

## **Assessment of employment conditions in the library workplace: A comparative study of public and private universities in Kwara State, Nigeria**

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Received: June 16, 2021. Revised: July 2, 2021. Accepted: July 16, 2021.

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### **Abstract**

The study comparatively assessed employment conditions in the library workplace focusing on public and private universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive research of a cross-institutional survey was adopted. A sample of 160 research subjects from four universities (2

public and 2 private) were sampled through multi-stage sampling of purposive, and stratified random sampling methods. A 25-item validated, pretested and administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed with appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools, such as, mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. Result revealed that professional development opportunities and quality work-life integration were better in public University libraries than what is enjoyed in their private counterpart, while pay and compensation, promotion prospects and welfare benefits in private University libraries are better than what is obtained in public University libraries. The study suggested that employment conditions differential exists in public and private University libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Key Words:** *Employment Conditions, Private, Public, University Libraries*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Universities, which occupy a strategic place in any educational system are established to provide students (pre-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate) from diverse race, ethnicity, and backgrounds with quality and qualitative education in order to make them productive, self-fulfilling, self-reliant, and functional, so that, they can contribute immensely to the technological, social, political, and economic development of their nation (Nigeria inclusive). The attainment and pursuance of this mandate of establishment highly depends on the extent of multi-dimensional services provided by the university library (AbdulRaheem & Atunde, 2018; Ukachi, 2013) in promoting quality teaching and research (AbdulRaheem, Atunde, Medupin, Awarun & Ayoku, 2020) in the university system.

Apparently, for library services to be delivered efficient and effective, its workforce are integral. This is because they are the deliverer of statutory services (AbdulRaheem et al., 2020) so as to enable University libraries meet the educational, informational, research, recreational and socio-cultural needs of the university community (lecturers, students, researchers etc.). In view of this, researchers like Abdulraheem, Atunde, Madukoma and Adewara (2018), and Connor (2013) argued that the library workforce who are the most valuable resource in an academic library, can be well-prepared to meet the needs of its clientele or the challenges that face their institutions, only when they are motivated, committed, and satisfied with their job and employment conditions. In order words, to attract, empower and retain quality library workforce, the employment conditions in which they work must be good, attractive and competitive, irrespective of type of workplace (Ajie & Omotunde 2015; Onyeike & Wagbara, 2018).

Employment conditions (EC) also used interchangeably in literature with conditions of service or working conditions are the totality of employment policies, practices, programmes and components included in the employment contract that binds both university owners/management and library workforce together contractually. Notable components of employment conditions enshrined in the University handbook as well as empirical research include staff pay or salary, bonuses, official cars, loan for purchase of personal cars, subsidy for housing rent (Bello & Adebajo, 2014; International Labour Organization, 2018; Ipole & Okpa, 2019; Sule, Amuni, Obasan & Banjo, 2015), higher education opportunities, leave with pay (Ipole, Agba & Okpa, 2018), health benefits, direct cash bonus, leave of absence, leave allowance, transport allowance, housing/rent subsidy (Altbach, 2015), end of year or festival bonus, paid annual leave (Oyedemi, 2012; Wokabi, 2013), long service award, special awards and certificates, promotion (Anifowose, 2018; Ipole et al.,

2018), gratuity and pension schemes among others. The listed elements or components of employment conditions are streamlined conceptually in this study to: (i) pay and compensation, (2) professional development opportunities, (3) promotion, (4) welfare benefits, (5) quality work-life integration. The assumption of this classification parlance emerged from the fact that an employees in formal workplace (public or private) are to be entitled to a basic pay or remuneration, development opportunities, regular promotion, welfare bonuses/allowances, and quality work-life (Kamau, 2013; Obiebi & Irikefe, 2018; Onyeike & Wagbara, 2018; Rani, 2015; Salau, Adeniji & Oyewunmi, 2014; Sule et al., 2015).

