



Nigerian Universities' Policies and the Migration of Nigerian Undergraduate Students to Universities in the Republic Of Benin

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Abstract

Nigeria and the Republic of Benin are located in the West African sub-region and both countries are undergoing similar developmental challenges. Recent statistics show that more Nigerian students are migrating to the Republic of Benin for higher education despite the fact that Times Higher Education (THE Ranking) ranked most Nigerian universities higher than their counterparts in the Republic of Benin. Nigeria also has better job opportunities than the Republic of Benin. Among other reasons, it is pertinent to probe into the motivation behind the increasing migration trend of Nigerian undergraduate students to the Republic of Benin to the point of constituting about 90% of the total population of students in one of the universities in the country. Relying primarily on primary data results from the analysis of both the interviews and questionnaires show that contrary to some previous research findings that explained students' motivations for migration from the economic or social class point of view, Nigerian undergraduates are migrating to escape "unfriendly" policies and to experience greater personal freedoms.

Keywords

Migration, Students, Nigeria, Freedom, Strikes, Undergraduates

1. Introduction

The migration of students has grown considerably over the last decades. Specifically, the migration of students from the Global South to the Global North. Studies have investigated international students' migration from the Global South to the Global North but with little focus on the migration of students within the Global South (França & Cairns, 2020). Students migrating from their home countries consider their choice of destination. The final decision of their migration destination is thought to be better in certain areas than in their home country. There is a paucity of data capturing the migration trends of Nigerian students to other countries in search of higher education. Reports show that Nigerian students are migrating in large numbers. Over 100,000 Nigerian students were said to have enrolled abroad in 2020 for higher education (Icef Monitor, 2021; Onuorah, 2021)

The increase in Nigerian student migration cannot be separated from the critical issues that have bedevilled the Nigerian education sector. Between 1999 and 2022, approximately 45 months – about four years – have been wasted on strikes. Most Federal and States-owned universities, which sadly have a higher percentage of Nigerian students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, are victims of this challenge. Some candidates have had to stay at home "for five years post-secondary school without gaining admission, despite surpassing all cut-off points for admission". Some eventually had to settle for courses they never preferred simply because they could not afford to stay at home anymore.

The Nigerian education system has a 6-3-3-4 structure: six years of primary school education, 3 years of junior secondary education and another three years of senior secondary education, while the last four years are spent acquiring tertiary education (Akinyoade, 2019). In addition, federal tertiary institutions are under the exclusive list of the Federal government, while the state and local governments also coordinate educational policies under the concurrent and residual lists (Akinyoade, 2019). The National University Commission (NUC) is the agency responsible for regulating Nigerian Universities. It prepares written legal and operational frameworks and guidelines by which these educational institutions are to abide. It guides the operation of the university first with regulating agency and the external context. The university based on individual mission and vision design its operating guidelines to regulate the conduct of both the students and staff. These are generally referred to as student and staff handbooks. The content of both the general guidelines for the administration of the university and the individual university guidelines are referred to as university policies.

However, recent statistics show that between 1999 and 2009, more students progressed from primary school to secondary school than students that progressed from secondary school to tertiary institutions. This suggests that while it was easy for students to gain entrance into secondary schools, certain encumbrances negate them from gaining admission to higher institutions upon completing their secondary school education. Ejoigu & Sule (2012) observed that “since 1999/2000, Nigerian universities have respectively exceeded their respective carrying capacity/admission quota by over ten per cent such, over 80% of qualified candidates cannot find a place of study”.

To address this challenge, successive Nigerian governments since the return to democratic rule in 1999 have taken two major bold steps: first, the issuance of operational licenses to individuals and corporate bodies to own and run universities and second, the establishment of more universities by both the State and the Federal governments. Despite the proliferation of tertiary institutions, however, enrolment into Nigerian universities was merely 11.8 percent in 2011. Bamiro (cited in (Akinyoade, 2019) noted that only 4 percent of secondary school graduates gain admission into Nigerian universities. This was further reiterated by Abiodun (2021) who, citing a 2015 publication by the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB), stated that “only 415,500 out of 1428,379 applicants were admitted into various universities in the country. This leaves out over a million applicants without admission”. A 2012 study by Bamiro further stated that over USD1 billion was being spent annually by Nigerian students in foreign tertiary institutions.

For those who could not afford a foreign education, the limited access to tertiary education, especially the universities with more prestige among Nigerians than the polytechnic or college of education, has “contributed to the use of bribes and personal connections to gain coveted places at universities, with some admissions officials reportedly working with agents to obtain bribes from students” (Osipian, 2013). There are about 219 universities in Nigeria- 49 universities owned by the federal government, 59 by the 36 States governments, and 111 owned by individuals and corporate organizations. Despite a large number of universities in Nigeria, Nigerian undergraduate students still migrate to the Republic of Benin for higher degrees.

