



THE EXAMINATION OF EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION OF QUALITY OF WORKLIFE (QWL) IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHEAST ZONE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined employees' perception of their Quality of Worklife in federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria. A concurrent mixed method research design was adopted. The sample size comprised of one thousand and four-three 1,043 respondents, selected through the Proportionate Stratified Sampling Technique. The structured Questionnaire schedule and In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide were used to collect data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 was used to process the quantitative data while descriptive statistics including frequency count, and simple percentages were used to analyse the data. In addition, the qualitative data were analysed using manual content analysis technique. Findings of the study indicated that employees in the federal Universities within the study area had fair ratings on QWL, The study therefore recommended the need for the National Universities Commission (NUC) to initiate annual conference for top management officers within federal Universities in Nigeria, which will be focused on how to improve the QWL.

Key words: Employees, Quality of Worklife, Perception, Federal Universities, working conditions

Introduction

Employee job satisfaction is one of the major contemporary issues that have gained tremendous attention within the ambit of studies in organisational behaviours and industrial relations. Among the most important variables affecting employee job satisfaction, is perception of Quality of Work Life (QWL), which is very critical.

According to Mamedu (2016), QWL is basically concerned with creating satisfactory working conditions such as increasing employees' opportunity to use their personal skills and judgments, ability to participate in problem solving, injury reduction, more family-friendly schedules, participation in continuous quality service improvement and improved labour-management relations respectively. It can also be equated with a set of objectives, organisational conditions, practices and employees' perceptions that they are safe, satisfied and able to grow and develop as human beings within the work



environment (Teryima, Faajir & John, 2016). As observed by Ahmad (2013), QWL of an organisational employee has to do with the design of their workplace and what they need to make productions or to deliver needed services more effectively and efficiently.

The term Quality Work Life was introduced in 1972 by Louis Davis at the first International QWL Conference held in Toronto, Canada. Reddy and Reddy (2010:828) noted that QWL as a philosophy was conceptualized as, “a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organisation as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and that they should be treated with dignity and respect”.

Over the past few decades, the Nigerian public University system has gone through tremendous changes in line with global practices for improved learning. These changes in work patterns came with increased pressure at work place with intense competition to survive in the dynamic working environment of which universities’ working environment is not exempted from this trend. Amidst these changing challenges, employees are expected to be at their best in producing efficiency and to be productive in the University institution. These have led to a very thin layer between employees’ personal life and work life, which often mares their QWL and job satisfaction (Bigirimana, Sibanda & Masengu, 2016).

Hence, the major concern of this study is to investigate the connection between these changes and how they affect the ways in which the employees perceive their QWL in their different Universities’ working environment.

Research Questions

1. How do employees’ in the selected federal universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria perceive their QWL?
2. How do employees’ perceive their working conditions in the selected federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between the employees and management of the selected federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria?



Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate employees' perception of their QWL in federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine how the employees of the selected federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria, perceive their QWL.
2. To ascertain employees perception of their working conditions in the selected federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria.
3. To examine the quality of relationship between the employees and management of the selected federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria.

Brief Review of Relevant Literature

Concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) This is a multi-dimensional concept that may not be practically integrated in one research. In fact, a good attempt was made by Khetavath (2015) in identifying seventy-seven (77) dimensions of QWL. On the other hand, quite a good number of scholars have conceptualized QWL in their various capacities. Each scholar has his or her opinion on the dimensions that constitute QWL in the work environment. However, a few relevant conceptualizations are reviewed here considering the fact that all of them cannot be reviewed in one research. Consequently, Roodpishi, Naserani, Hashemi, Choolabi, Chafi, Khah and Ranjbar (2013) conceptualized QWL as personnel image and perception of physical and psychosocial utility of their work environment. It is with this view that Brooks (2001) argued that QWL has two goals: improving the quality of the work experience of employees and simultaneously improving the overall productivity of the organisation. To Fapohunda (2013), QWL embraces the degree to which members of a work organisation are able to satisfy human resource needs through their experiences in the organisation.

