

EFFECTS OF OFF-CAMPUS ACCOMODATION ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGER STATE

BY

Shehu Adamu Abdullahi

Department of Public Administration
Federal Polytechnic, Bida, Niger State

AND

Abdulrauf Yusuf Aliyu

Department of Public Administration
Federal Polytechnic, Bida, Niger State, Nigeria
e-mail: yusufaliabdul2010@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study looks at the effects of living in off campus accommodation on students in educational institutions, using three educational institutions in Niger state as case study. The frequent problems posed by students living in off campus accommodations to school managements and the observed decline in the academic performance of some of the off campus students have been of concern to school administrators. The data was collected using multiple -answer-questionnaires distributed to students in the three institutions. It was complemented with interviews with staff of the student's affairs unit of the schools. Some of the findings were that most of those lured into cult activities in these schools are in off campus accommodations, they incur high financial expenses in off campus accommodations and that most of them perform below expectations in their academics. Some of the recommendations were for institutions to improve on their student accommodation capacities, and to strengthen security around off campus accommodations.

Keywords: Off-campus, Cultism, crime, campus marriage.

Introduction

Off campus accommodation is the situation where students live in accommodations outside the school premises or those hostels not owned by the institutions and attend lectures from such lodges. This situation has gradually become the trend in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. In fact, from the 1980s some secondary schools had started the de-boarding system of accommodation of students by allowing some of their students to stay off boarding houses and attend classes from their homes or rented premises close to their schools. Two main reasons accounted for this policy: the desire to have elderly and married people in mass teacher training colleges and the inadequacy of school hostels to accommodate increased student population in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In fact, some secondary schools began to operate solely as day colleges which implied students going from their homes or rented lodges to these schools. This was backed by the national education policy to encourage de-boarding of schools (Akinpelu (2005)

This practice of allowing students stay off campus in tertiary educational institutions is said to have resulted in untold hardships and other ancillary consequences. It is known that many of the students have had bitter experiences in their social lives and have had to decline in their academic pursuits. Due to inability to pay prevailing rents outside the schools, some are said to have

left the schools. It has therefore become difficult to confirm that all students are given equal opportunity in the pursuit of their academics (Bowles, 1968)

Besides negative impact on the academic lives of the students, many of the students living off campus are reported to be victims of social harassment while going or returning from lectures or while in their homes in the night. Such incidents have led to some of them withdrawing from their academic programmes on grounds of shame to face colleagues who may have known about what happened to them. The shame alone of such incidence has led to some being unable to concentrate in their studies even if they stay in school. This has ultimately led to them being withdrawn on academic grounds or their academic performances being drastically lowered.

Obviously the cost of renting off campus accommodations has sky rocketed in recent times with landlords taking undue advantage of the students. Again, much of the money the students would have used for purchase of academic materials are spent on renting and furnishing these houses.

It is known that not all students living off campus were forced by the lack of accommodation in the school premises. It is observed that many of them do so as a band-wagon effect on them by colleagues who have felt or imagined themselves as 'big/senior students' who would not want to

live in crowded hostels. It can be said that this trend and its negative consequences has constituted problems for Nigerian students. The statement of the problem of this research therefore, is what negative impact living in off campus accommodations have on the lives of the students?

The Students of three tertiary educational institutions in Niger state, Nigeria were used as case study :The Federal University of Technology, Minna, The Niger state Polytechnic Bida Campus, and the Federal Polytechnic Bida; all in Niger state, Nigeria. The researcher particularly concentrated on students living in off campus accommodations in these schools for in-depth study and assessment. The researcher has therefore adopted the judgmental random survey method. In this survey, respondents were purposely selected from various lodges of these educational institutions and given questionnaires to fill. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 140 were duly completed and returned .Their responses were then analysed using tables and percentages. The researchers concentrated on students in off campus accommodations who have first-hand information on the effect of their type of accommodation on the lives and academic performances of the students.

Primarily, this study is significant because problems of off campus accommodation cut across schools in Nigeria. A study of this nature on such a current issue is

therefore significant.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information from the three institutions has it that over 70% of the student population in the three schools live in off campus accommodations called lodges. This includes both regular, weekend and spill-over students who have failed to graduate because of inability to pass the required number of courses. There is therefore no definite data as to the exact number of students in the off campus accommodation of these schools.

Off-campus accommodation began in Nigeria from the 1980s when student population in schools became more than available bed spaces in the hostels. Some institutions began by renting rooms outside the campuses for post-graduate students and gradually moved to allowing both post-graduate and under-graduate students rent rooms for themselves in houses close to the campus because they could not access hostel accommodations (Ichima, 2010). In recent times, some students are said to prefer living in off-campus accommodations because of the acclaimed freedom students have while in these accommodations. The rigorous rules against visitors at odd hours, level of furnishings permitted in hostels and other rules guiding students living in school hostels do not apply to those living in off-campus lodges and this has become attractive to some students.

Establishment of private hostels off-campus was initially perceived as a solution to problems of campus accommodations but landlords have taken advantage of the high demand and escalated their rents (Fatunde, 2010). In these institutions rents range from thirty thousand to eighty thousand naira per room, depending on the quality of the lodges and their proximity to the campuses. Students all over the campuses are therefore reeling under the financial burden. These tertiary institutions possess large amounts of land on which student hostels could be built. But due to financial problems or private sector influence on housing policies in schools, efforts to build hostels in schools have been minimal. Today students are having a rough time at the hands of hostel owners whose primary obsession, like all business ventures, is to maximize profit with little concern for students' welfare. Students have also complained about the absence of a learning environment in private hostels. Portions of these private lodges are used as mini markets with hawkers daily disturbing the peace of the students. At night and during the weekend the hostels are very noisy and movements in and out of the hostels are not restricted.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The data presented below are as obtained from the questionnaire completed by the respondents and analysed by the researchers.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents and

returned questionnaire.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
FUT Minna	48	34
FED POLY Bida	50	36
NIGER POLY Bida campus	42	30
Total	140	100

Table 1 above shows the distribution of respondents according to the Institutions. 34% of the respondents were from the Federal University Minna campus, 36% of them from the Federal Polytechnic, Bida campus and 30% of them from the Niger state Polytechnic, Bida campus

Table 2 Students live off campus out of personal preference

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	25
No	105	75
Total	140	100

In table 2 above, 75% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that students live off campus out of their personal preference. It can therefore be concluded that majority of students live in off campus accommodations due to lack of accommodations within the school campuses.

