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ACADEMIC STAFF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND SERVICE DELIVERY OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The private sector-led economy aims at efficiency and sustainability, but for private universities in Southwest, Nigeria, there is an observed shortfall. Previous studies focused on public universities' service delivery concerns, neglecting private universities' efficiency. This study investigated influence of academic staff psychosocial factors on service delivery of private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research design. The participants for the study were 855 academic staff randomly selected from private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Two instruments titled "Academic Psychosocial factors Questionnaire (APFQ) (r = 0.81) and Service Delivery Questionnaire (SDQ) (r = 0.83) were used for the study. Two research questions were raised and answered using frequency, percentages and standard deviation. The findings revealed a high level of service delivery of academic staff ($\bar{x}$=3.37). Additionally, academic staff exhibited high psychosocial factors ($\bar{x}$=3.57). It was recommended that private universities should alleviate staff high workload, enhance workplace relationship among others.

Keywords: Academic Staff Psychosocial Factors, Service Delivery, Private Universities

Introduction

University system being the peak of educational institutions all over the world including Nigeria could not be an exception in effective and efficient service delivery. The deliverables expected from academic staff otherwise referred to as faculty members of the University appears to take a strategic position at ensuring qualitative service delivery to its varying stakeholders.

Academic staff service delivery in Nigerian universities can be described as the quality of performance expected of an academic staff within the university system. Adelekan (2018) affirmed that universities exist to advance knowledge and contribute to nation building through teaching, research and community service. Every profession has its variables of measuring the quality and quantity of service delivery, and this to determine the level of the output made or produced. In contemporary Nigerian universities, academic staff service delivery is measured through teaching, research and community service (Abiodun-Oyebanji & Adekola, 2017).

Service delivery of academic staff in many Nigerian universities seems to have become a matter of great concern to stakeholders in recent time because of the critical roles they play in the realization of goals, objectives, mission, visions and overall quality of university education via effective teaching, research and community service as mentioned earlier. Universities hence depend largely on the intellectual and creative performance of their human resource to realize these goals. Academic staffs are responsible for teaching the students and this in turn looks to increase knowledge acquisition both for themselves and the students they teach. This process of teaching and learning is perceived to lead to production of quality graduates for manpower development (Akuegwu, & Felix, 2016). It is affirmed that there is a kind of mix- match between Nigerian universities graduates and labour market requirements which may not be totally divorced from assumed defective curriculum, poor teaching and research going on in many Nigerian universities due to the perceived failure of the system that also bothers on poor funding of the university system and this had invariably degenerated to poor infrastructure provision in many Nigerians universities over the years (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2019) .

Apart from the perceived failure in teaching and research activities in many Nigerian universities, community service which is one of the service delivery of academic staff appears to have been totally neglected by many Nigerian private universities. It seems there is no cordial relationship between town and gown any more. How universities fulfill their corporate social responsibilities to their host communities could also determine the extent of their service delivery. In the light of the aforementioned, research, teaching and community service are considered as true measurement for academic staff service delivery in Nigerian universities (FGN, 2013).

The assumed poor service delivery of universities could be attributed to many factors based on findings of related studies. However, contributions of factors like consideration of the state of employees' psychosocial factors such as workload, academic freedom and workplace relationship seem to have not been researched intensively especially to determine their nexus and consequential effects on effective service delivery of academic staff of private universities

particularly in Southwestern Nigerian known as the hub of higher education in Nigeria.

According to Aslam & Adams (2022), workload refers to the amount of work that has to be done by a particular person or organization. It could also be the cost of having to accomplish numerous tasks (Akuegwu & Felix, 2016). Workload here could mean the responsibilities assigned to a worker as part of his/her job description at the place of work. It also means the set of statutory tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to a worker which he/she must accomplish at a given time. Relating this to the university system, workload are those academic and administrative duties carried out by lecturers in the course of performing their daily jobs. It is a known fact that, most private universities in Nigeria struggle to reduce cost while maintaining competitiveness because there are many tasks which are supposed to be handled by different levels of staff and this could significantly increase the personnel cost.

Moreover, academic freedom is one of the psychosocial factors that if not well managed may negatively affect effective service delivery in the university system. Therefore, for universities to perform their functions properly and contribute to national development, an element of freedom and independence is required for their academic. Academics certainly need to be free from any unnecessary form of interference from both internal and external forces in order to carry out assigned functions. Abiodun-Oyebanji (2019) opined that academic freedom is the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak and publish subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead. Furthermore, Olaoye & Alabadan (2019) define academic freedom as the liberty of members of the academic community, individually and collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, learning and writing. It is perceived that proprietors or management staff of private universities have absolute powers with respect to students' graduation or academic grading making teaching personnel rubber stamps.

