



MANAGING HOSTEL OVERCROWDING FOR IMPROVED STUDENT ATTITUDINAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Hostel overcrowding is a common issue in educational institutions, particularly in developing countries with a high demand for student accommodation. This study examined the issue of hostel overcrowding and its impact on student attitudinal behaviour among the students of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The design for this study was a descriptive survey. The study population comprised all the students resident in the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife hostels. A total of 330 students comprised the sample drawn from the eight hostels. The research instrument used in this study was the 'Managing Hostel Overcrowding for Improved Student Attitudinal Behaviour Questionnaire (MHOISABQ)' questionnaire. Two research questions were raised and answered, and one null hypothesis was formulated and tested. Findings showed negative effects of overcrowding on student behavior, such as increased stress, aggression, a decline in positive attitudinal behaviours among students and a lack of respect for rules and regulations. Based on the findings, the study proposed several strategies for managing hostel overcrowding, including implementing a strict Room Occupancy Policy, increasing the number of hostel facilities, and providing students with alternative accommodation options. These strategies aim to create a more conducive living environment for students, leading to improved attitudinal behaviour and overall well-being. The study further proposed a framework for hostel management that encompasses infrastructure optimization, policy interventions, and student-centric support mechanisms to mitigate the challenges of overcrowding and foster a more conducive living environment for students.

Keywords: hostel overcrowding, student attitudinal behaviour, student well-being, hostel management

Introduction

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering the student's intellectual, personal, and social development. One critical aspect of this endeavour is the provision of adequate and suitable on-campus accommodation, commonly referred to as university hostels or dormitories. These residential facilities serve as not only a residence but also a hub for various academic, social, and extracurricular activities that contribute to the holistic growth of students (Oladokun & Gbadegesin, 2019). However, in many developing countries, such as Nigeria, the increasing demand for higher education has led to a significant challenge in managing the limited on-campus housing resources. This has resulted in the pervasive problem of hostel overcrowding, where universities struggle to accommodate the growing student population within the confines of their existing infrastructure (Ajayi & Omirin, 2017). This overcrowding phenomenon can have far-reaching consequences, not only on the physical living conditions but also on the attitudinal behaviours of the students residing in these facilities.

The issue of hostel overcrowding in Nigerian universities has been a longstanding concern, with numerous studies highlighting the various challenges associated with this problem. According to Ajayi and Omirin (2017), the rapid expansion of student enrollment in Nigerian universities, coupled with limited resources

and infrastructure, has led to a severe shortage of on-campus housing. This has resulted in overcrowded dormitories, where students often have to share limited space, facilities, and resources, leading to a compromised living environment. The impact of hostel overcrowding on students' academic performance, social well-being, and overall quality of life has been well-documented in the literature. Oladokun and Gbadegesin (2019) found that overcrowding in university hostels can contribute to increased stress, poor sleep quality, and reduced academic engagement among students. Additionally, the lack of privacy and personal space can lead to conflicts, tension, and social withdrawal, further hampering the students' ability to thrive in their academic and social pursuits. Moreover, the overcrowding of university hostels can also have broader implications for the institutions themselves. Ajayi and Omirin (2017) highlight that the strain on limited resources and infrastructure can lead to the deterioration of existing facilities, increased maintenance costs, and a diminished overall student experience, which can ultimately affect the reputation and attractiveness of the university. It is against this background that this study examines the issue of hostel overcrowding, its impact on student attitudinal behaviour, and explores strategies for effective management among the students of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Overcrowding as it relates to student hostels can be explained as a situation where the number of students residing in a hostel outweighs the planned accommodation, leading to a range of untoward consequences. According to Smith et al. (2021), hostel overcrowding refers to a living condition where the number of students occupying a hostel exceeds the original design specification and optimal occupancy level, resulting in a lack of personal space and strain on shared resources. Lim et al. (2022) describe hostel overcrowding as a situation where the hostel accommodates more students than it was originally designed or intended to, leading to a diminished sense of personal space and privacy for the residents. Yusof and Masrom (2020) define hostel overcrowding as a situation where the student population living in the hostel exceeds the available living space and facilities, compromising the overall living environment and experience. Sharma and Sharma (2019) characterize hostel overcrowding as a condition where the number of students residing in a hostel surpasses the intended capacity, leading to a lack of adequate personal and shared spaces, as well as a strain on the available resources and amenities.

