

STUDENT HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION CHALLENGE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPTION

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Abstract: One of the most cherished educational assets for students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the world is hostel accommodation. This asset provides students with an environment for intellectual development and easy interaction with fellow peers and fosters teamwork and communal spirit among students. Hostel accommodation in most Nigerian tertiary institutions is problematic and scarce too; as such, many students tend to be affected academically and psychologically; this study investigated the challenges of hostel accommodation in Benue State University, Makurdi and suggested the Public Private Partnership (PPP) option. The objectives of the study are to ascertain the causes of hostel accommodation challenges in Nigerian tertiary institutions with Benue State University, Makurdi, in sight, to ascertain the impact of hostel accommodation problems on students' academic performance and welfare and to suggest options best for hostel accommodation challenge in Nigeria tertiary institution. Three research questions guided the study. The study is anchored on the stakeholders' theory by Edward Freeman (1983). A mixed-method research design was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling was used, and questionnaire administration and Oral interviews were conducted to obtain information from 45 respondents. The study found out, among other things, that the over-enrollment of students causes a shortage in student hostel accommodation, inadequate hostel facilities, and a lack of maintenance culture by management/government, which are identifiable sources of accommodation challenges. The study recommends the PPP option and privatization of hostel facilities as the way forward for the best quality and quantity of accommodation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Benue State University, Tertiary institutions, Hostel, Accommodation, Public-Private Partnership, Privatization

Introduction

Invariably, one of the pressing assets for students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is accommodation. This asset is considered critical because of the nature of what it portends to their academic success. By Maslow's conceptualization of fundamental life necessities, wherein shelter holds a significant place, Odaudu and Yahaya (2019) emphasize the pivotal role of student accommodation in influencing the selection of educational institutions. Accommodation is considered a basic human need essential for survival and ranks alongside food provision (Adebamowo, 2009). Consequently, the contemporary educational landscape has witnessed the hostel system emerging as a crucial component, offering students affordable lodging and fostering a social environment conducive to academic interactions. Providing on-campus housing, next only to disseminating specialized knowledge, is integral to tertiary institutions (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2012). Traditionally, Nigerian universities have primarily housed students on campuses and in hostel facilities, reflecting the intrinsic connection between student accommodation and the university experience. However, financial limitations and the burgeoning student population have posed challenges for universities to provide extensive on-campus housing. This predicament has resulted in overcrowded hostels, continual deterioration of facilities,

and a surge in criminal attacks on students residing off-campus, exacerbating absenteeism and poor academic performance (Onyike & Uche, 2012). In the context of Nigerian universities, such as Benue State University, the condition of most hostels needs to be more consistent with students' academic pursuits, which are experiencing a concerning decline. Muhammad, Dodo, and Adamu (2014) assert that overcrowding is the primary challenge plaguing university hostels, contributing to many issues adversely affecting students' well-being and academic engagement.

Statement of the Problem

The demand for tertiary education is also growing at an alarming rate and speed. Today, university education stands tall as a critical building block for the development of any nation-state. Over the years, this critical societal edifice has undergone many challenges, ranging from the non-payment of teachers and non-teacher remuneration to infrastructural decay and the non-existence of such. This has become a heavy burden on the government and other stakeholders in tertiary education. Hostel accommodation is one of Nigeria's main infrastructural challenges today in tertiary education. Recently, the state of hostels in Nigerian tertiary institutions contrasts starkly with their original purpose due to a substantial surge in prospective candidates seeking admission. This influx has compromised the hostels' ability to maintain an environment conducive to academic pursuits and social integration. As underscored by Usman (2021), institutional hostels grapple with overwhelming demand, resulting in unacceptable levels of overcrowding, increased stress on existing facilities, frequent service breakdowns, and the fostering of undesirable activities such as cultism.

The challenges surrounding hostel accommodation in Nigeria are multifaceted, centring on insufficient hostel numbers, limited facilities, and substandard building structures. The scarcity of hostel spaces triggers intense competition for available accommodations, exacerbating overcrowding issues and contributing to the frequent breakdown and deterioration of essential amenities. These problems, as noted by Usman (2021), give rise to social consequences manifested in the form of crime syndicates, prostitution, and other vices that find a breeding ground in the deteriorating conditions of these hostels. The study in question delves into a comprehensive assessment of the challenges posed by hostel accommodation at Benue State University, Makurdi, explicitly focusing on exploring potential solutions through public-private partnerships. The overarching objective of the study is to shed light on the intricate issues surrounding hostel accommodation at the university and to propose viable strategies that leverage collaborative efforts between public and private entities to address the pressing challenges.

