

Innovations

Discrimination in Welfare Distribution between Academic and Non-Academic Staff of selected Nigerian Universities: A Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract

Background: The study considered the unequal access to healthcare, housing and decent office space among academic and non-academic staff of Nigeria four universities (public and private) and how these have impacted on staff's work output. **Objective:** It examined the intra-and-inter universities divergences in staff welfare provisions using three basic indices of welfare, namely: healthcare, housing accommodation and decent office provisions. **Methods:** The study used semi-structured in-depth interviews among 12 academics (6 seniors, 6 juniors) and 14 non-academics (8 senior and 6 junior) in two public and two private universities selected out of the list of universities within the Lagos and Ogun States. The qualitative data obtained were analysed following systematic-content analysis pattern and presented in adherence to RATS guidelines. **The result** shows that the abdication of welfare-provision responsibility in the public universities with unhealthy consequences paved way for private ownership and has not been totally benign. The finding revealed that there is high priority for academics in the allocation of welfare facilities especially housing accommodation and offices compared to non-academics in both private and public universities. It shows that the cost of medical bills in private universities are high, unaffordable to workers and are not overwhelmingly. **Recommendation:** The authors suggest that the implications for discrimination in welfare distribution between academic and non-academic could breed unhealthy working rivalry, and eventual substandard research activities with negative consequences on the quality of the graduates.

Keywords: 1.Welfare, 2.public and private university, 3.healthcare, 4.housing, 5.descent office

1. Introduction

Welfare is synonymous with well-being and encompasses the health, comfort, safety, and happiness of a person or group and not only the monetised activities of a people (Amoo, Oni, et al., 2017). Amoo et al. (2017) emphasised that welfare is a population outcome that is measured beyond economic status, production, morbidity, and mortality but could indicate how people perceive their lives, physical, mental, and other socioeconomic progress, including good living conditions, employment, and safety. While it encompasses a wider range of essential facilities for the well-being of workers, access to healthcare, housing, and working place environment are directly linked to happiness and performance of the workers (Chadha & Mishra, 2021; Itodo & Abang, 2018; Ukaegbu & Ifeanchi, 2017). The welfare of an individual is measured relative to the environment with the element of survival or coping with effort and

expenditure of resources (Broom, 1986), more essentially in the sense of having needs and desires satisfied (Daly, 2011). Where the conditions encountered go beyond coping, such welfare could be regarded as poor, and the opposite holds where such conditions are satisfied. While the university plays a significant role in generating a high-level workforce needed for the growth and development of nations' economies, the critical welfare conditions of the workers have been the subject of controversies with dampened motivations for quality productivity in developing nations, especially Nigeria (Oba-Adenuga et al., 2022).

Generally, welfare is defined as a range of government socioeconomic interventions to aid individuals or groups who cannot support themselves to ensure that they meet their basic human needs such as food, shelter, water, electricity, good transportation and employment. As it relates to an employee, welfare is expected to be a corporate commitment that reflects in the expression of the care for employees at all levels, underpinning their works and the environment in which such are being performed (Itodo & Abang, 2018). From time immemorial, the state has been saddled with the responsibility of providing certain services and goods to the citizenry due to the democratic sense that such responsibilities cannot be adequately provided by the private sectors (Daly, 2011; Pugsley, 1998). However, the current paradigm has shown that it is now a collection of programmes by the state (government), its agencies, or private stakeholders (Amoo, Oni, et al., 2017). The primary goods and services popular among these are security (defence), protection (police), the justice system, roads, postal services, schools, and management of the airways and airwaves, to mention but a few (Pugsley, 1998). Individuals had the impression that the state guarantees all minimum living standards such that individuals could have a fair share of the country's resources or at least enjoy some prosperity of the middle and upper classes (Pugsley, 1998).

