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Investigating why students in Nigeria perceive education as a scam

Caroline Alordiah ^A	A	Lecturer, University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria
Florence Omumu ^B	B	Senior Lecturer, University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria
Kaizar Victoria Omenebele ^C	C	Lecturer, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the outstanding benefits of education to the individual and society, some students in Nigeria are saying education/schooling is a scam. No study has been undertaken to determine why students say education/school is a scam. This study aims to provide empirical evidence on the meaning of the slogan 'education/school is a scam', why the students are using the slogan and the way out. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from students in public schools/institutions in two states in Nigeria. The findings show that the slogan means that uneducated people are doing better financially, and many graduates are unemployed. They also show that the students are unsatisfied with the Nigerian educational system. Poor societal values, unemployment, and poor curriculum were reasons the students gave for using the slogan. They suggested that government should provide work for graduates and that the curriculum should be more practically oriented toward skills acquisition. The implications of this study's findings include an update of existing theories on the factors that influence students' attitudes and beliefs about education and the need to tailor education policy, teaching methods and curriculum to meet the needs of students. This study provides empirical evidence for the slogan 'education/school is a scam'. Further studies are needed to confirm this empirical evidence in other states in Nigeria using in-depth interviews.

Correspondence

caroline.alordiah@unidel.edu.ng

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Introduction

Education can provide a healthy, productive, and meaningful lifestyle. Education is also a basic human right. It can give people a better, longer life, satisfaction and reduce poverty (World Bank, 2018). Education is a major factor in economic, technological, and social development (Vali, 2013). The more you are educated, the better your chances of employment (World Bank, 2018; Thielen et al., 2014; Barham, 2009). Education has a significant role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030. This is true because education can reduce poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Education can also improve the health, nutrition, empowerment of women, and the management of water and sanitation (UNESCO, 2019; UNESCO, 2017; Educate a child, 2016; UNESCO, 2014). Education reduces negative externalities, increases social mobility, encourages better service delivery, and provides a high level of civic engagement (World Bank, 2018).

Despite these laudable educational benefits, many young people have lost faith in the Nigerian educational system. 'School is a scam' and 'education is a scam' are common statements among teenagers and youths in Nigeria (Eze, 2019; Ike, 2019; Osinubi, 2019). These statements mean that schooling/education carries an appearance of being promising, but it is not. It also means that school is perceived as an illegal and fake scheme that does not deliver what it promises to provide. These statements show that teenagers and youths have a negative attitude towards schooling (Ike, 2019). Attitude toward education greatly influences students' satisfaction, desire to learn, and achievement (Sölpük, 2017; Topalá, 2014; Bybee et al., 2010; Seker, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2010).

According to the online opinion poll carried out by Ike Sunny in 2019, the majority of the respondents (adults and youths) agreed that school is not a scam. However, it is the Nigerian schooling system that is a scam. They argued that the educational system has not been able to create employers but only employees. Many who did not attend or dropped out of school have become employers, while those who went to school to become graduates are employees. School dropouts involved in fraudulent acts like 'yahoo yahoo' are getting richer and more respected in society than university scholars. 'Yahoo yahoo' fraud means using the internet to steal valuables through fraudulence (Suleiman, 2019). The respondents also observed that the attention of Nigerian society has shifted from education to money (wealth). Teachers are only interested in giving grades and not impacting the knowledge of teenagers and youths. Most of what we should learn is not taught in schools (Bamgbose, 2022; Ike, 2019).

The benefits of education depend on learning and not schooling. A country may have good educational goals, but if it keeps changing education policies, curricula, and programmes like Nigeria's and proper learning is not taking place, it is a waste (Aluede, 2006). However, it will not be easy to achieve the benefits of education if what goes on in the schools are against learning (World Bank, 2018). Acquiring knowledge involves collecting information and using the data (Vali, 2013). The school system should focus

on providing students with information and how to use this information to better society. A schooling system that encourages learning should equip students with skills that will help the individuals to contribute to addressing society's challenges. A good schooling system should include internships in all programs, thus encouraging innovation. In addition, individuals should be allowed to either get a degree or develop a skill (Osinubi, 2019; Tomi, 2019). Many developing countries like Nigeria have failed to provide a sustainable education for their citizens. The educational system is supposed to narrow social gaps but is widening them (World Bank, 2018). In an opinion poll, all participants agreed that Nigeria's present formal educational institutions could not prepare individuals for the reality of life (Deji-Folutile, 2021; Tomi, 2019).

