

## Management of Destructive Sign-Out Celebrations in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Iwuagwu, Judith Nkechi <sup>1</sup>, Nwokonko Roberta Nwadiuto <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine's College of Education, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Abia State University, Nigeria



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.61796/icossh.v3i3.597>



### Sections Info

#### Article history:

Submitted: February 07, 2026

Final Revised: March 26, 2026

Accepted: April 08, 2026

Published: May 20, 2026

#### Keywords:

Tertiary institutions

Sign-out celebration

Student behaviour

Higher education management

Campus discipline

Moral development

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This paper examined the growing menace of sign-out celebrations in Nigerian tertiary institutions and discussed strategies that institutional managers can adopt to address the problem. **Method:** The study adopted a review-based method through the examination of existing literature, newspaper reports, institutional observations, and documented incidents relating to sign-out practices in higher institutions. **Results:** The paper identified weak institutional regulations, moral decline, peer influence, inadequate counselling services, and poor security monitoring as major factors encouraging the trend. The study concluded that if urgent administrative and moral interventions are not introduced, the culture of destructive sign-out celebrations may continue to undermine the core values and integrity of tertiary education in Nigeria. **Novelty:** The paper recommended the establishment of clear institutional policies, strengthening of counselling services, provision of structured celebration alternatives, improvement in campus security, and active student participation in behavioural reorientation programmes.

## INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions all over the world are established as centres for intellectual development, moral refinement, social transformation, and leadership preparation. Universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education are traditionally regarded as institutions where young people acquire not only academic knowledge and professional skills, but also discipline, modesty, responsibility, and acceptable social character. The essence of higher education extends beyond classroom instruction because society expects graduates of tertiary institutions to demonstrate maturity, ethical conduct, civility, and respect for social values [1]. Historically, institutions of higher learning have served as agents of civilisation and national development. They are expected to produce men and women capable of contributing meaningfully to economic growth, democratic stability, technological advancement, and peaceful coexistence. Parents, governments, and society invest enormous resources in tertiary education with the expectation that graduates will become role models in behaviour, leadership, and responsible citizenship. Consequently, tertiary institutions are not merely centres for certificate acquisition; they are environments for character formation and moral orientation [2].

In Nigeria, the importance of tertiary education in shaping responsible citizens has remained a major objective of national educational policy. Educational administrators and scholars have consistently emphasized that institutions of higher learning should

promote discipline, integrity, respect for human dignity, and adherence to societal norms. The university system, in particular, has traditionally been associated with decency, intellectual culture, and social refinement. However, recent developments in many Nigerian tertiary institutions suggest a growing erosion of these values among some students. One of the emerging trends attracting concern from educational stakeholders is the increasing prevalence of destructive sign-out celebrations among graduating students. Sign-out celebrations refer to activities organised by final-year students immediately after completing their final examinations to mark the end of their academic programmes. While celebration of academic success is normal and socially acceptable, the pattern of sign-out practices in several institutions has become alarming [3].

In many campuses across Nigeria, sign-out celebrations have gradually transformed into occasions characterised by disorderly conduct, reckless behaviour, indecent dressing, excessive alcohol consumption, public nuisance, vandalism, harassment, and violent processions. Students often engage in the pouring of paint, engine oil, dirty water, and other substances on colleagues within academic environments. In some cases, institutional facilities such as hostel walls, lecture halls, furniture, vehicles, and administrative buildings are damaged during uncontrolled celebrations. More disturbing is the increasing number of accidents and deaths associated with these activities [4]. Cases have been reported where students lost their lives through dangerous driving, cult-related violence, alcohol abuse, drowning, or stampedes linked to sign-out celebrations. Such developments have generated serious concern among parents, educational managers, security agencies, and the general public because they contradict the moral and civilising objectives of tertiary education.

The growing culture of destructive sign-out celebrations also poses serious threats to institutional peace and academic stability. It disrupts normal academic activities, creates insecurity within campuses, and damages the public image of tertiary institutions. Furthermore, it raises questions about the effectiveness of existing disciplinary systems and moral education programmes within Nigerian higher institutions [5]. The situation has therefore created an urgent need for educational administrators and policymakers to critically examine the phenomenon and develop sustainable management strategies capable of restoring discipline and responsible student conduct. There is also the need to protect the integrity of tertiary education as an institution for character formation and social development. It is against this background that this study examined the problem of sign-out celebrations in Nigerian tertiary institutions with a view to identifying practical strategies that tertiary institution managers can adopt to address the challenge and preserve the moral values associated with higher education [6].

