

## THE PROLIFERATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, MORAL AND ETHICAL POVERTY IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This paper examines moral and ethical poverty among citizens of Lagos State, Nigeria, in the context of the proliferation of higher education. By drawing upon a range of existing research, this paper investigates the causes of moral and ethical poverty among Lagos State citizens in Nigeria. The rapid increase in enrollment has outpaced the State's resources, causing overcrowding and lack of high-quality educational options, according to the argument that the decline in moral and ethical values among citizens is largely due to the astronomical growth of higher education. Consequently, citizens lack the necessary breadth of knowledge and understanding of ethical issues. Furthermore, it is suggested that the current emphasis upon rote learning, combined with a lack of guidance from Lagos State citizens, is contributing to a decline in moral and ethical values among citizens. The conclusion is that the current expansion of higher education is having an adverse influence on the emergence of moral and ethical values among Lagos State residents in Nigeria, and that appropriate efforts should be made to ensure an improved level of education is provided.

### Keywords:

Proliferation,  
Higher education,  
Ethical values,  
Enrollment, Moral  
and ethical poverty.

**Word count:** 179

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## Introduction

Moral decay is a troubling issue that is steadily undermining the morals and values that have historically been essential to human greatness, not just at Nigerian Tertiary Institutions but also in other parts of the world. Three interrelated ideas—poverty, ethics, and morality—can have a profound effect on people's lives. Being exceedingly destitute and unable to obtain basic essentials like food, shelter, and clothing is the state of being in poverty. Morality refers to the principles and values that distinguish right from wrong, whereas ethics refers to the principles and values that direct human behavior and decision-making. One of the pillars of any prosperous and civilized country is educational growth. Because of the significance of education to the development of nations, the government, its employees, corporate societies, religious organizations, private citizens, non-governmental organizations, and even multinational profit-making organizations have all been drawn to the development of the educational sector. While the government frequently leads the educational sector in providing the sector's legal frameworks, teachers, and school construction, other stakeholders like corporate societies, religious organizations, private individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, and international profit-making organizations provide infrastructural facilities like the physical building, laboratories, equipment, libraries and books, sports equipment, workshops. The depicted scenario is particular to third-world or emerging nations where the government controls the educational sector mostly or almost exclusively. However, in other environments (developing countries), the government provides the legislative frameworks for the efficient functioning of the education sector, while other stakeholders are primarily the owners of the colleges and benefits, which also prompted student protests. Private individuals or organisations, for example, have a lot of universities. Because of this, the government is able to establish high standards for the educational field (Dukor, 2017). This type of organisation allows for successful service delivery to the paid members of society under the supervision of the government and its agencies. Systems that allow the government to take a prominent lead as proprietors, however, are often skewed toward being ineffective since the government is unable to manage itself as a proprietor and as the architect of the legal framework (Ajayi, 2009).

It is believed that ethical principles are upheld in educational systems where non-state actors are the major owners, whereas ethical values are frequently undermined in educational systems where the government is the major owner and simultaneously the creator and implementer of legal and moral frameworks (Dukor, 2017). This is typically the biggest issue in Africa, and especially Nigeria. For instance, the educational system in Nigeria has a number of ethical and administrative challenges. There are often stories about drug usage, prostitution on college campuses, admission fraud, anointed student candidates, drug misuse, and absenteeism from courses during lectures that were caused by the strike over unpaid wages and other potential to become the "Hope and Future of Higher Education in Africa," (Ike, 2019). The judgment was based on the observation that many private institutions were founded with strong epistemic principles. There is evidence that would indicate that private higher education institutions in Nigeria are not exempted from unethical (corrupt) behavior in the course of their day-to-day activities, notwithstanding the fact that it could seem that way. Various academics have various perspectives on ethics. Ethics is about human behavior and ways of thinking that influence the conduct and wellbeing of other members of our community, according to (Ajayi & Adeniji, 2009). Other points of view define ethics as right or wrong. What is good or harmful in a particular field or discipline serves as the foundation for ethics. It is relevant to all facets of human activity because it focuses on how people should live their life and, in particular, how they should treat others. Moral principles are also a part of ethics. Adedara and Bewaji, (2017) stated that the moral philosophy of ethics, focuses on "norms of behavior; right and wrong, good and evil, approbation and reprobation." Wimmer and



Dominic (2003) explained that acting morally is the proper thing to do. According to these experts, someone who acts decently will be persuaded that his actions were "morally appropriate." The existence of ethics in all human undertakings is undeniable; as Parrish-Sprowl (2000), "ethical considerations reside in nearly every human activity, be it thought, word or deed."

