STUDENTS' FALSE ALLEGATIONS AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in two public universities in Delta State. Guided by one research question and one null hypothesis, the study adopted a correlational survey design. A total of 240 lecturers were sampled from the University of Delta, Agbor and Southern Delta University, Ozoro using stratified random sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires adapted from standardised instruments the WIS for students' false allegations and the MSQ for job satisfaction with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 and 0.90, respectively. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product moment correlation were used for analysis. Findings revealed a very weak and non-significant negative relationship between students' false allegations and lecturers' job satisfaction ($r = -0.044$, $p = 0.499$), indicating that such allegations do not significantly influence overall job satisfaction. Based on the findings, the study recommends that universities implement clear complaint-handling procedures, provide stress management and counselling support, and enhance working conditions to promote lecturers' professional wellbeing.

Keywords: *students' false allegations, job satisfaction, university lecturers, public universities, Delta State, academic staff wellbeing.*

Introduction

Universities are widely regarded as spaces where knowledge is created, ethical values are developed, and future professionals are shaped. At the core of these functions lies the relationship between those who teach and those who learn. The effectiveness of teaching and learning processes depends significantly on the level of trust that exists between lecturers and students. Such trust fosters open communication, encourages constructive feedback, and promotes a shared commitment to academic goals. When trust is present, both lecturers and students are more likely to engage meaningfully in the educational process, thereby strengthening the overall academic environment.

Although contemporary discussions of trust in higher education often emphasize areas such as technology adoption and institutional collaborations, interpersonal trust within the university particularly between lecturers and students remains fundamental. Recent research shows that positive student–staff relationships built on trust enhance engagement, academic cooperation, and the overall learning experience, while strained relationships weaken participation and academic outcomes (Pedler et al., 2022). This form of trust supports cooperation, enhances academic engagement, and contributes to a positive professional climate. Conversely, when trust is eroded, the academic environment becomes strained, potentially disrupting effective teaching and learning and weakening the broader educational experience.

While universities are often seen primarily as centers for knowledge production, they are also workplaces where the wellbeing of lecturers directly shapes the quality of teaching and learning. In higher education, job satisfaction plays a key role in determining outcomes such as productivity, commitment, and the overall effectiveness of academic work. Research indicates that lecturers who are satisfied with their roles tend to be more motivated, remain committed to their institutions, and engage actively in both teaching and research, which ultimately enhances student learning and

institutional performance. On the other hand, dissatisfaction among academic staff has been linked to lower morale, reduced effort in teaching, and higher turnover intentions, all of which can weaken institutional effectiveness and negatively impact student achievement (Stephen, 2024). Studies from a range of higher education contexts further show that job satisfaction is not only a personal psychological state but also a critical organizational resource, influencing lecturers' professional engagement, emotional wellbeing, and willingness to contribute to institutional goals (Safria, Husen & Suparno 2025; Tavárez de Henríquez & Domínguez Valerio, 2023). Understanding the factors that affect job satisfaction is therefore essential, as satisfied lecturers are more likely to demonstrate sustained commitment, deliver high-quality instruction, and foster productive professional relationships within their universities.

One factor that can negatively affect job satisfaction among university lecturers is the experience of student accusations, particularly when these claims are unfounded. In this context, false accusations can be understood as allegations made by students against lecturers that are not supported by credible evidence or that are later shown to be unsubstantiated or baseless. Although formal complaint mechanisms are important for ensuring accountability and protecting student rights, research shows that some complaints lack a solid basis, often arising from misunderstandings about academic standards or disagreements over teaching practices (Xu & Wang 2023). Even when these allegations are not substantiated, they can leave lecturers in vulnerable professional positions, especially in institutions where complaint procedures are slow, unclear, or inconsistently applied. Studies suggest that facing ambiguous or unjustified complaints increases stress, creates role conflicts, and fosters perceptions of organizational unfairness, all of which are linked to lower job satisfaction among academic staff (Heffernan,2023). Reports from the media further confirm that false allegations, while not common, do occur and can have serious professional and emotional consequences for lecturers (The Times, 2024). These circumstances underline the fine line between legitimate student concerns and unfounded accusations and highlight the importance of understanding how such experiences affect lecturers' workplace wellbeing and professional effectiveness.

