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### SEX FOR FAVOUR AND GRADES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: AN INSULT ON INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY AND FAIRNESS

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#### ABSTRACT

The study examined how sex for favour in Nigerian schools, especially the universities, has assumed an alarming proportion and the seeming quietude by students, parents, the government, the judiciary, and the university authorities. The study relied heavily on the oral interview method (95%) to ascertain why the phenomenon has continued unabated and focused on the dire consequences emanating therefrom. From the findings, it was discovered that the judiciary, parents, students, university authorities, etc. are accomplices; the act undermines and discourages hard work, wastes time and resources, etc. It was recommended, among other things, to include: lecturers found culpable should be arrested, prosecuted, and quit their jobs without their gratuities and pension entitlements; in respect to employment, any employer who accepts or requests sex instead of capacity, efficiency, skills, and intellectualism should be outrightly jailed for a period of 20–30 years; and there should be a general awareness campaign embarked upon by the government, churches, and mosques on the need for hard work to achievement instead of sex for favour and any other service.

## INTRODUCTION

Increasingly and very surreal, sex for favour in Nigerian schools is becoming the norm and is unfathomably being rationalised to justify this asinine behaviour, which consequences are dire to not only the participating actors but to the entire society (Peter, Okpa, & Okoi, 2020; Ebingha, Eni, & Okpa, 2019). Sex for favour and grades is indeed a trend in schools and the Nigerian secular society. It is expressed in the form of lewdness, lasciviousness, salaciousness, obscenity, etc. in both men and women to solicit for sexual intercourse in exchange for, in this case, grades and employment. This phenomenon has been misconstrued to suggest that only girls are culpable of offering sex for favours (Okpa, Ilupeju, & Eshiotse, 2020; Agba, Okpa, & Ogar, 2020). This assumption is very untrue, as boys equally engage in this untowardness, though the ratio of girls far outstrips the boys, which is why several postulations have tagged it "a girl thing". It has been argued that sex for favour in schools thrives because the environment gives it a fillip; that is, on the one hand, most lecturers in these schools are preponderantly males who would exploit the female students' vulnerability to force compliance; and, on the other hand, the unseriousness of the students and the corrupt tendencies inherent in the Nigerian polity that celebrates mediocrity (Ofem, Okpa, & Joshua, 2021; Okoi, O. N., Ogar, Ubi, Ubi, & Okpa, 2022). According to Stanley (2014), poor academic discipline and degenerated societal morality that expresses the bankruptcy of our systems seem to strengthen the malaise.

Generally, the Nigerian system works largely on "connection" and "who-knows-who syndrome" and not necessarily on competence, sagacity, and intellectualism (Ushie, & Okpa, 2021; Eshiotse, Okpa, & Iji, 2021). No wonder students, especially the female ones, would not hesitate to have sex for grades and any other favour that would earn them a certificate to be mediocritically employed. And when this happens (unmerited certification), the system suffers tremendously. Ottong (2006) agreed with the above statement. He noted that the contributions of these graduates to any organisation are a social, economic, and political harm to the country.

The situation has continued unabated and has become a vicious cycle. Since nature abhors vacuums and positions in terms of employment is transitory and ephemeral, these categories of people who are products of a debased system will find their way into the employment of these establishments and institutions of government (like universities) and replicate, expressly so, how they manipulated the system via offering sex to achieve or award degrees (Okpa, Eshiotse, Ofem, Sylvester, & Andrew, 2021; Omang, Okpa, Okoi, & Iniama, 2020).

Regrettably, the intensity and the verve with which the perpetrators' prospects for sex to offer grades and the readiness of the would-be conspirators by these set of persons (beneficiaries of sex for grades) is usually unimaginable. The implication, therefore, would be that sex for grades and employment is made normal and does not negate any legal or moral sphere. Arising from this perception, this work will try to exhume what has informed this phenomenon and, in doing so, rely largely on primary data (95%) to underscore empirically

sex for favour in Nigerian schools, with particular reference to the University of Calabar, Nigeria.

### ***The gap***

Pulsatingly is the extent to which sex services for favour are defining the Nigerian socio-economic space and other sundry spheres. With its frequency and what seems to be a tacit approval, portends a serious and grave danger to not only individual Nigerians who would be the end beneficiaries of services offered by elements of a fraught product of sex, but also the nation's institutions. This phenomenon is objectionable and inexcusable because it could have been avoided if the system had done what was necessary and in accordance with international best practices, which is to punish offenders (the offerer and the offeree) in accordance with the law(s). Since sex for service has become ubiquitous in Nigeria (no part of institutions is exonerated), it therefore means it would be quite herculean to, at a work of this nature, examine its occurrence in all Nigeria's ministries, departments and agencies, including the military, police, customs, immigration services, etc. Hence, the work's focus would be restricted to the universities in Nigeria and specifically geared to, among other concern to;