Davis (1983), as cited in Fapohunda (2013) earlier defined QWL as the quality of the relationship between employees and the total working environment, with human dimensions added to the usual technical and economic considerations. Also, Newstrom and Davis (1986) referred to QWL as the level to which employees are able to satisfy their essential personal needs through work. For Lau, Wong, Chan and Law (2001), QWL is



best described as the positive working environment that supports and stimulates satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security and career growth opportunities. Al-Muftah and Lafi (2011) corroborated by asserting that QWL is the combination of physical, psychological, and social factors that influence employee' satisfaction.

Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger (1997) described QWL as the feelings that employees attach towards their jobs, colleagues and organisations, which influence the organisations' growth and profitability. Mirvis and Lawler (1984) highlighted that QWL was associated with satisfaction with wages, hours and working conditions. The authors described the basic elements of a good QWL as: safe work environment, equitable wages, equal employment opportunities and opportunities for advancement. To Hatam, Lotfi, Kavosi and Tavakoli (2014), QWL is the ability of employees to satisfy their personal needs through experiences they learn in the organisation.

It is worthy of note that the above definitions are not exhaustive of the numerous scholarly contributions on the concept of QWL. However, it can be deduced from the above conceptualisations that QWL is a broad multidimensional concept, encompassing different approaches and models reflecting a large number of inter-related organisational and human dimensions. In this view, the concept of QWL revolves around the wellbeing of employees and its dimensions in general are aimed at facilitating employees' satisfaction with physical and psychological factors related to work and daily life, with the view to improving organisational efficiency and productivity. A descriptive survey was also conducted by Mamedu and Ahiakwo (2016) to examine the QWL of University academic staff and to relate this understanding to their performance towards University Goal Attainment (UGA) in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select 1681 academic staff in four universities in the area. A self-developed questionnaire was used in the collection of data and the data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test were used to test the study hypotheses. Findings of the study indicated that there was a satisfactory QWL for the



academic staff. Although this study was conducted in the South-South zone of Nigeria, the findings are very relevant to this present study because the study was conducted among academic staff in the Nigerian Universities, which is also a focus of this present study. Thus, there is a likelihood that similar results may be obtained within the context of Southeastern Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This research work is anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

This theory was developed by Abraham Maslow (1908 -1970). Maslow hypothesized that a hierarchy of needs exists within every individual. Such needs are prioritized and categorized into five levels in ascending hierarchical order which includes physiological needs, safety needs, social needs self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Elaborating further, the physiological needs include: food, water, oxygen, shelter, sleep etc; the safety needs includes the need for a generally ordered existence in a stable environment which is relatively free of threats, to the safety of the person's existence; sociological needs include the need for affectionate relations with other individuals and the need for one to have a recognised place as a group member - the need to be accepted by one's peers; esteem needs include the need of a stable, firmly based self-evaluation the need for self-respect, self-esteem and to command respect from significant others; and self-actualisation needs include the need for self-fulfilment, to achieve one's full capacity in life endeavours. Marta, Singhapakdi, Lee, Sirgy and Koonmee (2013) and Narehan, Hairunnisa, Razak and Lapok (2014) discussed the similarity between QWL and Maslow's hierarchy of needs and stated that QWL has two levels of needs. The lower level contains health/safety needs and economic needs, while the higher level is comprised of social, self-actualization and knowledge needs. Relating this theory to the relationship between QWL and job satisfaction at workplace, it then goes to deduce that, positive QWL reflects the existence of mechanisms that would enable employees to satisfy their relative hierarchy of needs in the work experience. Thus, if the work place environment provides an atmosphere for employees to satisfy their needs and expectations from work, they will be at the peak of employer loyalty and will retain with the organisation for longer time spans. In other words, all the levels depicted in Maslow's theory are directly related to



the fulfillment of the needs and wants of employees, which enhance their happiness and satisfaction with the work environment and staying with the organisation. Corroborating this, Almarshad (2015) argued that employees usually build their attitudes to job performance based on their perception of several aspects of the work environment as being able to meet their needs.