Social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation and modelling in shaping behaviour. In the context of education, social learning theory suggests that students' attitudes and beliefs about education may be shaped by their observations of the experiences of others, including their peers, teachers, and family members. In a developing country where education may be perceived as having limited value, students may observe their peers, teachers, and family members expressing negative attitudes toward education. These observations could contribute to students' negative attitudes and beliefs about education. Equity theory emphasizes the importance of fairness and equity in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviours. Equity theory could be used in education to explore how perceptions of unfairness or inequity in the educational system may influence students' perceptions of education. In a developing country, students may perceive that the educational system is unfair, as it may not provide equal access to educational opportunities or may favour certain groups over others. This perception of unfairness could contribute to students' negative attitudes and beliefs about education. Expectancy-value theory suggests that individuals' motivation to engage in a behaviour is influenced by their beliefs about the value of the behaviour and their expectations for success. In education, this theory could explore how students' perceptions of education may be influenced by their beliefs about the value of education and their expectations for success in the educational system.

In a piece of online news, The Sun (Nigeria) positions that the reasons why people are saying that education/school is a scam are numerous. Societal morals and values of Nigerian society have degenerated to the extent that criminals are celebrated as long they have enough money to throw around. More than 90% of graduates are unemployed and have taken menial jobs to survive. The school system did not empower our graduates to succeed independently. In Nigeria, educational achievements are not celebrated (Adiele, 2020). The luxurious lifestyle of yahoo boys and the valuable properties they have acquired through 'yahoo yahoo' have made many unemployed graduates feel that going to school is a waste, and some have gone ahead to engage in 'yahoo yahoo' fraud (Suleiman, 2019; Akanle et al., 2016; Ojedokun et al., 2012). Unemployment is one of the major causes of 'yahoo yahoo' fraud in Nigeria (Akane et al., 2016).

Based on existing records, youths' perception of education/school as a scam has not been scientifically researched. No study has been done to find the meaning of the slogan 'education is a scam' and 'school is a scam'. There is no study on why people say education/school is a scam and how it can be remedied. Presently, we have an online opinion poll on some individuals' viewpoints on this slogan (Ike, 2019). There is a significant gap in understanding the underlying factors contributing to this perception among students.

Understanding students' perception of education as a scam is crucial to inform effective interventions and policies that can address this issue and support students in achieving their full potential. In light of these gaps, there is a need to study what youths mean by the slogan 'education/school is a scam', why they are saying so, and what can be done to remedy it. If students believe education is a scam, they may be discouraged from pursuing it, limiting their access to education. By understanding the reasons behind this perception, the research can provide insights into improving access to education and encourage more students to pursue it. The research findings can inform education policy and decision-making, helping ensure that policies and practices align with students' needs and expectations. This can help create a more student-centred education system, which can better meet the needs of all learners. Education is often seen as a key driver of economic and social development, and improving education systems is a priority for many international development efforts. The research can help inform these efforts and support progress towards development goals by investigating why students in developing countries view education as a scam. Understanding the reasons behind students' perception that education is a scam can help educators to identify areas of the curriculum that may be perceived as irrelevant or outdated. This information can be used to update the curriculum, ensuring it is more relevant to students' needs and interests. It can also potentially inform the design of effective interventions to address this issue. The findings of such a study will provide useful information to educational stakeholders and society. This information will aid the improvement of our current educational system. Based on this premise, the researchers have decided to conduct a study that will provide evidence on the meaning of the slogan 'education/school is a scam', why students are saying so, and what can be done to remedy the situation.

Method

We used the students from public secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Edo and Delta States in Nigeria. There are six Senatorial Districts (SD) in Edo and Delta States; one senatorial district was chosen randomly from each state through the multistage sampling approach. Three tertiary institutions and ten secondary schools were selected randomly from each of the two senatorial districts. The researchers purposively selected 60 students from six tertiary institutions and 15 from each of the 20 secondary schools. This sample size was used because we used a concurrent mixed method design (i.e. the qualitative and quantitative studies took place simultaneously through a semi-structured questionnaire). Based on weight, the study

was more of a qualitative study than a quantitative study. The inclusion criteria for the study were: (a) students who were currently enrolled in the selected tertiary institutions or secondary schools, (b) students who were willing to participate in the study, and (c) students who were able to provide informed consent. The exclusion criteria were: (a) students who were not currently enrolled in the selected tertiary institutions or secondary schools, (b) students who were not willing to participate in the study, (c) students who were unable to provide informed consent, and (d) students who were unable to communicate fluently in English. With a response rate of 72.6%, the sample size became 479 students.