2. Literature Review

Students’ migration has continued to increase the world over. Extant literature on student migration reveals that students migrate for several reasons. These reasons have been classified broadly into both the push and the pull factors. Both the push and the pull factors are not sufficient reasons for the actual migration. Studies have established that the imperativeness of individual aspirations to migrate matched the capabilities to do the same. In other words, individual characteristics must interact with both the emigration environment and immigration interface for migration to take place. The aspiration to migrate must be matched with the capabilities of the migrants to meet certain conditions upon which successful migration is premised (Carling & Schewel, 2018)(de Haas, 2021). Results of previous studies have established a relationship between student migration and the quality of degrees i.e. differences in the quality of degrees earned from a foreign university and one from a home university(Szelényi, 2006); migration and international university ranking (Rodríguez González et al., 2011); migration and quality of education of the host country(van Bouwel & Veugelers, 2013); migration and timely completion of the program (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021); migration and availability of scholarship/sponsorship and research and teaching assistantship. Another study (Waters et al., 2011) discovered that UK students migrate overseas for further study because that provides an escape for them, the students seized the opportunity to escape from what they considered as pressures of the system as well as the expectations. Going abroad provides the needed avenue for a new life outside the UK. Studies have also established a relationship between migration and migration destinations/ geographies.

Studies have shown the driving importance of conceptual, institutional and demographic variables. To Findlay (2011) there is social, capital and human variables that are needed for the choice of migration destination as well as they also form the benefits from the migration destination. Brooks & Waters (2009) reported a relationship between the institutional variable and the migration destination of students. When some students are denied admission in a particular country, they migrate to other countries with institutions that seem to be in the same category in ranking as the one where they were denied admission.

The choice of migration destination can also be influenced by the people and institutions that are held in high esteem by the student. The institutions include family and sometimes-religious organizations. Raghuram (2013) alluded to the fact that the importance of family preference cannot be underestimated. For Cairns (2014), the views and opinions of friends on migration destinations are also very crucial. Most studies on students’ migration have been on migration from

the Global South to the Global North. Findings from intra-Africa students' migration for higher education studies have revealed several factors that attract students to the countries of their choice. These factors include religion, scholarship opportunities and the medium of instruction (Agbaje, 2021), conducive learning environment, good teaching and learning facilities, the friendliness of faculty and staff, friendliness of native students and structure (Badoo, 2021), specific policies, legal frameworks and citizens hospitality, friendly and safe environment (Kiiza, 2021), tourist attraction, cultural and historical values and capacity to accommodate student (Mavei, 2021).

Nigeria has a young population, an increasing middle class, and an ambition to emerge as a leading economy as well as invest in human capital development, especially among the youth. However, a country report by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2019) showed that during the last decade, Nigerian higher institutions do not have the wherewithal (both structural and financial) to sustain the population boom with just one-third of all students who registered for the university matriculation exam (UTME) gaining admission into a university. It is therefore pertinent to probe into the motivation behind the migration trend of Nigerian undergraduate students to the Republic of Benin to the point of constituting about 90% of the total population of the students at Houdegbe North American University (Asadu, 2017).

Nigeria and the Republic of Benin have historical roots traceable to the pre-colonial era. The challenge of irredentism severed the Yorubas in Ogun state in South-west Nigeria as the Egun tribe in the Benin Republic while both states have the Hausa-Fulanis in their northern parts respectively. However, cultural affinity has been maintained in the post-independence era. In addition, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through its treaty has facilitated cross-border migration, which enhanced joint economic, industrial and agricultural ventures between the two member states (Adeola & Fayomi, 2012)

However, from the educational and economic indicators, Nigeria still ranks better than the Republic of Benin. Two major approaches to measuring the quality of a country's education are the place of a university within the top-ranking institutions on a country, continent and world basis and the relative impact of a country in terms of the publications emanating from such country relative to its citations in total world's publications. Using these two criteria, Nigeria leads the Republic of Benin beyond measure (Abiodun, 2021). It is thus puzzling what could make Nigerian students migrate there for university education. This paper, therefore, aims to investigate and identify the reasons why Nigerian students emigrate to the Republic of Benin.

3. Research Methodology

This study combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected using two primary sources: questionnaires and key informants' interviews. We administered questionnaires using Google Forms to Nigerian students studying in some universities in the Republic of Benin using their various Nigerian students' platforms as well as through personal contact. Through this method, we were able to reach out to both current and graduate students from many universities in the Republic of Benin.

