

## ASTRONOMICAL INCREASE IN NUMBER OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: A CURSE OR A BLESSING?

<sup>1</sup>OKONTA, Vinella Ph.D

E-mail: [vokonta@delsu.edu.ng](mailto:vokonta@delsu.edu.ng)

<sup>2</sup>MOSES-PROMISE, Omonefe Jemilatu Ph.D

E-mail: [efemoes84@gmail.com](mailto:efemoes84@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>OSAKWE, Grace Nwamaka Ph.D<sup>3</sup>

E-mail: [osakweamaka@gmail.com](mailto:osakweamaka@gmail.com)

Department of Educational Management & Foundations  
Faculty of Education  
Delta State University  
Abraka

### Abstract

*This study was carried out to ascertain if astronomical increase in number of universities is a curse or a blessing to Nigeria. Two research questions and three hypotheses were raised as guide to the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey method of the ex post facto research design. The population comprised all 7 federal and 9 state owned universities and stakeholders in the six states making up the South South geo-political zone of the country. The sample comprised 240 respondents (120 from federal and 120 from state universities) randomly drawn from 6 (3 federal and 3 state) universities out of the total of 16 public universities on ground as at 2019. Data was collected with a self-developed questionnaire titled, "Astronomical Increase in Number of Public Universities Questionnaire (AINPUQ)" which was validated and subjected to reliability test using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics that yielded a coefficient of 0.70. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean ratings and standard deviation) for the research questions and inferential statistics (t-test) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings established amongst others that there were both positive and negative implications of astronomical increase in number of universities with those who believed that it is a blessing claiming that it opened up access to more admission places for the teaming youths; while those who believed that it is a curse claimed that quality education has been sacrificed on the altar of quantity. The study concluded that astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria has both positive and adverse effects on every stakeholder of the education sector. The study recommended amongst others that increase in universities should attract a corresponding increase in budgetary allocation to education; that government should make adequate provisions for existing universities before embarking on establishment of new ones and that ASUU's demand for revitalization of Nigerian universities should be favourably considered.*

**Keywords:** Astronomical increase, Universities, Politicization of education, Proliferation, Existing universities, New universities

### Introduction

There has been steady growth in Nigerian universities right from their inception. The increase in the number of universities is not unconnected to the fact that Nigeria and Nigerians (the government and its people) have come to the realization of the obvious fact that education especially higher education is the key to social, economic and political development of the country (Okonta, 2016). Again, another propelling force in proliferation of the country's universities is the idea of politicization of education (Nwadiani, 2000; Agabi, 2002; Babalola, 2022). Politicians have used location of universities in their ethnic zones as a —vote catching weapon during elections; and as a tool to immortalize themselves as many of these universities were created from political pronouncements without recourse to National Universities Commission's (NUC) advisory and supervisory roles before they are sited in very remote rural areas without the wherewithal for their smooth takeoff (Babalola, 2022). This seems to have become the norm.

Aribigbola (2022) noted that in the 1950s – 1980s, creation of universities was done after committees have been set up to justify and determine the need for such universities as well as determine their locations. Today, this good approach has been overtaken by political considerations as only those in the corridors of power dictates where universities should be sited.

Babalola (2022) pointed out that in establishing new universities, the functions of the NUC as spelt out in Section 4(1)(a) is to: —advise the President and the Governors on the creation of new universities and other degree-granting institutions in Nigeria. Again, Section 4 sub-section (1e) of the Act, also specified that the Commission is to —inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs of, both recurrent and capital, of university education in Nigeria and, in particular, study financial needs for research to enable the Commission provide adequately for the universities. These functions have been relegated to the background as more universities are established before the NUC sets out to do its due diligence.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria had 3 regions. Increases from 3 to 4 regions in 1963 and from 4 regions to 12 states in 1967 by the Yakubu Gowon led regime; then from 12 to 19 states in 1976 by Murtala Mohammed regime and from 19 to 21 in 1987 and 21 – 30 including the federal capital territory in 1991 by the Ibrahim Babangida regime and finally 6 additional states were created in 1996 by the Sani Abacha led regime (<https://www.legit.ng>) ushered in need for more and more universities to serve the teeming population across various regions and the states of the federation after their creation.