The study's tool used a semi-structured questionnaire based on relevant literature. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A contains questions on the respondents' biographical information. It included four questions on the type of institution, gender, state, and location of the respondents' schools. Section B has questions on the meaning of the slogan 'Education/school is a scam'. Section C contains two questions: if they are satisfied with the Nigerian educational system and whether they think education/school is a scam. For the two questions 'yes' was coded as 3, 'to an extent' was coded as 2, and 'no' was coded as 1. Section D focuses on why students say education/school is a scam and what can be done to stop students from saying education/school is a scam.

Sections B and D contained open questions that generated qualitative data. Expert rating of the items in sections B and D was done. Seven respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques to take part in the rating exercise. The seven respondents are secondary school teachers and senior faculty officers in the Faculty of Education. We sent the semi-structured questionnaire to them through email/Whatsapp. The respondents were asked to determine the importance (very important=4, important=3, somewhat important=2, and not important=1) and adequacy (very adequate=4, adequate=3, slightly adequate=2, and not adequate=1) of the scale's items. All the raters agreed that the items in the semi-structured questionnaire were important and adequate, which shows that the questionnaire was valid and reliable.

The researchers and four research assistants administered the semi-structured questionnaire to the students in their respective institutions. Participants were instructed to reply as honestly as possible to each issue. Before administering the questionnaire, consent from the institutions where the participants belonged was sought and secured. Each questionnaire took an average of 20 minutes to complete. It took the researchers four months to administer the questionnaire to the students. The respondents' demographic data and section C of the semi-structured questionnaire were summarised using a frequency count and a percentage estimate (Dim et al., 2018; Alordiah et al., 2021). While thematic analysis was used to answer the study questions from sections B and D of the questionnaire (Björktomta, 2019; Alordiah et al., 2022). A tool for finding and analyzing patterns in qualitative data is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used in qualitative research to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes within data.

It involves systematically identifying and organizing patterns of meaning, also known as themes, within qualitative data. The technique involves several steps, such as familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and producing a final report. We read the semi-structured questionnaire responses several times to identify patterns. After that, we coded, which required grouping similar information into categories or themes.

227 (47.4%) and 252 (52.6%) of the students were from secondary and tertiary institutions, respectively. 214 (44.7%) were from Edo State and 265 (55.3%) from Delta State. The sample comprises 338 (70.6%) female and 141 (29.4%) male students. In addition, 185 (38.6%) live in rural and 294 (61.4%) in urban settings.

Results

Participants mentioned several dimensions of the meanings of 'Education is a scam' and 'School is a scam'. They are presented below.

Uneducated people are doing better

Participants said what they observed around them when they spoke of uneducated people doing better. Those who decided to go and learn a trade/skill rather than completing secondary school/university are perceived to be well-established and doing very well financially compared to their mates who decided to complete their secondary/university education.

Those who are not educated seem to have a much better life than those that are educated. Some started learning a trade immediately after secondary school, and some went to the tertiary institutions; whether you believe it or not, those who learn a trade started earning money earlier while the so-called graduate starts searching for a job (Female, secondary school student).

'School is a scam' means that someone who did not attend school will have a good job and make more money than those who attend. There will be no job for them after spending so many years in school. This is so unfair (Female, University student).

School is a scam is a slogan used among the youths to justify that there are many rich people out there who aren't school-inclined but are very rich while they are many graduates who can barely afford to feed themselves (Male, University student).

Graduate unemployment

Graduate unemployment was also mentioned by most of the participants. This situation has made graduates unable to assist their family members.

School is a scam in Nigeria means there is much-unemployed youth in society. Our parents will send us to school to learn and become employed to earn a living to enable us to assist them financially, but after school, no job. Imagine a first-class student riding bike (motorcycle), pushing a wheelbarrow or going to people's farms to clear their farm to earn a living. Then the hope of going to school is lost. So that's why some people now tag it as 'school na scam'; as a result, you see some of them engaging in different criminal acts due to depression and frustration (Female, Secondary school student).