Employees in the University environment desire a workplace that is safe and free from threats; a sense of orderliness in their working conditions as well as financial security; a workplace characteristics whereby they feel accepted and belonged; where they feel recognized for their achievements in job performance. In most occasions, the employees also desire to be assigned challenging and meaningful work assignments, which enable them to showcase their innovation, creativity and progress in job accomplishments. In addition, a greater feeling of participation in decision-making especially in areas that concerns their job performance is also a major need of the University employees. Where the employees feel that these needs are achievable within the University environment, they would ultimately become satisfied with their QWL.

Materials and Methods

This study used the mixed method research design. This method involved the combination of quantitative and qualitative approach in the collection of data, analysis and presentation of findings. This study was conducted in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The Southeast zone was formerly known as the Eastern Region in Nigeria following the division of the country into three parts in the 1950s. The area was later split into three states in 1967. It was only in 1976 that more states including Imo and Anambra were created. Currently, the region is consisted of five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. However, the major target institutions for this study are the five (5) Federal Universities in the Southeast zone are Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, University of Nigeria Nsukka and Federal University of Science and Technology Owerri.



The population for this study comprised of all the employees in the federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeria. According to the data obtained from the personnel units of the five federal Universities in the Southeast Nigeria (*See Appendix V*), there was Seventeen thousand, five hundred and six (17,516) employees as at the period of this study. However, this study was conducted among the academic and non-academic staff in two selected federal Universities in the Southeast Nigeria (UNN & FUTO). The selection of these two Universities out of the five federal Universities was done using the simple balloting method. According to the data obtained from the personnel units of the two Universities, there was a total of nine thousand, seven hundred and eighty-eight (9,788) employees as at the time of this study.

Table 1: Population Composition of Academic Staff Categories in the Selected Federal Universities.

Academic Staff Categories	UNN	FUTO	Total
Professors/Associate Professors	339 (12.0%)	221 (22.7%)	560 (14.7%)
Senior Lecturers	497 (17.6%)	160 (16.4%)	657(17.3%)
Lecturer II & I	1,041 (36.8%)	365 (37.5%)	1,406(37.0%)
Assistant Lecturers/Graduate Assistants	950 (33.6%)	228 (23.4%)	1,178(31.0%)
Total	2,827 (100.0%)	974 (100.0%)	3,801(100.0%)

Field Survey, 2019

For the non-academic staff category, ten departments were used for this study. The population composition of each of ten departments in the two selected federal Universities is shown in table 5.



Table 2: Population Composition of Non-Academic Units within the Selected Federal Universities

Non-Academic Staff Units	UNN	FUTO	Total
Administration	3,022 (57.8%)	251 (33.0%)	3,273 (54.7%)
Finance	11 (0.2%)	48 (6.3%)	59 (1.0%)
Information Technology	28 (0.5%)	10 (1.3%)	38 (0.6%)
Library	227 (4.3%)	63 (8.3%)	290 (4.8%)
Personnel	102 (2.0%)	35 (4.6%)	137 (2.3%)
Planning and Resource allocation	19 (0.4%)	16 (2.1%)	35 (0.6%)
Records	31 (0.6%)	10 (1.3%)	41 (0.7%)
Security	799 (15.3%)	160 (21.1%)	959 (16.0%)
Students affairs	395 (7.6%)	29 (3.8%)	424 (7.1)
Works.	593 (11.3%)	138 (18.2%)	731 (12.2%)
Total	5,227 (100.0%)	760 (100.0%)	5,987 (100.0%)

Field Survey, 2019.