However, there has been a major paradigm shift in state's welfare performance roles to assist the citizenry, especially since the beginning of privatisation agenda. The popular privatization programme in Nigeria started between 1986 and 1987 with the liquidation of a number of agricultural commodity boards and a few sectors of the Nigerian Livestock Production Company (Kwaghe & Odeh, 2022). There was also the Decree No.25 of 1988 (amended 1999) that provided the legal backing for the privatisation and its furtherance (Asaolu et al., 2005). The period then marked the reduction in government presence in the industrial landscape (Kwaghe & Odeh, 2022). Since then, there has been noticeable decrease in government support, especially for worker, owing to the obvious expectation that the new ownership would be responsible for their workers' welfare. As the government is failing in creating more jobs, the private sector has remained a major employer of labour with over 99% of new jobs creation (Ajani & Oyekola, 2019). Thus, in Nigeria with larger youthful population and potential workforce, the private establishment became the havens of hope in terms of employment for the population.

Nevertheless, as events evolved, standard of living was falling, establishments and academic institutions are becoming decaying, that has been resulting into massive reduction in industrial output coupled in the face of large unemployment (Pugsley, 1998). The change has shown that most governments either reneged, or abdicated their responsibilities and opened the citizenry to hazard, hence, the intervention of the private sectors. Among the prominent private sectors is the private university. The intervention of private university in the academic landscape of Nigeria reduced drastically the volume of unemployment. It has been proffering solution to increasing cases of unsatisfied demand for admission, incessant workers' strikes, students unrest, and so on (Ige, 2013). The intervention brings the application of government failure theory into fore. The theory suggests that failure or limitation of government from providing certain public goods paves way for private organisations to fill in the niches left unserved by governmental action (Keech & Munger, 2015; Young, 2021) and especially in diverse populated environment.

Although, the advent of private universities in Nigeria has not overwritten the relevance of public universities in all ramifications. However, there are different perceptions on the contributions of private

university to employment generation and welfare packages for their workers. A study has reported that globally, the private university represents an important sector in modern economy with dynamic benefits for economic transformation (Oba-Adenuga et al., 2022). The study reported that in the United Kingdom, academic staff of private universities has contributed relatively £5.8 billion and have supported somewhat 145,921 jobs (directly and indirectly) across all skill levels (Oba-Adenuga et al., 2022). University academic staff are significant contributors to the growth and development of nations' economies, generating the needed high-level manpower, but often faced hectic and work overloads, and would more than necessary require motivations especially in terms of their welfare (Oba-Adenuga et al., 2022). A worker that is motivated could be easily identified by his/her enthusiasm, agility, zeal, commitment, and focus (Azende et al., 2019a; Babagana & Dungus, 2015). Such worker discharges his/her duty with high level of effectiveness and efficiency. However, how far these expectations have been met could be appraised judging the number of times workers have gone on strike or real staff turnover and turnover intention.

The first private university in Nigeria came into being in 1999 (Ige, 2013) and between that time and now there are over 110 private universities in the country. These are full-fledged physically available universities excluding other distance learning platform universities. As the establishment of more private university increasingly generating high demand for both skilled and semi-skilled labour force, the employed workers are facing risk of occupational hazards, exposure to casual and temporary employment arrangement, with lack of basic amenities and inadequate welfare facilities (Idowu, 2022).