In this context, there has been a growing concern about the extent to which different employment condition components in both public and private University libraries actually maintains equity, and made favorable and sustainable to employees. Survey evidences (AbdulRaheem & Atunde, 2018; Ameen, Olowoselu & Dauda, 2017; Bello, Ogundipe & Eze, 2017; Ergado & Gojeh, 2015; Idiegbeyan-Ose, Opeke, Aregbesola & Eyiolorunshe, 2019; Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020; Igbinedion & Torupere, 2019; ILO, 2018) on personnel related matters as well as observation by the researchers revealed that in public universities; prolong industrial conflict/disputes over several issues such as scandalous budgetary allocations to the education sector, staff welfare, infrastructural neglect/deficit, unpaid allowances, and lack of university autonomy has now become a recurring decimal. Also, stagnancy on a position/cadre for long without promotion, promoted without corresponding payment, study leave without pay (Anifowose, 2018; Eyo & Afebende, 2018; Iyida, 2015), administrators forcing employees to work under empty stomach amongst other working conditions anomalies are now part and parcel of employee's work life especially in state-owned universities. This is coupled with problems of haphazardly conducted training programmes (Siaffa, 2015) as well as workload and overtime issues encountered by staff.

Related to the situation above, library staff in private universities are also complaining of low wages as compared to work time per day. AbdulRaheem et al. (2020) reiterated that library personnel in private universities oftentimes, complain of health issues and not having adequate time to tend to their personal needs and responsibilities due to long hours of service they put in their work. The situation equally appears to have been extended with University proprietors/managers compelling every employee whether library or non-library workers to ensure that they attract more students to the school. Some staff even ends up losing their jobs if they are unfortunate not to meet the expected imposed outrageous standard (Adetoro & Sule, 2018). Similar issues like staff been owed backlogs of salaries, and percentage payments are now becoming rampant in most private universities.

Consequently, some staff (library staff inclusive) in private universities are on the verge of withdrawing to other jobs or transferring their services to the public sector over one employment issue or the other (Ergado & Gojeh, 2015; Idiegbeyan-Ose et al., 2019; ILO, 2018), while those in public universities are also leaving theirs to private education sector for perceived better employment conditions. The consortium of these employment issues, which can kick-start a motivational crisis in the library workplace and the university system in general, aroused the attention of educational manager, library managers, labour experts, as well as the researchers. This attention however, agitated the conduct of this research.

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The main objective of this research was to assess the employment conditions currently obtainable in public and private University libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to ascertain how employment condition indices of: pay and compensation, promotion, professional

development opportunities, welfare benefits and quality work-life integration differs in public and private University libraries in Kwara State.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Abundance of researches in related areas of employment conditions have been conducted in both developed and developing nations across the globe. Relatedly, a cross-continental survey by ILO (2018) showed that lecturers salaries in some African (such as Kenya, Mali and Uganda) and Asian (China and Viet Nam) countries in public universities are specifically uncompetitive, which made most of these lecturers to augment their salaries by taking up additional job in the private sector. The study by Clarke (2015) conducted among 2306 academic staff across nine selected European nations also found that more than 50 per cent of participants attested that their working conditions had regressed tremendously, and that they were under constant pressure to work for long hours considering large population of students. Adopting the purchasing power parity (PPP) index in making comparison across countries, Altbach, Reisberg and Pacheco's (2013) study found that academics in Brazil, Canada, European nations, India, Japan and the United States, are relatively well paid and are among the top 25% of high income earners. Irfan and Azmi (2015) studied the dimensions of Work-Life Balance among teaching workforce in Malaysia, and found that WLB balance policies were in place and employees utilized them effectively. Lopes and Dewan's (2014) study found that the employment contract of most academic personnel in the United States forces them to accede to disintegrated work schedules that influences their work-life integration, and engage in informal and delinquent tasks not included in their contracts.

Studies in related areas have not been found wanting in the African continent. A survey carried out by Abban (2018) among 65 library staff from University of Education, Winneba and Presbyterian University College, Ghana showed that 75% of staff had the opportunity to pursue formal education to upgrade themselves, while the remaining 25% did not pursue formal education due to their ineptitude to obtain study leave from work, inactiveness, and financial impediments. Findings from a cross sectional study (Ergado. & Gojeh, 2015) conducted in Ethiopia revealed that hapzardly organized staff and career development programmes, deplorable salary structure, and partisan treatment are the major factors forcing library professionals to leave their profession.

In Nigeria, Akinfolarin and Ehinola's (2019) survey among 50 academic staff at the Adekunle Ajasin University revealed that 60 per cent affirmed that the payment of salary and other remuneration, provision of opportunities for professional growth, and material facilities were inadequate and irregular. A survey carried out by Idiegbeyan-Ose et al. (2019) among 361 staff in private University libraries in South-Western Nigeria claimed that the motivation respondents received from external (their employees) such as salary, promotion, job security among other were lesser than their internal motivation such as work experience, skills and higher degree. In another study conducted in Cross River State among 912 civil servants, Ipole et al. (2018) reported that impoverish workers' remuneration (poor and untimely paid allowances) and safety mostly incites labour unions agitations.

