

Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs and Needs-Meeting Strategies of University Women Academics in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study identified the Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs and needs-meeting strategies of University Women in academics, Benue State Nigeria utilizing the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all women academics. Only public universities in Benue State were covered. A sample size of 288 women academics was surveyed. Adapted instruments with reliability co-efficient index of Cronbach's Alpha .90 were used. Data were analysed using mean scores and percentages while Chi-square statistic was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Findings of the study indicated that Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs (WOHSNs) of women academics were transport services 62.20%, sickness benefits 79.90%, and provision of eating café 51.40%. Results further show that there were no significant differences in the WOHSNs responses of the women academics based on university type (Cal χ^2 value = 4.514, p = 3.094). WOHSNMS were formulated based on the identified WOHSNs. The study concludes that transport services among others are important and necessary for work efficiency and productivity. However, the WOHSNMS are essential for inclusion and implementation for women academics in the universities in Benue State.

Keywords: Welfare, Occupational health, Health services, Strategies, Women academics

Introduction

Welfare Occupational Health Service (WOHS) is a major Occupational Health Service (OHS) that improve workers' morale and productivity. Onwu and Chika (2015) noted that welfare services provide a healthy and stress free work environment that is motivating for maximal performance and high productivity. The authors enjoined school administrators to understand that a teacher who is healthy and stress free is a major asset to the organization and advice full provision of welfare services and programmes that give a sizable degree of motivation to teachers. Naluwemba, Sekiwu, and Okwenje (2016) emphasized the importance of welfare services to teachers as they boost morals and leads to job satisfaction. Chukwunenye and Amgbare (2010) opined that staff welfare entails provision of social clubs, sports facilities, canteens, sick-clubs, savings schemes, pension funds, health insurance schemes and leave grants. Furthermore, arranging legal aids and advising on personal problems, making long service grant, providing assistance to staff transferred to another area and providing fringe benefits like sickness benefits, luncheon vouchers and other indirect advantages. Atkinson,

Kinder, Satpal, and Witkin (2003) stated that retirement benefits and pensions, social and recreational facilities such as soft loans, sport facilities, staff club and other facilities for relaxation are welfare services that ease off tension and relax the brain and body for the staff to be refreshed for work the next day are important welfare packages that enhance morale and productivity. Dhaar and Robbani (2008) identified cafeteria, transport services, sickness benefits as very important welfare services needed to improve worker morale and increase productivity.

Ogbuji and Iwuagwu (2011) reported that occupational health needs of workers provided for were recreational facilities, welfare allowances and commensurate living wages. In addition, union membership, National Health Insurance and Pension Scheme are other welfare occupational services for working people. Bernadette and OtuEkpeyong (2017) reported that forty-nine per cent of respondents agree that full implementation of welfare policies to university staff to a large extent will impact positively on performances; and suggested full implementation of the policies and guidelines for staff welfare. Onwu and Chika (2015) reported that welfare in the form of: money (34.4%), transport allowances (40.7%), meals (45.2%) extra duty allowance (43.4%), were provided for university in Pretoria and were below the stipulated guidelines. Idubor and Oisamoje (2013) noted that providing welfare services improves morale and boost productivity. Policies that are humane' promote social and psychological health of people; improve interpersonal relationships, and also preserve human dignity and dignity of labour. A friendly management policy supports implementation of services for the health and welfare of workers which creates a congenial work environment and increases job satisfaction. Bernadette and OtuEkpeyong (2017) stated that the universities had good welfare policies and guidelines but the implementation is low more so, it seems to be gender bias especially when it comes to training and staff development with women being at the disadvantage. Organisation and Administration of OHS is a welfare service that falls within the duty of the occupational health physician or a nurse in charge. This work involves making sure that laid down health policies are properly implemented. Liaison with other agencies especially those that render useful health services to the workplace is very important (Asogwa, 2007). Idubor and Oisamoje (2013) stated that providing WOHS to workers supports the realization of basic needs and rights, and also promote social justice and peace as well as facilitates production of services, thus actualizing the mental, physical, and psycho-social health needs of workers especially university women academics.

Need Assessment (NA) is a process for determining and addressing gaps between current and desired conditions. It is carried out to minimize waste of resources, so that most important needs can be achieved. National Institute for Assessment Health and Clinical

Excellence (2005) defined NA as a systematic method for reviewing the health care needs of a particular segment of the population. When NA is linked to occupational health services, it is termed occupational health services needs assessment (OHSNA). OHSNA, therefore, refers to a process of identifying gaps between the important and the provided WOHS of university women academics in Benue State. This was accomplished through identification of the OHS that are important to the women academics and matching it against the services that are provided in order to arrive at the gap in the OHS of the women academics that are not provided. The gaps in provision otherwise WOHS not provided were therefore referred to as the identified needs. The identification of such needs was a necessary step to the formulation of strategies for meeting such needs.