Basu and Chakraborty (2022) identify hostel overcrowding as a scenario where the number of students living in a hostel is higher than the original design and infrastructure can comfortably accommodate, resulting in various challenges and compromises in the living conditions. Studies have highlighted the negative consequences of overcrowding, including increased stress, reduced sense of privacy, and diminished academic performance (Smith et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2022). Hostel overcrowding has become a significant issue in many educational institutions around the world. As the demand for higher education continues to rise, universities and colleges are faced with the challenge of providing adequate living accommodations for their growing student populations. Overcrowding in student hostels can have a range of negative impacts, both on the students' academic performance and their overall well-being. One of the primary concerns with hostel overcrowding is the impact it can have on students' ability to focus and study effectively. When living spaces are cramped and shared by too many individuals, it can be challenging for students to find the quiet, private areas they need to concentrate on their coursework (Cheng, 2019). The noise, lack of privacy, and distractions associated with overcrowded hostels can lead to increased stress and anxiety, which can in turn negatively affect students' academic outcomes (Kaya & Erkip, 2001).

In addition to the academic implications, hostel overcrowding can also have a detrimental effect on students' physical and mental health. Crowded living conditions can contribute to the spread of illness and infection, as students are in close proximity to one another and may have limited access to proper sanitation facilities (Gichaga et al., 2016). Furthermore, the lack of personal space and privacy in overcrowded hostels can exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can lead to the development of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Ojo, 2018). The issue of hostel overcrowding is not limited to a specific region or country; it is a global problem that affects educational institutions across the world. In India, for example, the rapid expansion of higher education has led to an increase in student enrollment, outpacing the availability of on-campus housing (Dash, 2019). As a result, many Indian universities have resorted to housing students in makeshift or temporary accommodations, leading to significant overcrowding and substandard living conditions.

To address the issue of hostel overcrowding, educational institutions and policymakers must take a multi-faceted approach. This may involve increasing the availability of on-campus housing, improving the quality and safety of existing accommodations, and implementing measures to regulate off-campus housing options (Gichaga et al., 2016). Additionally, universities should strive to provide students with access to mental health support services and wellness programs to help mitigate the negative impacts of overcrowding on their well-being (Ojo, 2018). Overall, the problem of hostel overcrowding is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a collaborative effort from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, government agencies, and student representatives. By addressing this issue, educational institutions can create a more supportive and conducive environment for students, enabling them to thrive academically and personally during their time in higher education.

Attitudinal behaviours refer to the various psychological and social tendencies that influence an individual's actions, responses, and overall interactions within a given environment (Ayoola & Olufunke, 2020). In the context of university hostels, the issue of overcrowding can significantly impact the attitudinal behaviours of students in several ways. First, the cramped living conditions and lack of personal space in overcrowded hostels can lead to increased tensions, conflicts, and antisocial behaviour among students (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2013). The constant proximity to others and the lack of privacy can strain interpersonal relationships, fostering an environment that is not conducive to academic pursuits and personal development. Moreover, the stress and frustration associated with living in overcrowded hostels can contribute to the development of maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse, aggression, and withdrawal from social interaction (Ayoola & Olufunke, 2020). These attitudinal behaviours can not only impact the individual student but also create broader challenges for the university community, leading to disciplinary issues, disruptions to the learning environment, and the overall deterioration of the campus culture.

The consequences of hostel overcrowding extend beyond the attitudinal behaviours of students; they can also have a significant impact on the overall student experience and academic performance. Numerous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of overcrowded living conditions on various aspects of student life (Oginni & Afolabi, 2013). One of the primary concerns is the impact on physical and mental well-being. The lack of personal space, limited access to basic amenities, and constant exposure to noise and distractions can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and poor sleep quality among students (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2013). These factors can, in turn, negatively affect their overall health and well-being, ultimately hindering their ability to focus on their academic pursuits. Furthermore, the disruptions caused by

overcrowding can also have a direct impact on academic performance. The inability to find quiet spaces for studying, the difficulties in managing time and resources, and the increased likelihood of conflicts and distractions can all contribute to a decline in student academic outcomes (Oladokun & Gbadegesin, 2019). This can lead to a vicious cycle, where poor academic performance further exacerbates the challenges faced by students in overcrowded hostels.

While the expansion of on-campus housing and the implementation of comprehensive student support services and policies are essential, researchers have also highlighted the potential benefits of exploring alternative housing options to alleviate the issue of hostel overcrowding (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2013). One such approach is the development of public-private partnerships, where universities collaborate with private housing providers to offer off-campus accommodation options for students. This can not only diversify the available housing choices but also potentially offer more affordable and suitable living environments for students (Oladokun & Gbadegesin, 2019).

Another measure is the creation of student housing communities, either on-campus or close to the university that are designed to cater to the specific needs and preferences of the student population. These communities can provide a more organized and supportive living environment, fostering a sense of community and promoting positive attitudinal behaviours (Ayoola & Olufunke, 2020). The issue of hostel overcrowding and its impact on student attitudinal behaviour in higher education institutions is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted approach. By prioritizing the expansion and renovation of on-campus housing facilities, enhancing student support services, integrating attitudinal behaviour management into hostel policies, and exploring alternative housing options, universities can work towards creating a more conducive living and learning environment for their students.