Welfare in Nigerian universities has been topical issue of contention both in practice and in discussion. Prominent contended issues of welfare have resulted into series of industrial actions including incessant strikes and increasing staff turnover. Majority of the universities are unable to meet up with adequate staff welfare (Idowu, 2022). This has often times reported as reason for excessive brain drain out of the university system, truncated academic calendars, dampened-values of employees, poor academic quality, with potential for production of semi-baked graduates with unimagined negative effect on national growth (Azende et al., 2019b; Idowu, 2022; Ogunode & Musa, 2020). Notwithstanding that there are several indices for measuring welfare, the welfare provision in this study is conjectured as the provision of accessible and affordable medical care, house accommodation and decent office for both academic and non-academic staff of the university. These are the statutory provision by the government in government's universities (i.e. public universities) but that have been abdicated with the passing of time. However, with the emergence of private ownership administration of university, the extent to which these provisions are sustained and how it is being shared between academic and non-academic staff is not popular in the literature (Baltaru, 2019). The two categories of staff in the university (academic and non-academic) are indispensable to each other. Non-academic staff performance is crucial to the success or failure of the academic activities within the university. Non-academic staff's contributions are pillars to the success of both the students and the lecturers, especially in terms of research, laboratory affairs, and classroom comfort (Baltaru, 2019) and should not be ignored. While studies have examined welfare among workers (Itodo & Abang, 2018; Oba-Adenuga et al., 2022; Pugsley, 1998), and a few concentrated only on private universities (Idowu, 2022; Ubah & Nkedishu, 2021), investigation on the inequalities dimensions inherent in private-provided welfare and their public counterparts are not popular, especially as it relates to academic and non-academic staff in Nigeria. Specifically, studies that compared the welfare of non-academic staff with respect to their academic counterparts in the university are not common. This study attempted to fill this gap by providing the current distribution of welfare between academic and non-academic staff in Nigerian private-owned and public-owned universities. The study is also meant to suggest solution that could engender balanced welfare attention to both categories of staff in the university such that quality work output would not be hampered.

2. Methods and materials

2.1 Research Design

The study used semi-structured in-depth interviews research approach among academics and non-academics in four universities that comprise two public and two private universities. Ballot-aided selection was used in the choice of the four universities out of the list of universities within the Lagos and Ogun States that were selected for the study. Ogun state has the largest concentration of higher institutions (including universities both private and public) in Nigeria (Ayedun et al., 2021; Faremi et al., 2017). Lagos is selected as economic hub of the country and has one of the foremost public universities and numerous private universities both within the state and its environs. The eligible participants are academic and non-academic staff that have worked for a minimum of 2 years in the university and have not resigned their appointment with the institution as at the time of the interview.

2.2 Participants

Within each university, cluster sampling procedure was used to ensure a fair representation of all academic cadres and non-academic ranks. For the academic, categories involved are: senior faculty (professors, associate professors, senior lecturers) and other level grouped as junior academics (comprising of Lecturer I, Lecturer II, Assistant Lecturer and Graduate Assistant). At the non-academic level, the senior non-academic category consisted of Deputy Registrar, Principal Assistant Registrar (PAR), Senior and Assistant Registrar (SAR), and Senior Technologists. The junior non-academic are in the ranks of Executive Officer, Secretaries and Junior Technologists. Overall, 6 senior academics and 6 junior academics, 8 senior non-academics and 6 junior non-academics were selected. Purposive and convenience sampling approaches were deployed in selecting participants within the ranks or cadres identified among the academics and non-academics. We interviewed only available and willing participants though guided by their ranks or cadres. The grouping into senior and junior, especially among the non-academics is based on the researchers' convenience as it relates to this study.

2.3. Research Instrument and Data Collection

The principal instrument used is semi-structured interview guide for data collection. It was developed by the principal investigators and thereafter, other members of the team reviewed it. However, since members of the team are faculty and experts in qualitative research including fieldwork, there was no formal training organised. Notwithstanding, a few series of interview practices were conducted among the team members to ensure adequacy of the instrument to meet the objectives of the study. Also, a pilot exercise was carried out with two participants from the principal investigators' university. Responses were recorded with hand-phones. The observations and initial result obtained were used to refine and modify the drafted interview guide. English language is the official language within the university hence only English language were used in the conduct of the interviews.

The study focus of the divergence in staff welfare provisions between the public and private universities using three basic indices of welfare, namely medical care, housing provisions and decent office. Thus, the interview asked questions about how long the participants have been working in their universities, accessibility to healthcare facility and services, housing accommodation and the type or size of offices occupied. Preliminary questions include few demographics profile and length of working experience with the university. The time spent on each of the interviews was \leq 50 minutes.