Nickolas (2012) defines strategy as a complex web of thoughts, ideas and plans that provides general guidance for specific actions in pursuit of particular ends. In this study, strategy is conceived as a blue print of thoughts, plans, ideas, and actions and measures to be taken to meet the WOHSNs of university women academics in Benue State. This study involved the formulation of needs meeting strategies by choosing the most appropriate ways, actions and measures that are capable of meeting the WOHSNs of the university women academics in Benue State.

Women academics are highly educated and work in Universities. Universities are higher education institutions that offer a strong potential for contributing to national development. The universities operate under stipulated good welfare policies and guidelines. Unfortunately, it appears that due to scarce resources, lack of commitment and ignorance, these policies/guidelines may not be fully implemented in university workplaces. In order to use limited resources and provide the necessary welfare services for workers, it is important to identify the Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs (WOHSNs) of women academics in Benue State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the welfare occupational health services needs and needs-meeting strategies of university women academics in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified the:

1. welfare occupational health services needs of university women academics;
2. welfare occupational health services needs of university women academics according to university type; and
3. formulate strategies for meeting the WOHSNs of the university women academics.

Hypothesis

A null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the responses of university women academics in federal and State universities in Benue State regarding their WOHSNs was postulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

Materials and Methods

The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This design permits the collection of data on, and describing in a systematic way, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2015). This design was used in the present study to generate data that was used in formulating strategies for meeting the WOHSNs of university women academics in Benue state, Nigeria. The universities are public institutions owned by the Federal and State Governments. They operate the welfare scheme that is well planned and captured in the university policy and guidelines, the implementation however depends on availability of funds and the political will of the funding governments.

The population of the study consisted of all Federal and State university women academics estimated to be 296; 198 and 98 from Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi and Benue State University Makurdi respectively (Personnel Services Departments, 2010). Two hundred and eighty-eight (288) university women academics in Benue State University Makurdi and the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi participated in the study.

Two instruments were utilized for data collection in this study. The researcher adapted community needs assessment questionnaire designed by Aparna, Mindy, and Yolanda (2000). The researcher utilized only the aspects of the questionnaire that dealt with welfare and named it Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs Assessment Questionnaire (WOHSNAQ) and Occupational Health Service's Needs-Meeting Strategies Questionnaire (WOHSNMSQ) structured by the researcher based on the specific objectives of the study.

The WOHSNAQ centered on 10 items classified into two sections (A & B). Section A contained one item demanding information on personal data of the respondents. Section B contained nine items on the WOHSNs of university women academics. All the items on sections B were divided into two columns A and B. The items on column A focused on the types of Welfare Occupational Health Services (WOHS) that were important to the women academics; and were assigned response options which range from Very Important need (VI)-4, Important Need (IN)-3, Unimportant Need (UN)-2, and Completely Unimportant need (CU)-1. The items in column B focused on the provision of the WOHS to the women academics and were assigned two response options of Provided (P)-2 and Not Provided (NP)-1. The respondents were requested to tick (✓) against the option that was applicable to the university situation. The items in the questionnaire were organized to reflect the specific objectives of the study.

The formulation of WOHSNMSQ started with the packaging of summary of major findings of the study followed by a list of possible strategies for meeting the identified welfare occupational health services needs of the women academics working in Universities in Benue State. The suggested strategies had three response options and were rated: very appropriate (3 points), appropriate (2 points), and not appropriate (1). The WOHSNAQ and WOHSNMSQ were validated by experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education.

The reliability of the WOHSNAQ was determined through split half method, using Cronbach Alpha statistic and the reliability co-efficient index was 0.90; while the reliability co-efficient index of WOHSNMSQ was 0.84 and were substantial for use in the study. The instrument was administered to all the women academics in the Benue State University Makurdi and the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi in their respective universities. The valid WOHSNMSQ was administered on twenty purposively selected experts comprising industrial psychologist and public health educators. The experts completed copies of the WOHSNMSQ, indicating the appropriateness or otherwise of each suggested strategy in the light of the study results.