Through these strategies, higher education institutions can foster improved student attitudes, social interactions, and academic outcomes, ultimately contributing to the overall development and success of their student population. As the demand for higher education continues to grow, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, the effective management of hostel overcrowding remains a critical priority for universities to ensure the well-being and academic success of their students.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of hostel overcrowding and student attitudinal behaviours is becoming increasingly prevalent in educational institutions. The limited availability of hostel accommodations has led to overcrowding, resulting in cramped living conditions and a lack of privacy for students. This overcrowding has also contributed to a decline in the overall cleanliness and maintenance of the hostels. The attitudes and behaviours of students living in overcrowded hostels have become a cause for concern. The lack of personal space and privacy has led to increased tensions and conflicts among students, resulting in disruptive and disrespectful behaviours. This negative environment can have a detrimental impact on the students' attitudinal behaviours. This study, therefore, investigated the relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Research Questions

The following Research Questions were raised to guide the study:

- 1 How does hostel overcrowding impact student satisfaction and overall well-being at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife?

- 2 How do students' attitudes and behaviour change in response to living in an overcrowded hostel environment at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the students resident in the hostels of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. A total of 330 students comprised the sample drawn from the eight hostels (Awo Hall - 43, Fajuyi Hall - 43, Angola Hall - 43, ETF Hall - 43, Mozambique Hall - 43, Moremi Hall - 43, Akintola Hall - 36 and Alumni Hall - 36) respectively. The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled 'Managing Hostel Overcrowding for Improved Student Attitudinal Behaviour Questionnaire (MHOISABQ)'. Two research questions were raised and answered, and one null hypothesis was formulated and tested. The analysis was done using both mean score and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tools.

Results

Research Question One: How does hostel overcrowding impact student satisfaction and overall well-being at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife?

Table 1: *Impact of student overcrowding on Students' satisfaction and Well-being*

S/N	Potency Indices	Always (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Decreased concentration and focus	200	20	110	0	3.27	Great Extent
2	Compromised study habits and time management	160	90	30	50	3.12	Great Extent
3	Impaired sleep quality and quantity	190	50	50	40	3.18	Great Extent
4	Increased psychological stress and anxiety	200	50	70	10	3.33	Great Extent
5	Reduced opportunities for extracurricular involvement	170	70	80	10	3.22	Great Extent
6	Withdrawal and isolation	120	110	90	10	3.00	Great Extent
7	Irritability and interpersonal conflict	110	120	80	20	3.09	Great Extent
8	Increased substance use	170	100	50	10	3.30	Great Extent
9	Avoidance and escapism	170	80	40	40	3.15	Great Extent
10	Deterioration in self-care and hygiene	180	70	70	10	3.27	Great Extent
	Mean Score					3.19	Great Extent

According to Table 1, it was observed that hostel overcrowding has a significant negative impact on students' satisfaction and well-being. The observations include decreased concentration and focus with a mean of 3.27, compromised study habits and time management with a mean of 3.12, impaired sleep quality and quantity with a mean of 3.18, increased psychological stress and anxiety with a mean of 3.33, reduced opportunity for extracurricular involvement with a mean of 3.22, withdrawal and isolation with a mean of 3.00, irritability and interpersonal conflict with a mean of 3.09, increased substance abuse with a mean of 3.30, avoidance and escapism with a mean of 3.15, and deterioration of self-care and hygiene with a mean of 3.19.

Research Question Two: How do students' attitudes and behaviour change in response to living in an overcrowded hostel environment at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife?

Table 2: *Students' attitudes and behaviour in response to living in an overcrowded hostel environment*

S/N	Potency Indices	Always (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Withdrawal and isolation	70	80	150	30	2.58	Great Extent
2	Irritability and interpersonal conflict	110	110	110	20	3.00	Great Extent
3	Increased substance use	190	20	20	-	3.52	Great Extent
4	Avoidance and escapism	190	30	30	10	3.52	Great Extent
5	Deterioration in self-care and hygiene	150)	120	60	30	3.18	Great Extent
	Mean Score					3.16	Great Extent

The analysis presented in Table 2 indicates that hostel overcrowding has a negative impact on students' attitudes and behaviours. Students experiencing overcrowding may feel overwhelmed, anxious, or have a strong desire for privacy and personal space, as evidenced by a mean score of 2.58. This can lead to increased withdrawal and isolation, with some students spending more time alone in their rooms, limiting their interactions with peers. Additionally, irritability and personal conflicts, with a mean score of 3.52, are likely to occur due to the constant presence of others and the lack of personal space in the hostel, leading to heightened irritability and short-tempered behaviours. Furthermore, the increased use of substances, also with a mean score of 3.52, suggests that students may turn to alcohol, drugs, or other substances as a way to cope with the stress and negative emotions stemming from hostel overcrowding, potentially leading to the development of unhealthy coping behaviours and further exacerbating mental health issues. The data also indicates that students may engage in avoidance and escapist behaviours with a mean score of 3.52, such as spending more time off-campus or seeking activities that allow them to distance themselves physically and mentally from the overcrowded living conditions. Moreover, the deterioration in self-care, with a mean score of 3.18, suggests that the lack of personal space and privacy may lead to a decline in students' self-care and personal hygiene practices, including neglecting basic grooming, maintaining a clean living space, or attending to their physical and nutritional needs.