The study's main objective is to examine the menace of accommodation challenges in Benue State University Makurdi vis-à-vis the need for PPP options. Other objectives of the study are to:

Investigate the causes of hostel accommodation challenge in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with Benue State University, Makurdi, in sight

Ascertain the impact of hostel accommodation problems on students' academic performance and welfare;

Determine the effects of accommodation challenge in Benue State University Makurdi;

Determine vices associated with accommodation challenges on Benue State University Campus;

To suggest the best option for the Benue State University Makurdi hostel accommodation challenge.

Study Question

The following questions were formulated in line with the objectives to guide the study.

What are the causes of hostel accommodation in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

Does the hostel accommodation challenge impact students' performance and welfare?

Is adequate accommodation on campus a panacea for eradicating vices on the Benue State University Makurdi campus?

What is the possible solution for the Benue State University Makurdi hostel accommodation challenge?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Hostel Accommodation

Universities are responsible for facilitating academic endeavours such as teaching and research and providing suitable living facilities for students, recognizing the integral role of accommodation in stimulating their learning capabilities (Alaka, Pat-Mbano & Ewulum, 2012). The importance of proper accommodation in the educational context is emphasized by Ozioko (1997), who contends that adequate living spaces contribute significantly to achieving educational objectives within an institution. Furthermore, Ajayi, Nwosu, and Ajani (2015) emphasize the pivotal role that student housing plays in the decision-making process for students and their parents during the university enrollment phase. The Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary defines housing as not merely a physical space but encompasses privacy, personal space, and territoriality. According to Chiguvi and Ndoma (2018), accommodation extends beyond the physical realm and involves an individual's freedom of choice within a given setting. In the educational context, hostel accommodation is crucial, serving as the student's place of abode within the university premises. Beyond shielding students from environmental elements, hostels serve as learning environments profoundly influencing comfort, safety, and academic performance.

Student accommodation, often synonymous with student hostels or housing, serves as a place of residence for students, particularly those whose homes are distant from the educational institution. Khozaei, Ayub, Hassan, and Khozaei (2010) categorize student accommodation as a hostel with institutional characteristics that provides access to university recreational facilities. Living in a sustainable on-campus hostel environment fosters independence, as students share accommodations with a limited number of peers. This lifestyle cultivates qualities such as smartness, discipline, tolerance, and socialization with roommates, contributing to a well-rounded student experience. Moreover, the safety and security afforded by on-campus housing alleviate parental concerns, distinguishing it from off-campus alternatives. Providing suitable accommodation is not just a logistical necessity but a crucial factor in shaping students' holistic experiences and fostering an environment conducive to academic achievement and personal development.

According to Jennifer (2011), the primary objectives of tertiary education encompass the acquisition, development, and instillation of proper values essential for individual and societal survival. Additionally, it aims to cultivate intellectual capacities to enable individuals to comprehend and appreciate their surroundings. However, achieving these

goals in tertiary institutions becomes challenging without adequate student accommodation, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, consistent electricity supply, and affordable transportation options.

Insufficient or inadequate accommodation for students poses a host of challenges, including psychological difficulties and a heightened propensity for aggression among students. Aggressive behaviour may emerge when the living environment is unconducive, influenced by the occupants' surroundings. The physical environment of a student's residence, encompassing the condition of the place and the transportation system, significantly affects behaviour, either positively or negatively. Shortages in student accommodation contribute to students sacrificing academic commitments, such as missing lectures, examinations, and practicals, due to the relentless search for suitable housing. Moreover, overcrowded living conditions lead to friction, conflicts, and open confrontation among roommates, negatively impacting the student experience. Living in crowded, poorly built spaces with inadequate water supply can lead to health issues and negatively affect academic performance.