Higher education in Nigeria is categorized as the tertiary education sector and is referred to as university education (NPE,1998). Polytechnics are handled by the technical education sector, whereas colleges of education are handled by the teacher education sector. Monotechnics are located in professional schools (Ajayi & Adeniji, 2009). Thus, these classifications are the subject of this study's primary attention.

The demand on public institutions to serve all needs is lessened by the development of educational options. Public providers dominated the market with the exception of a few correspondence-based institutions more than thirty years ago, and students heavily influenced schools and universities to cater to local and unique demands. Although lower-quality institutions have begun to emerge as the higher education market has grown, competition has caused most institutions to become more effective and efficient, and the market will eventually "shake out" the lower-quality institutions. In the Internet age, Lagos State enjoys a staggering variety of educational and training options as a result of the mass growth of higher education institutions and access to foreign training opportunities.

### **Nigeria's Higher Education System, Moral and Ethical Poverty**

One of the biggest and most complicated areas (ministries) in Nigeria is education. About 217 universities and 152 polytechnics fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Ministry of Education, of which the Federal government owns 37, the various state governments own 51, the private sector owns 64, and there are 205 accredited colleges of education. This study's goal is to examine a few of these organizations in relation to tertiary morals and ethics education in Nigeria. This paper starts with the National Universities Commission (NUC). This body, which is manned by its executive secretary, is tasked with overseeing the university educational system and issuing licenses to both public and private universities. In addition, the Commission is directly responsible for approving and accrediting courses, supervising, monitoring, and evaluating university curriculum, as well as setting the benchmark (standard) for higher education in Nigeria. Unexpectedly, however, Nigerian university education is tainted by corruption, including exam fraud, a sex scandal, bribery, inadequate curriculum development, a lack of personnel, and inadequate manpower training. Some lecturers frequently teach in five to six universities at once as a side job. Regrettably, society sees academics as mentors and role models for senior citizens. It is true that NUC has refused to create the necessary databases for Nigerian academics to track their primary assignments and to prevent lecturers from moonlighting and acting unethically while receiving accreditation. Some of the ethical problems listed above severely hamper the effectiveness of Nigerian universities and lower their standing internationally. Sometimes the administration of the university will go along with this unhealthy behavior in order to save it from failing the accreditation process. This is significant since the universities' owners have not provided the financial resources required for efficient operation of the institutions. In their survey research to determine the degree of conformity to professional ethics by academic and non-academic employees as stakeholders in Nigerian institutions, Adeyemi and Obadiora (2020) discovered that there is a low level of professional ethics implementation among the university staff. The viewpoint presented above demonstrates that, despite putting a structure in place, the ethical standard needs to be established and, more importantly, ethics without application worsens an already chaotic environment. This is how university education really is in Nigeria.



The Nigerian Polytechnics and Monotechnics, on the other hand, are under the direction of the Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). Universities in Nigeria appear to have less ethical problems than polytechnics and monotechnics. The government's and the supervisory agency's oversight of Polytechnics and Monotechnics tends to be weaker, if not nonexistent, which allows for a high level of indiscipline among staff and students. In the Nigerian Polytechnics/Monotechnics, poor-quality textbooks are sold to students at lecturers' fixed prices, which creates room for exploitation and extortion. For the purchase of printed publications with poor writing and editing, scores are occasionally given. The system has a number of ethical issues, such as sex for the grade, bribery, falsification, inadequate curriculum creation, a lack of personnel and inadequate personnel development, as well as inaccurate employee enumeration. Sometimes lecturers are hired from the sister university(s) and other times from local or distant universities who posed as full-time employees of the institution during the accreditation of courses by NBTE. This immoral behavior by faculty members at universities, polytechnics, and monotechnics also serves as a reminder that NBTE has fallen short of its duty. The solution to this hydra-headed issue will be a database for all Polytechnic/Monotechnic Colleges of Education. The Federal Government of Nigeria established Education and Allied Institutions from the already established Tertiary Education Department in 2021 to provide skilled and semi-skilled technical and specialized middle and high-level manpower through available relevant distinctive education in Polytechnics, Monotechnics, and other institutions. This decision was made in response to the Nigerian Polytechnics' repeated failure to provide functional education to Nigerians, which was orchestrated by grossly ineffective supervision and monitoring by NBTE.