The sample size for this study was one thousand and fourty-three (1,043). In determining the sample size, the researcher used the Yamane (1967) method of sample size determination, which provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes for finite (known) population using 95% confidence level or 0.05 margin of error.

The proportionate stratified sampling technique was used as the sampling technique for this study. This was to enable the selection of respondents that is academic and non-academic staff in their various strata in the selected federal Universities based on their relative percentage composition to the entire population of the study. Due to the difficulty in accessing the sample frame for the various sampling units, the researcher considered the use of convenient/availability sampling technique relevant in this situation to select the respondents who were administered with the questionnaire. For the qualitative aspect of this study, the researcher purposefully selected 12 participants (six from each of the selected Universities) for the In-depth Interview.

This study adopted the mixed method for data collection. This involved the combination of quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (In-depth Interview) instruments in the collection of data for the study.



The quantitative data collected was sorted, coded and processed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. However, frequency counts and simple percentages were used to present the descriptive aspect of the data.

The qualitative data was however analysed using the method of content analysis. This method involved first, reading of the notes and transcripts to gain an overview of the body and context of the data collected. Subsequently, the variables and ideas in the data were coded and organized under distinct themes. In this view, the theme was discussed and necessary illustrative quotes were extracted to support and elucidate the quantitative data.

Research Findings/ Results

This section contains the analysis and presentation of data collected from the field research. Total of one thousand and forty three (1,043) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sampled respondents, out of which only nine hundred and seventeen (917) copies were collected back. However, after thorough sorting of the returned copies, only eight hundred and ninety seven (897) copies were considered valid; while twenty (20) copies were considered invalid due to improper filling of the items in those questionnaire copies. Hence, only 897 valid copies were used for data analysis in this study. The qualitative data obtained through the responses of selected key stakeholders in the University community including: a Vice Chancellor, Senior University administrators, Senior Academic Staff and Union Chairmen, were analysed and used to complement the quantitative data.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Questionnaire items 1 – 6 were used for the analysis of socio-demographic data of the respondents. The findings are presented in table below³.



Table 3: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

VARIABLES DESCRIPTION	UNN	FUTO	TOTAL	Missing Values
GENDER				
Male	303 (44.8%)	108 (49.1%)	411 (45.8%)	Missing = Nil
Female	374 (55.2%)	112 (50.9%)	486 (54.2%)	
Total	677 (100.0%)	220 (100.0%)	897 (100.0%)	
AGE CATEGORIES				
20 - 29 Years	74 (13.1%)	22 (12.9%)	96 (13.0%)	Missing = 161
30 - 39 Years	210 (37.2%)	56 (32.7%)	266 (36.1%)	
40 - 49 Years	165 (29.2%)	54 (31.6%)	219 (29.8%)	
50 - 59 Years	90 (15.9%)	32 (18.7%)	122 (16.6%)	
60 - 69 Years	26 (4.6%)	7 (4.1%)	33 (4.5%)	
Total	565 (100.0%)	171 (100.0%)	736 (100.0%)	
MARITAL STATUS				
Single	185 (27.9%)	62 (28.4%)	247 (28.0%)	Missing = 15
Arried	455 (68.5%)	139 (63.8%)	594 (67.3%)	
Divorced	6 (0.9%)	3 (1.4%)	9 (1.0%)	
Separated	3 (0.5%)	5 (2.3%)	8 (0.9%)	
Widowed	15 (2.3%)	9 (4.1%)	24 (2.7%)	
Total	664 (100.0%)	218 (100.0%)	882 (100.0%)	
CURRENT DURATION OF SERVICE				
Less than 5 Years	292 (44.0%)	86 (39.4%)	378 (42.9%)	Missing = 15
6 - 10 Years	138 (20.8%)	54 (24.8%)	192 (21.8%)	
11 - 15 Years	121 (18.2%)	30 (13.8%)	151 (17.1%)	
16 - 20 Years	39 (5.9%)	26 (11.9%)	65 (7.4%)	
Above 20 Years	74 (11.1%)	22 (10.1%)	96 (10.9%)	
Total	664 (100.0%)	218 (100.0%)	882 (100.0%)	
EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES				
Non Academic Staff	481 (71.3%)	164 (73.9%)	645 (71.9%)	Missing = Nil
Academic Staff	194 (28.7%)	58 (26.1%)	252 (28.1%)	
Total	675 (100.0%)	222 (100.0%)	897 (100.0%)	
RANKS OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF				
Junior Employee	85 (17.6%)	44 (27.0%)	129 (20.0%)	Missing = 252
Intermediate Employee	44 (9.1%)	15 (9.2%)	59 (9.1%)	
Senior Employee	353 (73.2%)	104 (63.8%)	457 (70.9%)	
Total	482 (100.0%)	163 (100.0%)	645 (100.0%)	
RANKS OF ACADEMIC STAFF				
Junior Lecturer	64 (33.0%)	24 (41.4%)	88 (34.9%)	Missing = 645
Intermediate (Lecturer II & I)	60 (30.9%)	16 (27.6%)	76 (30.2%)	
Senior Lecturer	50 (25.8%)	10 (17.2%)	60 (23.8%)	
Professor/Asso.Professor	20 (10.3%)	8 (13.8%)	28 (11.1%)	
Total	194 (100.0%)	58 (100.0%)	252 (100.0%)	