### **History of University Education in Nigeria to Present Day**

The history of university education in Nigeria dates back to 1943 when the Elliot Commission was set up to investigate and report on the higher institutions that could be established in British West African colonies; and the Asquith Commission which provided report on relationship that should exist among the proposed colonial university colleges and University of London (Abamba, 2018). It could be likened to the story of the ‘proverbial mustard seed’. With one University College, Ibadan in 1948, three regional universities between 1960 and 1962 located at Nsukka, Zaria and Ife; and a federal university at Lagos (1962); University of Ibadan having attained a full-fledged university status in December, 1962 became the fifth Nigerian university. The Mid-West Institute of Technology (MIT), Benin which was initially established in 1970 became the University of Benin and Nigeria’s sixth university in 1972. These six universities are generally known as Nigeria’s first generation universities (Okecha, 2008; Otonko, 2012; and Wikipedia, 2022). Otonko (2012) citing Nwangwu (2003) reported that during the years 1975 – 1980, seven universities were established by government. These include Universities of Sokoto, Ilorin, Calabar, Jos, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri and Ado Bayero University, Kano. These were the second generation universities. Between 1980 and 1990, the third generation universities were created. They include Federal Universities of Technologies at Akure, Bauchi, Makurdi, Owerri and Yola. Also, states sited their universities in Cross River, Lagos, Ondo, Imo, Oyo and Akwa-Ibom States. The fourth generation universities comprised all those that were opened from 1991 to date. These are Nigerian National Open University, many of the federal and state universities, and all the private universities. Currently, Nigeria has 217 universities made up of 49 federal, 57 state and 111 private universities (Adamu, 2022).

### **Public Reactions on Astronomical Increase in Number of Universities**

The argument on whether the creation of new universities in Nigeria by both federal and state governments has been a curse or blessing in disguise is a very contentious one. Sheyin (2020) reported that while some Nigerians believe that the nation’s 200 million people deserve even more universities, others have argued that more attention should be paid to strengthening existing ones to meet required standards and boost the quality of graduates. Stakeholders who are opposed to and those in support of proliferation of universities have pointed out their divergent views on this issue.

Babalola (2022) believes that the creation of two new universities in Lagos state by Governor Sanwo-Olu led administration may seem laudable yet it calls for a great concern in view of government’s confessed inability to revive the education sector, yet they are creating state universities around the country without regard to the issue of funding, provision of infrastructure and payment of staff emoluments. In another development, the author supported ASUU’s National President, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke when he stated

that the Federal Government has been toying with Nigerian future as they have turned universities to constituency projects, making village to have higher institutions for political reasons and not for academic excellence. Sheyin (2020), Aribigbola (2022) and Babalola (2022) condemned the present trend noting that Nigerian universities are not developing optimally; yet government is establishing new specialised universities such as the University of Transportation, Daura, and that of Medical Sciences amongst others, which ought to be faculties or departments in existing universities.

To Aribigbola (2022), upgrading colleges of education and polytechnics into universities is wrong as the author believed that Nigeria equally needs these types of education for the production of middle-level manpower. Extermination of these middle-level income earners will all things being equal reduce economic growth of the nation for they are very essential for medium and small scale businesses that are critical to national development.

Given the present circumstances of protracted strikes and inadequate funding in the nation's tertiary educational system, Abati (2022) noted that there is no doubt that every tertiary educational institution is a creation of the law but it would amount to gross stupidity for lawmakers to deliberate over the possible creation by law of additional tertiary institutions in Nigeria. To him, part of ASUU's demands, is that Nigerian universities should be rationalized as there are too many; thus reducing the standards of education. They want improved quality education. According to him, university lecturers object to establishment of universities at every corner of the nation without provision of adequate infrastructure to sustain them. The nation does not require additional tertiary institutions; as he sees recklessness establishment of extra tertiary institutions through legislation as annoying. Akpotu (2018) and Babalola (2022) citing Malcolm X stressed that the passport for a better future is education and that only the people who provide a better education today will reap its benefits tomorrow. So, this should remind Nigerians that they should prepare for the kind of education which should usher in the much needed national development. In support of the above submissions, Aribigbola (2022) stressed that ASUU's strike has been hinged on the deplorable conditions in the nation's universities because of poor funding, yet new universities are built by government with impunity even in the face of prevailing unenviable positions of the public Nigerian universities. This is an evil wind that will blow the country and its citizens no good as the resources that would have been ploughed into making existing universities world-class institutions are being scattered in the citing and running of 'mushroom universities' in every nick and crannies of our country.

