level.

Corruption among higher institution stakeholders, especially students, has a negative implication for learning. Learners do not attend lectures because the rule on 70% attendance to qualify for writing examination is hardly followed, as they can bribe their way through writing and passing the exams and buying of handouts from lecturers' representatives who may also exploit other students for their own personal gain (Amini-Phillips & Ogbuagwu, 2017). Inadequate learning and poor understanding of the course contents can also lead to examination malpractice and other activities like sorting. Inadequate learning leads to poor performance of learners and the production of half-

baked graduates which often leads to low self-esteem and inability to compete in the labour market especially in this present time.

According to Olasanmi (2019), the unacceptable roles of the many class representatives have led university authorities and departmental heads to curb and cancel the position of class representatives in the polytechnics and universities. Many of these class representatives were accused of corrupt practices, increase in the cost of sales of handouts, helping lecturers in the victimization of students and collection of bribes. Hence, many university authorities have set up panels and disciplinary committees for punishment of students and lecturers involved in these shady deals.

The attitude of lecturers in tertiary institutions can either stamp out or promote indiscipline among students. Such attitudes as exploitation of students by lecturers such as compulsory sales of handouts, textbooks as well as sexual harassment in addition to receiving bribes of all kinds from the students can promote indiscipline. Moreover, inadequate commitment to duty by lecturers, incessant industrial actions as well as inadequate incentives and staff welfare policies are also factors that promote corrupt practices in tertiary institutions. The society in which the students develop and operate also has tremendous influence on their behaviours. Issues such as inadequate transportation, water, accommodation and electricity in host communities as well as massive poverty in the land can engender indiscipline and unethical behaviours in tertiary institutions, including course leaders or class governors exploiting fellow students (Ugbode & Adeleke, 2015).

Several theories over the years have been advanced in the social and behavioural sciences to explain why people engage in deviant behaviour such as corruption and exploitative attitudes. Some of these theories include both macro and micro level theories. This study employed the Social Learning Theory. This theory is useful because it covers aspect of students' social indiscipline. The study sought to explore students' perspectives on how peer and faculty factors influence their corrupt intentions; the Social Learning theory is the most suitable micro theory underpinning the study. According to Akers (2006) and Jensen (2006), presently, the social learning theory is one of the most used theories for explaining students' misconduct. In view of this, several studies on students' misconducts in higher education in countries like the United States (Mc Cabe, 2006), Romania (Teodorescu & Andrei, 2009) and Ghana (Mensah, 2016) have all used this theory.

The theory, which Bandura propounded in 1989, is actually a build-up on Sutherland's (1961) differential association theory and argues that people learn deviant in the same manner they learn non-deviant behaviours (Brauer & Tittle, 2012); hence, through social interactions, people learn these deviant behaviours. The theory, therefore, gives precise accounts of how both deviant and non-deviant behaviours as well as their cues (definitions), that produces them. This is however explained by Akers (2006) that the probability that persons will engage in criminal and deviant behaviour is increased and the probability of their conforming to the norm is decreased when they differentially associate with others who commit criminal behaviour and espouse definitions favourable

to it; they are relatively more exposed in-person or symbolically to salient criminal/deviant models; it as desirable or justified in a situation discriminative for the behaviour; and have received in the past and anticipate in the current or future situation relatively greater reward than punishment for the behaviour.

According to Heyneman et al. (2013), all these forms of exploitation can be found in every sector of university education. Universities are essential places where young people learn and inculcate values; nonetheless, students learn not only what they are taught in class, but also behaviour and characters that are inherent of the classroom curricular and these include hidden rules, which determines who progresses and who does not (Meighan & Harber, 2007). Accordingly, when these rules are not guided by the principle of integrity, increasingly, young people adopt corrupt ways to succeed in life (Chapman, & Lindner, 2016). Undoubtedly, it is evident that corruption within the education sector in general and the university, in particular, is the single most insidious behaviour, which universally undermines the quality of education delivery and the integrity of its products. Considering its ubiquitous nature, corruption at universities has motivated many multidisciplinary studies within the social sciences, and one of these studies is to explore from student's perspective, the perceived corrupt practices at universities.