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected followed the pattern of systematic-content analysis (Amoo et al., 2022; Amoo, Omideyi, et al., 2017; Clark, 2003; Tong et al., 2007). First, the recorded information was transcribed and thoroughly proofread. The transcribed responses were matched with notes taken from the field, emerging concepts and major statements were noted down and coded accordingly into categories that thereafter formed the themes of the results. The team subjected these themes into scrutiny and reached consensus.

The processes were done manually, and this was made easy considering the limited number of respondents and the shorter length of the interview (Amoo et al., 2022). In addition, the duration of each interview (≤ 50 minutes each) was manageable. Finally, a descriptive narrative approach was adopted in the presentation of findings on basis of the key themes (medical care, accommodation provision and decent office). All the analysis processes were aided by the use of Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word, especially for the organisation of the data. The data analysis was believed to adhere to qualitative research review guidelines (RATS) that places emphasis on the relevance of research questions, appropriateness of methods, transparency, and soundness of interpretive approach analysis (Amoo et al., 2022; Amoo, Omideyi, et al., 2017; Clark, 2003; Tong et al., 2007). The author also followed the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) in the presentation of this research analysis (Amoo et al., 2022; Amoo, Omideyi, et al., 2017; Clark, 2003; Tong et al., 2007).

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The fact the participants concerned are staff of universities who are not strange to interview or research processes made the reconnaissance and the conduct of the interview relatively seamless. Verbal permissions were sought from the prospective participants. Where available and permitted, the Head of the Department was briefed of the aims of the research. Virtually every prospective participant understood the research process. Participation was totally voluntary and major screening question is the duration of working experience where only those that have worked for 2 years and above were included in the study. There were relatively a few rejections due to their work schedules of the prospective participants but there were overwhelming interest in the topic of discussion among the participants. Notwithstanding, the research guide did not contain any identifier (such as names, addresses, e-mails or phone numbers). We also assured the participants of the confidentiality of their responses and the interviews were restricted to only required information (Amoo et al., 2022).

3. Results

3.1 Demographic profile of participating academics and non-academics

The participants were selected in ratio of 50:50 between the public and private universities selected for the study. While the gender distribution shows male (61.5%) and female (38.5%), it is not a reflection of national employment standard or gender labour employment distribution for the entire university or the country. The age group demonstrated an upward trend from lower age category 25-29 years (15.4%), and 19.2% for age group (40-44) and 38.5% for the participants in age group 45 and above. Overall, more than half of the participants are in age group ≥ 40 years (57.7%). Participants by ranking shows that 53.8% of the participants belong to senior staff categories, namely: senior academics (23.1%) and senior non-academic (30.8%) as indicated in Table 1. The junior staff are in equal ratios (Table 1).

Only three categories of degrees were identified as qualifications of the participants, namely: (1) First degree that comprise Bachelor and Diploma (e.g. B.Sc, HND), (2) the second degree relates to Masters of Science (M.Sc), Masters in Engineering (M.Eng), Masters of Arts (MA) or Masters in Business Administration (MBA), and (3) the third degree that is mostly the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D). The distributions ranges from 30.8% to 42.3% and 26.9% for the first, second and third degrees respectively.

Although, the basic inclusion criterion is a minimum of 2 years of working with the university, the data shows that more than half of the participants (53.8%) have worked in the university for 10 years and above. The length of period of working with any establishment could give opportunity to understand and experience the welfare provisions provided by the employer.

