

## Provision of Student Support Services and Its Impact on Quality University Education

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### **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigated the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities to ascertain the level of compliance with the National Universities Commission benchmark and its impact on quality university education. The population for the study consisted of the public Nigerian universities, while the sample was made up of 300 staff (teaching and non-teaching) and 1200 students selected from 3 Federal and 3 State universities in South-West Nigeria. Multi-stage, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the samples. A self-designed instrument tagged "Provision of Student Support Services in Nigerian Universities (PSSS)" was used to collect data for the study. Frequency counts, means, standard deviation, bar charts and simple percentage were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses raised were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study established a moderate level of provision of student support services, a moderate level of quality of Nigerian university education, and a significant relationship between student support services and quality of Nigerian university education. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that, the Nigerian universities must ensure that these support services are adequately provided in total compliance with NUC benchmark; while the NUC should enforce the provision of these support services in Nigerian universities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of every university to see its products obtain degrees, be worthy in character, be of enviable personalities with ability to compete globally. It is in this connection that the National Policy on Education [1] expects tertiary institutions in Nigeria to aim at: (a) Acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society; (b) the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments; (c) the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals develop into useful members of the community; and (d) the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments. However, in achieving the above stated aims, students support services become very crucial, and are consequently considered by the National Universities Commission in institutional accreditation processes. NUC [2] reported that in order to address the inadequacy of relevant physical facilities and services in Nigerian universities, the department of students support services was created in May, 2007 to coordinate the provision of standard Student Support Services (SSS) in all Nigerian universities.

Experiences have shown that majority of the students secured admission into Nigerian universities between the ages of 15 and 19 years without a clear vision of why they are in the university. On this premise, student support services seem to be very crucial in the success of education programmes as it may break learners' isolation and meet not only the academic demands of students in education but also their social needs (Omogbadegun et al. [3]. Consequently, Hedin [4] concluded that the biggest problem students must overcome in school is a lack of motivation and boredom. This according to Hedin is probably a function of what seems to many students an unfathomable gap between the curriculum and their everyday lives. Corroborating this view, Idogho [5] submitted that students support services assist in the production of graduates with the attributes of a complete individual, in the sense of forthrightness, acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society. Ibijola [6] also corroborated this submission when she posited that the quality of university education when

viewed from the quality of inputs perspective comprises the quality of the admission processes, quality of staffing procedure, quality of facilities, quality of curriculum and quality of the student support services.

The university system according to Oyebade [7], can be compared with industries where raw materials are processed into manufactured products. According to her, universities admit raw school leavers who meet the admission requirements and through vigorous teaching, learning and training in character as in a refinery, are processed between three, four or more years as the case may be. She further asserted that these processes as in the production cycle of graduates, require not only impartation of knowledge but also adequate provision of necessary supports in every sphere of life for students who with their barrage of personal, domestic, social, emotional and academic problems, register in the universities. Consequently, students support services seem to provide students with the critical missing link and also allow for interaction and opportunity to integrate and elaborate on their knowledge.

Observations have shown that, in most cases inadequate management of student support services had led to series of students' unrest and closure of many Nigerian universities' campuses, consequently leading to instability in academic calendar. It is on this premise that Dabesaki [8] argued that, poor customer service affects the delivery of quality education in Nigeria considering the relationship between student and lecturer. According to the submission of Oyebade [7], some of the components of students support services in the university system are in the areas of accommodation, orientation programmes for fresh students, in loco parentis, guidance and counselling, recreation and sports, transportation, health care and staff-students' relationship. Others are; university library services, students' associations, clubs and societies, discipline, grievances procedure, effective handling of misunderstanding between/ among students, scholarship, bursary awards and loans, information services (Bureau of students' information), mail service, basic amenities, good sanitary system, students unionism, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) matters, identification, international students activities, religion, information and technology services.