## **Conceptual Terms**

### **Concept of Tertiary Education**

National Policy on Education FRN (2013), defined tertiary education as an education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic

Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education is an education designed for national development through manpower training and retraining. Tertiary institutions is an industry for manpower development via teaching, research and community service. The word tertiary, simply means of the third rank or order, and tertiary level of education in Nigeria, based on the aforementioned meaning, implies that tertiary education in Nigeria is the third order of education which can also be referred to as higher education [7].

Tertiary education according to Ogunode (2026) is the level of learning after secondary school where individuals acquire specialized knowledge and skills for careers, research, and personal development. Tertiary education is the level of learning that comes after secondary school. It includes universities, polytechnics, colleges, and other institutions where people gain specialized knowledge, skills, and qualifications in a particular field. Unlike basic schooling, tertiary education focuses on preparing learners for a career, critical thinking, research, and personal growth. The objectives of Tertiary Education includes;

1. To equips students with practical and theoretical skills they need for their chosen careers. It's not just about reading books; it's about learning how to apply knowledge in real-life situations. For example, engineers learn to build, doctors learn to treat, and teachers learn to inspire.
2. To train students to think deeply and analyze situations critically. This means not just accepting information, but questioning it, evaluating evidence, and making informed decisions skills you'll use every day, both at work and in life [8].
3. To shape character, values, and ethics. It encourages students to become responsible citizens who can make moral decisions, respect diversity, and contribute positively to society.
4. To foster research, creativity, and innovation, helping students and faculty to find solutions to societal problems, improve technology, and advance knowledge.
5. To prepares graduates to serve society and contribute to national development. By producing skilled professionals, innovators, and leaders, tertiary institutions help build stronger communities and a more prosperous nation.

### **Concept of Sign Out**

Ogunode (2020) remarked that sign out is a major social problem in the Nigerian tertiary institutions that needs urgent actions because its impact on human society portray the university in a bad light. Many students have lost their lives to the social problem on the day of graduation which ideally is meant to be a day of positive celebration turned into a day of mourning because of carelessness and recklessness thereby resulting to educational wastage on the part of the schools and economic wastage

on the part of the parents and guardians. Sign out syndrome refers to a social and anti-social activities graduating students involve into on the day they completed their final examination. Final year students engaged in all sort of anti-social activities such as pouring buckets of water on each other, writing on each other shirts and serious sexual orgies as a display of freedom from academic stress and campus life (Ogunode, Edinoh & Ibrahim, 2024). In Nigeria, Odok, (2026) noted that sign-out is becoming a symbolic and celebratory tradition among final-year students, marking the completion of their undergraduate studies and the anticipation of graduation.

### **Review of literature on Sign-Out Celebrations in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

The culture of sign-out celebrations among graduating students in Nigerian tertiary institutions has increasingly attracted public concern due to its association with violence, reckless behaviour, destruction of institutional property, and loss of lives. Newspaper reports across Nigeria indicate that what was initially regarded as a harmless celebration of academic completion has gradually transformed into dangerous social conduct in many institutions. A review of media reports reveals recurring issues such as reckless driving, violent gatherings, disregard for institutional regulations, vandalism, and poor student discipline during sign-out activities [9].

One of the most widely reported incidents occurred at the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, in 2024. According to reports published by The Guardian Nigeria and other Nigerian media organisations, a female student lost her life during a sign-out celebration after a graduating student driving recklessly lost control of his vehicle and rammed into a crowd of students celebrating on campus. Two other students sustained serious injuries and were hospitalised. The report indicated that the institution had earlier warned students against excessive sign-out celebrations, but the directives were ignored. The incident led to the suspension of final year examinations and renewed calls for the regulation of student celebrations.

Similarly, several newspapers reported the tragic killing of a student of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomoso, during an unauthorised sign-out ceremony in 2025. Reports published by Punch Newspaper, The Telegraph Nigeria, and Legit.ng indicated that the student was shot during an off-campus sign-out gathering organised despite an earlier ban by the university management. The university authorities confirmed that sign-out activities had already been prohibited because of previous incidents of disorderly conduct and insecurity associated with such gatherings. The incident resulted in police investigations and the arrest of several suspects.

Another important newspaper development involved the decision of several Nigerian universities to ban sign-out ceremonies completely due to repeated incidents of violence, destruction, and public disturbance. Reports published by The Nation Newspaper revealed that institutions such as Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Federal University Lafia (FULafia), Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, and Kaduna Polytechnic officially prohibited sign-out activities. The reports linked the bans to concerns about reckless student

behaviour, dangerous vehicle processions, indecent conduct, and vandalism of institutional facilities.