| Table 1. Demographic profile of participating academics | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| selected University | Frequency | Percent |
| Private (CU & Caleb) | 13 | 50 |
| Public (Unilag & Funaab) | 13 | 50 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 16 | 61.5 |
| Female | 10 | 38.5 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| Age group | | |
| 25 - 29 | 4 | 15.4 |
| 30 - 34 | 4 | 15.4 |
| 35 - 39 | 3 | 11.5 |
| 40 - 44 | 5 | 19.2 |
| 45 and above | 10 | 38.5 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| Ranks | | |
| Senior Academics (Professorial & Senior Lecturer cadre) | 6 | 23.1 |
| Senior Non-Academics (Deputy Registrar, Principal & Senior & Assistant Registrar, Snr Technologists) | 8 | 30.8 |
| Junior Academics (Lecturer I & II, Assistant Lecturer & Graduate Assistant) | 6 | 23.1 |
| Junior Non-Academics (Executive Officer, Secretaries & Junior Technologists) | 6 | 23.1 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| Qualifications | | |
| First degree (B.Sc, HND) | 8 | 30.8 |
| Second degree (M.Sc, MBA, M-Eng, M.A) | 11 | 42.3 |
| Third degree (Ph.D) | 7 | 26.9 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| Duration in the university | | |
| 2 - 4 years | 5 | 19.2 |
| 5 - 9 years | 7 | 26.9 |
| 10 years and above | 14 | 53.8 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |
| NB: Covenant University (CU) & Caleb (Caleb University), University of Lagos (Unilag), and Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) | | |
| Source: Survey 2021 | | |

3.2 Provision and access to medical facilities

The provision of welfare is assessed using a trio-welfare index, namely: medical care, house accommodation and decent office in the universities selected for the study. While the participants' opinions were sought on the topics of discussion as relate to their various universities, the presentation was categorised by the public and private ownership of the university. This enable further comparison on the current situation in the public universities and private universities. The general finding pointed to reduce or relative abdication of government funding or support towards the welfare provision for the workers in the public university and non-uniform disposition of private university in the welfare provisions.

The wellbeing of workers is critically tied to accessibility to and affordability of the medical care expenses. While there has been provision for medical facility in all the public university selected, the general response tilted towards affordability and extension of the care to four family members of the worker. The response shows that a worker and his/her spouse including four of their children are eligible for medical care in the university health facility. This is however contrary to what is obtainable in the private university. Majority of the participants from the private university indicated that the bills are outrageous and unaffordable and many have stopped patronising the university medical facility. Various divergent responses are indicated below:

Although our medical facility cannot not be compared with what is obtainable in other countries. Most of public universities health centres are teaching hospitals.

(Male, Senior Academic, Public University)

The university organises an annual voluntary medical check-up for members of staff. Every staff have access to some level of free medical services. Here, your medical privilege includes free medical service for you, your spouse, and four children.

(Female, Senior Academic, Public University)

The medical services in this university are very standard. The facility is well equipped with basic medical instruments and they are functioning though, level of maintenance is not good.

(Male, Senior Non-Academic, Public University)

I visit our medical center only when it is made compulsory for us to go for annual medical check-up. Ordinarily, I don't visit the place. The services are not excellent and as at the last time I visited, the environment has been upgraded. If I am asked to rate it now, I will say 7 over 10-point grade.

(Female, Junior Non-Academic, Public University)

The funding and maintenance should be given high priority. The newly upgraded medical centre is looking nice. But this was how it started years ago before degenerating to bad shape before renovation.

(Male, Junior Academic, Public University)

The current state of our medical facilities might require improvement. A lot of staff are patronising outside health facilities. The cost implication is also exorbitantly high comparing with outside charges.

(Female, Senior Academic, Private University)

I hardly visit medical center. Notwithstanding, I think they are in good state though referrals are often made to other bigger hospitals. My children and family use other medical center because I don't reside on the campus.

(Male, Senior Academic, Private University)

The services rendered by the medical center in this institution are poor. I do not use their services. It seems a few of the officials are inexperienced and they have lackadaisical attitude. My family and I make use of other medical facilities, especially the state medical center and their bills are affordable. Some of my colleagues also do the same.

(Female, Junior Academic, Private University)

I was displeased at the outrageous bill for a brief illness and I have stopped using the place for health treatment. Other colleagues often complain bitterly about their experiences whenever they visit the university medical centers, especially due to the bills.

(Male, Junior Academic, Private University)

The standard there is improving very fast and I know with time, it will be superb. In the pre-COVID-19 era, it was more like a dispensary or consulting clinic. Sometimes I attend because of the proximity but must also go out for proper treatment.