Orientation programme for fresh students seems to be the most important aspect of the student support services, as it educates the fresh students about the new environment by giving them firsthand information. Successful candidates of different ages, culture, gender and diverse backgrounds when offered admissions, eventually converge on campuses to co-habit in a new environment which they believe offer unlimited freedom, with the same goal of obtaining a 'meal ticket' which is the degree that will enable them cope with their lives in the future (Oyebade, [7]). On this premise, Toncich [9] noted that universities can be very daunting places to outsiders and to newcomers, so it is not surprising that many students feel a little overwhelmed when they first arrive as undergraduates. Consequently, the orientation programme for fresh students becomes highly imperative to ensure that students are familiar with the school environment and be alive to their responsibilities in the process of achieving their individual and institutional aims and objectives. Ajayi and Ayodele [10] also corroborated this assertion when they concluded that, new students should be introduced to the school in such a way that they have sense of belonging.

Adegun [11] submitted that all aspects of individual behaviour are being influenced or altered by the group or the groups the person finds himself or herself at historical or discordant level, family set up, friendship circles, religious, race and nationality grouping. Corroborating this submission, Owuamanam and Owuamanam [12], while considering the heredity and environmental influences on growth and development, concluded that the environmentalists believed that a person's whole being was shaped by how and in what circumstances he was raised or nurtured. They further concluded that people were born genetically equal and that later differences among them were only a result of different environmental opportunities, and that the environmentalists' position is very closely linked with philosophy of John Locke who said that the mind at birth was a blank slate, a "tabularasa" upon which experience writes. On this note, the orientation programme for the fresh student becomes very paramount in achieving both the students' and the institutional aims.

The needs hierarchy theory of Maslow cited in Akomolafe [13] classified the physiological needs which consisted of feeding, clothing and shelter as the most important need of man. Chinwuba

[14] submitted that, decent and affordable students' hostels would contribute to better academic performance that would catapult Nigerian universities into the worldwide rankings. It is a common knowledge that, a good hostel accommodation will no doubt contribute to the human and character formation of the students as a suitable environment may play a formative role in the character of the individual. However, Obadara [15] while lamenting the current state of students' halls of residence in some Nigerian universities noted that, university students' hall of residence in years back were 'home away from home with neat and dignifying environment. Consequently, a well-managed students' halls of residence will promote the students' personal, religious, social and psychological development. It also allows for co-ordination of a variety of students' activities planned by a number of students' organizations, care of students conduct and discipline.

The contribution of a well-equipped library to the production of good quality graduates cannot be overemphasized. The provision of up-to-date academic information to staff and students seem very significant in the production of quality university graduates. Ajibero cited in Ogidan [16] defined a university library as the heart of the university using the human and material resources at its disposal to support teaching, learning and research objectives of the institution, while Yusuf and Iwu [17] defined academic library as the nerve centre or the hub around which scholarship revolves. Eze and Uzoigwe [18] concluded that, the library has a unique position as a potential educational force in the university community of staff and students of different levels, more importantly in the era of information communication technology.

The university libraries in playing their supportive role to the teaching/learning process provide materials such as textbooks, journals, newspapers, reference materials, electronic journals, past project and theses, book of abstracts, government publications and indexes for the use of staff and students as common information materials, (Nwezeh and Shabi, [19]). It is in this connection that Singh and Kaur [20] posited that the preservation and access to knowledge and information is the main function of the academic libraries alongside supporting the mission of their institutions. Consequently, the quality of university education depends on the quality of the libraries.