From the Google form shared 252 students both current and graduated students responded. We also complemented this by conducting in-depth interviews with eighteen (18) current undergraduate students and twelve (12) graduated students from various Beninois Universities. These interviews were conducted between June 2021 and February 2022.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Analysis of Results

Table 1 Socio-demography of respondents

Nationality of respondents				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Nigerian	252	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender of respondents				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	175	69.4	69.4	69.4
Female	77	30.6	30.6	100.0
Total	252	100.0	100.0	
Age of respondents				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
15-20 years	144	57.1	57.1	57.1
21-25 years	72	28.6	28.6	85.7
26-30 years	24	9.5	9.5	95.2
31 years and above	12	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	252	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above shows the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of the study. The table contains three segments: the nationality, gender and age of the respondents. For the nationality, the figures show that all the two hundred and fifty-two (252) respondents that responded to the request to fill out the questionnaires are Nigerians.

The gender distribution of the respondents shows that out of two hundred and fifty-two 252 respondents, 175 (69.4%) were males, while 77 (30.6%) were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents are male. The result presented above also shows the age of the respondents. It shows that 144 respondents representing 57.1 percent fall between 15-20years, 72 respondents representing 28.6 percent are between the ages of 21-25 years, 24 respondents representing 9.5 percent are between the ages of 26-30 years and 12 respondents representing 4.8 percent are from ages 31 years and above. This shows that students who are predominantly teens constitute the majority of migrant students to the Republic of Benin for higher degree study.

Table 2 studentship status and enrolment of respondents

Studentship status of respondents						
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Current students	168	66.7	66.7	66.7		
Graduated	84	33.3	33.3	100.0		
Total	252	100.0	100.0			
Which of these Universities did you attend?						
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		
Houdegbe North	216	85.7	85.7	85.7		
Université IRGIB Africa	12	4.8	4.8	90.5		
Escae Benin-University	12	4.8	4.8	95.2		
Others	12	4.8	4.8	100.0		
Total	252	100.0	100.0			
Studentship status vs the university attended by the respondents?						
		Which of these Universities did you attend?				Total
		Houdegbe North	Université IRGIB Africa	Escae Benin-University	Others	
Studentship status	Current students	156	0	12	0	168
	Graduated	60	12	0	12	84
Total		216	12	12	12	252

Table 2 above shows the result of the analysis of the studentship status of respondents. From the analysis of the 252 respondents, the result shows that there is current as well as graduated Nigerian students who had migrated to the Republic of Benin for higher education. The analysis shows that 168 of the respondents are current students representing 66.7 percent and 84 respondents are graduated students representing 33.3 percent.

The result also shows that based on both current and graduate studentship status, two hundred and sixteen (216) respondents representing 85.7 percent are from Houdegbe North American University, 12 respondents representing 4.8 percent are students from Université IRGIB Africa, while 12 respondents representing 4.8 percent are students from Escae Benin university and 12 respondents representing 4.8 percent are students from other universities.

The result of the cross-tabulation of studentship status and the university the respondents attend or attended, the result shows that one hundred and fifty-six (156) of the respondents are current students and 60 respondents have graduated from Houdegbe North American University, for IRGIB Africa University there are no current students among the respondents, while twelve (12) respondents have graduated from the university. The result also shows that twelve (12) respondents are current students and no student among the respondents graduated from Escae Benin University, while twelve (12) respondents graduated from other universities and none are current students.

This result shows that Houdegbe North American University has the largest number of both current and graduated students of migrant Nigerian students from the Beninise universities.

Table 3 Choice of institution information

How did you get to know about the University in the Republic of Benin?				
	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Through Friends	96	38.1	38.1	38.1
Through Parents	48	19.0	19.0	57.1
Through the Internet	84	33.3	33.3	90.5
Others	24	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	252	100.0	100.0	

To establish what defines the migration destination of the respondents, they were asked how they got to know about the universities in the Republic of Benin. The result from Table 3 above shows that ninety-six respondents representing 38.1 percent got to know about the universities in the Republic of Benin through friends, 48 respondents representing 19.0 percent through their parents, 84 respondents representing 33.3 percent through Internet, while 24 respondents representing 9.5 percent through other means.

The result shows the importance of peer influence and networks in information dissemination as well as career choice and development. The role of the internet in this regard shows in the number of respondents that got to know about the institutions through the information available on the internet.