(Male, Senior Non-Academic, Private University)

3.3 Accommodation

There are five types of accommodation in this campus, namely: (1) One room apartment, (2) Self-contained (a living room and a sitting room), (3) 2-Bed room flat (two living rooms and a sitting room), (4) 3-bedroom flat and (5) Duplex. The types of accommodation for a non-teaching staff are far different from the academics'. There is no any non-teaching staff that occupies Duplex, 3-bedroom flat except the principal officials.

(Male, Senior Non-Academic, Private University)

Priority is given to academic staff before the non-academic, except for senior non-academics such as Registrar, the Chief Librarian.

(Male, Senior Academic, Private University)

Where do you see accommodation for workers in this university? That was in those days. Things have changed. Government is not funding university as it used to do before. The universities are barely surviving now. So, whatever little you have as a university is not for building estate. Every lecturer finds accommodation for themselves.

(Male, Senior Academic, Public University)

There is no new office for anyone. Everywhere is occupied and no new building constructed. It is not strange to see a lecturer driving in, about 10 minutes to the lecture time, quickly give the lecture and drives off because he doesn't have a personal office.

(Male, Junior Academic, Public University)

When you mention provision of welfare within the university or for the university workers, what comes to my mind first is lecturers/academic welfare. Non-academic welfare is secondary in the welfare hierarchy of the university system. When they are mentioning improvement in facilities for the university, attention goes straight to classrooms, lecturer offices and maybe laboratories for students cum faculty. The welfare of those that handle the equipment, the laboratory assistants/technologists are only thought of tangentially.

(Female, Senior Non-Academic, Public University)

When an academic comes in today, accommodation is provided. It is not the same with a non-teaching staff. In fact, majority of the non-academics lives off-campus. Seems like non-academics are not matter in the university welfare system.

(Male, Senior Non-Academic, Public University)

Yes, there are accommodation for staff on request. there quite different types of accommodation, you request based on your capacity to pay. If you have large family size, you apply for a bigger type and where available, it could be allocated to you.

(Male, Senior Academic, Private University)

You have opportunity to change your accommodation as the need arises. It also depends on whether the place is vacant and if it can satisfy your family requirements.

(Male, Junior Academic, Private University)

The houses for teaching staff are well furnished while that of their non-teaching staff counterparts are sparsely furnished. In fact, it not strange to see some non-teaching staff unofficially squatting in the quarters of the academics

(Male, Non-Academic, Private University)

Accommodation! The university has not built staff quarters in a long while. The existing ones are very old and require huge renovations. Currently, I am not aware of any new accommodation provision for any staff of this university, either academic or non-academic, young or old. There is no fund in the university again.

(Male, Academic, Public University)

The university do have staff quarters but it is already saturated or over populated. The first occupiers since 15-20 years ago have not vacated their quarters. I doubt if the university is contemplating on building another staff quarters now.

(Female Academic, Public University)

3.4 Decent Office

Office layout could be a reflection of the corporate statement of the business and increases or discourages efficient contribution for the organisation. The level of space and decoration of the office could make the worker to be at ease and creates inducement for more effectiveness and efficiency at work place. Notwithstanding that there are different types of offices, in sizes or furniture, a descent office is related to a comfortable floor space (room-space) that have the required equipment (or tools) and accessories for work. It is a space where employees perform their administrative (or non-administrative) works in order to support and realise objective of the establishment they work for. In this study, the dimension in term of size (in length or breadth) was not captured in the interview.

Excerpts shows that the participants' general perspectives in respect of provision of offices, is that the provision of offices favour the academics than the non-teaching staff. The following are excerpt from this study of decent offices

There is a wide-apart difference between a non-academic's office and a lecturer's office. There is no basis for comparison at all. As the head of this unit, can you see my office? There is no regard for office when it comes to a non-teaching staff. I am not sure the management of the university believe you must sit down when you come to work daily. The perspective could be that you must be working outside all through.