Field Survey, 2019.

Table 3 contains the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The data show that a majority 486(54.2%) of the respondents were females compared to 411(45.8%) of them who were males. This is also reflective of the variation in gender occurrence within the two selected Universities (UNN = Females 55.2%, Males 44.8%) and (FUTO = Female 50.9%, Males 49.1%).

With regards to the age categories of the respondents, the data show that a majority 266(36.1%) of the respondents aged between 30-39 years old, while a least proportion 33(4.5%) of them were aged between 60 – 69 years old. Also, further analysis of data



indicated that this finding was reflective of the two selected Universities. In other words, a majority 210(37.2%) of the respondents in UNN were aged between 30 – 39 years old; as well as a majority 56(32.7%) of the respondents in FUTO also were aged between 30 – 39 years old. The mean age of the respondents was 40.6 and standard deviation of 10.0. This indicates that the respondents were within the active or productive age and mature enough to express their feeling and experience about the QWL and job satisfaction within the selected institutions.

With respect to the marital status of the respondents, the data show that a majority 594(67.3%) of them were married compared to 247(28.0%) of them who were single. The data also indicated that 24(2.7%) of them were widowed, 9(1.0%) of them were divorced, while the least proportion 8(0.9%) were separated. This finding is also reflective of the data in the two selected Universities where 455(68.5%) of them in UNN were married and 185(27.9%) of them were single. Also in FUTO, 139(63.8%) of the respondents were married and 62(28.4%) of them were single.

Going by the respondents' job duration within the two selected Universities, the data show that a majority 378(42.9%) of them had worked within the organisation for less than 5years. Also, 192(21.8%) of them had worked between six to ten years. Also, 151(17.1%) of them indicated that they had worked within the institutions for period between eleven to fifteen years. Only 96(10.9%) of them indicated having worked more than twenty years within the institutions; while a lower proportion of them 65(7.4%) had worked between sixteen to twenty years within the institutions. This is also reflective of the data in relation to the two selected Universities. This implies that a relatively good number of employees were new within the institutions, which may have an implication on the data with regards to the impressions they give about their work organisations.

In the employee categories, the data show that non-academic staff comprises a larger proportion of the employees in the selected federal Universities compared to the academic staff (71.9% and 28.1% respectively). This is also reflected in the data within the two selected institutions. In UNN, the non-academic staff comprised 481(71.3%) of the total employees, while the academic staff comprised only 194(28.7%) of the total employees population. Also in FUTO, similar data were found - where the non-academic



employees comprised 164(73.9%) of the total employees population, while the academic staff comprised 58(26.1%) of the total employees population. This goes to show that there is a huge gap or discrepancy in the employment quota for the academic and non-academic staff of the federal Universities in the Southeast Nigeria.