Table 4 Previous admission status of respondents

Before you came to the Republic of Benin to study, have you been admitted to any Nigerian University/Higher institution?				
	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	120	47.6	47.6	100.0
Total	252	100.0	100.0	
Is your previous school in Nigeria a private or public university?				
	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Private	123	48.8	93.2	93.2
Public	9	3.6	6.8	100.0
Total	132	52.4	100.0	
Total	252	100.0		
Studentship status vs type of the previous university in Nigeria				
		Is the Nigerian Institution private or public?		Total
		Private	Public	
Studentship status	Current students	89	7	96
	Graduated	34	2	36
Total		123	9	132

We also sought to know if the respondents had previous studentship experience. In other words, whether they had been admitted into any university in Nigeria before migrating to the Republic of Benin. The result shows that one hundred and thirty-two (132) respondents representing 52.4 percent have been admitted to a Nigerian university before coming to the Republic of Benin, while 120 respondents representing 47.6 percent have never been admitted to any Nigerian university before now.

We further asked them about the ownership nature of their previous university. The result shows that one hundred and twenty-three (123) respondents representing 48.4 percent were formerly students from private universities in Nigeria, while 9 respondents representing 3.6 percent are from public universities.

Cross-tabulating the studentship status with the ownership nature of their previous university in Nigeria, the result shows that eighty-nine (89) respondents are current students and seven (7) respondents were from private universities, while thirty-four (34) respondents are current students and two (2) respondents who have graduated were from public universities in Nigeria.

Table 5 Reasons for not applying for admission into any Nigerian university

Studentship status vs Why was you never been admitted to any Nigerian University?						
		Why you were never admitted to any Nigerian University/Higher institution?				Total
		Applied but was unable to secure admission into a Nigerian university	Incessant strikes by Nigerian universities' lecturers	inability to meet admission criteria of Nigerian universities	Desire to study outside Nigeria	
Studentship status	Current students	22	41	3	6	72
	Graduate	21	19	4	4	48
Total		43	60	7	10	120

Table 5 above shows the result of the questions posed to the respondents who were never admitted into any university in Nigeria before they migrated to the Republic of Benin. The result shows the reasons from both the current students and those that have graduated. Of the total of seventy-two (72) respondents who are current students, twenty-two (22) of these respondents stated that their inability to secure admission into any Nigerian university was responsible for not having been admitted. Forty-one (41) respondents were discouraged due to incessant strikes by Nigerian universities' lecturers. Three (3) respondents could not secure placement because of their inability to meet the admission criteria of Nigerian universities, while six (6) respondents that are current students never applied because they desired to study outside Nigeria.

Out of the forty-eight (48) respondents that are graduates of these universities in the Republic of Benin, nineteen (21) of these respondents applied for admission but were unable to secure admission into a Nigerian university, and nineteen (19) respondents never applied for admission to any Nigerian university because of the incessant strikes by Nigerian universities' lecturers. Four (4) respondents were never admitted because of their inability to meet the admission criteria of Nigerian universities, while four (4) respondents were never admitted because of the desire to study outside Nigeria. From the analysis above, it shows that the number of Nigerian students who migrated to the Republic of Benin are students who had attempted to get enrolled into public universities in Nigeria but could not because of certain policies, and those who were students from either public or private universities in Nigeria who left because of one reason or the other.

Table 6 Reasons for leaving the previous university in Nigeria

Leaving your previous Nigerian university as a result				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Expulsion based on violation of the university rules and regulations	39	15.5	29.5	29.5
Voluntary withdrawal from the institution	49	19.4	37.1	66.7
Termination of studentship based on poor academic performance	44	17.5	33.3	100.0
Total	132	52.4	100.0	

Table 6 above shows the result of the question asked to the respondents who were once students at one university or the other in Nigeria but left for the Republic of Benin. Of the one hundred and thirty-two (132) respondents in this category, thirty-nine (39) respondents representing 15.5 percent indicated that they were expelled from their previous university based on their violation of the university rules and regulations. Forty-nine (49) respondents representing 19.4 percent indicated they left based on voluntary withdrawal from the institution, while 44 respondents representing 17.5 percent indicated that the Nigerian university terminated their studentship based on poor academic performance.