Jennifer (2011) proposes that involving the private sector in providing student hostels is a potential solution to address the shortage of student accommodation (Oyeleran & Adeoye, 2013). Student housing goes beyond merely providing shelter; it creates an environment that stimulates intellectual development, encourages peer interaction, fosters a sense of community, and reinforces the notion that studying is a primary occupation. Olutuah (2003) emphasizes the benefits of hostels, noting that they facilitate a conducive reading environment by minimizing distractions. Hostel students have more opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities, including sports, games, clubs, and social events. Hostel life also provides greater security, as institutions typically have on-campus security personnel, ensuring a safer environment than off-campus living. Despite the evident advantages, the provision and maintenance of hostel accommodation face various challenges. Ndu, Ocho, and Okeke (1997) trace the root of the accommodation problem to governmental policies that overlooked the implications of establishing new tertiary institutions without sufficient consideration for accommodation needs. Challenges such as overcrowded rooms, the struggle for bed space and room accessories, inadequate funding, and insufficient management skills exacerbate the accommodation problem in tertiary institutions. Therefore, addressing the challenges associated with student accommodation is crucial for achieving tertiary education goals. It involves providing a physical shelter and creating an environment that supports intellectual growth, social interaction, and overall well-being. Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors, proper funding, and effective management are essential components of a sustainable solution to the accommodation predicament in tertiary institutions.

Public-Private Partnership in Perspective

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) represents a contemporary approach to public sector management, particularly in developing nations such as Nigeria. This concept emerged in response to the reforms implemented in recent years to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector. The primary motivation behind these reforms was to improve public service delivery, making PPP a pivotal strategy in the evolving landscape of public sector management. Various scholars have offered diverse definitions of Public-Private Partnership. Anayo and Okon (2011) define PPP as a contractual arrangement

between a public-sector agency and a profit-driven private-sector entity. This collaboration involves allocating resources and risks to deliver public services or develop public infrastructure. Hodge and Greve (2007) describe PPP as a cooperative arrangement between two or more public and private sectors, typically of a long-term nature. Kwan (1995) and Bagal (2008) emphasize that PPP entails an arrangement between the government and private sector entities to provide infrastructures, community facilities, and related services. These partnerships involve sharing investments, risks, responsibilities, and rewards between the public and private partners. The reasons for establishing PPPs often revolve around financing, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of public infrastructure and services, with the private sector assuming a significant role in these functions.

PPP is a collaborative relationship between public sector organizations and private sector investors, aiming to procure essential infrastructural facilities for a country. The increasing population and rural-urban migration amplify the demand for new and existing facilities, leading to higher building and maintenance costs. Recognizing that the government alone cannot bear this burden, PPP schemes have become instrumental in various countries, both developed and developing. Governments worldwide are turning to the private sector as an additional funding source, acknowledging the crucial role of PPP initiatives in economic and infrastructural development. In Nigeria, properly formulating and implementing policies surrounding PPP is a valuable tool. This approach can elevate infrastructure development, stimulate private sector growth and stability, and ensure the prompt completion of projects (Seibert, 2006). The relationship between the government and private sector organizations engaged in PPP is symbiotic, with each partner anticipating benefits aligned with its objectives and goals for participating in such partnerships. Okoye and Oghoghomeh (2011) state that PPP involves a contractual agreement between a public-sector institution or municipality and a private party. In this arrangement, the private party assumes financial and technical risks in constructing and operating a public project. Ferreira and Khatami reinforce this perspective, cited in Okoye and Oghoghomeh (2011), who highlight PPP as a promising option for enhancing public service delivery in developing countries like Nigeria. The endorsement of PPP as a means to bridge the gap in infrastructure development and improve public services underscores its importance in the contemporary landscape of public sector management.