According to Umemezia & Akenzua (2017), workplace relationship include a 'friendly, well designed, safe and effective communication. Workplace physical environment involving facilities and equipment among others but the social environment is the workplace relationship which can also be perceived as employees' behavioural practices, interconnectivity or conditions in the workplace that influence favorably or unfavorably individual employee performance. Academic staff of universities are among the group of employees classified as knowledge workers whose works use mental faculty and involve substantial use of information, creativity and decision making (Mote & G. Karadas, 2022).

The influence of employee psychosocial factors and institutional

empowerment on service delivery could also be affected by the type of private university being considered at a particular period. (Forid, Hafez, & Khan, 2022). Hence, the need to investigate the influence of academic staff psychosocial factors on service delivery in Southwestern private universities in Nigeria appears necessary.

Statement of the Problem

Decline in provision of exceptional service delivery in Nigerian private universities calls for serious concern. This is quite disturbing considering the fact that Nigeria is seen as the economic base of Africa that has produced a number of renowned academics of international repute but this has perhaps not reflected on the deliverables of Nigerian private universities over time. The observed deficient service delivery in academic staff service delivery of private university system reflects in cases of students' complaints regarding lecturers missing classes unjustly, missing or delayed examination results, conflicting individual staff's position on related issues, delay in project supervision, absenteeism of staff at their offices at the point of need during official hours perhaps for self-benefitting ventures mobilization, and so on have been affecting the achievement of overall aims of the private university system.

The implications of deficient service delivery in private universities include but not limited to; low enrolment, increased students drop out, poor students performance, poor global visibility, low employers confidence in graduate quality, low contribution to societal growth and development.

Earlier scholars have researched on ineffective service delivery in the university system in Nigeria such as managing academic service delivery in South-South Nigerian Universities for national education transformation, students' satisfaction with service delivery in federal universities in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria, influence of academic staff empowerment on service delivery in Nigerian Universities, service delivery and accountability in public universities in Southwest Nigeria, reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, repositioning Nigerian universities for quality service delivery among others. However, much work has not been done on service delivery efficiency in private universities in Southwest, Nigeria as well as influence of psychosocial factors in this study. Therefore, it is important to interrogate the influence of employee psychosocial factors (workload, academic freedom, workplace relationship) on service delivery in private universities resident in the Southwestern part of Nigeria.

Research Questions

i. What is the level of academic service delivery (teaching, research, community service) in private universities in Southwest, Nigeria?
ii. What is the level of academic staff psychosocial factors (workload, academic freedom, workplace

relationship) in private universities in Southwest, Nigeria?

Research Method

This paper adopted a descriptive research design. The population consisted of all the 5,215 academic staff of 37 private universities in Six (6) Southwestern States of Nigeria. The sample size was 855 (Eight hundred and fifty-five) respondents using multi-stage procedure. Two research instruments was used for the paper and they are Academic Staff Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire (ASPFQ) and Academic Staff Service Delivery Questionnaire (ASSDQ) and were subjected to face and content validity in order to ensure that the instruments measure what it is supposed to measure. A reliability coefficient value of 0.811 and 0.813 were obtained respectively. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Research Questions

i. What is the status of academic service delivery (teaching, research, community service) in private universities in Southwest, Nigeria?

Table 1 Status of Service Delivery of Academic Staff in Private Universities in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Always (4)	Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	x̄	Std
1.	Make use of relevant instructional materials during your classes/lectures for students' active learning	304 (35.9%)	487 (57.9%)	56 (6.6%)	00	3.29	0.583
2.	Finish every course syllabus with students before semester examinations	518 (61.2%)	322 (38.0%)	07 (0.8%)	00	3.60	0.506
.3.	Make yourself available to students for resolution of their academic challenges	581 (68.6%)	266 (31.4%)	00	00	3.69	0.464
4.	Supervise students research works to ensure quality	630 (74.4%)	196 (23.1%)	21 (2.5%)	00	3.72	0.502
5.	Work with students to identify societal problems and conduct research to proffer solutions	553 (65.3%)	273 (32.2%)	21 (2.5%)	00	3.63	0.532
6.	Engage host community dwellers of your university on issues needing professional advice and other support	224 (26.4%)	392 (46.3%)	224 (26.4%)	07 (0.8%)	2.98	0.750
7.	Participate in enlightenment programmes for societal development	320 (37.8%)	366 (43.2%)	154 (18.2%)	07 (0.8%)	3.18	0.749
8.	Take part in electoral process supervision of the society	200 (23.6%)	381 (45.0%)	238 (28.1%)	28 (3.3%)	2.89	0.799
	Weighted Mean/Std					**3.37**	**0.611**

Source; Field survey, 2023; **Threshold;** Mean < 1.50 is low, 1.50 – 3.00 is Moderate and > 3.00 is high

Table 11 presents the frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation for each statement/item formulated to answer research question one about the level of service delivery (teaching, research, community service) of academic staff in private universities in Southwest Nigeria. The results show that lecturers are making use of relevant instructional materials during your classes/lectures for students' active learning, finish every course syllabus with students before semester examinations, make yourself available to students for resolution of their academic challenges, supervise students research works to ensure quality, work with students to identify societal problems and conduct research to proffer solutions, engage host community dwellers of your university on issues needing professional advice and other support, participate in enlightenment programmes for societal development, take part in electoral process supervision of the society. Based on the provided data and the decision-making threshold, an analysis of the status of service delivery in private universities in Southwest Nigeria can be concluded as generally high (Weighted Mean = 3.37; S.D = 0.611).