In loco parentis, guidance and counselling seem very significant to the overall development of the students (Nnoruga, [21]; Akindele-Oscar and Ogunsanwo, [22]; Akinfolarin, [23]). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary [24] defines "in loco parentis" as having the same responsibility for a child as a parent has. Doregos [25] concluded that students' poor academic performance is traced to teachers' lack of interest in the welfare of the students. To this end, course advisers, hall wardens, hall masters, career officers are often employed to impart to students, positive attitude of co-existence, orderliness and sense of responsibility and resolve misunderstanding among students, while course advisers are appointed to guide students on various aspects of their social life as much as possible, and in taking decisions on their academic pursuit in the university. These university officials also give counsels to guarantee physical, mental and emotional stability of the students to enable them complete their academic programme successfully. On this premise, the effective handling of in loco parentis, guidance and counselling may go a long way in preventing and relieving students from depression and other mal-practices, while the defective handling of this role may have an overall negative effect on the quality of education offered by the university.

In conclusion, the significance of student support services to quality university education cannot be over emphasised, as it helps to provide a high quality educational experience that would be shaped by quality teaching and research, and in inculcating the core value of university education into the students. It was on this premise that Ibijola [26] concluded that quality can only be acquired when set standard is achieved, and that the success of the university system depends on how well the NUC is able to monitor and evaluate the provision of these educational inputs in which the students support service is inclusive, to ensure and maintain conformity with the set benchmark. In view of the foregoing, the researcher investigated the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities, and if there is any relationship between level of provision of student support services and quality of university education.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The student support services are the non-academic activities provided for the students to complement their academic activities to enable

them acquire a high quality educational experience. However, there have been complaints that these services seem not to have been adequately provided in Nigerian universities, which according to many authors do have effect on the quality of the educational outputs. This study was carried out to ascertain the level of provision of these services by Nigerian universities based on NUC Benchmark on Minimum Academic Standard and to investigate if there is any relationship between the level of provision of these services and the quality of Nigerian university education.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to proffer solution that can influence university policy makers on way to improve the quality of university education by investigating; (i) the level of provision of students support services in Nigerian university system; (ii) the perception of the university staff and students on provision of student support services; (iii) the level of provision of these services within the Federal and State universities and (iv) its relationship with quality of university education.

### 1.3 General Questions

- i. What is the perception of university students and staff on the of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities?
- ii. What is the level of the provision of student support services in Nigerian university system?
- iii. What is the level of the provision of student support services in Nigerian state and federal universities?
- iv. What is the level of the quality of Nigerian university education?

### 1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

- i. Is there any difference between the university staff and students' perception of the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities?
- ii. Is there any difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities?
- iii. Is there any relationship between the level of provision of student support services and level of quality of university education?

### 1.5 Research Hypotheses

- H1: There is no significant difference between the university staff and students' perception of the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities.
- H2: There is no significant difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities.
- H3: There is no significant relationship between the level of provision of student support services and the level of quality of Nigerian university education.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research of survey type was employed in the study. The population for the study was made up of all public universities in Nigeria. The sample consisted of 1,500 subjects, made up of 300 staff and 1,200 students from 3 federal and 3 state universities from southwest Nigeria. Multi-stage, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the samples. An instrument titled 'Provision of Student Support Services in Nigerian universities' (PSSS) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument (PSSS) consisted of Sections A and B. Section A was on bio data of the respondents, while Section B sought information on the provision of students' hostels, campus shuttle, in loco parentis/staff-students relationship, guidance and counselling services, academic library, sporting equipment and functional recreational facilities. Responses for Sections B of the instrument were indicated in terms of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Scoring was done using the Likert rating method. Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The face, content and construct validities of the instrument (PSSS) were ascertained by experts in test and measurement, while the reliability was done using split-half method, which gave a co-efficient of 0.91. The researcher administered the instrument by direct contact with the respondents with the help of research assistants. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyse the data. Frequency counts, means, standard deviation, simple percentage and Bar chart were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses raised were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic for hypotheses 1 and 2, and Pearson

product moment correlation analysis for hypothesis 3. Table 6 on level of quality of Nigerian university education was adapted from Ibijola [6].

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Question 1: What is the University Staff and Students' Perception of Student Support Services in Nigerian Universities?