The data were analysed on item by item basis. The response options in column A were assign 4 - point scale ranging from Very Important need (VI)-4, Important Need (IN)-3, Unimportant Need (UN)-2, and Completely Unimportant need (CU)-1 with corresponding scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A mean score of 2.5 and above was interpreted as important service, while a mean score below 2.5 was interpreted as unimportant service. The WOHSNMSQ completed and returned were weighted as follows: very appropriate (3 points), appropriate (2 points), and not appropriate (1 point). A criterion mean of 2.0 was adopted for taking a decision. In other words, for each suggested strategy, a mean value of 2.0 and above showed it was an appropriate strategy while any mean value below the criterion mean signified that the affected strategy was inappropriate for meeting the needs.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses of Welfare OHS of Women Academics (n = 288)

S/N	Welfare OHS	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1.	Health insurance scheme (NHIS) pension and wages	3.75	.47	Very important
2.	Transport services to work	3.68	.47	Very important
3.	Job security	3.66	.52	Very important
4.	Free access to unionism	3.45	.63	Important
5.	Maternity/sick leave	3.62	.49	Very important
6.	Rest rooms	3.52	.54	Very important
7.	Sickness benefits	3.61	.59	Very important
8.	Eating café	3.63	.52	Very important
9.	Sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment	3.53	.54	Very important
	Grand mean	3.61	.53	Very important

Table 1 indicates a grand mean response of 3.61; SD= .53 which falls above 2.5, indicating that WOHS were important for university women academics. Table further indicates mean responses for free access to unionism ($\bar{x} = 3.45$, SD=.63); health insurance scheme (NHIS) pension and wages ($\bar{x} = 3.75$, SD= .47); transport services to work ($\bar{x} = 3.68$, SD=.47); job security ($\bar{x} = 3.66$, SD = .52); maternity/sick leave ($\bar{x} = 3.62$, SD = .49); rest rooms ($\bar{x} = 3.53$, SD= .54); sickness benefits ($\bar{x} = 3.61$, SD = .59); eating café ($\bar{x} = 3.63$, SD = .52); sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment ($\bar{x} = 3.53$, SD = .54) were important WOHS of university women academics since the mean responses were above 2.5.

Table 2: Proportion of University Women Academics Provided with WOHS (N = 288)

S/N	Welfare OHS provision	Provided		Not provided	
		f	%	F	%
1.	Health insurance scheme (NHIS), Pension wages	224	77.80	64	22.20
2.	Transport services to work	109	37.80	179	62.20
3.	Job security	168	58.30	120	41.70
4.	Free access to unionism	241	83.70	47	16.30
5.	Maternity/sick leave	203	70.50	85	29.50
6.	Rest rooms	102	35.40	186	64.60
7.	Sickness benefits	58	20.10	230	79.90
8.	Eating café	140	48.60	148	51.40
9.	Sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment	220	76.40	63	23.60
	Overall percentage		56.51		43.49

Table 2 shows that majority of university women academics indicated that the following important welfare services were provided: free access to unionism 241(83.70%), NHIS, pension and wages 224(77.80%), sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment 220(70.40%) and maternity/sick leave 203(70.50%), while more than half of the women academics indicated that job security 168(58.30%) was provided. However, important welfare services of transport services to work 179(62.20%), rest rooms 186(64.60%), sickness benefits 230(79.90%), and eating café 148(51.40%) were indicated as not being provided.

Table 3: Mean Responses of WOHS of Women Academics According to University Type (n = 288)

S/N	WOHS item	University		Type	
		Federal Govt. owned (n= 192)	Decision	State Govt. owned (n= 96)	Decision
		\bar{x}		\bar{x}	
1.	Health insurance scheme (NHIS), Pension wages	3.73	Very important	3.77	Very important
2.	Transport services to work	3.68	Very important	3.68	Very important
3.	Job security	3.61	Very important	3.77	Very important
4.	Free access to unionism	3.33	Very important	3.70	Very important
5.	Maternity/sick leave	3.60	Very important	3.67	Very important
6.	Rest rooms	3.59	Very important	3.57	Very important

7.	Sickness benefits	3.58	Very important	3.67	Very important
8.	Eating café	3.65	Very important	3.59	Very important
9.	Sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment	3.49	Very important	3.60	Very important
	Grand mean	3.58	Very important	3.67	Very important

Table 3 shows that the mean responses of women academics in the State Government owned university were slightly higher than those of women academics in the Federal Government owned university: welfare OHS(State $\bar{x} = 3.67 > \text{Federal } \bar{x} = 3.58$). These mean responses fall between 3.50 and 4.00, indicating that these were very important WOHS.