In addition to the above, the data show that within the non-academic staff category, a majority 457(70.9%) of them were senior employees compared to 129(20.0%) and 59(9.1%) of them who were junior employees and intermediate employees respectively. These data are also reflected within the two selected Universities. On the contrary, within the academic staff category, the data show that a majority 88(34.9%) of them were junior lecturers compared to 76(30.2%) of them who were intermediate lecturers (Lecturer II & I), 60(23.8%) who were senior lecturers, and a very lower proportion 28(11.1%) of them who were professors/Associate professors respectively. These data show that there is a gap in the number of experienced lecturers in terms of lecturers within higher ranks; which informs the need to improve the experience of the upcoming employees through international scholarship programmes for Masters Degree and Doctoral programmes, interdisciplinary workshops and seminars, etc.

Analysis of Research Questions 1, 2 and 3

How employees in the federal Universities in the Southeast zone of Nigeri do: 1. perceive their QWL; 2. Perceive their working conditions; 3. perceive employee and management eelationship in their institutions? Answers to these questions are contained in table 4.



Table 4: Composite Data of Respondents' Ratings on the QWL(including their Perception of their working and nature of relationship with management) according to their Work Designation within the Selected Universities.

Items	Options	Non Academic Staff	Academic Staff	Total	Mann-Whitney U Statistics
Type of work rules and policies	Very Stringent	111 (17.7%)	37 (14.9%)	148 (16.9%)	$U = 67,103;$ $p = .001$
	Somewhat stringent	220 (35.1%)	138 (55.4%)	358 (40.9%)	
	Somewhat flexible	220 (35.1%)	61 (24.5%)	281 (32.1%)	
	Very Flexible	75 (12.0%)	13 (5.2%)	88 (10.1%)	
	Total	626 (100.0%)	249 (100.0%)	875 (100.0%)	
How hard it is for employees to take time off in order to take care of personal or family matters.	Not Hard at all	56 (8.7%)	22 (8.9%)	78 (8.8%)	$U = 69,272;$ $p = .001$
	Not Too Hard	296 (46.1%)	150 (60.5%)	446 (50.1%)	
	Somewhat Hard	183 (28.5%)	46 (18.5%)	229 (25.7%)	
	Very Hard	107 (16.7%)	30 (12.1%)	137 (15.4%)	
	Total	642 (100.0%)	248 (100.0%)	890 (100.0%)	
General working conditions being flexible enough.	Strongly Agree	63 (10.0%)	18 (7.3%)	81 (9.2%)	$U = 75,617;$ $p = .460$
	Agree	233 (37.0%)	119 (48.0%)	352 (40.1%)	
	Undecided	118 (18.8%)	31 (12.5%)	149 (17.0%)	
	Disagree	180 (28.6%)	58 (23.4%)	238 (27.1%)	
	Total	629 (100.0%)	248 (100.0%)	877 (100.0%)	
Work procedures and rules not letting employees use their personal skills to make difference in the work	Strongly Agree	78 (12.4%)	13 (5.2%)	91 (10.4%)	$U = 63,928;$ $p = .000$
	Agree	165 (26.2%)	59 (23.7%)	224 (25.5%)	
	Undecided	89 (14.1%)	23 (9.2%)	112 (12.8%)	
	Disagree	226 (35.9%)	103 (41.4%)	329 (37.5%)	
	Total	629 (100.0%)	249 (100.0%)	878 (100.0%)	
Quality of relationships between the employees and the university management	Very Cordial	171 (29.1%)	44 (18.4%)	215 (26.0%)	$U = 58,262;$ $p = .000$
	Somewhat Cordial	270 (46.0%)	98 (41.0%)	368 (44.6%)	
	Somewhat Antagonistic	61 (10.4%)	64 (26.8%)	125 (15.1%)	
	Very Antagonistic	34 (5.8%)	10 (4.2%)	44 (5.3%)	
	Total	587 (100.0%)	239 (100.0%)	826 (100.0%)	

Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 contains the analysis of data that measured employees' perception of QWL in the selected Universities. These data were classified according to the employees' work designation in order to assess if there are variations in respondents' perception regarding their work experiences as non-academic staff and academic staff. This was however tested using the Man-Whitney test of statistical differences. Consequently, on the type of work rules and policies in the selected Universities, the data indicated that the combined proportion of the respondents who had unfavorable perception about it; i.e. those who



perceived it as being very stringent, 148(16.9%) and somewhat stringent, 358(40.9%) respectively, were greater than those who had favourable perception about it; i.e. those who perceived it as being somewhat flexible, 281(32.1%) and those who perceived it as being very flexible 88(10.1%).

With respect to the dimensions of QWL examined, the result shows that a majority 446(50.1%) of the respondents perceived that it is not too hard for them to take time-off in order to take care of their personal and other family matters. This is against 229(25.7%) of them who perceived that it is somewhat hard for them to do so. 137(15.4%) of them perceived that it is very hard for them to do so; while only 78(8.8%) of them perceived that it is not hard at all to do so. In general, the proportion of respondents who had positive perception about it was quite greater than those who had negative perception about it.

Furthermore, a majority 352(40.1%) of the respondents agreed that the general working conditions in the selected Universities are flexible enough. This is followed by 238(27.1%) of them who disagreed with that view. Also, 149(17.0%) of them were neutral on this item. It was only 81(9.2%) of the respondents that strongly agreed on this issue; while a very lower proportion 57(6.5%) of them strongly disagreed with the view. In general, the proportion of the respondents who had positive ratings on the item was greater than those who had negative ratings as well as those who remained neutral on the item.

Further item analysis showed that a majority of the respondents 329(37.5%) disagreed with the view that work procedures and rules do not let employees use their personal skills to make difference in the work. However, a good proportion 224(25.5%) also agreed with this view. Furthermore, 122(13.9%) of them strongly disagreed with this view, while 112(12.8%) of them remained undecided on the issue. It was only 91(10.4%) of them that strongly agreed that work procedures and rules do not let employees use their personal skills to make difference in the work. These findings suggest that the proportion of the respondents who support the view that procedures and rules are flexible for the employees to use their personal skill, are greater than those who did not support the view.

A majority 368(44.6%) of the respondents also perceived that the quality of relationship between employees and the Universities management was somewhat cordial. About quarter proportion 215(26.0%) of them also perceived that the relationship was very cordial. 125(15.1%) of the respondents perceived that the relationship was somewhat antagonistic, and 44(5.3%) of them perceived the relationship as very antagonistic; while 74(9.0%) of them were neutral on the issue. This shows that a majority of the respondent perceived that a positive relationship exists between employees and the management of the federal Universities within the Southeast Nigeria.

The above findings are also reflective of the data contained within the two institutions used in this study. However, using the Mann-Whitney statistics, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of academic and non-academic staff on the given items viz: perception of type of work rules and policies, ($U = 67,103$; $p = .001$), perception of how hard it is for employees to take time off in order to take care of their personal or family matters, ($U = 69,272$; $p = .001$), perception of work procedures and rules as not letting employees use their personal skills to make a difference in the work, ($U = 63,928$; $p = .000$), perception of quality of relationships between the employees and the University management, ($U = 58,262$; $p = .000$). However, only one item in the table (Perception of general working conditions as being flexible) was found to have no statistically significant difference in the perception of academic and non-academic staff of the two selected Universities, ($U = 75, 617$; $p = .460$).