Using the complementary research design, Bello et al.'s (2017) study showed that academic staff in private universities have better working conditions, while, their contemporary in the public universities have better payment package. Babayi and Ijantiku's (2016) survey of 18 library staff in Federal College of Education Yola revealed that only few of the staff were given soft loan as a welfare allowance. The survey (Enemuo, 2016) carried out among 1,020 employees in selected federal and state health institutions in South- East, Nigeria discovered that work-life components of telecommuting, employee assistance programs, compress work weeks, flexi time, annual leave,

sick leave and maternity leave, and job sharing though affected turnover intention positively, they were not effectively implemented but scantily. Fapohunda (2016) using 200 randomly selected academic staff as research participants found a disparity in pay between public and private sector academic staff with the private universities paying better than the public university.

Furthermore, diverse theories and models have emerged within the motivation, job satisfaction, employee turnover, and human resource management (HRM) paradigm with the aim of contributing to the theoretical knowledge of employment conditions (Beer & Walton, 2014; Luthans, 2014; Malik, 2017; Nwanko, 2014). These theories, though, emphasized the importance of career, welfare, safety and psychological needs of employees, they could not elaborately explain the theoretical base of this research. This present study therefore hinges on the Best-fit (BF) models of HRM, which drew its inspiration from the contingency theory (Boxall & Purcell, 2011; Malik, 2018) of HRM. The conceptualization of BF stems from the premises that it is unwise to assume that a given set of working conditions are universally applicable (Nwankwo, 2014). Rather, every organisation either private or public has certain types of culture, structure and managerial ideologies peculiar to them, as the same employment conditions can take different nomenclature from one organization to the other. That is, the implementation of fair or equitable conditions of employment can differ in different organizations in the same industry.

A summary of empirical literature indicates that, even though, most of the previous studies serve as a springboard for the present study, they had their derelictions in terms of their geographical, contextual and theoretical defects, which created a research vacuum that present study will fill. Precisely, most of the previous studies were carried out in government parastatals, health institutions, multinational companies, Colleges of Education and universities (which is a parent organization of academic libraries). Also, those studies carried out in universities and academic libraries focused mainly on academic staff and managerial behaviour components like motivation, job commitment, job satisfaction, and job retention. More so, no empirical study on public-private employment conditions differentiation has been recently conducted in Nigeria universities especially in the library workplace. The dearth of reliable research output/evidence on employment condition differential in the library workplace calls for urgent attention in the academia.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research of a cross-institutional survey type was adopted for this study. This type of design mainly focused on description, investigation and comparison of events as they normally occur without any manipulation of what is being observed (Neuman, 2014). The study was carried out in public and private University libraries in Kwara State. In the study area, there are six fully operational universities, which comprises of two public (Kwara State University, Malete and University of Ilorin, Ilorin) and four private (Al-Hikamah University, Ilorin, Crown Hill University Eiyenkorin, Landmark University, Omu-Aran, and Submit University, Offa) universities. Thus, the study population comprised of 366 library staff in all the six universities in Kwara State (see table 1).

**Table 1: The Sample Population of Library Staff in Kwara State, Nigeria**

S/N	Universities	Year Established	Library Staff
<b>Public Universities</b>			
1	Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin	2009	75
2	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	1975	162
<b>Private Universities</b>			
3	Al-Hikamah University, Ilorin	2005	37
4	Crown Hill University Eiyenkorin, Kwara State	2016	20

5	Landmark University, Omu-Aran	2011	53
6	Submit University, Offa	2015	19
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>366</b>

**Source: Office of the Registrar of each University, 2020**

Accordingly, the multi-stage sampling of purposive, and stratified random sampling methods was utilized in selecting 40 participants each from the four sampled universities, that is, two public (Kwara State University, Malete and University of Ilorin, Ilorin) and two private (Al-Hikamah University, Ilorin, and Landmark University, Omu-Aran). This makes a total of 160 sampled respondents. These universities were chosen based on population of library staff and years of establishment of the universities, so as to ensure a fair representation of the targeted population. Likewise, the criteria on university's years of establishment was based on the fact that, they represents the premier and second generation public and private universities in Kwara State that have witnessed a series of industrial conflicts over working condition issues in the last 15 years. Contrarily, these universities have been acclaimed to offer better working conditions for its staff (AbdulRaheem & Atunde, 2018).