Beyond the experience of student accusations, the way institutions respond to such complaints raises further concerns for lecturers' job satisfaction and overall wellbeing. In many universities, complaint-handling processes are not only intended to address student grievances but also to protect the institution's credibility and public image. This can sometimes result in responses that appear cautious or defensive, particularly when complaints have the potential to affect the institution's reputation. Research shows that universities are under increasing pressure to maintain legitimacy, attract students, and sustain public trust, and this pressure can shape how complaints are handled and resolved (Downes, 2017). More recent studies also suggest that institutions often have to balance the need to protect their reputation with the responsibility to ensure fairness, creating a tension between organizational interests and ethical obligations (Humbert & Strid, 2025).

At the same time, although complaint systems are designed to give students a voice, they may unintentionally create an imbalance in how credibility is perceived, with student claims sometimes given more weight. This is particularly evident in systems influenced by consumer-oriented approaches to education. There is also evidence that complaint-handling processes are not always consistent or transparent, raising concerns about fairness and due process for lecturers (Harris, 2018). In addition, studies on student complaint behaviour show that accusations and blame are common in such interactions, often placing lecturers in a position where they must respond defensively, even when the issues raised are unclear or disputed (El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2023).

Taken together, these issues suggest that institutional responses to student accusations are not always neutral. Instead, they are shaped by broader concerns such as reputation, accountability, and internal power relations within the university system. This can leave lecturers feeling professionally exposed or insufficiently supported, especially when dealing with unclear or unfounded complaints. It also points to a deeper structural issue the tension between protecting student interests and ensuring

fairness to lecturers which deserves closer empirical attention, particularly in relation to its implications for job satisfaction and professional functioning.

Heffernan (2023), in the study titled Abusive comments in student evaluations of courses and teaching: The attacks women and marginalised academics endure adopted a mixed-method design combining quantitative analysis of student evaluation data with qualitative interpretation of comments from academics across higher education institutions. The study found that student feedback often contains abusive, accusatory, and sometimes unfounded claims against lecturers, which negatively affect their emotional wellbeing, professional identity, and overall job satisfaction. These findings suggest that even informal forms of student accusations can function as psychological stressors that reduce lecturers' satisfaction with their roles.

Research studies on students' false accusations and job satisfaction among university lecturers consistently show that student's false accusation negatively affects the jo satisfaction of lecturers. For example, El-Dakhs and Ahmed (2023) conducted a quantitative discourse analysis study titled Student complaint behaviour in higher education, examining patterns in student complaints within university settings. The study found that student complaints frequently contain elements of blame and accusation, often placing lecturers in defensive positions. This persistent exposure to accusatory interactions was associated with increased stress, perceptions of injustice, and reduced job satisfaction among lecturers.

Nassar et al. (2022), in their qualitative study Does students' satisfaction matter to faculty job satisfaction in higher education? used critical incident interviews involving student–lecturer interactions. The findings showed that lecturers' job satisfaction is strongly influenced by student behaviour, particularly negative or conflictual interactions. Lecturers reported that unfair criticism and accusatory student responses diminished their morale and reduced their enthusiasm for teaching.

Doerfler et al. (2021), in the study Internet-facilitated harassment and its impact on researchers, employed a qualitative interview design with academics who had experienced online harassment and accusations. The study found that such experiences led to emotional distress, fear, and reputational damage, all of which negatively influenced job satisfaction and professional engagement. This suggests that misconduct-related accusations, even when unverified, can have lasting psychological and occupational consequences.

Harris (2018), in the study the resolution of student complaints in higher education institutions, adopted a legal and policy analysis approach to examine complaint-handling processes in universities. The study found that complaint procedures are not always transparent or consistent, which can create perceptions of unfairness among lecturers. This lack of procedural clarity may increase frustration and reduce job satisfaction, particularly when lecturers feel that accusations are not adequately investigated.

Cuc, Minh, and Tu (2024), in their study Occupational stress of university lecturers, used a theoretical and analytical review approach to examine sources of stress among academic staff. The findings identified workplace stressors including negative student interactions and conflict as major contributors to anxiety, emotional strain, and reduced job satisfaction among lecturers.

Finally, a recent study by Kim & Maijan (2024), titled "An exploration process on job satisfaction in higher education" which employed a quantitative design with a sample of 450 university lecturers using path analysis. The findings showed that stress and burnout significantly reduce job satisfaction, with workplace conflicts and pressures acting as key predictors of dissatisfaction.