The third significant part of Nigeria's tertiary education system, colleges of education, are under the supervision of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). Education colleges aim to prepare the crucial labor force (teachers) for primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, owners have neglected colleges of education, and oversight is inadequate. Most angry Nigerian youths today who were turned down by universities and polytechnics end up at colleges of education thus causing widespread malfeasance and immorality in Nigerian colleges of education.

### **Moral and Ethical Poverty as a Result of the Proliferation of Higher Education in Lagos State, Nigeria**

The most renowned higher educational institutions in Nigeria are governed by three important federal government organizations: universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and colleges of education. At this point, it is necessary to look at specific ethical problems that are prevalent in these three Nigerian higher education institutions.

#### **Absence from classes without cause and lack of project supervision**

A number of lecturers and educators in Nigeria frequently skip class without any justification. Many times, it is observed that students wait for their teacher in the classroom for hours on end without knowing whether or not the teacher will actually show up. Due to lack of quality control and assurance, this situation is common in government-owned universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and college of education where lecturers rule as lords. The lack of lecturers to oversee student projects is one of the main reasons why such projects are seldom seen. According to Nigerian lecturers, Nigerian legislation and engagement principles are not followed when giving lectures and policies are not enforced.



### **The absence policy is not strictly enforced**

Even though studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between excellent attendance and successful performance, class attendance is rarely treated seriously in Nigeria's universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and institutes of education. Some lecturers have no concern about attendance, which allows students to slack off and possibly flunk exams so they can seek settlement. The absence of quality monitoring by institution administration adds another wrinkle to this. There is no system in place to stop this display of faculty dishonesty and misconduct.

### **Late commencing of lectures and incomplete course outlines**

Due to over-engagement, some lecturers who moonlight may be attending other institutions while parents or the second, third, fourth, or even fifth university suffers. This is an additional method by which lecturers make courses difficult for students, a tactic or gap that encourages learners to accept payment in exchange for grades. It is a clear indication of management of the institutions' lack of quality control.

### **The administration of difficult tests and examinations.**

These immoral behaviors are frequently used by dishonest and distorted lecturers. First and foremost, lecturers who wish to extort money from students will skip class, start their lectures late, ignore the course schedule, and ignore attendance records. These are all psychological intimidation tactics used on students. They occasionally omit the marking guidelines from their questions since they lack the answers to the ones they propose. The aim is to collect money from students.

### **Pleasure-seeking and sexual harassment**

Bribe-taking and sexual harassment are the results of lecturers' psychological coercion of their students. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, there are two groups of deformed lecturers. The first category consists of avaricious professors who will do anything to advance their material interests. Such seduce students with their greedy behavior, demanding money or presents in exchange for grades they do not merit. Pleasure-seekers are another kind of malformed lecturers in Nigerian higher education. These lecturers are the ones that give grades based on sex. This seems to be the number one unethical practice on Nigerian campuses. Many campuses are finding it difficult to deal with the issue of sex obsession and hypersexuality, a psychiatric disorder that has taken a toll on Nigerian tertiary education. Ikechi and Akanwa (2012) claim that young academics are the most sexually harassed.

### **Campus prostitution**

A portion of the female students who are under financial pressure from particular lecturers to meet those demands turn to prostitution in order to do so. These young female students favor body-baring outfits that might draw male lecturers.