On the opinion of the general public, university staff and stakeholders who are in support of establishments of more universities in Nigeria, Sheyin (2020) reported that the Executive Secretary of NUC, Prof Abubakar Rasheed stated that the university system is growing and there is need for more universities to come on board as the existing ones could no longer cope with the large number of yearly applicants for admission. In support of his earlier submission on the need for more universities in Nigeria, Rasheed (2022) stated that 1,415,501 candidates applied for the 2020 Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). Out of this figure, only 527,929 representing 37.2% gained admission into Nigerian universities. So, to him, increase in the number of universities is a necessity and a blessing to Nigeria. Governor Okowa of Delta State at the issuance of letter of recognition for the establishment of three new universities for Delta State by the NUC (2021) stated that outside the huge numbers of applicants seeking admission places yearly, the local economy would benefit from the establishment of additional universities in Delta as they would increase employment opportunities for the teaming graduates.

Still in support of more universities, the Minister for Education, Adamu (2022) at the issuance of licences to twelve private universities pointed out that as long as the access gap in university education and its attendant enrollment of students far outweighs the carrying capacity in the university system persists, government would continue to welcome proposals for the creation of more universities from credible organizations and groups. He gave the number of Nigerian universities to be 217 (49 federal, 57 state and 111 private). Furthermore, he noted that Nigeria being the largest African economy with a population forecast of about 400 million by 2050, there was a valid need to create more universities. He cited examples with countries such as Indonesia having population of 272 million and 3,162 universities; South Korea 51 million people and 203 universities; Vietnam having about 97 million people with 185 universities amongst others. Again, he asserted that Nigeria dropped 3 places to 161 out of 189 countries

and territories in the 2020 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI); and there is need for us to improve this HDI ranking as countries that have done well consistently in their HDIs are those that have maintained appreciable number of universities in relation to their population.

Despite the objection to the creation of additional universities, some vice chancellors, professors and other stakeholders believe that there is need for these universities. They believe that these universities will take care of the many applicants that are denied admission yearly. Some believe that a way out is to form specialised universities. Even those who support the establishment of more universities advocate for parity between university degrees and higher national diploma holders and believe that recognition of qualifications such as HND obtained from polytechnics and similar institutions is a way of reducing the clamour for university education.

On the impact of creating new universities, Isuku (2022) noted that proliferation in the face of dwindling financial input from government has serious implications for cost and quality. To him, for government to claim its inability to efficiently run existing universities while at the same time establishing new ones is just irrational. It would be better to plough the finances used in opening new universities into existing ones for them to be able to produce the quantity and quality of graduates that can compete globally. He argued that with sufficient funding, older universities can absorb and enlarge access through increasing enrollment and lowering cost. On his part, Akinwumi (2010) enumerated the implications of proliferation of institutions of higher learning to include threat to quality education as there would be no corresponding increase in resources and facilities; threat to quality staffing; and threat to adequate funding because of government's refusal to increase budgetary allocation to education; so the available amount would be shared amongst all the existing public higher educational institutions within the country.

### Statement of the Problem

The argument on whether the establishments of more universities by both federal and state governments in Nigeria have been a curse or blessing in disguise is a very contentious one. One school of thought believes that with over two million applicants seeking admission into the nation's universities on yearly basis, building more and more universities should be a blessing considering the improvement in the quantity of candidates to be admitted yearly; while the other school of thought believes that with governments' proclaimed inability to adequately fund the older universities on ground, establishing new ones will be inadvisable and as such a curse in an already bad situation. These arguments were what prompted the researcher to undertake this study. Therefore, this study was carried out to critically examine the astronomical increase in number of public universities in Nigeria; whether it is a curse or a blessing to the nation in general and the tertiary education subsector in particular.

### Research Questions

1. What is the public perception of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between male and female respondents' perception on astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between university staff and stakeholders' perception on astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference between male and female respondents' opinion on implications of astronomical increases in number of universities in Nigeria.

### Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey design as it sought to elicit and describe information from a representative sample of public university staff and stakeholders in the South South geo-political zone in Nigeria. The population comprised all federal and state universities academic (11,785) and non-academic (27,597) staff numbering 39,382 (NUC, 2019) and stakeholders in the geo-political zone. The random sampling technique was used to select 6 (3 federal and 3 state) universities from the 7 federal and 9 state universities within the six states of the federation that make up the South South, Nigeria as at 2019.

From each of these universities, 40 respondents comprising 10 male and 10 female staff; and 10 male and 10 female stakeholders were selected as sample for the study. This gave a total figure of 240 respondents; that is, 120 from federal and 120 from state universities.

A self-developed questionnaire titled —Astronomical Increase in Number of Public Universities Questionnaire (AINPUQ) was used as instrument for collection of data. It was made up of two sections. Section —A contained demographic data of respondents; while Section —B contained questionnaire items on university staff and stakeholders' perceptions on astronomical increases in Nigerian public universities. This section is further divided into two – Respondents' perceptions and Respondents' opinions on the implications of astronomical increase in number of universities respectively. Four-point Likert scale was used in the rating of respondents' perceptions and opinions. Two experts in Measurement and Evaluation validated the instrument which was further subjected to reliability test using 30 respondents that were not part of the population for the study. Test-retest was adopted and the scores were computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and a Coefficient of .70 was obtained. This indicated a high reliability index. Data obtained from respondents were analysed with descriptive statistics – mean ratings and standard deviation to provide answers to the research questions using 2.50 mean as benchmark. Inferential statistics – t-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the public perception of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean Rating on Public Perception on Astronomical Increase in Nigerian Universities**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Astronomical increase in universities is of a great advantage to applicants seeking admission places.	3.07	.91	Agreed
2.	It is of great advantage to job seekers	3.20	.81	Agreed
3.	Increased number of universities are created to aggrandize the politicians in power.	2.93	1.07	Agreed
4.	Universities are built as constituency projects by politicians.	2.90	.88	Agreed
5.	Public universities are created by governments for political reasons instead of educational considerations.	3.14	.79	Agreed
6.	Governments establish new universities with due recourse to NUC's guidelines.	2.30	.92	Disagreed
7.	Universities are established with due regard to adequate provision of infrastructural facilities.	2.41	.98	Disagreed
8.	University staff do not support astronomical increase in universities.	2.50	.94	Agreed
9.	University stakeholders support increase in Nigerian universities.	2.86	.79	Agreed
10.	ASUU support astronomical increase in universities.	2.29	1.08	Disagreed
11.	Older universities are adequately funded.	1.46	.58	Disagreed
12.	Newly created universities are adequately funded.	1.93	.91	Disagreed
13.	Proliferation of universities affects quality of education.	2.80	1.06	Agreed
14.	Some states that cannot pay staff salaries for one university are establishing more.	3.17	.89	Agreed
15.	Expenditures on newer universities could be channeled into expansion and provision of teaching facilities in older ones.	3.30	.79	Agreed

The data as presented in Table 1 shows that the mean scores of ten (10) of the fifteen (15) items range from 2.50 to 3.30. Respondents agreed that astronomical increase in universities is of a great advantage to applicants seeking admission places and job seekers; that universities are established to aggrandize the politicians in power; that they are established as constituency projects by politicians; that public universities are created by governments for political reasons instead of educational considerations; that university staff do not support astronomical increase in number of universities, while stakeholders are in support; that proliferation of universities affects quality of education; that some states that cannot pay staff salaries for one university are establishing more; and that expenditures on newer universities could be channeled into expansion and provision of teaching facilities in older ones (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 14

and 15). The table also indicated that with mean scores ranging from 1.46 to 2.41, respondents disagreed that governments establish new universities with due recourse to NUC's guidelines; that these universities are created with due regard to adequate provision of infrastructural facilities; that ASUU support astronomical increase in number of universities; that older universities are adequately funded; and that newly established universities are adequately funded (items 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12).