What students mean by education is a scam is the poor educational system in Nigeria, in which there is no job after all the stress they pass through in acquiring their certificate. It's saddening and has made young ones lose hope and interest in schooling (Male, University students).

Most graduates today are not working in offices; they are doing dirty jobs. After passing through much stress in school, some people feel that education is a scam because there are not enough job opportunities and the government doesn't care about it (Female, Secondary school students).

Learning skills from those without a university education

The students further explained that what they meant by 'school as a scam' is that after graduating from the university, they still need to stoop low to go and learn skills from those who did not get a university education to survive economically.

It means the cost of schooling is high, and after schooling, you will still come back home to learn handy work from uneducated people, so it appears that schooling doesn't pay back" (Male, University student).

In Nigeria, 99% of youths and graduates are unemployed. First-class holders are shoemakers, tailors etc., so this slogan came out because of the crisis graduates are facing because... after four years of schooling, working hard and suffering in school, you come out with nothing to help put food on the table, no means of survival... Most graduates are surviving with the handwork they learnt from those that did not get a secondary education, so why won't people say school is a scam (Male, University student)?

"Well, in my understanding... 'education is a scam' means that the education system has failed in the sense that once a person graduates from school, there is no job. Graduates now become apprentices to an illiterate man or woman who doesn't know the worth of education" (Female, Secondary school student).

Employment is no longer by merit but by favouritism

The participants also claimed that school is a scam since employment is no longer by merit but by partiality. Why go to school?

When we say school in Nigeria is a scam, it means someone that graduates with a third class will get a job before a first-class student. Everything now is through connections; if you don't know anybody in politics, you can't get what you want. To me, school is a scam, but education is not a scam because education helps you to acquire knowledge. But the question is, are we acquiring the right knowledge in schools? Can the knowledge gained in Nigerian schools help you find your footing in society (Female, University student)?

It simply means that with or without education, people... will work in known companies and offices due to the political games, thereby giving them an edge over those qualified for the job, i.e. going to school is not the main issue in Nigeria (Female, University student).

The Nigerian educational system is not providing the necessary

The students said education in Nigeria is a scam because what we expect from the educational system is not what we get. The educational system does not help graduates to be creative. Examination malpractice has reduced the standard of education in Nigeria (Owan et al., 2023; Schotgues, 2022). There are special centres that fully allow examination malpractice. Special centres are schools where the principals, teachers, and students allow examination malpractice on a full scale.

Education is far more than schooling. When what is expected from our educational system is not what we receive, it is a scam. Education is supposed to bring development and growth to individuals and society, but we see less of this (Male, University student).

School is a scam means the students are not taught the necessary life skills that will make them relevant in society. School teachers do not prepare students for their future career paths (Male, Secondary school students).

[There is a] high rate of bribing and corruption in the educational system. For example, in secondary schools, without money for runs (examination malpractice), you will not be able to pass your final examination (Female, Secondary school student).

The benefits from education are slower when compared with fraud

Some students claimed that school is a scam because the years spent in schooling are longer, and the proceeds from

education slow. Yahoo yahoo fraud is faster; you only need to spend a few days or months before yielding dividends.

School is a scam means since many youths are eager to make money and our society is so corrupt. They think yahoo fraud is the easiest way to get money than going to school (Male, Secondary school student).

'Education is a scam' is a slogan used by mostly these internet fraudsters who think scamming people online is much better than going to school; they just want to enjoy life (Female, University student).

Is Nigerian education a scam?

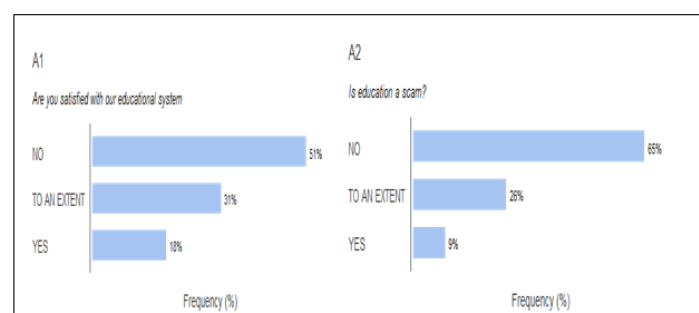


Figure 1. Results from the study.

Figure 1 shows that 240 (51%), 148 (31%), and 85 (18%) of the students were not satisfied, satisfied to an extent, and satisfied with the Nigerian educational system, respectively. In addition, 311 (65%) of the students said that education is not a scam, 125 (26%) that is a scam to some extent, and 43 (9%) that it is a scam.