### **Cultism**

Cultism is one of the biggest vices plaguing Nigerian campuses as a result of a lack of morality and discipline, which many academics ascribe to the military's protracted presence in Nigeria. The number of cult activities



has been rising for a while. Some students join cults under the influence of their professors, while others do so through the influence of their friends. The intimidation of female students and access to professors who are enrolled in the same course are just a couple of the factors that contribute to cultism on campus. Ikechi and Akanwa (2012) assert that cultism has had a negative impact on young Nigerians of all genders, ages, and religious origins. Mfonobong (2022) contends that "the major place that has been influenced and affected by activities of cult groups is the Nigerian universities." Pyrate Confraternity, Black Axe, Vikings, Buccaneer, Supreme Eiye Confraternity, Mafia Confraternity, TwoTwo Confraternity, Eternal Fraternal Order, Maphite Confraternity, Black Bra Confraternity, and others are noteworthy cult organizations found on Nigerian campuses.

### **Substance or drug abuse**

The catalyst that propels Nigerian students into cults is drug misuse. It gives them the confidence to partake in cult practices. Some Nigerian students are heavily active in using alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, nicotine, cigarettes, and other tobacco products due to a lack of moral standards.

### **Intellectual property monetization and lecturer participation in project writing by students**

Today, the monetization of intellectual property is becoming rampant in Nigeria. This is currently the trend among professors on greed and cupidity. These professors charge for their labor and offer paid assistance to students in the completion of their projects, theses, and dissertations. These professors will occasionally pay a talented student or younger colleague to produce a project, thesis, or dissertation for them. The startling aspect of this nasty tendency is how prevalent participation among senior lecturers.

### **Examination fraud**

Exam fraud has eaten deeply into the foundation of the educational system in Nigeria, where it is not only rampant on college campuses. It was described as "scandalous" by Ikechi and Akanwa (2012), who also claimed that professors have raised the bar for exam-cheating. Exam fraud has becoming more widespread in Nigerian colleges, examiners can assist students in cheating during examinations, they occasionally turn away from the students to allow them use whatever foreign materials they brought to the exam hall. Some examiners decide to hang around the entrance or window, talk with other examiners, or even decide not to enter the exam room.

### **Favored script emergence, deceptive recording, and script substitution**

In Nigerian institutions, this technique is fairly widespread. Some examiners send their scripts to their postgraduate students, younger colleagues, or undergraduates in upper classes to mark for them due to the large number of students. The students are then informed by this new examiner that their scripts are in his or her possession, and such is thereafter contacted. Lecturers may dishonestly record students' grades. This frequently occurs when dishonest level examination officers solicit money from students while making false promises that they have access to all the results and can take action. In Nigeria, polytechnics and monotechnics are more responsible for this unethical conduct. When this effort fails, lecturers may substitute the script to allow students to start writing again while using their notes or textbooks.





### **Racketeering and admission syndicates.**

Typically, a student and admissions official will agree to this unethical conduct. In some instance, getting admitted could be paid for, and the admission officers attimes use some students as intermediaries to collect money for them. Some college students who do not have the necessary connections to engage in this illegal activity do it on their own and frequently become victims.

### **Failure to use TETFund Grant**

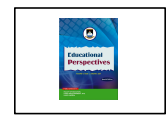
It is concerning how crooked the educational system is. Normally, tertiary institutions should be a haven for decency, but the reverse is the case. Many students who apply for TETFund grants don't actually use the money for what they were intended for. Some researchers who were awarded grants for their work instead used the money to get married, buy a car, finish a building project, pay for medical expenses, or go abroad. As stated in the grants agreement, some recipients of funding for further study abroad never leave the country, while some recipients who travel overseas with the money never returned back to Nigeria.

