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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE WELFARE, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF STATE UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study explored how employee welfare and psychological wellbeing affect human development among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria. It was based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. The study had two objectives: (1) to examine the link between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing, and (2) to assess how psychological wellbeing influences staff development. A correlational research design was used. The population of the study consisted of 2,600 academic staff from six state-owned universities. The sample of the study was 780 respondents which made up 30% of the total number of academic staff population. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. Data were collected through structured questionnaires. A total of 780 academic staff were selected using stratified random sampling from six out of seven state-owned universities. This number made up 30% of the total academic staff population of 2,600.Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the Pearson Product Correlation Movement (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses. Results showed a strong positive relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing. They also showed a positive link between psychological wellbeing and human development. The study concluded that better welfare and mental health support improve staff satisfaction, emotional balance, and work performance. It recommended that universities provide better welfare packages and mental health services, like counseling and stress management.

Keywords: Academic staff, employee welfare, human development, North East Nigeria, psychological wellbeing, state universities, and staff productivity.

Introduction

Human capital plays a crucial role in national growth, especially within universities where academic staff drive knowledge creation, student training, and institutional success. The productivity of these staff members is largely shaped by the quality of welfare and mental health support provided by their institutions. Employee welfare—including financial incentives, healthcare, professional development, and good working conditions—boosts morale and enhances job performance. Akinyemi (2021) found that adequate welfare improves motivation and reduces grievances, promoting institutional commitment and satisfaction. However, many state universities in Nigeria's North East lag in offering comprehensive welfare. Academic staff are often burdened with numerous responsibilities without adequate institutional support, leading to dissatisfaction and decreased engagement. Psychological wellbeing is also a major concern, particularly in conflict-prone regions like the North East. Studies by Nwachukwu *et al.* (2023) reveal that insecurity, underfunding, and administrative instability contribute to lecturer anxiety, burnout, and emotional fatigue.

Employee welfare refers to the various support systems, benefits, and services provided to employees to improve their work and life conditions, which significantly influence their job satisfaction and commitment, especially in educational institutions (Eze and Buba, 2022). Psychological wellbeing, which encompasses emotional and mental stability, is critical for maintaining academic staff's focus, resilience, and engagement. Human development involves continuous improvement in knowledge, skills, and professional growth, contributing to institutional success. Improved welfare and psychological wellbeing are strongly linked to enhanced human development among academic staff (Abubakar and John, 2023).

Neglecting staff mental and emotional health has long-term consequences on efficiency and human development. Scholars like Eze and John (2022) have called for integrating psychological wellbeing into welfare strategies, viewing it as essential to sustaining academic performance. True human development among academic staff must involve personal growth, and career advancement. Beyond training and promotion, factors like recognition, job security, leadership support, and motivation are critical to staff development. Aliyu *et al.* (2023) emphasized these as necessary for institutional progress. Likewise, Oladipo and Ibrahim (2024) confirmed that strong welfare systems encourage higher qualifications, research engagement, and meaningful university contributions.

Theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory suggest that unmet physical and psychological needs can lead to job dissatisfaction and disengagement (Ibrahim and Adewale, 2021). Structured welfare programs have been shown to reduce stress and improve productivity, though many institutions focus only on salaries, overlooking benefits like recognition and mentorship. This lack of holistic support reduces creativity and passion (Salihu and Haruna, 2023).

Insecurity and poor funding in North East Nigeria worsen these challenges. Bako and Nuhu (2024) and Tijjani and Bala (2023) observed that these factors reduce morale and hinder staff development. Therefore, this study explores the relationship between employee welfare, psychological wellbeing, and human development among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Academic staff in state universities across North East Nigeria face growing challenges related to poor welfare provisions and limited psychological support. These conditions have contributed to declining staff morale, reduced job satisfaction, and stunted professional development. Insecurity, inadequate funding, and institutional neglect worsen the situation, threatening long-term human development outcomes. Addressing these gaps requires a clear understanding of how employee welfare and psychological wellbeing influence academic staff development among academic staff of state universities in North East Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between employee welfare, psychological wellbeing and human development among academic staff of state universities in North East Nigeria.

1. To examine the relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.
2. To assess the impact of psychological wellbeing on human development of academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria?
2. How does psychological wellbeing impact the human development of academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between psychological wellbeing and human development of academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory

This study is anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory propounded by Abraham Maslow in 1943. The theory suggests that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, starting from basic physiological needs to safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before achieving higher-level psychological growth. A key strength of this theory is its holistic approach to human motivation, recognizing that wellbeing and development depend on meeting various needs. A limitation is its assumption that needs follow a fixed order, which may not apply universally across cultures or individuals. The theory's focus on psychological wellbeing and motivation directly relates to this study, as employee welfare addresses basic and safety needs, while psychological wellbeing aligns with higher-level needs.

Methodology

The study used a correlational research design to examine the relationship between employee welfare, psychological wellbeing, and human development among academic staff of state universities in North East Nigeria. The North East Nigeria had seven (7) state-owned universities, and six (6) were sampled from six states in the zone. The population of this study was 2,600. This comprised all 2,600 academic staff, made up of 1,842 males and 758 females drawn from six state universities in North East Nigeria. A sample size of 780 academic staff members was selected from the six state-owned universities in the region using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various departments and academic ranks. Precisely, thirty percent of the population was used as a representative sample size for the study. Thus, 30% of 2,600 respondents gave 780 respondents (the sample size for the study). Data were collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaire included both closed and Likert-scale questions. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize responses and inferential statistics (Pearson Moment Correlation) to test the hypotheses.