**Research Question 2:** What are the implications of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean Rating on Implications of Astronomical Increase in Universities in Nigeria**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
16.	More applicants secure admission places annually.	3.47	.68	Agreed
17.	Offers the public opportunities for increased human capital development.	3.23	.63	Agreed
18.	Offers the public more job opportunities at university level.	3.23	.57	Agreed
19.	Offers working adults the opportunity to acquire university degrees.	3.10	.48	Agreed
20.	Increases the manpower production level of university sector.	3.07	.60	Agreed
21.	Meets the people's academic needs.	3.00	1.00	Agreed
22.	Leads to government's inability to fund both old and new universities.	2.80	1.10	Agreed
23.	Leads to lowering of academic standards.	2.57	.85	Agreed
24.	Leads to poor provision and maintenance of learning infrastructures.	3.13	.8	Agreed
25.	Encourages infrastructural decay in universities within Nigeria.	3.28	.70	Agreed
26.	Reduces the number of qualified academics teaching in the various existing universities.	2.77	.89	Agreed
27.	Affects the productivity of senior academics as they shuttle as visiting lecturers to the newly created universities.	3.20	.66	Agreed

Table 2 shows that with mean scores ranging from 2.57 to 3.47, respondents agreed to all twelve (12) items on the implications of astronomical increase in universities. They agreed that more applicants secure admission annually; that the public would have opportunities for increased human capital development; that there would be additional job opportunities at university level; that working adults have more opportunities to acquire university degrees; that the manpower production level of university sector would be increased; that the people's academic needs are met; that it leads to government's inability to fund both old and new universities; that academic standards are lowered; that there would be poor provision and maintenance of learning infrastructures; that it encourages infrastructural decay; that it reduces the number of qualified academics teaching in the various existing universities; and affects the productivity level of senior academics as they shuttle as visiting lecturers to the newly established universities.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between male and female respondents' perception on astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.

**Table 3: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Respondents' Perception on Astronomical Increase in Number of Universities in Nigeria**

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Male	112	2.60	.90	238	-.709	±1.96	Not Significant
Female	128	2.66	1.06				

Table 3 showed the t-test analysis of male and female respondents' perception on astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria. The table presented that male respondents were 112 with a mean score of 2.60 and SD of .90; while the female respondents were 128 with a mean score of 2.66 and SD of 1.06. With a t-calculated value of -.709 greater than the t-critical value of -1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that significant difference does not exist in the perception of male and female respondents on astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between university staff and stakeholders' perception on astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.

**Table 4: t-test Analysis of University Staff and Stakeholders Respondents' Perception on Astronomical Increase in Nigerian Universities**

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
University Staff	137	3.29	.99	238	-.677	+1.96	Not Significant
Stakeholders	103	3.37	1.03				

Table 4 presented the t-test analysis of university staff and stakeholders respondents' perception on astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria. The table showed that university staff respondents were 137 with a mean score of 3.29 and SD of .99; while stakeholders' respondents were 103 with a mean score of 3.37 and SD of 1.03. The table showed a t-calculated value of -.677 which is greater than the t-critical value of -1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between university staff and stakeholders' respondents' perception on astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria was retained. This implies that significant difference does not exist in the university staff and stakeholders' respondents' perception on astronomical increase in Nigerian universities.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference between male and female respondents' opinion on implications of astronomical increases in number of universities in Nigeria.

**Table 5: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Respondents' Opinion on Implications of Astronomical Increase in Nigerian Universities**

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Male	112	2.90	.81	238	-2.152	+1.96	Significant
Female	128	3.15	1.07				

Table 5 showed the t-test analysis of male and female respondents' opinion on implications of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria. The table indicated that there were 112 male respondents with a mean score of 2.90 and SD of .81; while the female respondents were 128 with a mean score of 3.15 and SD of 1.07. With a t-calculated value of -2.152 less than the t-critical value of -1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents' opinion on implications of astronomical increase in number of universities was rejected. This implied that there was indeed a significant difference between male and female respondents' opinion on implications of astronomical increase in number of universities in Nigeria.