### **Plagiarism or falsifying research findings**

The lifeline of tertiary education, especially in universities, is research. Ethics govern research, although many researchers do not adhere to them in their work. Research ethics are not prioritized in Nigeria. At the undergraduate level, you are allowed to enroll in two research courses without receiving research ethics instruction. If you do not know anything about research ethics, you can just as well enroll in a course at a Masters or PhD program. These are some of the issues Nigerian academics deal with, in addition to the fact that unethical behavior has crept into our educational system. Research ethics are crucial because they define the line between what is ethical and what is not. Wimmer and Dominic (2003) assert that ethical issues like data manipulation are always a challenge for researchers. These researchers opined that it is expected of researchers to process their data with sensible consideration to prevent unnecessary mistakes that can skew the results and to alert researchers to plagiarism. To many Nigerian scholars, this advice is nothing more than utter nonsense. Among the many ethical concerns that Nigerians frequently disregard are data manipulation and plagiarism. Researchers may choose 10 participants for a sample, then add additional "0" to make a total of 100. Because it is multi-disciplinary, the university has many different tasks. Given the university's multi-disciplinary nature, research is one of its primary duties. In the field of medical and health sciences, university research has many advantages. The university has now assumed a central role in society as a self-governing institution. The global pandemic and the COVID-19 experience serve as additional evidence of the significance of medical and health sciences research. The most recent epidemic revealed the inadequate status of medical and health sciences research in the world's corrupt and least developed nations. In response to the demand for ethical norms in health research, the World Medical Association drafted the Declaration of Helsinki in 1975. This ethical commitment advises meticulous techniques of doing medical research without having an adverse effect on or harming our environment.

### **Higher Education in Lagos State**

The National Policy on Education of 1998, which includes all universities, classifies higher education in Nigeria as the university education sector and refers to it as tertiary education. Lagos State as a cosmopolitan city houses the following Tertiary Institutions:



### **Federal Government**

National Open University of Nig. (NOUN)  
University of Lagos (UNILAG)  
Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech)  
Nigerian French Language Village  
Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)  
National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN)

### **State Government**

Lagos State University (LASU)  
Lagos State University of Education (LASUED)  
Lagos State University of Science & Technology (LASUSTECH)

### **Privately Owned**

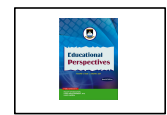
James Hope University  
Anchor University  
Pan-Atlantic University  
Caleb University  
Augustine University  
EKO University of Medical Science

### **Proliferation of Higher Education in Lagos State**

The rapid increase in the number or amount of something is referred to as proliferation, according to the 9th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The phrase "proliferation of higher education" describes the abrupt growth of this sector in Lagos State. In an effort to raise educational standards, more higher education institutions are popping up in Lagos State, Nigeria. The problem with higher education in Lagos State, Nigeria, is much bigger than just a government monopoly. The frightening pace at which recent secondary school graduates are applying for admission is high. The traditional higher education institutions were unable to handle the influx of applicants. In addition, the government no longer provides enough financing for these institutes. As a result, it is essential that private education providers take responsibility for themselves. However, these schools should provide good education, if not better than that provided by traditional higher education institutions. How much more students apply to universities each year is degrading. Public universities were unable to accommodate the increase in applicants. As a result, tertiary institution agencies can now license private higher education institutes. Reassuring the public about the quality of private educational institutions and the acceptance of our graduates in local, national, and global societies is essential right now.

Examining the two colleges of education in Lagos State, the State Executive Council authorized the conversion of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education into a University of Education. This was an attempt to make it work as a stimulus to attract talented students who can clearly see a career path from attending the university to the teaching certification. The Michael Otedola College of Primary Education would eventually house open and online education, according to the State Government's plans. Lagos State is in a good position to provide part of the unmet demand for higher education in Nigeria because of its open and distant learning universities.





The rapid increase in enrollment has outpaced the State's resources, causing overcrowding and a lack of high-quality educational options, according to the argument that the decline in moral and ethical values among citizens is largely due to the astronomical growth of higher education. At the moment, the state of Lagos is home to three universities: the Lagos State University in Ojo; the Lagos State University of Science and Technology in Ikorodu; and the Lagos State University of Education in Otto-Ijanikin.

### **Analyzing How Poverty Affects Morality and Ethics**

Poverty, morality, and ethics are intertwined concepts that affect people's lives significantly. Being in poverty is being utterly penniless and unable to afford necessities like food, housing, and clothing. Morality refers to the principles and values that distinguish right from wrong, whereas ethics refers to the principles and values that direct human behavior and decision-making. Millions of people worldwide are affected by the ubiquitous problem of poverty. The impacts of poverty on a person's ethics and morality are frequently ignored, despite the fact that the majority of conversations on poverty tend to concentrate on the economic and social ramifications. An individual's capacity to make moral judgments and uphold moral values can be significantly impacted by poverty. Looking at some of the ways that poverty influences morality and ethics.