The responses from the table above show that the popular reasons why students migrate such as the offer of a scholarship, higher quality education, university ranking and the availability of the desired course were not the reason why Nigerian students migrated to the Republic of Benin. Rather, the results show that Nigerian students changed their institutions by migrating to the Republic of Benin because of factors that are more related to the desire for personal freedom.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

In this section, we draw upon and analyze the in-depth interviews we conducted with current students and graduates of universities in the Republic of Benin. The interview participants were current and graduate Nigerian students of these universities who were previous students in any Nigerian university and those that were never students in any Nigerian university. They were asked questions that are relevant to the research objectives. The participants that were former students in any of the Nigerian universities were asked to explain the reasons why they left and why they chose the Republic of Benin for higher education. For the participants who never applied nor were admitted by any Nigerian university, they were asked why they never applied and why they failed to secure admission. They were asked to specifically describe their experiences that largely account for their migration decision and destination. The interview participants were selected through the purposive and snowball sampling methods. The analysis is in two parts: in-depth interviews of current students and graduates of the selected universities who were once admitted into any university in Nigeria; and the second part is the views of both current students and graduates of the selected universities who were never admitted by any Nigerian university.

The analysis of the participants' views and opinions was done by first transcribing the views and opinions and developing the preliminary codes. These codes were further categorized into sub-themes. The researchers expunged codes that were considered redundant and non-useful from the categorized sub-themes. This is to reduce the codes to manageable proportions. With careful comparison of codes, similar codes are therefore arranged into themes. The analysis dwells on the various reasons why the students migrated to the Republic of Benin for higher education studies.

Table 7 Derived themes and sub-themes from the participants' interviews

Enrollment Status		Themes	Sub-themes
Previously enrolled in any Nigerian University	1	<i>Unfavourable</i> university rules	Controlled gender interaction Non-use of phone No social gathering Dress code
	2	Academic rules	Parental/ university monitoring Repeat of level Enforcement of attendance policy
Never enrolled in any Nigerian University	3	University administration; Admission standards and procedures	Highly competitive admission process Use of quota system Persistent industrial disputes

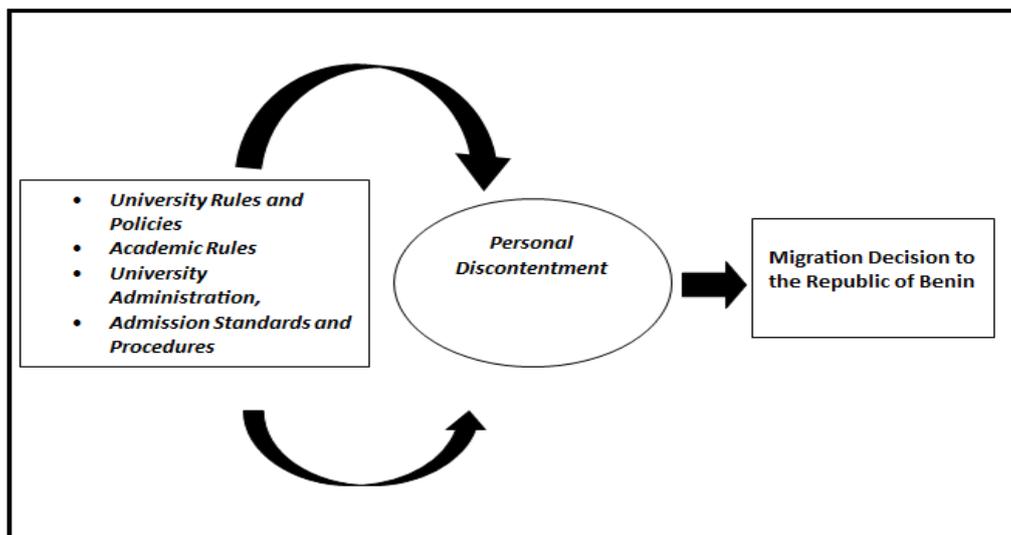


Fig. 1 Personal freedom-migration decision nexus

5. Thematic Analysis

5.1 Unfavorable University Rules and Desired Freedom

5.1.1 Attendance

Institutions differ in ownership and operation. The ownership status notwithstanding, there are government policies that regulate the operation of universities in Nigeria. The regulating agency requires that students' attendance at lectures should be strictly obeyed. While some institutions may enforce this to the letter, others may not. Our interview participants mentioned that the implementation of the attendance policy enforced in their previous universities in Nigeria has been responsible for why they have to leave for the Republic of Benin. Below is the opinion of some of the respondents on the issue of attendance policy as it influenced their decision to migrate.

.... in my elementary school, there is a belief among most of us that there is freedom in the university. Freedom to be absent from classes, freedom to request a shift exam etc. but this belief turned out to be false. I became disappointed when in my previous university, there is strict enforcement of class attendance....

The drive for compliance with these policies by some private universities led to the deployment of interconnected biometric systems for strict monitoring of students' compliance with rules and regulations. This also affects the desired freedom of the students. Below is the view of one of the respondents

The attendance policy is complex and closely linked to one another. When you miss one, you will not be qualified for the other. There is the student hall of residence roll call, if it is missed, the student will not be able to sign at the religious gathering and that will affect the lecture attendance.