Hypothesis Testing

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Table 3: *Correlation analysis testing the relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	rCal	r-(critical)	Sig.	Decision
Hostel Overcrowding	330	3.764	2.41	328	0.60	0.062	0.00	Rejected
Students' Attitudinal behaviour	330	3.122	4.21					

Based on the data in Table 3, it was found that the calculated R-value of 0.60 is greater than the critical R-value of 0.062 at a significance level of 0.05 and for 328 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that overcrowding in hostels has a negative impact on students' satisfaction and overall well-being, which can adversely affect their academic performance. This is supported by Cheng (2019), who suggests that overcrowding in student hostels can lead to various negative effects on academic performance and overall well-being. One of the main concerns with hostel overcrowding is its impact on students' ability to concentrate and study effectively. When living spaces are overcrowded and shared by too many people, students may find it difficult to find quiet, private areas they need to focus on their coursework (Cheng, 2019). This can compromise study habits and time management, disrupt sleep quality and quantity, increase psychological stress and anxiety, and reduce opportunities for extracurricular involvement, all of which can significantly impact students' academic performance.

The research findings indicate that overcrowded hostels significantly influence students' attitudinal behaviour. Gbadegesin and Oladokun (2017) argue that hostel overcrowding can indirectly lead to increased risk-taking and deviant behaviour among students. When students face limited living space and resources, they may feel frustrated, resentful, and lack control over their environment. This can result in the adoption of coping mechanisms such as engaging in disruptive behaviour, substance abuse, or other risky activities as a way to assert independence and release pent-up emotions. Additionally, hostel overcrowding can have detrimental effects on students' physical and mental health, according to Chichaga et al. (2016) and Ojo (2018). Crowded living conditions contribute to the spread of illness and infection, while the lack of personal space and privacy exacerbates feelings of isolation and loneliness, potentially leading to depression and anxiety.

Furthermore, overcrowding can foster a sense of social isolation and withdrawal among students, making it challenging for them to build meaningful social connections and establish a sense of community. The limited personal space and overcrowded conditions can lead to increased feelings of loneliness, exacerbating existing mental health issues and negatively impacting overall student well-being. The study also revealed a significant relationship between hostel overcrowding and students' attitudinal behaviour at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Hostel overcrowding extends its consequences beyond students' attitudinal behaviours and can have a significant impact on the overall student experience and academic performance. Numerous studies have

highlighted the detrimental effects of overcrowded living conditions on various aspects of student life (Oginni & Afolabi, 2013). One primary concern is the impact on physical and mental well-being. The lack of personal space, limited access to basic amenities, and constant exposure to noise and distractions can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and poor sleep quality among students (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2013). These factors can ultimately hinder students' ability to focus on their academic pursuits.

Conclusion

Hostel overcrowding can significantly impact students' attitudes and behaviours. When students are compelled to live in cramped and crowded conditions, it can lead to increased stress, frustration, and a lack of privacy. This, in turn, can result in negative attitudes towards their living situation, their peers, and their academic performance. Educational institutions need to address the issue of overcrowding in hostels to create a more conducive and positive living environment for students. By providing adequate and comfortable living spaces, institutions can help promote a more positive and productive attitude among students.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1 Institutions should implement a maximum occupancy policy: For hostels to prevent overcrowding, alternative accommodations should be offered. If a hostel is consistently overcrowded, consider providing alternative accommodations such as nearby hostels or hotels for guests. This can help alleviate overcrowding and ensure a better experience for all guests and ensure that there is enough space for everyone to stay comfortably.
- 2 Monitor and enforce occupancy limit: Hostel staff should regularly monitor the number of guests staying in the hostel and enforce the occupancy limits to prevent overcrowding, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for all guests.
- 3 Encourage respectful behaviour: Hostel staff should promote a culture of respect and consideration among guests to prevent conflicts and disruptive behaviour that can arise from overcrowding.
- 4 Provide clear guidelines and rules: Hostels should have clear guidelines and rules in place regarding noise levels, cleanliness, and other behaviours to set expectations for guests and prevent issues related to overcrowding.

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