Theoretical Framework

This paper relies on the Stakeholder Theory as its theoretical framework. Originating from a 1963 Stanford Research Institute internal memorandum, Stakeholder Theory defines stakeholders as groups supporting an organization's needs for its continued existence. Edward Freeman championed the development of this theory in the 1980s (Freeman & Reed, 1983). The core tenet of the Stakeholder Theory posits that a corporation possesses stakeholders, representing groups and individuals either benefiting from or being adversely affected by the actions and inactions of an organization or enterprise. The Stakeholder Theory offers a robust approach when applied to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in infrastructural development within tertiary institutions. This framework guides tertiary institution management in engaging the private sector for targeted investments in critical areas like hostel accommodation, lecture theatres, and offices through PPP strategies. Stakeholder Theory underscores the importance of involving various stakeholders to

address infrastructural development deficits in tertiary institutions. If properly leveraged, the PPP arrangement serves as an effective platform for holistic infrastructural development. Recognizing the private sector's vital role, Egonmwan (2018) emphasizes its contribution to innovation, modernization, cost-effectiveness, and service delivery in public settings. Negligence of duties by stakeholders has been identified as a contributing factor to the worsening infrastructural development in the country, particularly within tertiary institutions (Itu & Kenigua, 2021). This shows the significance of Stakeholder Theory in guiding the collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors to address infrastructural gaps and ensure the overall progress of tertiary institutions. The engagement of stakeholders, especially the private sector, becomes imperative for fostering innovation, efficiency, and the successful implementation of PPPs in infrastructural development.

Build Operate Transfer in providing Student Hostel Accommodation

Private sector participation refers to the engagement of both formal and informal private enterprises in providing and managing accommodations within tertiary institutions (Asare-Kyire & Osia, 2012). The rationale behind encouraging robust private sector involvement in infrastructure provision, including hostels and offices, stems from the prevailing challenges the government faces regarding budget constraints and public finance difficulties. Tertiary institutions, particularly universities, grapple with financial limitations, leading to inadequate funding for critical aspects such as student accommodation. The Federal Government of Nigeria, historically responsible for the capital and recurrent expenditures of federally owned universities, has witnessed a steady decline in capital allocations over the years, reaching about 50% of the total budgetary allocation in previous years. This decline has rendered government entities at various levels incapable of providing sufficient funding to effectively address the diverse needs of universities. In response to these challenges, the federal government initiated policies encouraging private sector involvement in university accommodations. In 2004, university authorities were directed to hand over hostels on campuses to private managers, with a parallel encouragement for private investors to venture into building hostels for students. Despite these directives, the policies still needed to be fully implemented. Subsequently, in 2006, the Federal Government issued a policy statement specifying that new hostels should be constructed exclusively through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements based on the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) model.

According to Okebukola, Abdullahi, Balogun, and Bankole (2004), the overarching objective of this policy shift was to stimulate private sector participation in the provision of hostel facilities within universities. Additionally, the policy aimed to motivate the private sector to reinvest some of its profits into critical national needs. The involvement of the private sector in providing hostel facilities allows universities to redirect their resources toward core activities like teaching and research, alleviating the burden of managing municipal functions. This strategic collaboration addresses funding challenges and enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure development within tertiary institutions. The integration of private sector expertise and resources serves as a valuable complement to the public sector's efforts, fostering a more sustainable and dynamic approach to meeting the evolving needs of tertiary education.

Public-Private Partnership and Infrastructural Development in Nigeria

It is undeniable that the responsibility for providing public services and infrastructure has traditionally rested solely with the government. However, factors such as population growth, urbanization, and increasing developmental aspirations have constrained the government's ability to adequately address the anticipated infrastructural needs of the populace (Dominic et al., 2015). Consequently, the Nigerian government has embraced the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy as a strategic tool for national infrastructure development. Practitioners have widely recognized the merits of PPPs, as they mobilize additional financing sources, defer payments to the future, and allocate the risk of funding public infrastructure projects to the private sector for profit (Fadeyi, Adegbuyi & Ifeanye, 2016). The advantages of PPPs in terms of infrastructural development are noteworthy. They offer superior infrastructure solutions compared to entirely public or private initiatives, allowing each participant to leverage its strengths. The positive impacts include accelerated project completion, reduced delays, and enhanced performance and accountability measured by time-to-completion. The return on investment (ROI) for PPPs surpasses that of projects with traditional, all-private, or all-government fulfilment. Collaborating entities can adopt innovative design and financing approaches, assess risks early in the process, and ensure project feasibility. Private partners check against unrealistic government promises or expectations, while operational and project execution risks are transferred to the private sector, which typically excels in cost containment and management.