- a. Investigate the extent to which sex has become a prerequisite to award of grades instead of examination and continuous assessment.
- b. Examine why there is conspiracy of silence by all concerned (parents, students, school authorities and the government).
- c. Evaluate the position of legislations on addressing or otherwise the phenomenon
- d. Assess the consequences emanating from offering sex for grades and any other dividends accruable to this and its effect on development in Nigeria Finally, because it will exhume firsthand facts from purposefully selected participants (university students and lecturers), this work will rely heavily on primary data (interview) and sparingly on secondary data. This will enable inferences to be drawn generally, especially for policy purposes to curb the menace.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### ***Why sex is a prerequisite for grades and employment instead of hard work***

The predatory and annihilatory posture posed by this phenomenon in Nigerian universities recently, no doubt, cast a sad commentary on the history of excellent records of Nigeria's educational achievement in terms of its products in times past. According to WIL (2020), education significantly influences a person's life chances in terms of labour market success, preparation for democratic citizenship, and general human flourishing – and to a greater extent, one's life chances should not be fixed by certain morally arbitrary circumstances of their birth (social class, race, and gender). Impliedly, is that education espouses ideals of equality that are predicated on capacity, and goal riven by high quality and value-oriented underpinnings; in that, the instrumental and

intrinsic value of education for an individual and societies education economic to deliver, participate

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***Rational choice theory***

Rational choice theory is a paradigm used in the social sciences and other disciplines that suggests that individuals make choices after a cost-benefit analysis and that these choices are made to promote their self-interest (Okpa, Ajah, & Igbe, 2021). Individuals' decisions on what will best benefit them are influenced by their particular tastes. For example, one person may conclude that refraining from smoking is the best option for them because they wish to safeguard their health from the risks of smoking. Another person will decide that they want to smoke because it helps them relax and reduce tension. Despite the fact that their choices are diametrically opposed, both people make these decisions in order to get the greatest possible outcome for themselves. The theory proposes that individuals consider monetary gains as well as losses in their decision-making. However, many people strive toward avoiding any losses rather than seek out gains in something referred to as loss aversion. The theory further emphasises that complex social phenomena can be explained in terms of the individual actions that lead to that phenomenon. This is called methodological individualism, which holds that the elementary unit of social life is individual human action.

## **METHODS**

A brief survey was conducted with ten lecturers who have served the department and university in various capacities and have accumulated experience on various social issues occurring on the campus. This group of individuals were selected from five departments, namely, Sociology, Economics, Science Education, Social Work, and the Agricultural Economics department. The survey lasted for one month, starting in April and ending in May, 2020. All the participants gave their verbal and written permission to participate in the study. After all the data was put together, the qualitative data was analysed by adopting the thematic analysis approach.

## **RESULTS**

To corroborate or debunk the above allusion as sex for grades instead of hard work, the study purposefully selected respondents and posed the following questions:

### ***Questions***

1. Are you aware that sex is offered in exchange for examination grades and employment?

Respondents' responses

That is very true and obvious. Nigeria state does not preach integrity, honour trustworthiness, equity and hard work. Rather, it celebrates corruption and not hard work – not certainly integrity. As I am talking to you, if I see any

opportunity to leverage sex to get employment, trust me I will not hesitate. Why kill myself for nothing (hard work) when we celebrate mediocrity.

2. But you can change this by not condoning sex for grades, rather hard work

Respondents' responses:

Ahhh! In this Nigeria? Let me tell you the gospel truth; good deeds in this country are not rewarded; put differently, if you want to die prematurely, try to do things the right way. I saw it like this, I met it this way and certainly not going to waste my time trying the impossible. After all, sex for favour is less stressful, often times it accompanies other good things of life.

3. Why the conspiracy of silence by students, parents and government?

It has been observed that prioritizing grades based on external cravings over anything else limits one's ability and desire to learn, as it discourages academic risk-taking, creativity and sound engagement (Melbourne, 2019). Expectedly, the few that does well, it is a great accomplishment that will serve as a head-start for their future, and for those who didn't, it is an opportunity to look at what they can learn from this experience, reiterated Melbourne (2019); and it behoves on the teachers, parents and school authorities now to fashion out the best thing to do for the students and to show them why they fail and what to do to succeed.

But in Nigeria, as captured by Eze (2019), "like an angry tornado, sex for grades is effacing life away from Nigerian universities". The malfeasance buried in silence is denying victims any avenue to speak up. Academic institutions are meant to nurture and groom students but they have become hunting grounds for sexual gratification of men entrusted to teach. Eze (2019) further explicate thus: "Sex for grades has become a culture, a sturdy plant growing on the grounds of silence, fertilized by silence, trimmed by silence and this silence is deadly – not only has it buried dreams, it has rendered lives useless".

To ascertain why there is conspiracy of silence by parents, students, school authorities and government, the study posed the following questions:

### *Question 1*

Why do victims in almost all cases keep quiet when coerced to offer sex for them to pass examination or to be employed?