Table 4: Proportion of Women Academics Provided with WOHS Based on University Type (n=288)

S/N	WOHS item provision	University				Type			
		Federal government owned(n=192)				State govt. owned (n=96)			
		Provided		Not provided		Provided		Not	
f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1.	Health insurance scheme (NHIS), Pension wages	166	86.46	26	13.54	58	60.42	38	39.58
2.	Transport services to work	69	35.94	123	64.06	40	41.67	56	58.33
3.	Job security	106	55.21	86	44.79	62	64.58	34	35.42
4.	Free access to unionism	164	85.42	28	14.58	77	80.21	19	19.79
5.	Maternity/sick leave	125	65.10	67	34.90	78	81.25	18	18.75
6.	Rest rooms	66	34.37	126	65.63	36	37.50	60	62.50
7.	Sickness benefits	39	20.31	153	79.69	19	19.79	77	80.21
8.	Eating café	97	50.52	95	49.48	43	44.79	53	55.21
9.	Sports facilities, recreation centers and equipment	142	73.96	50	26.04	78	81.25	18	18.75
	Overall %		56.37		43.63		56.83		43.17

Table 4 shows an overall high per-centage (State Government owned=56.83% > Federal Government owned=56.37%). of women academics indicating that welfare services were provided. The Table further show that majority of women academics in Federal and State government owned universities indicated that they were provided with Health Insurance Scheme(NHIS), pension wages(Federal Government owned =86.46% > State Government owned = 60.42%), free access to unionism(Federal Government owned =85.42% > State Government owned = 80.21%), sport facilities, recreation centres and equipment (State Government owned = 81.25% > Federal Government owned = 73.96%), maternity/sick leave (State Government owned = 81.25% > Federal Government owned = 65.10%); while majority of State and less than half of Federal university women academics indicated that they were provided with job security (State Government owned = 64.58% > Federal Government owned = 55.21%). However, transport services to work (Federal Government owned = 64.06% > State Government owned = 58.33%), rest rooms (Federal Government owned = 65.63% > State Government owned = 62.50%), sickness benefits (State Government owned = 80.21% > Federal

Government owned = 79.69), and eating café (State Government owned = 55.21%) were indicated as not being provided.

Table 5: Result of Chi-square Analysis Testing the Null Hypothesis of No Significant Difference in the WOHSNs of Women Academics Based on University Type

S/N	Environmental OHSNs	University Type				Cal χ^2 Value	Df	P-value	Decision
		Federal govt. owned		State govt. owned					
		Provided	Not Provided	Provided	Not Provided				
1.	NHIS, Pension wages	166 (149.30)	26 (42.70)	58 (74.70)	38 (21.30)	25.112	1	.000	Reject
2.	Transport services to work	69 (72.70)	123 (119.30)	40 (36.30)	56 (59.70)	.893	1	.345	Accept
3.	Job security	106 (112.00)	86 (80.00)	62 (56.00)	34 (40.00)	2.314	1	.128	Accept
4.	Free access to unionism	164 (160.70)	28 (31.30)	77 (80.30)	19 (15.70)	1.271	1	.260	Accept
5.	Maternity/sick leave	125 (135.30)	67 (56.70)	78 (67.70)	18 (28.30)	8.020	1	.005	Reject
6.	Rest rooms	66 (68.00)	126 (124.00)	36 (34.00)	60 (62.00)	.273	1	.601	Accept
7.	Sickness benefits	39 (38.70)	153 (153.30)	19 (19.30)	77 (76.70)	.011	1	.917	Accept
8.	Eating café	97 (93.30)	95 (98.70)	43 (46.70)	53 (49.30)	.841	1	.359	Accept
9.	Sports facilities, recreation centers and equipment	142 (146.70)	50 (45.30)	78 (73.30)	18 (22.70)	1.887	1	.170	Accept
	Overall χ^2					4.514	1	3.094	Accept

Data on Table 5 showed the overall calculated χ^2 values with their corresponding P-values at 1 degree of freedom for WOHSNs ($\chi^2=4.514$, $P= 3.094 >0.05$) which are more than .05 level of significance at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was therefore accepted. This implies that the WOHSNs did not differ according to university type. Table 5 again shows the calculated χ^2 values with their corresponding P-values at 1 degree of freedom for health insurance scheme, pension and wages ($\chi^2= 25.112$, $P=.000 <0.05$); maternity/sick leave ($\chi^2= 8.020$, $P=.005 <0.05$) which were less than 0.05 level of significance at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. This implies that the need for these welfare services differ by university type.