5.1.2 Dress Code

The activities of cult groups in some public universities, which often affect the necessary learning environment prompted most private universities to specify the dress code in the institution. Part of the modus operandi of these cult groups is the use of specific colours for ease of identification. Students are also restricted from using clothing materials that could portray them as belonging to any of these outlaw groups. English corporate dressing become the approved mode. However, this has also become an issue between most students and the school authority. Some of our respondents expressed the importance of this to their desired freedom

The variety they say is the spice of life. However, when it comes to dressing, my institution compelled us to dress "corporate" ...by corporate, they mean trousers, shirt and tie throughout the working days of the week. This most of the time is not convenient for others and me...

Another respondent shares his experience on the issue of dressing patterns in his previous institution
I have a flair for fashion, I tried to dress to impress in my little way. The university frowns at certain dressing patterns and even colours. I was asked to go and change either my trousers or the shirt as both look similar in colour. I received a warning never to put on such again as it was interpreted to mean my being a member of a secret cult...

5.1.3 Close Opposite-Sex Interaction

Most private universities operate the *in loco parentis* policy of acting the roles of parents in the upbringing of the students. Part of the policy is to ensure the sexual safety of the students. To achieve this, apart from not allowing the visit of the opposite sex to the residence of each other, these institutions regulate the physical interactions between students of the opposite sex. Some of the respondents also construe this as a violation of their freedom. For example, a respondent shared his experience below.

...the institution frowns at close interaction with the opposite sex. Perceived closeness means a violation of spiritual purity and it attracts a heavy penalty. The perceived closeness is determined by the time, place and posture of the students. This includes holding hands, hugging and kissing...

Another respondent shares his experience that led to his being invited to face the disciplinary committee and his eventual decision to withdraw from his previous university.

...I was seen by a female student in the afternoon who placed her on my shoulder. The monitoring officer frowned at this by issuing us a form to fill out stating the offense he alleged we committed. That was the beginning of the change of institution...

5.1.4 Parental Control and Monitoring

Some of the respondents also stated that the issue of parental control and monitoring has been responsible for their migration to the Republic of Benin. The pre-university expectation of being free from parental control was dashed. Issues that they believed should not be reported to their parents were relayed.

My institution has the email of my parents issues whether major or minor are reported to them. If to take permission, to go out of campus, parental consent must be given. This is annoying when I am not a kid...I have to devise a means of leaving the school...either I fail below-given grade points or violate the school rules that are considered grievous. I deliberately failed to escape...

The respondent below shared his experience thus:

There is unnecessary and unfounded suspicion against the students. For example, if pushed to the wall and you react or complain; it is seen as deviant behavior and could be subjected to an immediate drug test.

5.1.5 Non-Use of Mobile Phone

To make the students concentrate more on their studies and to avoid the avoid distractions associated with addition to the use of mobile phones, some private universities have a policy that banned the use of mobile phones by students immediately after the university resumes. This also has been adduced as one of the reasons for migration to a place where such restriction is not in place. Some of the views of the respondents are presented below:

In this modern age and advanced technology and the growing importance of technology in teaching and learning. My institution does not permit the use of a phone. It makes me isolated and disconnected from the world.

Another respondent shared his view

...I was into business and entrepreneurial practice even before I was admitted into the university. My online business activities suffered because of the non-use of phone policy. When I couldn't cope, I internationally violated the policy twice to be expelled, hence my coming to the Republic of Benin.

The following response shows the extent to which the university's authority goes to enforce this policy.

...Imagine being subjected to an embarrassing search. Your devices are searched for songs that are considered *worldly*. They do not care about what gives you inspiration and satisfaction.

5.1.6 Privacy Violation

Attempts by the institutions to enforce rules and regulations to ensure the maintenance of security and safety on the campus have also become a form of freedom violation. This also has contributed to the reasons why some students migrated to the Republic of Benin. The respondents shared their various experiences. Some of these are reported below

...I was coming back from a lecture on a sunny afternoon when an administrative officer accosted me in my previous institution and demanded to search my iPod. I resisted this, immediately he called security and took me to the health centre for a drug test

A female respondent gave an account of privacy violations in her previous institution by the officers of the hostel management. In her words

...one of the annoying privacy-violating actions in my previous institution was the issue of room search. It was annoying when you are fast asleep and the hostel officers start to bang on your door, asking you to open the door for a search... search for phone, charger, unauthorized food items etc...

Another male respondent narrated the issue of privacy violation from another perspective. According to him ...the administrative officers in charge of accommodation and students' welfare don't respect our privacy. They come at an odd time to check for items they classified as contraband. Imagine being woken up at midnight when a search is been conducted...looking for phones, prohibited but not harmful food items, electric stoves etc.