Data obtained from the qualitative vary; with some of the data supporting the above findings, while some others do not. For instance, an IDI interviewee while supporting the view that the QWL in the selected universities are not favourable noted that:

...some employees do not even understand their right of work because nobody is given any form of orientation here as a staff. You just walk into office and you start work. It's only on a rare few occasions that they organize some kind of workshop that is not holistic; ...so if we compare the quality of work life we have among workers in our own era, with what we saw during our undergraduate days, I think there is an aberration and a digression from the standard (Male, 50 Years Old, Member University Government Council, UNN, Enugu State).

Another interviewee had similar view when he said,

...it is not okay here. It is better in the North and Southwest. I say this because I did ask my pro-chancellor when we were struggling to be paid



some allowances, why is it that if government releases money to parastatals, particularly the universities, those in the North and Southwest will give their workers their due, but coming to Southeast it will be a tug of war? They will receive and say that they have not received. Surprisingly, he ask me, is it not your people? (Male, 53 Years Old, Chairman Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, UNN, Enugu State).

However, another interviewee had a different view about the QWL in the selected Universities in comparison with other Universities.

...the university system is uniform in Nigeria, especially at federal level ... it is been controlled by the same quality agent; we have the standard and we have what we call B-mass... that is, controlled by NUC and it is the same standard everywhere in Nigeria (Male, 58 Years, Vice Chancellor, UNN, Enugu State).

Discussion of Findings

This study examined employees' perception of their QWL in federal universities within the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria; with focus on two selected Universities viz: UNN and FUTO. It was found that the employees within the selected Universities perceived the dimensions of QWL measured in this study as either positive(including taking time off from work, general working conditions, work procedures and rules letting employees use their personal skill and employees-management relations), or negative (including only type of work rules and policies). In general, there was mixed perception about QWL, judging from the quantitative data and the qualitative data. While the quantitative data suggested that the QWL in the federal Universities in the Southeast Nigeria is fair, the qualitative data suggests that QWL in the institutions is very poor.

Conclusion

QWL is a key variable that influences optimal job satisfaction of employees within organisations. This study was conducted with the view to investigate the QWL within the federal Universities in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria, and how it can be improved upon positively. This study was motivated due to the need to address the inconsistencies observable within the University system in Nigeria; pending the fact that previous studies conducted on QWL suggested that the QWL in the Nigerian tertiary institutions fall below the global standard. Based on the complexity of data found in this



study, it is concluded that the opinion of the respondents varied significantly based on the mixed-approach to data collection. While the quantitative data suggest that employees have fair level of perception about QWL and job satisfaction, the qualitative data however suggest strongly that there is a lot of pretence among the employees regarding their actual situation; hence, the QWL and employees' job satisfaction in the federal Universities within the Southeast Nigeria may not actually reflect the findings of the quantitative data. Based on the two contradicting findings, this study also concludes that, there are observable improvements in the QWL within the Federal Universities in the Southeast, Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. There is also the need for the National Universities Commission (NUC) to initiate annual conference for top management officers within different Universities in Nigeria, which will be focused on how to improve the QWL and especially the management-employees relations, which is critical to efficiency and productivity within formal organisations.
2. There is also the need for the management of the Universities to instill the spirit of democratic principles into the management of employees, so as to give the employees sense of opinion in decision-making process that could influence their commitment, enthusiasm, and sense of ownership, which are indicators of job satisfaction.
3. There is equally the need for Universities to introduce compulsory monthly general meeting within different units with conditions that would give each employee the opportunity to express their concerns, challenges, as well as their suggestions on areas for improvement within their respective units.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The quantitative data of this study indicated that QWL was favourable whereas, the qualitative data fell at variance with this finding. Thus, studies in the future should use



only qualitative data particularly using In-Depth Interview (IDI) to obtain more in-depth knowledge about feelings of the employees with regards to QWL and job satisfaction.



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