PPPs incentivize early completion, increasing efficiency and reducing change order costs. The government's investment efficiency allows funds to be redirected to other socio-economic priorities, consequently lowering government budgets and deficits. Maintaining high-quality standards throughout the project's life cycle is more achievable with PPPs, potentially resulting in lower taxes. However, the benefits of PPPs can vary based on assumed risks, competition levels, and project complexity. The expertise within PPPs predominantly lies with the private sector, placing the government at an inherent disadvantage, particularly in accurately assessing proposed costs. Following the Nigeria Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC, 2010), governments engage deeply in PPPs for infrastructural development and service propagation to achieve optimal resource utilization, improve organizational plans and policies, attract skilled forces with competitive efficiency, and reform sectors through the reallocation of roles, incentives, and enhanced accountability.

Methodology

A mixed-method research design was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling was used, and questionnaire administration and oral interviews were carried out to obtain information for this study. Thirty-five questionnaires were administered to students and staff of Benue State University Makurdi; out of the thirty-five, five of the respondents were interviewed orally. The data collected was analyzed through percentages and tables to understand the result better.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Presentation of Results based on Percentages

Table 1: Respondents by Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	44.4
Female	25	55.5
Total	45	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the gender of the respondents in the study. 44.4% of the respondents were males, while 55.5% were females.

Table 2: Cadre of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Academic Staff	10	22.2
Non-Academic Staff	10	22.2
Students	25	55.5
Total	45	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows the category of respondents. 55.5% of the respondents were students, 22.2% were Non-Academic staff, while the academic staff of the respondents were 22.2%. The result implies that the respondents of this study cut across the stakeholders in the university environment, which is suitable for this study.

Table 3: Hostel Accommodation Challenges by Over enrollment of Students

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	88.8
Undecided	7	15.5
Disagree	8	17.7
Total	45	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result presented in Table 3 provides insights into respondents' perspectives on the challenges associated with hostel accommodation in the university, specifically focusing on the phenomenon of over-enrollment of students in an academic year. A significant majority of respondents, amounting to 88.8%, expressed the view that the hostel accommodation challenges observed in tertiary institutions, particularly at Benue State University, stem from the issue of over-enrollment. In contrast, 15.5% of respondents remained undecided, and 17.7% disagreed that the challenges related to hostel accommodation in tertiary institutions result from over-enrollment. This finding aligns with the observations made by Chukwu (2001) regarding the state of hostel accommodation in Nigerian tertiary education environments. Chukwu emphasized that many students are admitted beyond the planned capacity, leading to overcrowded living conditions and fierce competition for bed spaces and room accessories. The over-enrollment phenomenon exacerbates accommodation problems, with the number of admitted students surpassing the available facilities provided by the institutions.

Jennifer (2011) supports this perspective by attributing the shortage of student hostel accommodation to the continual increase in student enrollment. In Nigerian public tertiary institutions, there is a recurring trend of rising student numbers each year, contributing to a shortage of hostel accommodation. This shortage forces many students to seek housing off-campus, exposing them to various dangers and threats. Even those fortunate enough to secure private accommodation within secured environments often face exorbitant rents and uncertainties regarding safe drinking water and affordable transportation. These challenges, in turn, adversely affect students' academic achievements.

The result further shows that poor funding from the government, insufficient maintenance by government bodies, individuals, and organizations, and a shortage of space for constructing student housing constitute additional factors contributing to students' accommodation problems. It is imperative for the school authorities, in collaboration with the government, to address these multifaceted challenges. A holistic examination of factors such as increased student enrollment should guide admission policies to prevent overpopulation. Collaborative efforts between the school authority and the government to construct additional hostels are crucial to mitigating the persistent problem of student accommodation shortages.

Table 4: Inadequate Hostel Facilities

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	40	88.8
Undecided	-	-
Disagree	5	11.1
Total	45	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 above shows another cause of hostel accommodation: the inadequate hostel facilities. 88.8% of the respondents said that the lack of hostel facilities is a significant challenge, while 11.1% disagreed. The preceding result is in line with the assertion by Aluko (2011), where he averred that the rise in the population of students in tertiary institutions is considered a big problem due to the shortage of students' hostel accommodation, which in effect ranges from inadequate infrastructure facilities to overcrowding. Therefore, tertiary education managers need to provide the basic housing and infrastructural facilities the students need. Such facilities must include toilets, running water, electricity, a reading room, a canteen, a buttry, a kitchenette and a recreational area and these facilities must be in good working condition.