Also, the 160 sampled respondents, which represents 44 per cent of the total population is reminiscent of Atunde, Medupin, Alabi, Awarun, Oladejobi, Oladimeji and Maiye (2021) and Brians (2011) observation that a sample size of 40 – 50% of the target population is not too little for an empirical research in as much that they are manageable, accessible and will gave room for fair and equal representation of the target population. The research instrument utilized for obtaining information from the respondents was a 20-items Likert scale of questionnaire titled "Employment Conditions Assessment Questionnaire" (ECAQ). The Likert scale ranges from Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 point and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The instrument (ECAQ) was subjected to both content and face validation by experts in Educational Management, Library Administration and Labour Studies. For reliability, a pilot study was conducted on 20 library staff of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and Ajayi Crowther University, situated in Oyo State, which were outside the area of the study. The outcome, which was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient, generated an overall alpha value of 0.89. Furthermore, the researchers directly administered 160 copies of ECAQ on the respondents to gather information needed for the study, and this produced a 100% response rate.

**Research Question (RQ):** Do employment conditions in public and private University libraries differ in terms pay and compensation, promotion prospects, professional development opportunities, welfare benefits and quality work-life integration?

**Hypotheses (H):** There are no significance differences in employment conditions of public and private University libraries in terms pay and compensation, promotion prospects, professional development opportunities, welfare benefits and quality work-life integration.

For analysis, descriptive statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. For the case of mean score analysis, it was interpreted as follows: mean scores between 3.25 to 4.00 was interpreted as Good Condition (GC), 2.50 to 3.24 was interpreted as Fair Condition (FC), and < 2.49 was interpreted as Poor Condition (PC). This interpretation also applies to the overall mean scores. Additionally, inferential statistical tool of t-test statistics was applied to significantly test the existing differences in employment conditions at 0.05 level of significance. The formular for t-test statistics is inscribed as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{s^2(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2})}}$$

In the inscribed formula, the t-value is t,  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  are the means of the two groups being compared,  $s_2$  is the pooled standard error of the two groups, and  $n_1$  and  $n_2$  are the number of observations in each of the groups (Bevans, 2020). The larger t-value shows that the difference between group means is greater than the pooled standard error, indicating a more significant difference between the groups (Bevans, 2020).

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive and inferential statistical results for this study were presented as follows:

**Table 2: Descriptive Outcome on EC in Public and Private Universities Libraries.**

S/N	ITEMS	Public Universities			Private Universities		
		Mean	S.D	Dec.	Mean	S.D	Dec.
1	Pay and Compensation	2.95	0.79	FC	3.01	0.72	FC
2	Opportunities for Professional Development	2.92	0.78	FC	2.85	0.80	FC
3	Promotion Prospects	3.19	0.76	FC	3.32	0.72	GC
4	Welfare Benefits	2.55	0.93	FC	2.64	0.87	FC
5	Quality Work-life Integration	3.12	0.77	FC	2.74	0.84	FC
	<b>OVERALL EC</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>FC</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>FC</b>

**Key: S.D = Standard Deviation, Dec. = Decision.**

Analysis from Table 2 showed that public University libraries had a higher mean scores (cluster mean of 2.92 and 3.12 respectively) in areas of professional development opportunities and quality work-life integration than their private counterpart (cluster mean of 2.85 and 2.74 respectively). On the other hand, private universities had a higher mean scores (cluster mean of 3.01, 3.32 and 2.64 respectively) with regards to pay and compensation, promotion prospects and welfare benefits than their public counterpart. In sum, the grand mean values of 2.95 and 2.91 obtained respectively indicates that, the overall employment conditions in both public and private library workplace in Kwara State differs.

**Table 3: Inferential Analysis of Employment Conditions Differential**

Inferential Statistics					
t-test results of the difference in terms of pay and compensation					
Type of Institution	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Public University	11.7882	3.15810	3.116	.006*	Significant difference exists between the two groups ( $p<.05$ ).
Private University	12.0210	2.85631			
t-test results of the difference in terms professional development opportunities					
Type of Institution	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Public University	11.6700	3.11033	3.334	.004*	The two groups were significant different ( $p<.05$ ).
Private University	11.3752	3.17642			
t-test results of the difference in terms promotion prospects					
Type of Institution	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Public University	12.7506	3.03002	3.502	.001*	There is significant difference in the two groups ( $p<.05$ ).
Private University	13.2551	2.88800			
t-test results of the difference in terms welfare benefits					
Type of Institution	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Public University	10.1791	3.70005	3.470	.003*	There is significant difference in the two groups ( $p<.05$ ).
Private University	10.5505	3.49112			
t-test results of the difference in terms quality work life integration					