At the Federal University of Lafia, management authorities reportedly introduced restrictions on sign-out activities following a fatal tricycle accident linked to graduation celebrations. According to *The Whistler Newspaper*, the institution prohibited celebrations around the university gate and restricted activities to faculty premises under supervision. The institution also banned loud public address systems and dangerous vehicle movements during celebrations. This action reflected growing administrative concern over student safety and campus orderliness.

A common theme emerging from these reports is the increasing disregard for institutional directives by students. Many institutions had already issued warnings or outright bans before the incidents occurred. However, students often continued organising celebrations off-campus or in uncontrolled environments. This suggests that weak enforcement mechanisms and peer pressure contribute significantly to the persistence of destructive sign-out practices [10].

The reports also indicate that reckless driving has become one of the leading causes of fatalities during sign-out celebrations. In the IMT Enugu case, eyewitnesses reported that students drove vehicles dangerously while celebrating, eventually causing fatal accidents. Similar patterns have been observed in other campuses where students engage in car racing, motorcycle stunts, and uncontrolled convoys during graduation celebrations. Such activities not only endanger students but also threaten the safety of staff members, visitors, and surrounding communities.

Another issue identified in newspaper reports is the growing commercialization and social media influence associated with sign-out culture. Many graduating students now organise expensive outdoor parties, hire vehicles, use loud music systems, and engage in public displays aimed at attracting online attention. In some cases, students damage walls, hostel facilities, classroom furniture, and public infrastructure through paint spraying, graffiti, and violent processions. These behaviours contradict the moral and disciplinary objectives of tertiary education.

The media reports reveal that the destructive nature of sign-out celebrations has damaged the public image of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Educational institutions traditionally regarded as centres of discipline and civilisation are increasingly associated with disorderly student conduct during graduation periods. This development has raised serious concerns among parents, educational administrators, and policymakers regarding the effectiveness of moral training and student affairs administration in higher institutions [11].

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopted a review-based research method. The review model was considered appropriate because the study relied on existing literature, documented reports, institutional observations, newspaper publications, journal articles, conference

papers, and educational commentaries relating to student behaviour and sign-out celebrations in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Relevant materials were sourced from books on higher education management, student affairs administration, campus security, moral education, and educational sociology. Additional information was obtained from media reports documenting incidents of violence, destruction of facilities, accidents, and misconduct associated with sign-out celebrations in various Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The review approach enabled the study to critically analyse existing knowledge on the subject, identify emerging behavioural trends among graduating students, and examine practical administrative strategies that may assist tertiary institution managers in addressing the problem. The method also provided an opportunity to compare institutional practices and management responses across different tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Strategies for Managing the Problem of “Sign-Out” Celebrations in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

The emergence of “sign-out” celebrations in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become a major concern for university administrators, student affairs officers, security personnel, and parents. Originally conceived as harmless social activities marking the completion of final examinations, sign-out celebrations have gradually degenerated into acts of indiscipline, destruction of institutional property, public nuisance, alcohol abuse, reckless driving, violent conduct, and, in some tragic cases, loss of lives. Across universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Nigeria, management authorities now face increasing pressure to regulate these activities without denying graduating students the opportunity to celebrate academic success. The following strategies are fundamental for addressing the menace of destructive sign-out practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions [12].

#### **Establishment of Institutional Policies and Regulations on Sign-Out Activities**

One of the most effective strategies for managing destructive sign-out celebrations is the formulation and strict enforcement of institutional regulations guiding graduating students’ conduct. Many tertiary institutions in Nigeria experience problems because there are no clearly defined rules specifying acceptable and unacceptable forms of celebration. Institutional managers should therefore develop comprehensive policies that regulate student gatherings, procession routes, use of loud music, alcohol consumption, spraying of substances, and destruction of school facilities. Such regulations should be included in student handbooks, orientation manuals, and graduation guidelines. For example, some Nigerian universities have witnessed situations where graduating students poured paint, engine oil, mud, and dirty water on colleagues within lecture halls and hostels, thereby damaging institutional infrastructure and creating unhealthy environments. In other cases, students climbed moving vehicles during celebrations, leading to fatal road accidents. Where institutional rules are weak or poorly enforced,

students often assume that management tolerates such behaviours. University administrators should make it clear that misconduct during sign-out activities constitutes a disciplinary offence capable of attracting sanctions such as suspension of graduation privileges, payment for damaged property, community service, or withdrawal from the graduation list in extreme cases. The certainty of sanctions often discourages reckless conduct. Beyond punishment, the existence of formal policies creates administrative clarity and reduces ambiguity in handling student misconduct. It also empowers security personnel and student affairs divisions to intervene lawfully before situations escalate into violence or destruction.