Table 5: Lack of Government/ Management Maintenance Culture

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	36	80.0
Undecided	3	6.6
Disagree	16	35.5
Total	45	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 above highlights another causes of hostel accommodation in Nigeria's tertiary institutions: the government/management's lack of maintenance culture. 80% of the respondents agreed that the lack of maintenance on the existing hostel facilities had caused

their dilapidated state, making it practically impossible for such structures to be effectively implemented; 6.6% were optionless. In comparison, the remaining 35.5% disagreed that the cause of the hostel accommodation challenge, especially at Benue State University, could not be attributed to the lack of maintenance culture by the handlers/owners of the tertiary institution.

Impact of Hostel Accommodation Problem on Students' Performance and Welfare

The role of shelter in the academic well-being of students cannot be overstated. Joan (2010) emphasizes that the environment in which students live significantly influences their academic performance. Poor living conditions are closely linked to a negative impact on academic outcomes. Notably, the security of students is a crucial aspect of their accommodation. Students residing in insecure areas are often plagued by the constant fear of theft, adversely affecting their academic performance. Establishing a secure environment enhances students' reading experiences and contributes to potential academic excellence. Joan highlights that noisy, overcrowded residences with inadequate security and nighttime lighting are typical examples of physical environments undermining students' ability to engage effectively in their studies. The combination of overcrowded living spaces, minimal supervision, and insecurity emerges as a significant factor affecting students' welfare and academic performance. Oladiran (2013) further underscores the impact of hostel facilities on students' performance, with the state of the building playing a pivotal role. Poor facilities and overcrowding have a detrimental effect on academic outcomes. The challenges associated with on-campus hostel accommodation often compel students to seek shelter outside the school environment. This, in turn, results in missed lectures, examinations, and laboratory practicals, stemming from the inadequacy or non-existence of student accommodation on campus. Additionally, overcrowded student hostels contribute to frequent frustration, conflicts, antagonism, and open confrontation among roommates, especially concerning wardrobes, corners, and other facilities within the room (Joan, 2010). Recently, the inadequacy of student hostel accommodation has become more apparent, with existing facilities often needing to be more dilapidated and posing risks to the health of students and the entire university environment. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including Benue State, are grappling with hostel conditions that need to be more adequate and deplorable, significantly impacting students' academic performance and overall development.

Moreover, the health implications arising from overcrowded hostels constitute a substantial challenge affecting academic performance in most tertiary institutions. The lack of effective sanitary measures, exacerbated by overcrowding, negatively impacts students' overall well-being and hampers their academic performance. The hostel accommodation challenge in tertiary institutions, particularly in Benue and across Nigeria, thus presents a multifaceted issue with implications for both the physical and mental health of students and their academic pursuits. Addressing these challenges is essential to fostering a conducive environment that supports students' holistic development and academic success.

Remedies to Hostel Accommodation Challenge in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

For a purposeful solution to the prevailing challenges of student accommodation in Nigeria's public tertiary educational sector. The following are considered viable options for eliminating such challenges.

Public Private Partnership
Privatization of hostel facilities

Table 7: Public-Private Partnership in Hostel Provision and Management

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	42	93.3
Undecided	-	-
Disagree	3	6.6
Total	45	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The findings presented in Table 7 shed light on the proposed solutions to the persistent challenges of hostel accommodation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. A striking 93.3% of the respondents believed that Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is the most effective solution to address the ongoing hostel accommodation challenges. Only a small fraction, 6.6% of the population, disagreed with this perspective. This overwhelming support for PPP underscores the belief that private sector involvement is the optimal strategy to overcome infrastructural deficits in developing countries like Nigeria. This aligns with the insights provided by Asare-Kyire and Osie (2012), who argued that private sector participation in basic infrastructure provision is a response to the financial difficulties faced by governments globally. In parallel, university authorities have consistently voiced concerns about the lack of funds to address student accommodation needs adequately. Historically, the Federal Government of Nigeria has shouldered the responsibility for providing capital and recurrent expenditure for federal universities, partly intervening in infrastructure through bodies like TETFUND for state tertiary institutions. However, the capital allocations to universities have declined over the years, rendering the government incapable of meeting the comprehensive financial needs of universities. In recognition of this challenge, the Federal Government issued directives in 2004 and 2006, advocating the involvement of the private sector in student accommodation. The 2006 directive specifically emphasized the adoption of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) on a Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis for new hostel construction.