Type of Institution	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	Remarks
Public University	12.4554	3.07801	3.907	.000*	There is significant difference in the two groups ( $p < .05$ ).
Private University	10.9471	3.34440			

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 revealed that the statistical test of equality on employment conditions in public and private University libraries were significantly different based on pay and compensation (t-value = 3.116, p-value = .006), professional development opportunities (t-value = 3.334, p-value = .004), promotion prospects (t-value = 3.502, p-value = .001), welfare benefits (t-value = 3.470, p-value = .003) and quality work-life integration (t-value = 3.907, p-value = .000).

### Discussion

The study revealed that personnel/staff in public University libraries are enjoying better professional development opportunities and quality work-life integration than their counterparts in the private sector. This discovery was equally corroborated by the inferential statistical outcome, which showed significant differences in professional development opportunities ( $p < 0.05$ ) and quality work-life integration ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the library workplace. This finding aligns with those of Bello et al. (2017), and Ergado and Gojeh (2015) who in their independent study found that staff in public universities have the advantages of flexible working hours, lesser workloads and training empowerments, than those in the private sector which have rigid/monotonous work hours and workloads and few training empowerments. This discovery and those of previous studies might be orchestrated by the prudential management strategy mostly implemented in maintaining operational cost by most private university managers, as statutory duties which should be discharged by two individuals are merged together for one individual to discharge. Likewise, haphazardly organized staff and career development programmes are witnessed in lieu of this (Ergado. & Gojeh, 2015). Contrastly, Fapohunda's (2016) study which found that employees in private universities have better opportunities of career training and development programmes, however contradict this present study result.

Findings further revealed that, the pay and compensation, promotion prospects and welfare benefits in private University libraries are better than what is obtained in public University libraries in Kwara State. This finding although not surprising considering the influx of industrial actions witnessed in public universities in the last 30 years with over four years of academic calendar out rightly lost, and academic activities paralyzed by incessant labour union (ASUU) agitations over uncompetitive pay, unpaid allowances and poor working conditions, it therefore agrees with other previous studies (Akinfolarin & Ehinola 2019; Azeez & Lawal, 2016; Eyo & Afebende, 2018; Ergado & Gojeh, 2015; Fapohunda, 2016) but negates that of Bello et al. (2017) who reported that staff in public universities have better payment package than their counterpart in the private universities.

Surprisingly, finding on the overall employment conditions though differs with regards to their grand mean values of 2.95 and 2.91 respectively; they are both fair in terms of rating criterion. This result is fuelled by a number of factors ranging from continuous economic downturn to bad governance/leadership, efficacy of proprietors (owners) towards employees' welfare and the current COVID-19 pandemic impact ravaging many nations (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020; University World News, 2020). Apparently, the finding of this study is in consonance with the findings made in previous studies (Altbach, 2015; Clarke, 2015; ILO, 2018), while it negates that of Altbach et al. (2013) who found that university staff are well paid and are among the top 25% of high income earners.

## 5. CONCLUSION



The study findings showed that, employment condition indices differs in public and private University libraries, with professional development opportunities and quality work-life integration better in public University libraries than what is enjoyed in their private counterpart, while pay and compensation, promotion prospects and welfare benefits in private University libraries are better than what is obtained in public University libraries. This therefore calls for an urgent re-review and implementation of employment conditions in the university by proprietors (public and private)/ library management so as to cater for the differentials found in order to provide its workforce with a good, favourable, attractive, competitive and equitable employment conditions. This will save the Nigerian university system from collapsing and ensuring quality and functional education delivery.

Additionally, it is pertinent to note that in spite of the conclusion and suggestions made, the present study has its lapses. The research was limited only to 160 library personnel in four sampled universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. Further studies should cover wider geographical dispersions within the North-central and other geo-political zones in Nigeria with using a larger sample size in order to make nation-wide inferences on the research endeavor. Also, this study can be replicated in other tertiary institutions (polytechnics, colleges of education) and research institutes in Nigeria, since they are not unsusceptible to the problem of labour agitation. More so, the present study is limited conceptually to pay and compensation, professional development opportunities, promotion prospects, welfare benefits and quality work-life integration. Other employment condition indices such as disciplinary management, and severance packages should be look into.

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