### **Provision of Structured and Official Graduation Celebration Programmes**

Another important strategy is the organization of institutionally approved celebration programmes that provide graduating students with safe and dignified avenues for expressing joy. Human beings naturally celebrate achievement, and graduation represents years of sacrifice, financial commitment, and emotional struggle. Attempts to suppress celebrations entirely may therefore prove counterproductive. Rather than allowing uncontrolled street processions and chaotic gatherings, tertiary institution managers should design structured programmes such as farewell concerts, award nights, cultural displays, departmental dinners, alumni induction ceremonies, and sports activities supervised by the institution. For instance, some universities abroad organize “graduation week” activities where students celebrate under institutional supervision with clear schedules and security arrangements. Similar approaches can be adopted in Nigerian institutions. Faculties and departments may organize officially approved “finalist day” events within designated environments where music, photography, and social interaction occur without disturbing academic activities. This strategy reduces the tendency for students to create alternative informal celebrations that may become violent or destructive. When students feel recognized and respected by the institution, they are more likely to cooperate with management directives. Practical evidence from some private universities in Nigeria shows that structured graduation activities significantly reduce incidents of vandalism and disorder because students celebrate within organized systems rather than through spontaneous street carnivals [13].

### **Strengthening Counselling and Value Reorientation Programmes**

The increasing excesses associated with sign-out celebrations reflect deeper problems relating to moral decline, peer pressure, substance abuse, and weak value systems among some students. Consequently, tertiary institution managers must strengthen counselling services and moral reorientation programmes aimed at promoting responsible student behaviour. Student affairs divisions and counselling units should organize seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns targeting final-year students before examination periods and graduation activities commence. Such programmes should educate students on the dangers associated with reckless celebrations, including accidental deaths, cult-related violence, drug abuse, and legal consequences. Many students participate in destructive sign-out practices primarily because of peer influence. They fear being labelled “boring” or “unsocial” if they refuse

to join harmful group activities. Counsellors therefore have a responsibility to educate students on assertiveness, emotional control, and responsible celebration practices. For example, there have been cases in Nigerian campuses where students consumed excessive alcohol during sign-out activities and later engaged in violent fights or dangerous driving that resulted in fatalities. In some institutions, female students have also become victims of harassment and assault during uncontrolled celebrations. Counselling interventions should therefore focus not only on discipline but also on personal safety, emotional maturity, and social responsibility. Religious organizations, alumni associations, student union leaders, and respected public figures may also be invited to participate in value reorientation campaigns aimed at promoting positive behavioural models among students.

### **Improved Campus Security and Monitoring Mechanisms**

Effective campus security management is essential for preventing destructive sign-out activities. Many incidents escalate because security arrangements are weak, poorly coordinated, or reactive rather than preventive. Institutional managers should adopt proactive security strategies during periods associated with final examinations and graduation activities. This may involve increased patrols, surveillance of sensitive areas, restriction of vehicle movement, and deployment of security personnel to hostels and major student gathering points. Security departments should collaborate closely with student union governments, hostel administrators, and departmental associations to obtain early information about planned activities that may threaten peace on campus. Intelligence gathering is particularly important in institutions where cult groups exploit sign-out celebrations to engage in violence or intimidation. For example, some Nigerian universities have experienced situations where rival student groups engaged in clashes during sign-out processions, resulting in injuries and destruction of property. Early intervention by security personnel could have prevented such incidents. Institutions should install surveillance cameras in strategic locations and ensure rapid emergency response systems during graduation periods. Where necessary, collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, Civil Defence Corps, and local vigilante groups may strengthen institutional security arrangements. However, security measures should be implemented professionally and respectfully. Excessive force or harassment of students by security personnel may create further tension. The objective should be preventive management rather than confrontation [14].

### **Promotion of Student Participation in Institutional Decision-Making**

A sustainable solution to the sign-out problem requires the active involvement of students themselves in designing and implementing behavioural regulations. Policies imposed without student participation often face resistance and non-compliance. Tertiary institution managers should therefore engage student union leaders, departmental associations, faculty representatives, and graduating class executives in discussions concerning acceptable forms of celebration. When students participate in decision-making processes, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility toward institutional regulations. For instance, management may establish joint committees

comprising staff and student representatives to develop guidelines for graduation activities. Such committees can identify potential security risks, recommend celebration venues, and mobilize peer monitoring systems. Student leaders can also help discourage destructive behaviours by promoting responsible celebration campaigns on social media and during campus meetings. Peer influence is extremely powerful among young people; therefore, students are often more likely to listen to fellow students than to administrative directives alone. In some institutions, student associations have successfully introduced alternative celebration methods such as charity visits, campus sanitation exercises, and career networking events as substitutes for violent sign-out processions. Such innovations demonstrate that students can become part of the solution when properly engaged [15].