While research on lecturers' job satisfaction and student complaints is well established, studies that focus specifically on students' false allegations remain scarce. Most existing work addresses general stressors, student feedback, or complaints in higher education (Heffernan, 2023; El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2023), but very few examine how unfounded accusations affect lecturers' morale, commitment, and overall workplace wellbeing. This gap is particularly noticeable in Nigerian universities, where formal complaint processes and institutional support may differ from other contexts, leaving little understanding of the professional and emotional impact on academic staff.

Empirical evidence within Nigerian higher education suggests that lecturers' job satisfaction is highly sensitive to workplace stressors, particularly those arising from interpersonal and institutional tensions. Although studies rarely isolate false student accusations as a standalone variable, existing

Nigerian research provides indirect but compelling evidence linking student-related pressures, grievance systems, and perceived injustice to reduced job satisfaction.

For instance, Nosike, et al (2023) examined the effect of employee grievance on performance at Nnamdi Azikiwe University using a survey research design involving academic staff. The study found that perceived unfair practices and unresolved grievances significantly influenced job dissatisfaction and reduced job commitment among lecturers. This finding is particularly relevant because student accusations especially when unverifiedoften enter the institutional system as formal grievances. When such grievances are poorly handled or prematurely believed, they can mirror the "perceived unfair practices" identified in the study, thereby undermining lecturers' job satisfaction. The present study extends this by focusing specifically on false accusations as a source of grievance-induced dissatisfaction.

Similarly, Osifila and Abimbola (2020) investigated workload and lecturers' job satisfaction in Adekunle Ajasin University using a descriptive survey design with 105 lecturers. The study revealed that excessive workload particularly tasks tied to student activities such as marking scripts and supervising projects significantly reduced job satisfaction. This is critical: student-related demands already strain lecturers' satisfaction levels. When false accusations are added to this burden, they compound stress and may further erode satisfaction. Thus, the current study builds on this by introducing false accusations as an additional psychological workload affecting lecturers.

In another Nigerian study, Aguwa, Shu, and Conable (2024) examined burnout and job satisfaction among lecturers in public universities in Enugu State using a cross-sectional design with 392 lecturers. The findings revealed a high prevalence of low job satisfaction, largely driven by poor working conditions, psychological stress, and unfavorable work environments. False accusations can be conceptualized within this framework as a psychosocial stressor that contributes to burnout. When lecturers operate under fear of allegations or reputational damage, their emotional exhaustion increases, thereby reducing job satisfaction. The present study advances this line of inquiry by identifying student false accusations as a specific trigger of such stress.

Furthermore, Ezema-Kalu (2023) investigated the influence of psychosocial factors on lecturers' job effectiveness in Nigerian universities using a survey approach. The study found that workplace stress arising from student demands, institutional pressures, and social interactions significantly affects both job effectiveness and satisfaction. This study is particularly important because it explicitly identifies student-related interactions as a source of stress. Within this interactional space, false accusations may emerge as extreme forms of negative encounters. Consequently, such experiences can disrupt lecturers' emotional stability and reduce satisfaction with their job roles. The present study refines this by isolating false accusations as a distinct psychosocial factor influencing job satisfaction and task efficiency.

The Nigerian higher education context presents unique cultural and institutional realities that make this issue locally urgent. Universities often operate within hierarchical structures, where power dynamics between students, faculty, and administration can influence how complaints are handled and whose voice is given priority. Lecturers may therefore be particularly vulnerable when faced with baseless allegations, especially in institutions where responses are shaped more by reputational concerns than fair treatment. In Delta State, public universities face additional pressures related to funding, student enrollment, and community expectations, making it critical to understand how false student accusations influence lecturers' job satisfaction.

These unfounded allegations, when treated as credible, can undermine motivation, reduce commitment, and compromise professional effectiveness. They may also trigger stress, frustration, and emotional withdrawal, while eroding trust in institutional processes. Despite these serious implications for staff wellbeing and teaching quality, empirical research on the effects of false student accusations in Nigerian universities remains extremely limited, highlighting a pressing need for

focused, context-specific studies. Addressing this gap is essential to safeguard lecturers' professional functioning and the overall quality of higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State.