Table 3 Living off campus is more expensive than living in school hostels

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	140	100
Disagreed	-	-
Total	140	100

Table 3 above shows that 100% of the respondents agreed that living in off campus accommodations is more expensive than living in school hostels. It can therefore be concluded that there is a high financial burden on students living in off campus accommodations.

Table 4 There is high rate of crimes among those living off campus

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Agreed	130	92
Disagreed	10	8
Total	140	100

On table 4 above, 92% of the respondents agreed that there is a high rate of crime among students living in off campus accommodations. It can therefore be concluded that higher number of students living in off campus accommodations are liable to negative crime effects than those living within the school hostels.

Table 5 If more female students living off campus experience indecent attacks from unknown people than those in school hostels

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Agreed	120	86
Disagreed	20	14
Total	140	100

Table 5 shows that 86% of the respondents agreed that more female students in off campus accommodations experience indecent attacks from unknown persons than those living within the school hostels. It can therefore be concluded that living in school hostels are safer than living in off campus accommodations.

Table 6 Three most common anti-social behavior among off campus students

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Campus marriage	120	86
Alcoholism	100	71
Theft	110	78

Table 6 are responses on ratings of the three most common ant-social behavior among off-campus students. When respondents were asked to list three of the most common ant-social behavior among off campus students the ratings were:

Campus marriage-86%

Theft-78%

Alcoholism-71%

The above data shows that 86% of the respondents agreed that campus marriage is one of the most common anti-social behavior among off campus students. Campus marriage means male and female students living in the same room and engaging in amorous activities when they are not really married.

Theft is rated as the second most common anti-social behavior among the off campus students while alcoholism was rated as the third most common nanti-social behavior.

Table 7 more off campus students deliberately miss lectures than those living in hostels

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Agreed	125	89
Disagreed	15	11
Total	140	100

Table 7 above shows that 89% of the respondents agreed that students in off campus accommodations have higher incidence of deliberately missing lectures than those in school hostels. It can therefore be concluded that such attitude could lead to decline in academic performance of the students in off campus accommodations.

Table 8 more students in campus hostel accommodations belong to secret cults than those in off campus lodges

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Agreed	5	4
Disagreed	135	96
Total	140	100

On table 8 above 96% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that more students living in school hostels belong to secret cults than those in off campus

accommodations. It can therefore be concluded that secret cult activities in schools are more based among off campus students.

Table 9 Living in off campus negatively affects academic performance of students

Responses	Frequency	percentage
No	5	4
Yes	120	85
Can't say	15	11
Total	140	100

In table 9, a total of 85% of the students agreed that living in off campus accommodation has negative impact on the academic performance of the students. Only 4% of the respondents disagreed with this view.

Summary of Findings And Conclusions

Respondents confirmed that living off-campus often involves high financial challenges .Complementary interviews with students and school administrators confirmed that this situation arises from competition to furnish their rooms and transportation to lectures by those in lodges not close to their lecture areas. This means that indigent students living off-campus would be financially uncomfortable.

Many of the off-campus students face cases of thefts arising from poor security in their lodges.

It can therefore be concluded that it is either that some of the students are the thieves or those people living near them come to steal from them when they go to lectures. Insecurity of property is therefore a major challenge of those living in off-campus lodges.

The female students face challenges of indecent attacks such as attempted rapes, rapes, unwanted plays/touching etc. Reports are that these are particularly carried out in the nights.

Many students living off-campus have the habit of missing lectures. Investigations show that two reasons are responsible.

- i. Rains during rainy season prevent them from finding transport to lectures
- ii. Bad attitude of sleeping or doing other activities instead of lectures.

The habit of many off-campus students refusing to go to lectures have negative effect on their academic performances.

The respondents said that students living off-campus have the tendency to join bad gangs more than those living in school hostels. Complementary interview reports show that they are initiated by others who have been withdrawn from school but pretend to be students and live in these off campus lodges. It can therefore be concluded that the increase in membership of bad gangs in the schools has direct relationship with the increased number of

off campus students in the schools

Majority of the respondent agreed that students living off-campus decline in their academic standard. Because they do not pay good attention to their academic life, their academic performances decline. This contradicts the position of Brenda(1981) that education is to primarily build in a child the ability for self-development.

It can therefore be concluded that there is a causal relationship between living in off campus accommodations and low academic performance though it cannot be denied that some of the students living off-campus are also academically good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. The Schools should build more hostels to accommodate more students. This will reduce the number of students living in off-campus lodges.
2. It should become compulsory for all fresh students and final year students to live in the campus. In this way it will be easy to monitor their activities and academic performance
3. A good security system should be put in place to monitor the students living in off-campus lodges. This will reduce cases of anti-social activities.
4. There should be a way of detecting those students already withdrawn but

who still live around the campuses. They should be ejected and the landlords made to accommodate only real students in the lodges very close to the institutions

5. There should be a way of controlling rents around the campus. This will make students pay affordable prices instead of the uncontrolled high rates.

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