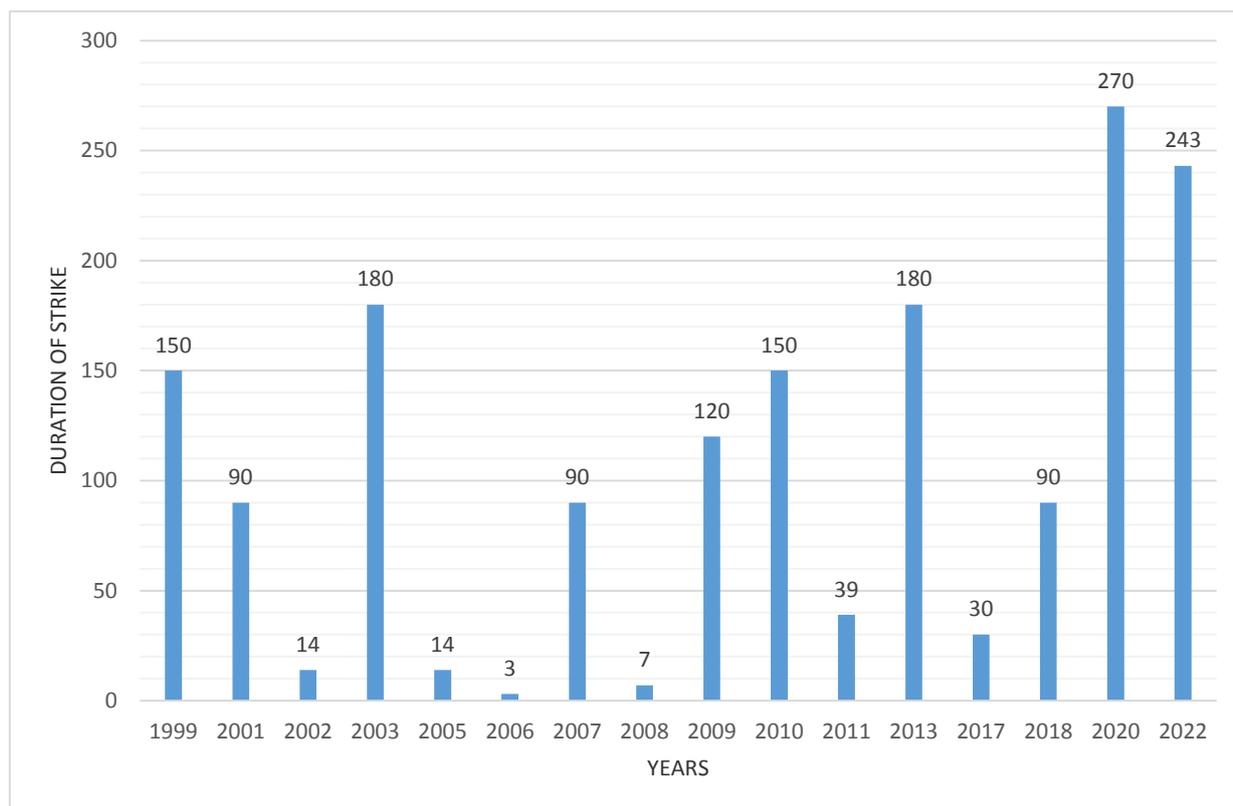
5.1.7 Academic Policies

...there are many academic rules that I was not comfortable with...for example the policy of students repeating a level in the university. That policy was only known and applicable to lower grades (primary or secondary education). The school did not consider the feeling and egos of students... imagine having to repeat and attend lectures with the students that were admitted after me...I considered that embarrassing and I decided to look for an alternative...

Theme 5.2 University Administration, Admission Standards and Procedures

5.2.1 Industrial Disputes

Many of the interview participants who never applied to any university in Nigeria before coming to the Republic of Benin blamed the incessant industrial disputes between government-owned universities and the lecturers in those institutions. There has been disagreement between the universities' lecturers represented by their professional association known as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the federal government over several issues that affect university education in Nigeria. The issues include the inadequate funding of the universities following the recommendation of UNESCO; the failure of successive Nigerian governments to fund the revitalization of both the States and Federal government-owned universities, and the deployment and imposition of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) instead of the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) a payment platform developed by the universities' lecturers' union, the refusal of the government to pay the backlog of the lecturers' Earned Academic Allowance; and the endemic unsettled promotion arrears of the lecturers. The table below depicts the duration of strike actions by Nigerian university lecturers since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999.