Reasons for the students' responses

The findings from the study further expressed the students' views on why education is a scam or not a scam. We present some example quotes of the students.

Education is a scam

The reasons given by some of the students who claimed that education/school is a scam were the unemployment of graduates, an increase in examination malpractices, and school curricula not being able to prepare students to face unemployment challenges. Another reason was that the government did not care about what was happening in the education sector. Here are some of the respondent's comments.

Based on my observation and understanding of what we are experiencing in Nigeria, education is a scam. Something should be done fast; if not, we, the youth, will run away from this country and do not blame us if we start getting involved with some illegal things (Male, Secondary school student).

When lecturers tell students that they will fail even if they answer all questions correctly without 'seeing me' or 'buying my textbook' or when students are made to believe that their body or money is equal to a certificate and result, then school and education in Nigeria is a scam (Female, University student).

The Nigerian education system is a scam but not education in general. Schooling in Nigeria is almost a total waste of time. It prepares the student for nothing. It only provides a piece of paper called a certificate. Neither the government nor employers attach any value to it, and now even Nigerian graduates do not attach importance to it. Four years and funds are invested in preparing for the future only to secure a stamped paper with no innate value. If that is not a scam, then I don't know what a scam is (Male, University student).

My reason is that we are going to school to obtain a certificate, to be able to speak in society, but not to be employed. Nigeria's education curriculum is not helpful because there's nothing you can do after school than go back and learn a skill. The curriculum, in most cases, is not based on the student's interest and passion. There is no room for creative thinking. The teachers teach only some selected topics while forgetting relevant topics and subject areas essential to the student's development (Male, University student).

A student will go to school and graduate with first class, but there is no job in our country except you learn handwork (skill). So people prefer to learn handwork and open their shops (start a business) than to go to school (Female, Secondary school student).

We have a government that is only interested in enriching themselves to the detriment of the masses. Every year, students write projects where they identify a problem and give solutions to it, but they are never given consideration. The government should care about us, its citizens; we are tired of suffering and smiling. A typical example of why people say school is a scam is what is happening with students presently in Nigeria; so many students are at home because the government has refused to do the right thing. A four-year course has turned into five years; I know that individuals have their role to play, but the main work is on the government (Male, University student).

Education is a scam to an extent

The students who said education/school is a scam to an extent gave some reasons for taking that stand. Education is not a scam, but schooling in Nigeria is a scam. The school system makes students believe that a certificate is the ultimate, yet the certificate can no longer earn graduate jobs. The inability of the government to employ graduates is a major factor. Some of the students' comments are now presented.

I believe education is not a scam, but school is a scam. The certificate is not everything, but the school system made us believe it is. However, the school in our tertiary institution will help give you false assumptions about yourself and society – not the reality of life. This will take years to correct (Male, University student).

Because if you are well-educated, you apply it to what you are learning, you can do better than the rest. On the other hand, the time and money wasted on education and still coming out of school to start learning a skill are heartbreaking (Female, University student).

Our country has justified the slogan to some point, including lack of interest in student educational growth and the high unemployment rate as a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the nation's fabric. Education is not a scam, and it can never be. It is only that the governments don't want to create jobs for us. But I believe this country will turn out for good one day, and everybody will be happy again (Female, Secondary school student).

It is not that the school is a scam because there is no knowledge without school. School seems to be a scam when one graduates with no job or work, I believe it is due to the bad government we have in our country Nigeria (Female, Secondary school student).

Education is not a scam

The students that said education/school is not a scam pointed out that education is not all about having a certificate or getting a job. Education can improve a person's life. Here are some example quotes.

Education doesn't necessarily have to do with financial benefits. Education transforms one into a better and more disciplined member of society, making a meaningful mental impact on society. Education is the key to every man's success. If you aren't informed, you will be deformed (Male, University student).

Education is not a scam because it has a way of shaping one's life positively when one allows the school to pass through one's life. Education boosts one's confidence (Female, Secondary school student).

No matter what the educational system brings, whether good or bad, an illiterate is never comparable to or preferred to a literate. An educated person makes a difference in society. For example, in a business setting, an educated person will apply the knowledge he gained from school in business. They will add styles and brands to the business to differentiate it from other businesses. This is one knowledge an illiterate might never acquire, not to talk of applying the knowledge. If education is a scam,

I don't see why people forge or buy certificates. This shows that education is a necessity of life (Female, University student).