To answer this question, the university staff and students' perception of student support services in Nigerian universities were analyzed separately, using the mean scores and the standard deviation to categorize the subjects into three groups representing levels of perception as follows.

#### 3.1.1 University staff perception of student support services in Nigerian universities

Using the mean score of 14.08 and standard deviation of 3.36, respondents whose scores ranged between the minimum scores of 6.0 and the difference between the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{x} - SD$ ) were grouped into 'Low' level performance i.e. 6.00 - (14.08 - 3.36) which gives (Low: 6.00 - 10.72). Respondents whose scores ranged from the sum of mean and standard deviation and the maximum score of 24 were grouped as 'High' i.e. (14.08+3.36) - 24.00 equals (17.44 - 24.00). "The moderate' level of performance constitute the respondents whose scores fell between the 'low' and 'high' level (17.44-24.00). The findings are presented in Table 1 and graphically represented in Fig. 1.

**Table 1. University staff perception of student support services in Nigerian universities**

	F	%
Low (6.00-10.72)	38	12.7
Moderate (10.73-17.43)	212	70.7
High (17.44-24.00)	50	16.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 1 showed that 38(12.7%) of the university staff had low level of perception of student support services, 212(70.7%) were moderate while 50(16.7%) had high level of perception of students support services. Therefore, the university staff perception of student support

service was adjudged moderate. The result is graphically represented in Fig. 1.

**3.1.2 University students’ perception of student support services in Nigerian universities**

Using the mean score of 14.87 and standard deviation of 4.07, respondents whose scores ranged between the minimum scores of 6.0 and the difference between the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{x} - SD$ ) were grouped into ‘Low’ level performance i.e. 6.00 - (14.87 - 4.07) which gives (Low: 6.00 - 10.80). Respondents whose scores ranged from the sum of mean and standard deviation and the maximum score of 24 were grouped as ‘High’ i.e. (14.87+ 4.07) – 24.00 equals (18.94 - 24.00). ‘The moderate’ level of performance constituted the respondents whose scores fell between the ‘low’ and ‘high’ level (10.81-18.93). The findings are presented in Table 2 and graphically represented in Fig. 2.

The result in Table 2 revealed that 182(15.2%) of the respondents had low level of perception of student support services, 799(66.6%) had moderate level of perception while 219(18.3%) were high in their perception of student support services. This implied that the university students’ perception of student support services

was moderate. The result is further presented in Fig. 2.

**Table 2. University students’ perception of student support services**

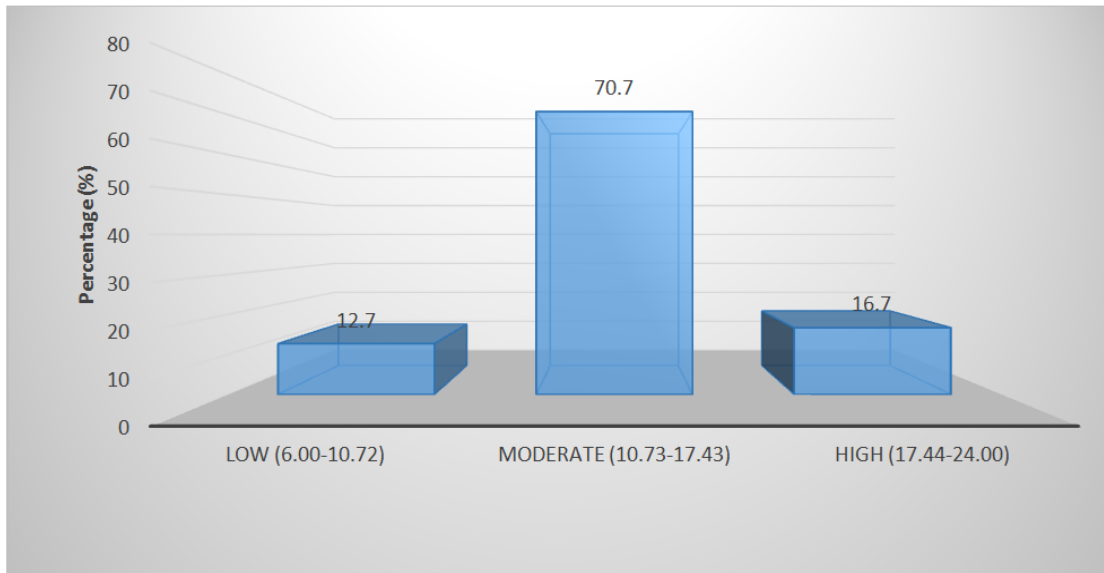
	f	%
Low (6.00-10.80)	182	15.2
Moderate (10.81-18.93)	799	66.6
High (18.94-24.00)	219	18.3
Total	1200	100.0