The PPP option, therefore, emerges as a strategic response to the funding shortfall and challenges in providing adequate hostel accommodation for tertiary institution students. Given the financial constraints faced by the government, this approach has gained traction as a panacea for the hostel challenges. It underscores the need for collaboration between the public and private sectors to bridge the infrastructural gap in educational institutions. Addressing the inefficiencies in managing student accommodation, most respondents proposed the privatization of student hostels. This involves entrusting private individuals responsible for building, operating, and maintaining hostel facilities within the university setting. Concurrently, university management and government oversight would regulate the operations of these private investments. According to respondents, this privatization approach holds the potential to significantly alleviate student hostel accommodation challenges by ensuring both quality and quantity in the nation's tertiary educational sector. The consensus among respondents highlights the perceived efficacy of private sector involvement and proactive management strategies to enhance students' overall hostel accommodation experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the current context, there is a growing apprehension regarding the deficiency in infrastructural development across diverse sectors of the country, compounded by the limitations of the government's budget. A predominant challenge confronting tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the need for more student accommodation. Private Public Partnership (PPP) emerges as the most favoured and practical alternative to address the extensive challenges burdening the educational sector, offering the prospect of involving the private sector in the provision of hostel accommodation for students and other critical infrastructures crucial for the development of our educational sector and national life at large. This study meticulously examined the challenges associated with students' hostel accommodation in Benue State University, Makurdi, with a focused exploration of the PPP option. The findings elucidate that the over-enrollment of students in tertiary institutions, especially in the study area, constitutes a paramount challenge for student accommodation. The acute shortage of hostel facilities is a well-acknowledged concern by both the management and the government. Additionally, the lack of a maintenance culture by the government and institutional management has further hindered the availability of student hostels in the study area and numerous tertiary institutions across Nigeria. In the face of governmental financial constraints, the most viable options are the public-private partnership and the build-operate-transfer models, which have proven transformative in other national contexts.

It is underscored that the imperative for an effective and conducive student housing facility in universities and tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot be overstated. A robust student housing system becomes crucial because students are expected to be in a sound state of mind to excel in their academic endeavours. Since student housing contributes not only to physical protection but also to healthy social and behavioural stability, the productivity of students is inherently linked to their housing conditions. Consequently, it is recommended that tertiary institution authorities proactively build hostels to accommodate all enrolled students, ensuring inclusivity. The government is urged to engage in partnerships with private entrepreneurs, utilizing the Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) option, where funding and management are entrusted to private entities, with the government maintaining a supervisory role to monitor and regulate safety as needed. The challenges associated with hostel accommodation in Nigerian tertiary institutions extend beyond overcrowding to encompass a range of issues, such as mounting pressure on infrastructure, social amenities, and the rapid deterioration of the environment. Existing hostel facilities in public tertiary institutions are strained, leading to decreased lifespans and the sharing of a single space for four students among ten. Moreover, the unsanitary environment in overcrowded hostels often results in disease outbreaks and socio-disorder on tertiary institution campuses.

To pave the way for improved student hostels, a comprehensive approach is necessary to address the multifaceted problems impeding various fields of study. Notably, inadequate funding of the educational sector emerges as a significant factor hindering the construction of student hostels by institutions. Consequently, the study recommends that the government entrust the provision of hostel facilities to private bodies or individuals to construct, operate, and maintain such facilities on its behalf.

Given the myriad challenges faced by students living off-campus due to the shortage of on-campus accommodation, this study emphasizes the urgency for government and institutional management to collaborate with various stakeholders in tertiary education to

address the problem comprehensively. Consequently, this research study fervently recommends the PPP option as a strategic and transformative solution. In tandem with private entities, the government must make concerted efforts to implement PPP initiatives to revitalize and transform the landscape of student accommodation, fostering an environment conducive to academic excellence and overall student well-being.

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