How to address the reasons why students say education is a scam

Nearly all the students agreed that the present state of the Nigerian educational system is unacceptable and showed deep concern about addressing this issue. Most students asserted that if the government can provide work for graduates, they will stop saying education is a scam and stop preferring to quit school to go and establish a business. They also claimed that the curriculum should be more practically oriented such that skills acquisitions should form the central part of the curriculum.

The graduate should be empowered or employed. What happened to the industries our parents told us existed years ago? Provide skills that will motivate the students to remain in school and to be able to create a job for themselves in future (Male, Secondary school students).

Skills acquisition should start from primary school. It should be embedded in all the subjects already offered in primary and secondary schools (Female, University student).

A strong need to restructure and overhaul the nation's educational system was repeatedly mentioned.

Materials, equipment, and facilities should be provided in the educational sector, like libraries, laboratories, and workshops. Admission should be given when the person deserves it (Male, University student).

More technical colleges should be established and provide a conducive class for learning and sophisticated equipment in the school laboratory. Adequate funding of institutions and improved remuneration of lecturers. More support for industrious and successful students. Upgrading the education system to international standards (Male, University student),

Let us correct our foundation. Malpractice and bribery should be strongly detested at the primary and secondary levels. Teachers should stop taking bribes from students and demanding sex from female students for marks. Students who take their studies seriously in the foundational levels of education will not find it challenging. Students should be made to discharge their responsibilities well and actively. Students should be taught to hold education with high regard and value (Female, Secondary school student).

The students mentioned that the country's political, economic, and social systems should be improved. Young people should be allowed to participate in politics. educational system was repeatedly mentioned.

Our political system should be improved. The right leader should be allowed to lead. Our economy should be improved. There should be more internal production and less importation and borrowing.

We need good leaders, so the citizens should vote rightly. Youths should not allow corrupt politicians to pay for their voting right. Enough is enough. It is time to vote for younger people. The older people have failed us. What would an 80-year-old man be able to offer? Tribalism and religious sentiment should not form our bases for voting. We need good governance for Nigeria's economic and educational sector to improve (Female, University student).

The mindset of the students needs to be educated. Education is not all about getting a job. It is more than that. Society should enlighten on the need to value education and differentiate between ill-gotten and legally acquired money. It is wrong to measure success based on the amount of money you have (Female, Secondary school student).

Discussion

The study focused on what students meant by the slogan 'education/school is a scam', why they are saying so, and what can be done to stop them from that act. The findings of this study showed the various dimensions of the meaning of the slogan 'education/school is a scam'. According to the students, 'education/school is a scam' means uneducated people are doing better financially, graduates are unemployed, and graduates now learn skills from those without a university education. The slogan also means that employment is no longer by merit but by favouritism. The Nigerian educational system does not help its graduates become creative, and the gains from education are slower than fraud. The student's comments on the meaning of 'education/school is a scam' were in line with the explanations given by Eze (2019) and Ike (2019).

The study's findings also showed that most students were unsatisfied with the Nigerian educational system. However, only a quarter of the students agreed that Nigerian education is a scam or a scam to an extent. Even though the number of students who agree that education/school is a scam is relatively small, the percentage of students with these beliefs is worrisome. In an online opinion poll, most respondents agreed that school is not a scam but that the Nigerian schooling system is a scam (Ike, 2019). Our findings show that students feel education/schooling may not necessarily be a scam, but how education and schooling are done in Nigeria makes people think it is a scam. In another opinion poll, all the participants agreed that Nigeria's present formal institutions (schools) could not prepare individuals for the reality of life (Tomi, 2019).

Some of the reasons the students gave for saying education/school is a scam were the unemployment of graduates, the curriculum being incapable of preparing students for future challenges, and the government not showing enough concern in the education sector and not providing jobs for graduates. Adiele (2020) identified the reasons

for students saying that school/education is a scam as poor societal values, unemployment, and poor curriculum. Some studies identified inadequate infrastructural facilities, unstable academic calendars due to strike actions, academic corruption (malpractices), and poor governance as challenges the Nigerian schooling system faces (Bashar & Yasin, 2020; Ogunode & Musa, 2020).