**3.1.3 University staff and students’ perception of provision of students support services in Nigerian universities**

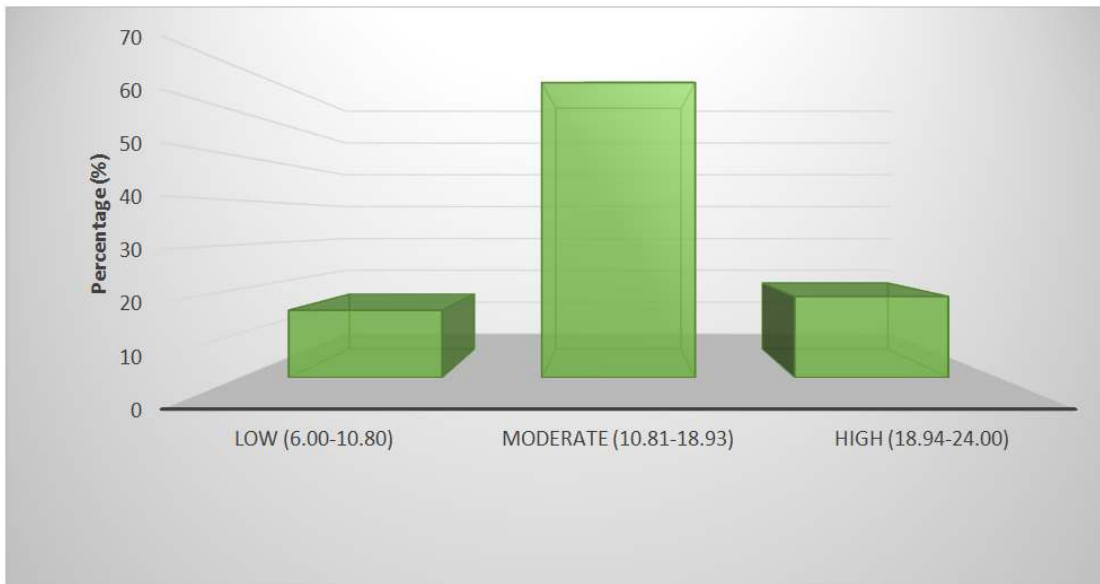
The analysis of the university students and that of the university staff perception of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities were compared for statistical difference.

**Table 3. The university staff and students’ perception of student support services in Nigerian universities, compared**