ASUU Strikes Timeline (1999=2022) *Source: Eduplana (2022)*

Some of the interview participants expressed their views on how strike actions by the university lecturers influenced their migration decision to the Republic of Benin.

From my college days, I have been desirous of gaining a placement in any Nigerian university. This aroused my interest in activities relating to the university. I discovered that strike action has been a recurring decimal... I decided not to apply at all... I do not want additional years to the completion of my program...

Another respondent expressed her view from the perspective of age and employers' requirements. She said Most Nigerian employers require young graduates at the point of job entry. When I considered my age and the possibility of incessant and prolonged strike actions by the university lecturers, I decided to search for admission at the available university in the Republic of Benin. I am sure that age will not become an issue when applying for employment in Nigeria....

5.2.2 Admission Procedures and Processes

Some of the respondents were not satisfied with admission procedures and processes in the Nigerian universities and especially the government-owned. Because they are relatively cheaper, the admission requirements are too stringent for many students to meet. Below are some of the views of the respondents on the admission procedures and processes that led to their migration decision.

I had to migrate to the Republic of Benin having tried three times to secure placement in any Nigerian university. The admission procedure is too strict. I met the minimum requirement for admission, but could not secure a placement due to other criteria such as the policy of catchment area ...

Another participant expressed his view on some of the discriminatory policies that affect students' enrollment in public universities in Nigeria

I believed many unwritten rules and procedures guide admission in most government-owned universities in Nigeria. I could not secure admission for my desired course of study because my name and religious affiliation became factors that were used in the selection process....

The views and experiences of the study participants represent the push factors that motivate them in migrating to the neighbouring Republic of Benin. Their migrating there is an indication that some of the policies that are operational in Nigerian universities may be relaxed or non-existent. This doesn't translate to mean that there are no rules or policies over there in the universities in the Republic of Benin.

6. Conclusions and Implications

In this paper, we employed both questionnaires and in-depth interviews to interrogate current and graduate students of universities in the Republic of Benin on why they migrated. The result from both the survey and key informant interviews shows that many of the Nigerian students studying in the Republic of Benin did not migrate essentially to secure superior educational qualifications or for better-paying jobs but to escape the perceived strict educational policies of most, especially the privately owned, universities in Nigeria.

The study shows that many of the Nigerian students in the Republic of Benin were once students in a Nigerian university before coming to the Republic of Benin. Many were former students from private universities in Nigeria. Those who have never been admitted to any university in Nigeria were so because of incessant strikes by Nigerian universities' lecturers as well as the admission procedures and processes. Many Nigerian students migrated to the Republic of Benin because of factors that emanated from policies of Nigerian universities which inhibit their freedom as well as their aspiration for higher education. The findings from this study differ from those of Agbaje (2021) who found that religion, scholarship opportunities and the medium of instruction are important factors that motivated the migration of students of international students to Nigeria despite security challenges occasioned by terrorist attacks. The findings from this study reveal the experiences of Nigerian students who migrated because of stringent university policies which are quite different from the findings of Badoo (2021) who found that a conducive learning environment, good teaching and learning facilities, the friendliness of faculty and staff, friendliness of native students and structure are important factors that motivated Nigerian students to migrate to Ghanaian universities for higher education. Contrary to the findings from this study, Kiiza (2021) found that specific policies, legal frameworks and citizens' hospitality, friendly and safe environment are pulling factors for students' migration to Ugandan universities. The finding of this study also differs from the finding of Mavei (2021) which reveals that tourist attraction, cultural and historical values and the capacity to accommodate students are major motivating factors for students' migration to Egyptian universities.

There are implications of this migration on the Nigerian economy. For the Nigerian economy, there is a huge financial loss to both private and government-owned universities. What is supposed to accrue to them in terms of tuition fees and other payments is taken to the Republic of Benin. The performance of such universities in coefficient of efficiency will therefore be low.

The Nigerian government can reduce the migration of Nigerian students to neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Benin by taking some line of action. These include directing the supervising/regulating agency of university education to perform its oversight function of monitoring the activities and policies of Nigerian universities towards guaranteeing the freedoms of students; the review of some of the anachronistic admission policies that place quota system and indigeneity above merit in the admission process. Private universities should also endeavour to strike a balance between university rules and students' rights and freedom.

Efforts should be made by the Nigerian government to tackle the challenge of incessant strike actions that constitute the bane of the education system within the country. While a permanent approach to that would be much beneficial to the country, members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) should demonstrate tolerance for the stability of academic calendars, sessions, and programmes of public universities. This will minimize the migration of students to neighbouring countries for undergraduate studies.

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