Beyond examining this relationship, the study makes a distinct contribution by isolating students' false allegations as a specific psychosocial stressor within the academic environment. Unlike prior studies that generally focus on student complaints, workplace stress, or occupational burnout, this study directs attention to the unique and often overlooked impact of *false* allegations on lecturers' job satisfaction. It therefore provides a more precise understanding of how such experiences shape lecturers' emotional well-being, professional attitudes, and satisfaction with their work in Nigerian universities.

Research Question

What is the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State?

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

There is a significant negative relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State.

Method

This study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers. The correlational approach was selected because it allows for the investigation of naturally occurring relationships between variables without manipulating the academic environment, making it appropriate for understanding workplace dynamics in universities.

The population for this study comprised all academic staff in two public universities in Delta State, Nigeria: University of Delta, Agbor (UNIDEL) and Southern Delta University, Ozoro (SDU), with an estimated total population of approximately 600 lecturers across various faculties and academic ranks.

To determine an appropriate sample size, Taro Yamane's (1967) formula was applied, resulting in a sample size of 240 lecturers. Of this, 140 lecturers were drawn from UNIDEL, while 100 were selected from SDU using proportional allocation based on the size of each institution's academic staff population.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation across academic ranks and disciplines. The population was stratified into three categories based on academic rank: Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II/Assistant Lecturer cadre, Lecturer I/Senior Lecturer cadre, and Associate Professor/Professor cadre. Within each university, the sample was proportionally distributed across these strata to reflect their actual population sizes. Respondents within each stratum were then selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal chance of inclusion.

Table 1: *Sample Distribution Across Institutions and Academic Ranks*

Institution	Assistant Lecturer	Lecturer II	Lecturer I	Senior Lecturer	Professor	Total
UNIDEL	28	34	30	32	16	140
SDU	20	24	22	22	12	100
Total	48	58	52	54	28	240

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted at Dennis Osadebey University, Asaba with 30 lecturers. The pilot aimed to assess the clarity, relevance, and reliability of the research

instruments. Feedback from the pilot informed refinements to the questionnaires, ensuring that the items were understood consistently and were appropriate for the study context.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires adapted from standardized instruments. The independent variable, students' false allegations, was measured using an adapted version of the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) developed by Cortina et al. (2001), modified to reflect lecturers' experiences of unfounded student complaints and accusations in academic settings. The original scale items focusing on general workplace disrespect were reworded to capture student-to-lecturer interactions involving false or unverified allegations. Specifically, items referring to "uncivil behaviours" were adapted into statements reflecting experiences such as unjustified complaints, unfounded accusations, and misleading reports made by students against lecturers. A total of 12 items were retained from the original scale, and the modified version was reviewed by experts in educational psychology to ensure content relevance and clarity. The factor structure of the original instrument was assumed to be retained due to the preservation of its core dimensions, although the items were contextualised to the higher education environment.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) Short Form developed by Weiss et al. (1967), which assesses intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction. The MSQ has been widely validated and used in higher education and organisational studies due to its strong psychometric properties. Both instruments were administered using a Likert-scale format and were deemed appropriate for measuring lecturers' perceptions of workplace experiences and job satisfaction.

The reliability of the adapted instruments was established during the pilot exercise. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the students' false allegation scale was 0.87, and that for the job satisfaction scale was 0.90, indicating high internal consistency and confirming that the measures were reliable for the main study.

Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process. Lecturers were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and given the option to participate voluntarily. Data collection was conducted in ways that respected participants' schedules and preferences, including both physical and electronic delivery of questionnaires.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the level of students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers. These descriptive statistics provided a summary of respondents' perceptions of the study variables.

The null hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers. The decision rule was based on a 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean and standard deviation of the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria*

Variables	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Students'False Allegations	240	2.56	0.31
Job Satisfaction	240	2.51	0.25

The results presented in Table 1 show that students' false allegations recorded a mean score of (M = 2.56, SD = 0.31), while job satisfaction recorded a mean score of (M = 2.51, SD = 0.25). Both

variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Based on this scale range, the mean scores fall within the midpoint of the distribution, indicating moderate levels of students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers. The relatively low standard deviation values further suggest that respondents' views were closely clustered around the mean, indicating a high level of agreement among participants.