(Male Non-academic, Public University)

As a non-teaching staff, we use workstation and not office. Everyone occupies a portion of the workstation with your table and chair, nothing more. It is the faculty that have offices and everyone has his/her own key to his/her own office. Ours is general one and no one keeps the key. If we close the janitors will come and lock the workstation and they have the time to open it.

(Female Non-academic, Private University)

There is no fridge or any other special thing in my office. It a like a small room size. Imaging a Chief Technician office like this Apart from my desk and a small chair for any visitor, you can see that there is no much space again.

(Male Non-academic, Private University)

4. Discussion

The study considered the critical role of university in delivery of quality graduates and research outputs for national development that could be impaired due to workers welfare inadequacies. The study emphasised that the welfare provision(in the university) that has been the solely responsibility of the government in the time past has now been shifted to nearly only private-responsibility. The study

affirmed the playing out of government failure theory, marked with inadequacy on the part of the government in catering for the welfare of her universities' workers that is often resulted into incessant truncation of academic programmes by worker strikes and frequent closure of the university(Ige, 2013; Keech & Munger, 2015; Young, 2021). The study highlighted that the advent of private ownership of university and the eventual intervention in terms of private-welfare provision has not been benevolent. The private's involvement has indirectly extended the gap between academics and non-academics in the share of available welfare services. This finding could be a significant insight into why there are shortages of non-academic staff in the university or why their contributions too are not often pronounced unlike their academic counterparts.

The results obtained highlighted that welfare, especially in terms of healthcare, housing and decent office are among the major expectations by workers from their employers (i.e. the university). The study confirmed that motivation of workers in terms of healthcare, housing and office could engender enthusiasm, agility, zeal, commitment, and focus (Azende et al., 2019a; Babagana & Dungus, 2015), with potential for quality research output, excellent classroom teaching and good performance among the students. The priority placement of the welfare needs of academics above their counterparts' (non-academic staff) could have detrimental effect on the quality of expected productivity (i.e. quality graduates). This is because, the works of non-teaching staff are critical to lecturers' effectiveness and efficiency. The finding shows that there is welfare provision for workers in all the study locations. However, it confirmed that 'welfare' in the university is synonymous with welfare for academics. The welfare of the non-academic is rarely emphasised. This could have great policy implications for non-academic staff performance and contributions to both students and the lecturers successes(Baltaru, 2019).

The crucial nature of housing accommodation provision as well as office cannot be over emphasised. The potentials of workers without offices could be marred. Delivery of quality assignments and raising quality graduates could also be impaired where accommodation and affordable healthcare are not provided(Azende et al., 2019b; Idowu, 2022; Ogunode & Musa, 2020). However, the study found that a few private universities have different types of accommodation for their staff which could have potential for improvement in workers' contributions towards the raising of quality graduates. However, where the opposite holds or where it is on discriminatory basis, perhaps favouring the academic profession than others, such practices could engender disinterest in commitment in the short-run, inequalities and other unhealthy working cooperation between the two cadres identified (i.e. Academic and Non-academic).

5. Limitation of the study

The use of only in-depth interview instead of a more triangulated research approach could be a limitation. However, the in-depth interview approached adopted permitted the researchers and participants to have a comfortable discussion that generated more in-depth responses on the subject matter. Follow-up questions were asked and additional information that could shape the findings of this study was obtained. Also, the study focused only on three indices of welfare namely, healthcare, housing accommodation and decent office rather exploring other options or indicators of welfare.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The study concludes that the abdication of welfare-provision responsibility in the public universities that paved way for private ownership has not been totally benign. While emphasising that welfare, especially in terms of healthcare, housing and decent office are among the major expectations by workers from their employers (i.e. the university), the study conclude that there are dichotomies in the distribution of housing accommodation and offices space between academics and non-academics with academics mostly favoured in the distribution. The authors submit that discrimination in welfare distribution between academic and non-academic could breed unhealthy working rivalry, and eventual substandard research outputs and eventual negative effect on the quality of the graduates.

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