Findings and Discussions

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	Welfare programs improve my wellbeing.	780	3.5	1.1	Agreed
2	I receive adequate health benefits.	780	2.3	1.0	Disagreed
3	Welfare policies reduce my work stress.	780	3.3	1.2	Agreed
4	My university supports my psychological health.	780	3.7	0.9	Agreed
5	Welfare provisions meet my family needs.	780	2.4	1.1	Disagreed
6	Employee welfare improves my job satisfaction.	780	3.4	1.0	Agreed
7	Psychological wellbeing helps my work focus.	780	3.6	1.3	Agreed
8	Welfare benefits reduce my absenteeism.	780	3.2	1.2	Agreed
9	I feel valued because of good welfare policies.	780	3.1	1.1	Agreed
10	Welfare programs increase my productivity.	780	3.3	1.0	Agreed
	Grand Mean		**3.15**		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Mean magnitude: $X \geq 2.5$ (Agreed)

$X < 2.5$ (Disagreed)

The results from Table 1 reveal that most respondents agreed that employee welfare positively influences their psychological wellbeing, as reflected in high mean scores for eight out of ten items. However, items 2 and 5, which address health benefits and family needs, recorded low means, indicating dissatisfaction in those areas. The grand mean of 3.15 shows an overall positive perception of the relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Impact of Psychological Wellbeing on Human Development of Academic Staff in State Universities in North East Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	I am mentally fit to teach effectively.	780	3.8	1.1	Agreed
2	I engage in capacity-building programs regularly.	780	3.5	1.0	Agreed
3	Psychological wellbeing enhances my innovation.	780	4.0	1.2	Agreed
4	I experience frequent emotional breakdowns.	780	2.3	1.0	Disagreed
5	Psychological stability improves my communication skills.	780	3.6	1.1	Agreed
6	Wellbeing helps in achieving personal goals.	780	3.9	1.0	Agreed
7	I participate in academic activities with enthusiasm.	780	3.7	1.2	Agreed
8	Psychological wellness sharpens my problem-solving skills.	780	4.1	0.9	Agreed
9	I am unable to balance work and personal life.	780	2.4	1.3	Disagreed
10	My wellbeing contributes to students' success.	780	3.8	1.0	Agreed
	Grand Mean		**3.61**		

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Mean magnitude: $X \geq 2.5$ (Agreed)

$X < 2.5$ (Disagreed)

Table 2 indicates that psychological wellbeing significantly impacts human development among academic staff. Eight out of ten items recorded high mean scores, showing agreement that mental wellness enhances innovation, teaching effectiveness, communication, and participation in academic activities. Items 4 and 9, with lower means, suggest minimal emotional instability and better work-life balance. The grand mean of 3.61 confirms that respondents generally perceive psychological wellbeing as a vital contributor to their personal growth and professional performance in North East Nigerian state universities.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Showing the relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria

Variables	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Df**	**R**	**P**	**Remark**
Employee welfare	195	3.5	1.1	748	0.645	0.05	Significant
Psychological Wellbeing	585	2.0	0.8				

Table 3 shows a significant positive relationship between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing among academic staff in North East Nigerian state universities ($r = 0.645$, $p < 0.05$).

This indicates that better welfare provisions are strongly associated with improved psychological wellbeing, highlighting the importance of welfare programs for staff mental health.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis showing the relationship between psychological wellbeing and human development of academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	R	P	Remark
Psychological Wellbeing	195	3.3	0.9	348	0.424	0.05	Significant
Human Development	585	3.7	1.2				

Table 4 reveals a significant positive relationship between psychological wellbeing and human development among academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria ($r = 0.424$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that higher levels of psychological wellbeing are associated with better personal growth, career advancement, and overall human development. The findings emphasize the importance of promoting mental health support to enhance academic staff's development and institutional effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The results show that most academic staff agree employee welfare positively affects their psychological wellbeing, though concerns remain about health benefits and family support. Psychological wellbeing was found to significantly boost human development, particularly in teaching, communication, and innovation. A strong correlation exists between employee welfare and psychological wellbeing ($r = 0.645$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, psychological wellbeing positively relates to human development ($r = 0.424$, $p < 0.05$), underscoring the need for mental health support. Akinyemi (2021) established that employee welfare significantly improves psychological wellbeing among academic staff, a finding that aligns with the present study's results. The positive relationship between welfare provisions and mental health suggests that when academic staff receive adequate financial incentives, healthcare support, and a conducive working environment, their emotional stability and professional commitment are enhanced.

Eze and John (2022) found that psychological wellbeing has a strong influence on human development among university employees. This study affirms that emotionally stable staff are more likely to engage in meaningful academic activities, develop professionally, and contribute effectively to institutional growth. These findings underscore the importance of prioritizing staff welfare and mental health support in institutional policy frameworks to enhance staff output and drive human development in the academic sector.

Conclusion

This study concludes that employee welfare and psychological wellbeing are vital to the human development of academic staff in state universities in North East Nigeria. Adequate welfare and mental health support enhance job satisfaction, emotional stability, and professional growth, ultimately improving staff productivity and contributing to institutional development and success.

Recommendations

1. State universities in North East Nigeria should improve staff welfare packages by providing adequate health benefits, housing allowances, and professional development opportunities to boost psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction.
2. Institutional policies should incorporate structured mental health support services such as counseling units and stress management workshops to enhance human development and overall academic performance.

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