Moreover, some students agreed that education/schooling is not a scam because education is not all about having a certificate or getting a job. However, that education helps to improve an individual's mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. However, research has shown that the more you are educated, the better your chances of employment (World Bank, 2018; Thielen et al., 2014; Barham, 2009). Education can reduce poverty and unemployment and improve nutrition (UNESCO, 2017, 2019). Schooling and education can only enhance employment, reduce poverty, and improve the well-being of individuals if education is properly done. Students should be taught in a way that they become more creative and able to acquire skills that can make them create jobs rather than wait for already created jobs. Education seems to widen social gaps in many developing countries instead of narrowing them (World Bank, 2018).

The students suggested that the government should provide work for graduates, and the curriculum should be more practically oriented toward skills acquisition. Also, the educational system needs to be restructured and improved. Materials, equipment and facilities should be provided, Examination malpractices should be checkmated, and the mindset of students should be reorientated to believe that they can create jobs for themselves rather than waiting for the government. Also, more youths should be allowed to participate in politics to get good leaders. The Nigerian government should provide adequate funding and infrastructural facilities, and strike actions should not linger on for long (Ogunode & Musa, 2020). Building more classrooms and restructuring the curriculum and learning pedagogies will remarkably improve the educational sector (Bashar & Yasin, 2020). Nigerian education should be re-engineered to achieve improved standards and socio-economic outcomes (Igwe et al., 2019).

The study has provided scientific evidence on what the slogan 'education/school is a scam' means to the Nigerian students who use the slogan. It has provided empirical evidence on why some Nigerian students are using this slogan and the ways to discourage these students from using this slogan were also studied. One of the implications of the study's findings is that the attitude of students towards schooling and education may be affected negatively, and some of them may drop out of school, thereby increasing the number of children currently out of school. Also, the desire to be involved in examination malpractices and illegal ways of getting rich quickly, like 'yahoo yahoo', may increase. Many students who use this slogan feel that illegal ways of earning money are faster than spending many years in the educational system and end up not being able to secure a job (Suleiman, 2019; Akanle et al., 2016). There is a need to tackle this situation as fast as possible because the implication of it on the country's educational, economic, social and security system is enormous. If this issue is not

well handled, kidnappings, fraud, and 'yahoo yahoo' will continue to increase in the country and may directly or indirectly affect other countries.

This study's limitations are, firstly, that the study was conducted in two selected states in Nigeria, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the sample of participants in this study was limited to students in tertiary institutions and secondary schools. Therefore, the study may not capture the perspectives of other groups, such as individuals who have dropped out of school or those who have never attended school. Additionally, convenience and purposive sampling techniques may have introduced selection bias and may not represent the broader population of students in the selected states. Thirdly, the study relied on self-report data, which may be subject to response and social desirability biases. Finally, the study's mixed-methods approach may have resulted in trade-offs between the depth and breadth of the data collected (the use of a semi-structured questionnaire). The qualitative data may provide rich insights into the factors contributing to students' perception of education as a scam but may not represent the broader population. The quantitative data may provide more comprehensive insights but may lack the depth of understanding that can be achieved through qualitative data. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's findings and addressed in future research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to students' perception of education as a scam in developing countries. However, the findings of this study are still relevant to populations with similar characteristics to the one used in this study.

Conclusion

The findings of this study can contribute to developing new or updating existing education theories to better account for the factors that influence students' attitudes and beliefs about education/schooling. This research has revealed a need for further studies on why students say education is a scam. The study findings imply that educators need to understand better the needs and expectations of students in developing countries and tailor their teaching methods and curriculum to meet these needs better. The research findings can inform and shape education policy by identifying areas where policy changes may be needed to improve the quality and relevance of education in developing countries. Therefore, we recommend upgrading the Nigerian education policy to factor in these implications.

The results of this study suggest that the slogan 'education/school is a scam' among students in two states in Nigeria means that the Nigerian educational system is not providing the necessary. There are many unemployed graduates in the country. A significant finding is that the students are using this slogan because many graduates are unemployed, and the government has failed to put the Nigerian educational system in an enviable position. Additionally, the students suggested that the government provide infrastructural facilities in the country's institutions and employment to unemployed graduates. A suitable curriculum that will encourage the development of critical thinking and skills

acquisition should be introduced in the country. While further study is needed in other states in the country to confirm our findings, this study has implications for policymakers, curriculum planners, and teachers. Education policy, curricula, and teaching methods should be tailored to meet the present needs of the learners.

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