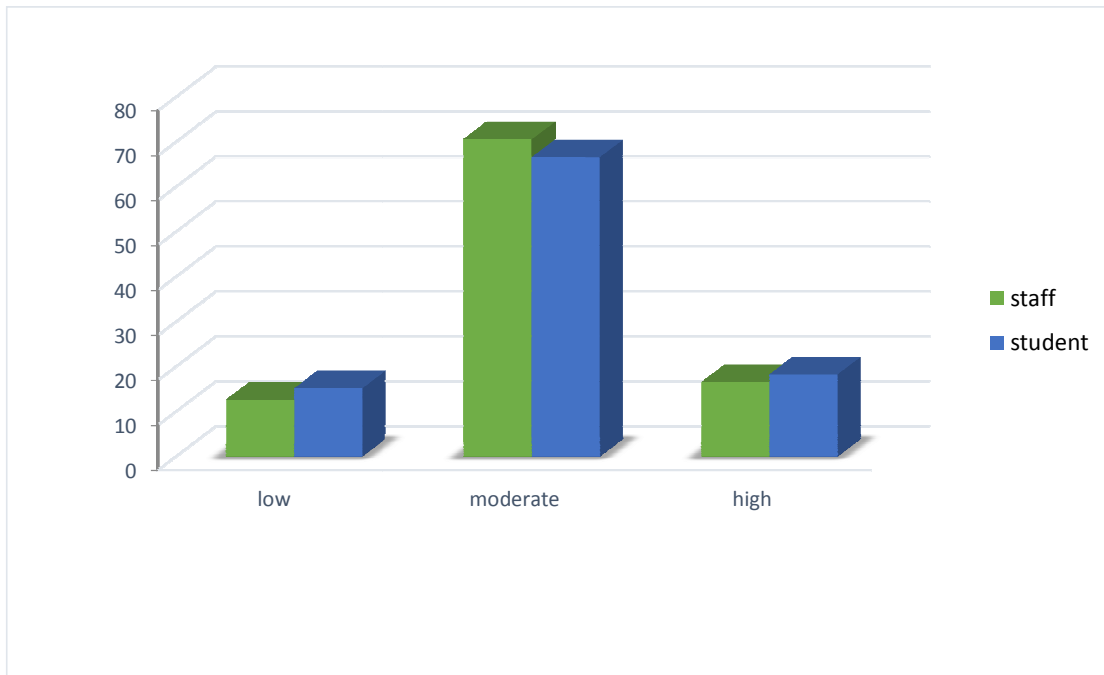
Level of provision	Staff		Student	
	F	%	f	%
Low	38	12.7	182	15.2
Moderate	212	70.7	799	66.6
High	50	16.6	219	18.3



**Fig. 1. University staff perception of student support services in Nigerian universities**



**Fig. 2. University students' perception of student support services**



**Fig. 3. A comparative perception of university staff and students on provision of student support services in Nigerian universities**

**3.2 Question 2: What is the Level of Provision of Student Support Services in the State and Federal Universities?**

In order to answer this question, the mean scores and the standard deviation were used to categorize the subjects into three groups, i.e.

high, moderate and low levels, representing levels of perception of the state and federal universities' respondents.

Table 4 shows that 157 (20.9%) of the state universities respondents agreed to low level, 498 (66.4%) agreed to moderate level while

95(12.7%) agreed to high level of provision of students support services respectively. Similarly, 63 (8.4%) of the federal universities' respondents adjudged the level of provision of students support service as low, 528(70.4%) adjudged it as moderate and 159(21.2%) adjudged it as high. Therefore, the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities was adjudged as moderate. The result is presented in Fig. 4.