### Discussion of Results

The findings revealed that the public perception on astronomical increase in universities is of a great advantage to applicants seeking admission places and job seekers. This supported the views of Adamu (2022), Rasheed (2022) and Okowa in NUC (2021) who submitted that establishment of additional universities will usher in the much-needed admission places and open up employment opportunities for the nation's teeming graduates. Findings equally showed that universities were established to dignify the politicians in power who use these institutions as constituency projects that were established for political reasons rather than giving educational considerations to this very important issue. This finding supports the assertions of Nwadiani (2002); Agabi (2002) and Babalola (2022) who asserted that politicians have used establishment of these new universities as a 'vote catching weapon' during elections and as a means of immortalizing themselves. Findings also showed that proliferation of universities affects quality of education; that some states that cannot pay staff salaries for one university are establishing more; and that expenditures on newer universities could be channeled into expansion and provision of teaching facilities in older ones. These findings support the views of Akinwumi (2010), Isuku (2022) and Babalola (2022) when they submitted that increases in number of higher educational institutions breed threat to quality education as there is no corresponding increase in resources and facilities; threat to quality staffing; and threat to adequate funding as the available amount would be shared amongst all the existing public higher educational institutions in the country. It equally showed that a cross section of the public perceive that governments established new universities without due recourse to NUC; and as such, universities are created without due regard to provision of adequate infrastructural facilities. This negates the views of Babalola (2022) and Aribigbola (2022) when the authors noted that in the past, creation of universities was done after committees set up to justify, investigate and determine if there is need for such universities as

well as ascertain where they are to be located have submitted their reports. To them, this process has been overtaken by political considerations since those in the corridors of power – those at the helm of affairs - are the only people empowered to dictate where universities should be sited. Findings also showed that university staff especially ASUU are not in support of astronomical increase in universities. This supports the views of Abati (2022), Aribigbola (2022) and Babalola (2022) who pointed out that ASUU strikes over the years have been hinged on their demand that Nigerian universities should be rationalized since they are so many, and are in very poor quality conditions because of poor funding which is resulting in the lowering of standards. It equally revealed that older and newly established universities are inadequately funded. This supports Isuku (2022) when he pointed out that with sufficient funding, older universities can absorb and enlarge access through increasing enrolment and lowering of costs instead of establishing new universities. Also, hypothesis one and two when male and female; and even university staff and stakeholders' respondents respectively were considered, findings showed that significant difference do not exist in the perception of male and female; and even that of university staff and stakeholders' respondents towards astronomical increase in universities. This implied that the male, female, university staff and stakeholders' respondents were almost unanimous in their perceptions towards astronomical increase in universities.

The second finding revealed the opinion of respondents on the implications of astronomical increase in number of universities to include the fact that more applicants will secure admission annually; that the public would have opportunities for increased human capital development; that they would be more job opportunities at university level; that working adults have more opportunities to acquire university degrees; that the manpower production level of university sector would be increased; that the academic needs of the people are met. These findings support the views of Okowa (2021), Adamu (2022) and Rasheed (2022) when they outlined the benefits of creating more public universities to include increased access to admission seekers yearly, employment opportunities and improvement in the general economy of people which invariably affects the country. Findings also indicated that increase in universities leads to governments' inability to fund both existing and new universities; that academic standards are lowered; that there would be poor provision and maintenance of learning infrastructures; that it encourages infrastructural decay; that it reduces the qualified academics in existing universities; and affects the productivity level of senior academics as they shuttle as visiting lecturers to the new universities. These findings support the views of Akinwumi (2010) and Isuku (2022) who posited that increasing universities without stable financial support from government has very serious quality and cost implications. To them, government should sufficiently cater for existing institutions for them to be able to turn out enough quantity and quality graduates who will be able to compete globally. Again for hypothesis three, findings further revealed that significant difference existed in the opinion of male and female respondents on the implications of astronomical increase in universities; with females having a mean score of 3.15 as against the male mean score of 2.90. This implied that the female respondents were more favourably disposed to the implications of astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria.

### Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it has been established that astronomical increase in universities in Nigeria has both positive and adverse effects on every stakeholder of the education sector. Those who perceive it in a positive light, see it as a blessing and the only way through which the country can open up access to university education, increase opportunities for employment for the economic wellbeing of the teeming youths and improve the Nigeria's HDI. For those who perceive the idea of astronomical increase in universities as a curse in a country already in a bad situation, they see it as a way of establishing more universities than the federal and state governments can cater for; a way of breeding half-baked and unemployable graduates. Again, they see it as a way of sacrificing quality for quantity considering the enormous figures of ill-trained and ill-equipped graduates that were being turned out from the nation's universities.

### Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that:

- 1) Government should make adequate provisions for existing universities before embarking on planting new ones.

- 2) If astronomical increase in public universities should be seen as a blessing in Nigeria, this increase should attract a corresponding increase in budgetary allocations to the sector to enable the universities adequately train and turn out quality graduates that would contribute to the social, economic and political development of Nigeria.

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