**Survival instincts** - People who live in poverty frequently battle for their lives on a daily basis. Some people may act unethically because they must satisfy their basic requirements, such as food, shelter, and clothing, which might take precedence over moral beliefs. According to a World Bank study, those who are poor are more likely to engage in corrupt activities like accepting bribes or embezzling money. "Lack of resources can lead to a sense of desperation, and this can override ethical principles".

**Limited Access to Opportunity** - People who live in poverty might not have the same access to opportunities as those who are more fortunate. As a result, they might not have the resources or opportunity necessary to make moral decisions. "Poverty can limit a person's exposure to positive role models and environments that foster ethical decision-making," Without these talents, people might not be able to make educated decisions or have a strong moral compass.

**Social Disadvantage** - People who are poor may have social disadvantages like stigmatization or discrimination, which can have a detrimental effect on their sense of value and self-esteem. This may cause one to lose faith in other people and to become less dedicated to acting morally.

**Reduction in Education** - People who are poor are less likely to have access to high-quality education, which may affect their capacity to comprehend moral principles and make moral decisions. A study by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics found that children who live in poverty are more likely to skip school or not go at all. Education is crucial for developing critical thinking skills and promoting ethical decision-making. People may lack the support they need to make moral decisions when their social networks are weak. A solid moral compass requires having individuals you can trust and who you can ask for advice.

**Limited Social Networks** - Having few friends and other kinds of support may make it harder for poor people to uphold moral values and make moral decisions. People may lack the support they need to make moral decisions when their social networks are weak. A solid moral compass requires having individuals you can trust and who you can ask for advice. In conclusion, a person's ethics and morality can be significantly impacted by poverty. The repercussions of poverty are pervasive and range from putting survival over moral principles to a lack of opportunity and resources, social disadvantage and discrimination, to constrained



social networks and support systems. But it is important to remember that not everyone lives in poverty, and that people from all socioeconomic levels can uphold high moral and ethical standards. It's important to remember that not everyone who is wealthy or poor behaves unethically. To build a more just and fair world, people and society must cooperate.

### Recommendations

The current literature evaluated for this study demonstrates the egregious ethical shortcomings in Nigeria's higher education system. The failures begin with the government organizations charged with overseeing Nigeria's higher institutions and finish with those institutions themselves. Private universities have a wealth of potential to become the "Hope and Future of Higher Education in Africa because they are built on strong epistemic values," according to this paper, which suggests that the government should encourage private ownership of tertiary institutions while the government oversees them through its agencies. The study also suggests that NUC, NBTE, and NCCE create a database to prevent teachers from moving around illegally while participating in resource verification and accreditation processes. This is also hitched on the thought that a tertiary education system that is not rooted in ethical principles cannot serve the 21st-century global society. It also recommend that workshops on ethics in tertiary institutions should be conducted periodically.

### Conclusion

Investigating moral and ethical deprivation among Nigerians in Lagos State in light of the growth of higher education is the goal of this paper. The argument in favor of adding more institutions of higher learning was brought up first. The study also examined some of the effects of the growth in higher institutions on the standard of education, paying particular attention to several crucial elements like staffing, funding, facilities, and student output, moral and ethical poverty. Lagos State higher institutions would generate better, efficient, effective, and quality graduates who will be able to turn around the country in particular and the entire world if there are appropriate facilities in the higher institutions and the presence of government in terms of finance.

Based on the results, it was determined that moral and ethical decadence among undergraduates requires immediate attention. If all stakeholders take necessary action to stop this threat, there will undoubtedly be improvements made in all areas of life, not just the education sector, they will positively impact the growth of the economy once they have graduated.

Finally, because private universities have a wealth of potential to become the "Hope and Future of Higher Education in Africa because they are founded on strong epistemic values," the government should support private ownership of tertiary institutions while still overseeing them through its agencies.



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