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding:** What was originally intended as a harmless expression of joy after final examinations has, in many institutions, degenerated into acts of indiscipline, violence, destruction of property, public disturbance, and avoidable loss of lives. **Implication:** The trend threatens institutional peace, damages the reputation of higher education, and weakens the moral values expected from graduates of tertiary institutions. **Limitation:** The increasing prevalence of destructive sign-out celebrations in Nigerian tertiary institutions therefore represents a serious contradiction to the core objectives of higher education. **Future Research:** Religious and community organisations within campuses should participate in value-based campaigns aimed at restoring moral discipline and civility among students.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education, 6th ed. Abuja, Nigeria: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), 2013.
- [2] "One dies, two hospitalised during 'wild' sign out celebration at IMT Enugu," Guardian Nigeria, Oct. 2, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/one-dies-two-hospitalised-during-wild-sign-out-celebration-at-imt-enugu/>
- [3] "Student dies, two injured during sign-out celebrations in Enugu," Guardian Nigeria, Oct. 3, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/student-dies-two-injured-during-sign-out-celebrations-in-enugu/>
- [4] "LAUTECH student shot dead during sign-out party in Ogbomoso, police confirm," Legit.ng, Aug. 7, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://www.legit.ng/nigeria/1668297-lautech-student-shot-dead-sign-party-ogbomoso-police-confirm/>
- [5] "LAUTECH confirms death of student during unauthorised sign-out celebration," Lagos Television, Aug. 15, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://lagostelevision.com/2025/08/15/lautech-confirms-death-of-student-during-unauthorised-sign-out-celebration/>
- [6] "One dies, two hospitalised during 'wild' sign out celebration at IMT Enugu," News Express Nigeria, Oct. 2, 2024. [Online]. Available:

- <https://www.newsexpressngr.com/news/239211/one-dies-two-hospitalised-during-wild-sign-out-celebration-at-imt-enugu>
- [7] G. E. Odok, *The Sociology of "Sign-Out Jamboree"*. 2026.
- [8] N. J. Ogunode and R. C. Odo, "Social Problems in Tertiary Institutions," *Web of Semantic: Universal Journal on Innovative Education*, vol. 2, no. 7, pp. 117-124, 2023.
- [9] N. J. Ogunode, K. Edinoh, and G. F. Ibrahim, *Tertiary Education in Nigeria: Social Problems/Issues and Possible Solutions*. Tunde Consult, 2024.
- [10] N. J. Ogunode, "Geopolitical Conflict and Educational Development: The Impact of the Iran-Centred Middle East Crisis on Tertiary Education in Nigeria," *International Journal of Education, Research and Scientific Development*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 159-165, 2026.
- [11] "300-Level LAUTECH engineering student killed at unauthorised sign-out event," *Okay.ng*, Aug. 13, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://www.okay.ng/300-level-lautech-engineering-student-killed-at-unauthorised-sign-out-event/>
- [12] "LAUTECH confirms final-year student murder during signing out," *Punch Newspaper*, Aug. 13, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://punchng.com/lautech-confirms-final-year-student-murder-during-signing-out/>
- [13] "LAUTECH confirms death of student during sign-out ceremony," *The Telegraph Nigeria*, Aug. 15, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://telegraph.ng/news/2025/08/15/lautech-confirms-death-of-student-during-sign-out-ceremony/>
- [14] "Five Nigerian universities that banned sign-out ceremonies," *The Nation Newspaper*, Sept. 7, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://thenationonlineng.net/five-nigerian-universities-that-banned-sign-out-ceremonies/>
- [15] "Lafia University bans sign-out celebrations," *The Whistler Newspaper*, Aug. 14, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://thewhistler.ng/lafia-university-bans-sign-out-celebrations/amp/>

---

**\*Iwuagwu, Judith Nkechi (Corresponding Author)**

St. Augustine's College of Education, Nigeria

Email: [e.iwuagwu@hotmail.com](mailto:e.iwuagwu@hotmail.com)

**Nwokonko Roberta Nwadiuto**

Abia State University, Nigeria

Email: [nwokonkoroberta@gmail.com](mailto:nwokonkoroberta@gmail.com)

---