### *Respondent's response*

Sir, what is new in Nigerian tertiary institution these days? To get anything today in Nigeria, you must part with something. Since it is easier to offer sex in most circumstances to get what I want, why would I hesitate? So, to come to your questions, as to why the silence – hmm! First of all, nobody will listen to you, and sadly enough, those you are reporting to, majority have done it and have had their ways in terms of securing good jobs or graduating with fantastic class of degrees which in all honesty they cannot defend. More shocking is that most parents would even encourage it. So that is it, on the one hand, the silence. On the other hand, the University is managed by a strong dubious cartel who control affairs with powerful individuals in politics, judiciary, the military and

the police. Sir, how can a cockroach secure justice in the court of chicken? So you can see the connection, and reporting issues of this nature is exercise in futility. In short, it is a vicious cycle. However, there are some students who are readily available to offer sex for grades and other favour and unfortunately they make the majority while insignificant number of them truly uphold hard work as a virtue and study hard to merit the class of degree they possess.

### ***Question 2***

Who solicits for sex for grades and other favours?

### ***Respondent's response***

Just a straight answer; both the lecturers and students. But the lecturers demand more.

### ***Legislations and sex for grade and other favours***

According to Akpoghome (2016) and Ayuk (2020), there are existing legal framework on offences bordering on academic dishonesty which involves sex for grades and other benefits illicitly contrived for a travesty all in attempt to gain what you do not deserve. Some of these laws include but not limited to The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended), which is the Grund norm, and chapter IV deals with the fundamental rights. Specifically, section 34 is entitled "right to dignity of human person" and subsection I reads: "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his/her person and accordingly (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment".

Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 addresses issues of rape and state inter-alia. It is offence if the consent is obtained by force or means of threat or intimidation of any kind or by fear of harm or by means of false or fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act or the use of any substance or additive capable of taking away the will of such person or in the case of a married person by impersonating his or her spouse. The Act further provides that if found culpable, he/she be sentenced to 14 to 20 years imprisonment. Others include the Criminal and the Penal Codes. Sadly, the judiciary in Nigeria has not been seen to have done much to help in this regard, as punishment for offences are watered down against the provision of the statutes (Akpoghome, 2016).

### ***Question 1***

What can you say about the judiciary applying the instrumentality of the law in sex for grades?

### ***Respondent's response***

This is a laughable but a serious question to ask. Isn't it obvious that our judiciary has in recent times become a center and a temple where justice is murdered? Emphatically speaking, if by any chance I have a case, my brother I

will not go to court because judgment is sold to the highest bidder. What I will do is settling it my own way (African Voodoo, Juju method).

The judiciary and our courts are so corrupt and to think that a poor common victim of harassment, rape and other indecent denigration of the human person will get justice, will be a “big miracle”. So, that is why the phenomenon of sex for grades and other favour in Nigerian schools remains a means to an end.

### *Consequences emanating from offering sex for favour (grades)*

The damage this uncircumspect and retrospective act impact on the overall productivity of the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria is incalculable and very destructive. Infact, products of a rigged system have advertently broken and tragically so, the effective and efficient system performance.

In another dimension, resources including time and finance are wasted due to unprofessionalism and incompetence attributable to illegitimate, scammed certification and qualification. Undoubtedly, guaranteeing or issuing a certificate or degree to an individual in a field of specialty without actually scaling through the requisite training and passing the necessary examinations spells doom to the advancement of the nation in all respects. Concomitantly, results definitely would be low, fabricated, misleading and increase risks of legal, social, economic and political catastrophe (Challenge Consulting, 2016). Furthermore, as a consequence, quality will be watered down, culminating into sharp-practices, breaches of work procedures and rules, absenteeism, etc. According to Challenge Consulting (2016), as a fallout, there will be a mismatch of job and employee, faulty recruitment and advertising method, ultimately leading to fracturing advancement developmentally. Also, conflicts and clashes reign, team building and performances generally take a nosedive, ultimately snowballing into low output. At the end of the day, industries, companies, institutions and the society generally suffer in terms of death, job loss and socio-economic failings.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A rigged system incontrovertibly can never guarantee plausible output in any known organisation and society. In this case, sex for grades in schools as adduced by this exposition, is a debasement and corrupt practice responsible for Nigeria socio-economic and political stagnation. As it is always opined, “you cannot give what you do not have”. That explains how sex for grades and employment is a disservice to national development in Nigeria.

The study recommends as follows:

- i) Any employer that employs such graduates if discovered should be prosecuted and punished appropriately.
- ii) Lecturers found culpable should be arrested, prosecuted and quit their jobs without their gratuities and pension.

- iii) In respect to employment, any employer who accepts or requests for sex instead of capacity, efficiency, skills and intellectualism, should be outrightly jailed for a period of 20 – 30 years.
- iv) A taskforce should be set to monitor lecturers' activities during and after exams towards seeing that the grades assigned to a student is a true reflection of what he or she deserves.
- v) There should be a general reorientation by the government, churches and mosques on the need for hard work to achievement instead of sex for grades and any other services.

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