Statement of the problem

The problem of exploitation and extortion of students has raised diverse questions with issues bordering on the legality and illegality of this behaviour which is enhanced with the help of the students' class representatives. For instance, the level of corruption within the sector was not disaggregated into the various levels in the Nigerian education system, so it was impossible to tell the extent to which corruption abound at the university, for example. Due to this limitation, it is possible for people to perceive at the university level if they have had similar corrupt experiences at the basic and secondary levels: this kind of reasoning, however, is mere speculation. Accordingly, there is no empirical evidence on the nature and level of corruption at the various university campuses across the country, the extent to which some students engage in this illicit act, through student representative members who involve themselves in this scheme, the contextual factors within the university environment that influence students' corruption intentions, and how likely corrupt students are different from unlikely corrupt students regarding their perceptions toward corruption and academics. It is for these reasons that this study seeks to fill this lacuna in the literature by exploring from the students' perspective, the perceived academic corrupt practices and exploitation enhanced by the support of class representatives in the universities.

Purpose of the study

The major objective of the study is to examine class representatives' roles in students' exploitation in Nigerian universities. The specific objectives of this study are to examine:
   i.   The vulnerability of students to exploitation by class representatives.
  ii.   The roles of class representatives in the exploitation of their co-students.
 iii.   The capacity to which class representatives exploit class members.

Hypotheses
The following research hypotheses are generated to guiding this study:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between class representative roles and student's exploitation in the university.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between lecturers' roles and class representative exploitation in the university.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between class representative roles and student's victimization.

Methodology
This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It is a form of descriptive design that uses a representative sample to collect data for systematic description of existing situation or phenomenon. The population consisted of all undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko in Akoko South-West Local Government Area of Ondo State. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose the sample for the study. The sample of the study consisted of 100 undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, in Akoko South-West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Class Representative and Exploitation Questionnaire (CREQ)," designed on a four point likert scale. 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 100 were returned. The instrument was divided into sections; section A contains personal data of the respondents, while section B contains 20 items. The instrument was rated on a four likert scale of SA (4) to SD (1), the higher the score, the relevant the item to the respondent. Section B consists of three subsections, section B(1) measured student's representation, B(2) measured lecturer's role while section B(3) measured exploitation and victimization of students by class representative.

The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by experts in related field. Test-retest technique was used by the researcher to generate data for analysis. copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a sample of twenty students in Federal University, Oye-Ekiti in Ekiti State, after a two-week interval, the same instrument was re-administered to the same set of students and Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the correlation coefficient which was 0.76; which certified that the questionnaire was reliable. Data generated from this study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in the university.

Table 1: Relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in the university

Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	df	r.cal	r.tab	Decision
Class Representatives' roles	6.72	1.86	67				
				98	0.807	0.567	Rejected
Student's Exploitation	23.87	5.63	33				

Table 1 showed that r-cal of 0.807 is greater than r-tab of 0.567 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in the university is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in the university

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in the university.

Table 2: Relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in the university

Variables	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	DF	r.cal	r.tab	Decision
Lecturer's role	7.40	2.40	67				
				98	0.800	0.567	Rejected
Student's Exploitation	23.87	5.63	33				

Table 2 showed that r-cal of 0.807 is greater than r-tab of 0.567 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there was significant relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in the university. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in the university is rejected. This implied that there was significant relationship between lecturers' roles and exploitation in the university.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization.

Table 3: Relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization

Variable	$\bar{x}$	SD	N	df	r.cal	r.tab	Decision
Class Representatives' roles	6.72	1.86	67				
				98	0.807	0.567	Rejected
Student's victimization	23.82	5.63	33				

Table 3 shows that r-cal of 0.807 is greater than r-tab of 0.567 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and

students' victimization. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization.

Discussion of the findings

The finding from hypothesis one of the study revealed that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' exploitation in the university. This is in line with Ogunbameru (2013) who found that reading and writing includes the building of character, behaviour, social attitude, and intellect.

Another finding of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between lecturers' roles and class representative exploitation in the university. This is in line with Amini-Phillips and Ogbuagwu (2017). Corruption among higher institution stakeholders especially students has negative implications for learning. Learners do not attend lectures because the rule on 70% attendance to qualify for writing examination is hardly followed as they can bribe their way through writing and passing the exams and buying of handouts from lecturers' representatives who may also exploit other students for their own personal gain.

The third finding of the study revealed that there is significant relationship between class representatives' roles and students' victimization. This is in line with Ajao (2017) who found that students' representation has various threats concerning one's grades.

Conclusion

The study concluded that class representative's roles influence exploitation among other students in Nigerian Universities. These forms of exploitation are not limited to collecting money or inflating the price of handouts, but sexual exploitation, victimization and failure.

Recommendations

1. Students should hold their class representatives accountable for any money contributed for group assignments and other activities within the department.

2. Rules should be made by the Faculties and Departments restricting class representatives from collecting money from course mates.

3. Lecturers should always give detailed information to the class to avoid class representatives using the information to exploit others in the class.

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