Research Question Two: What is the status of academic staff psychosocial factors (workload, academic freedom, workplace relationship) in private universities in Southwest, Nigeria?

Table 2: Status of Academic Employees' Psychosocial Factors in Private Universities in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	Workload	Always (4)	Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	x̄	Std
1.	Lecturers are scheduled to take an average of five classes daily	88 (10.4%)	176 (20.8%)	443 (52.3%)	140 (16.5%)	2.25	0.853
2.	I engage in other administrative functions such as students' advisory, school projects, committee meetings on daily basis	588 (69.4%)	231 (23.3%)	21 (2.5%)	07 (0.8%)	3.65	0.571
3.	Lecturers must organize make-up classes for students offered admission at different times	320 (37.8%)	149 (17.6%)	336 (39.7%)	42 (5.0%)	2.88	0.980
4.	I teach in multiple programmes in the university (Full-time, part-time, postgraduate, professional certificate etc)	623 (73.6%)	182 (21.5%)	35 (4.1%)	07 (0.8%)	3.68	0.593
5.	Lecturers have liberty to research area of interest	658 (77.7%)	133 (15.7%)	49 (5.8%)	07 (0.8%)	3.70	0.612
6.	Lecturers get punished for fixing classes at convenience as against the faculty time table	96 (11.3%)	112 (13.2%)	338 (39.9%)	301 (35.5%)	2.00	0.971
7.	Staff can easily get work support from colleagues and superiors within the university	630 (74.4%)	175 (20.7%)	42 (5.0%)	00	3.69	0.558
8.	Workplace relationship increases employees' service delivery in my university	440 (51.9%)	351 (41.4%)	56 (6.6%)	00	3.45	0.617
	Weighted Mean/Std					**3.57**	**0.719**

Source; Field survey, 2023; Threshold; Mean < 1.50 is low, 1.50 – 3.00 is Moderate and > 3.00 is high

Table 2 shows the status of academic staff' psychosocial factors in private universities in Southwest Nigeria as perceived by the lecturers. The results show that lecturers are scheduled to take an average of five classes daily, engage in other administrative

functions such as students' advisory, school projects, committee meetings on daily basis, lecturers must organize make-up classes for students offered admission at different times, teach in multiple programmes in the university (Full-time, part-time, postgraduate, professional certificate etc), lecturers have liberty to research area of interest, lecturers get punished for fixing classes at convenience as against the faculty time table, Staff can easily get work support from colleagues and superiors within the university and workplace relationship increases employees' service delivery in my university is at a high level. It shows generally that the overall decision for the academic staff' psychosocial factors in private universities in Southwest Nigeria as perceived by the lecturers is high (Weighted Mean = 3.57; S.D = 0.719).

Discussion and Finding

Research question one, findings of this study showed that there high level of academic staff' psychosocial factors in private universities in Southwest Nigeria.

This finding corroborates the work of Mote & Karadas, 2022 on "Academic staff of universities in which are among the group of employees classified as knowledge workers whose works use mental faculty and involve substantial use of information, creativity and decision making in private universities" which reported high level of academic staff. This study may be similar to the results obtained from this research because both studies were carried out in two neighboring states (Ogun and Oyo) in Southwest region of Nigeria. The results also in line with a research conducted in Osun state on "Influence of academic staff empowerment on service delivery in Nigerian universities (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2019). The high level of service delivery of lecturers seems to cut across most Southwest States Universities in the Country.

Research question two revealed that the status of academic staff' psychosocial factors in private universities in Southwest Nigeria. This result partially agrees with a study on "Managing academic service delivery in South-South Nigerian universities for national education transformation (Akuegwu & Felix, 2016). This result also partially agrees with the work on "Retention Strategies and Productivity of Academic staff in Universities in Southwestern Nigeria" (Adelekan, 2018) which revealed that universities exist to advance knowledge and contribute to nation building through teaching, research and community service. It was also affirmed by Olaoye & Alabadan (2019) that academic freedom as the liberty of members of the academic community, individually and collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, learning and writing. The high level of psychosocial factors of lecturers seems to cut across most Southwest states in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that psychosocial factors influence service delivery of academic staff

in private universities in Southwest Nigeria. Therefore, management of private universities should pay more attention to overburdening academic staff with excessive responsibilities, give them considerate freedom at work in other to be more creative, innovative and perform better. It is recommended that, universities should prioritize building positive workplace relationships among employees. Encouraging teamwork, communication, and mutual respect can enhance psychosocial well-being and improve overall service delivery. There is a need for periodic evaluations of service delivery to identify areas for improvement. This can be achieved through student and clients' feedback, as well as internal assessments.

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