This implies that lecturers generally reported a similar perception of both the presence of student false allegations and their level of job satisfaction, with neither variable showing extreme responses.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria**.**

Table 2: *PPMC on the relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.*

Correlation Matrix

		students' false allegations	Job Satisfaction
Students' False Allegations	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.044
	p-value		0.499**
	n	240	240
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-0.044	1
	p-value	0.499**	
	n	240	240

******Correlation not significant at the 0.05 level

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very weak negative relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction ($r = -0.044$, $p = 0.499$). Since the p-value exceeds the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between students' false allegations and job satisfaction among university lecturers in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria, is not rejected.

Discussion

Table 2 shows that students' false allegations have a very weak and non-significant negative relationship with lecturers' job satisfaction. Put simply, even when lecturers experience false allegations from students, it does not significantly influence how satisfied they feel with their jobs in these universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

This finding does not align with earlier studies such as Heffernan (2023), El-Dakhs and Ahmed (2023), and Nassar et al. (2022), which reported that accusatory student behaviour, abusive comments, and unfair criticism tend to reduce lecturers' emotional wellbeing and job satisfaction. In the same direction, studies by Doerfler et al. (2021), Cuc, Minh, and Tu (2024), and Kim and Maijan (2024) similarly linked negative student-related experiences, alongside stress and burnout, to reduced job satisfaction. Collectively, these studies present a consistent pattern in which student-related pressures exert a strong negative influence on lecturers' psychological wellbeing and job attitudes.

However, the present finding suggests a context-specific divergence that may be explained by institutional and structural realities within Nigerian public universities, particularly in Delta State. One possible explanation is that lecturers may have developed adaptive coping strategies in response to prolonged exposure to challenging academic environments. Over time, experiences such as student complaints or allegations may become normalized as part of the occupational culture, thereby reducing their emotional intensity and influence on overall job satisfaction.

In addition, job satisfaction in the academic environment is multidimensional and is not determined solely by student behaviour. Structural and institutional factors such as remuneration, promotion opportunities, job security, administrative support, and workload conditions may exert a stronger influence on lecturers' overall satisfaction. Within such a framework, student-related false

allegations may represent only a minor stressor in comparison to broader systemic and institutional challenges affecting academic staff.

Furthermore, the Nigerian public university context is shaped by resource constraints, administrative bureaucracy, and high workload demands, all of which may overshadow the effects of student-related issues. In such settings, lecturers may prioritize structural and career-related concerns over isolated interpersonal incidents when evaluating their overall job satisfaction.

Even so, the negative direction of the relationship indicates a directionally negative but non-significant trend. This suggests that while students' false allegations do not significantly affect job satisfaction, they are not entirely inconsequential. Rather, they may contribute subtly to psychological strain, potentially operating indirectly through mechanisms such as stress, emotional exhaustion, or burnout, as noted in Cuc et al. (2024) and Kim and Maijan (2024).

Overall, the findings indicate that students' false allegations alone do not significantly determine lecturers' job satisfaction in the studied context. Instead, job satisfaction appears to be shaped by a broader combination of institutional, economic, and psychosocial factors, with student-related allegations playing a relatively limited role.

Conclusion

Students' false allegations have a very weak and non-significant relationship with lecturers' job satisfaction in selected public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This indicates that false allegations, on their own, do not significantly influence how lecturers perceive or evaluate their job satisfaction within the study context.

However, the study is not without limitations. The findings are based on self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondent bias or subjective interpretation of experiences. In addition, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to make causal inferences between students' false allegations and job satisfaction. The study was also confined to selected public universities in Delta State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or institutional contexts.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insight into the limited but context-specific role of student-related false allegations in shaping lecturers' job satisfaction. It highlights the importance of considering broader institutional and structural factors when examining academic staff wellbeing.

Recommendations:

1. Although students' false allegations did not show a significant relationship with lecturers' job satisfaction, universities should still establish clear, transparent, and fair complaint-handling procedures to ensure that any form of student accusation is properly investigated and does not create unnecessary institutional tension or perceived injustice among lecturers.
2. Even though the effect of false allegations on job satisfaction was not statistically significant, institutions should provide stress management and counselling support services to help lecturers cope with occasional student-related challenges and maintain emotional wellbeing within the academic environment.
3. Since job satisfaction is influenced by multiple institutional factors beyond student behaviour, universities should strengthen working conditions by improving promotion processes, job security, remuneration structures, and recognition systems to enhance overall lecturer satisfaction and motivation.

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