Table 5 further shows the calculated χ^2 values with their corresponding P-values at 1 degree of freedom for transport services to work ($\chi^2= .893$, $P=.345 >0.05$); job security ($\chi^2= 2.314$, $P=.128 >0.05$); free access to unionism ($\chi^2= 1.271$, $P=.260 >0.05$); rest rooms ($\chi^2= .273$, $P=.601 >0.05$); sickness benefits ($\chi^2= .011$, $P=.917 >0.05$); eating café ($\chi^2= .841$, $P=.359 >0.05$) and sports facilities, recreation centres and equipment ($\chi^2= 1.887$, $P=.170 >0.05$) which were greater than 0.05 level of significance at 1 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. This implies that the need for these welfare services did not differ by university type.

Table 6: Mean Responses of Welfare Occupational Health Services Needs-Meeting Strategies-WOHSNMS(n = 20)

Identified Needs (WOHSNs)	S/N	Objectives	Mean Responses	Decision	S/N	Strategies	mean Responses	Decision
Transport to work	1	To ease transportation problems of the women academics.	2.45	A	1	Trade union such as ASUU, NASU to liaise with University management to provide buses for a fee to ease transportation of women academics.	2.40	A
Sickness benefits	2	To promote holistic health and boost morale of women academics.	2.60	A	2	Sickness benefit policy should be reviewed to cover all sicknesses.	2.70	A
Eating café	3	To provide nutritious foods without contamination to women academics.	2.60	A	3	Advocacy	2.60	A
Time for recreation	4	To provide relaxation and refresh body and mind after a hectic day activities.	2.60	A	4	Create time for female staff and encourage participation in recreation and sports.	2.50	A
Shopping moles, salon	5	To provide shopping, salon services to women academics.	2.35	A	5	The universities to provide a space and possibly construct stores and rent out to registered traders to sell on campuses in designated areas.	2.30	A
Grand mean			2.59	A	Grand mean		2.50	A

KEY:

- A Appropriate
- NA Not Appropriate

Results in Table 6 show a grand mean response of 2.59 which implies that proposed objectives of welfare occupational health services needs meeting strategies were considered appropriate by experts.

Table 6 show a grand mean response of 2.50 which implies all the proposed content of welfare OHSNMS were considered appropriate by experts. Table further show the highest mean response of 2.70 by item 2 (sickness benefit policy should be reviewed to cover all sicknesses; while the lowest response of (2.30) was shown by item 5 (universities to provide a space and possibly construct stores and rent out to registered traders to sell on campuses in designated areas).

Discussion

Research question 1 which sought to identify the welfare services needs of women academics as presented in Tables 1 and 2 revealed that transport services to work, sickness benefits, eating café, and time for recreation were the welfare OHSNs of women academics. The result lent support to the study of Ogbuji and Iwuagwu (2011) which reported that the welfare occupational health needs of the workers studied were recreational facilities (76%), welfare allowances and commensurate living wages (62%); others were non-restriction from union membership (68%), National Health Insurance and Pension Scheme (57%). The overall welfare health needs (55%) were reported as a major occupational health need of industrial workers. This call for education of employers of labour generally and the university managements on the need to provide welfare services to the women academics under their watch. According to Dhaar and Robbani (2008), eating café, transport services to work, sickness benefits are very important welfare services needed to improve worker morale and increase productivity; and should be provided irrespective of the kind of workplace. Onwu and Chika (2015) reported that welfare in the form of: money (34.4%), transport allowances (40.7%), meals (45.2%) extra duty allowance (43.4%), were provided for university workers in Pretoria and were below the stipulated guidelines. Naluwemba, Sekiwu and Okwenje (2016) emphasized the importance of welfare services to teachers as they boost morals and leads to job satisfaction. These should be worked out by the administrators of the Benue State University and the Federal University of Agriculture for comfort, efficiency and high productivity of the women academics.

Research question 2 which sought to establish welfare occupational health services needs of university women academics according to university type as revealed in Tables 3 and 4 showed that more than 50 per cent (56.83%) of women academics in the State and Federal (56.37%) government owned universities indicated that welfare OHS were provided. This result was expected and not surprising. Idubor and Oisamoje (2013) noted that providing welfare services improves morale and boost productivity. However, the result contradicts that of Chukwunenye and Amgbare (2010) in which welfare services that were important to workers such as sickness benefits and eating café were not provided for staff in Patani LGA.s an overall high per-centage (State Government owned=56.83% > Federal Government owned=56.37%). of women academics indicating that welfare services were provided. Data on Table 5 showed the overall calculated χ^2 values with their corresponding P-values at 1 degree of freedom for WOHSNs ($\chi^2=4.514$, $P= 3.094 >0.05$) which are more than .05 level of