**3.3 Question 3: What is the Level of Provision of Student Support Services in Nigerian University System?**

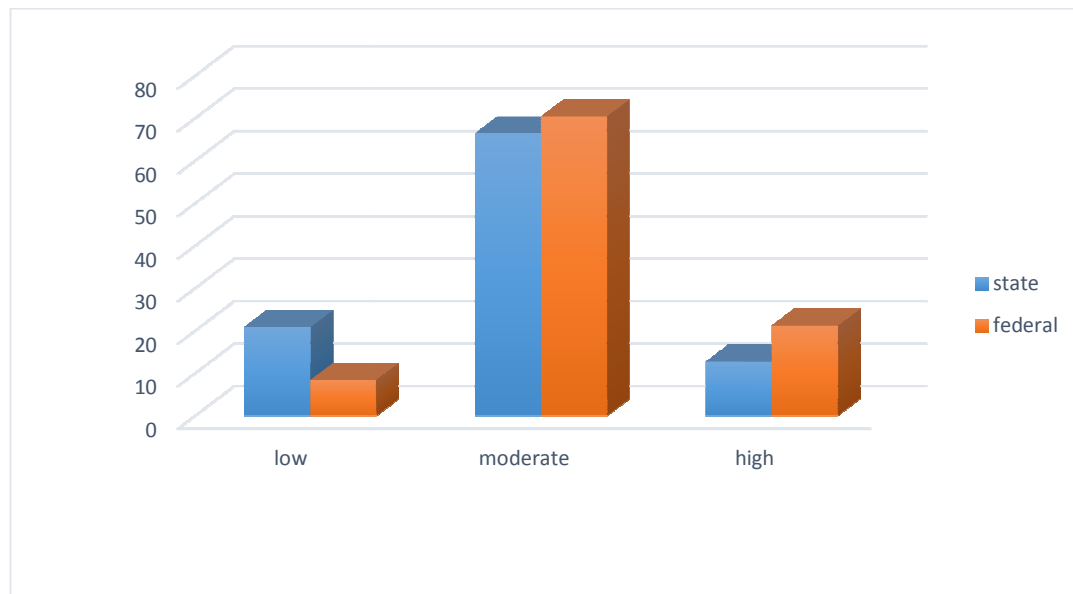
In order to answer this question, the mean scores on the university staff and students' perception of student support services in Nigerian universities and the standard deviation were used to categorize the subjects into three groups representing levels of perception. Using the mean score of 14.71 and standard deviation of 3.94, respondents whose scores ranged between

the minimum scores of 6.0 and the difference between the mean and standard deviation (X-SD) were grouped into 'Low' level performance i.e. 6.00 - (14.71- 3.94) which gives (Low: 6.00 – 10.76). Respondents whose scores ranged from the sum of mean and standard deviation and the maximum score of 24 were grouped as 'High' i.e. (14.71+ 4.07) – 24.00 equals (18.66 – 24.00). 'The moderate' level of performance constituted the respondents whose scores fell between the 'low' and 'high' level (10.77-18.65). The findings are presented in Table 5 and graphically represented in Fig. 5.

Table 5 revealed that more than half of the respondents, 1026(68.4%) rated the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities as moderate, while 220(14.7%) and 254(16.9%) rated it as low and high respectively. Hence, the level of provision of student support services in Nigerian university system was moderate. The result is graphically represented in Fig. 5.

**Table 4. Level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities**

Level of students support services	Type of institution					
	State		Federal		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low ( 6.00 – 10.76)	157	20.9	63	8.4	220	14.7
Moderate (10.77 – 18.66)	498	66.4	528	70.4	1026	68.4
High (18.66 - 24.00)	95	12.7	159	21.2	254	16.9
Total	750	100.0	750	100.0	1500	100.0



**Fig. 4. Provision of student support services in the state and federal universities**



**Table 5. Level of provision of student support services in Nigerian university system**

	F	%
Low (6.00-10.76)	220	14.7
Moderate (10.77-18.65)	1026	68.4
High (18.66-24.00)	254	16.9
Total	1500	100.0

**Table 6. Quality of Nigerian university education using employers' assessment**

Level	F	%
Low: Min – (X - SD) 10 – (28.34 – 7.32)	55	18.3
Moderate: 21.03 – 35.67	185	61.7
High: (X+ SD) – Max =(28.34 + 7.32) – 49	60	20.0
Total	300	100

*Adapted from Ibijola (2014), Open Journal of Education 2(3) pp 125*

### 3.4 Question 4: What is the Level of Quality of Nigerian University Education?

Table 6 above showed that 55(18.3%) of the respondents rated the quality of Nigerian university education as low, while 185(61.7%) and 60(20%) rated it as moderate and high respectively. This implied that the level of

quality of Nigerian university education was moderate.

## 4. TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

### 4.1 Hypothesis 1

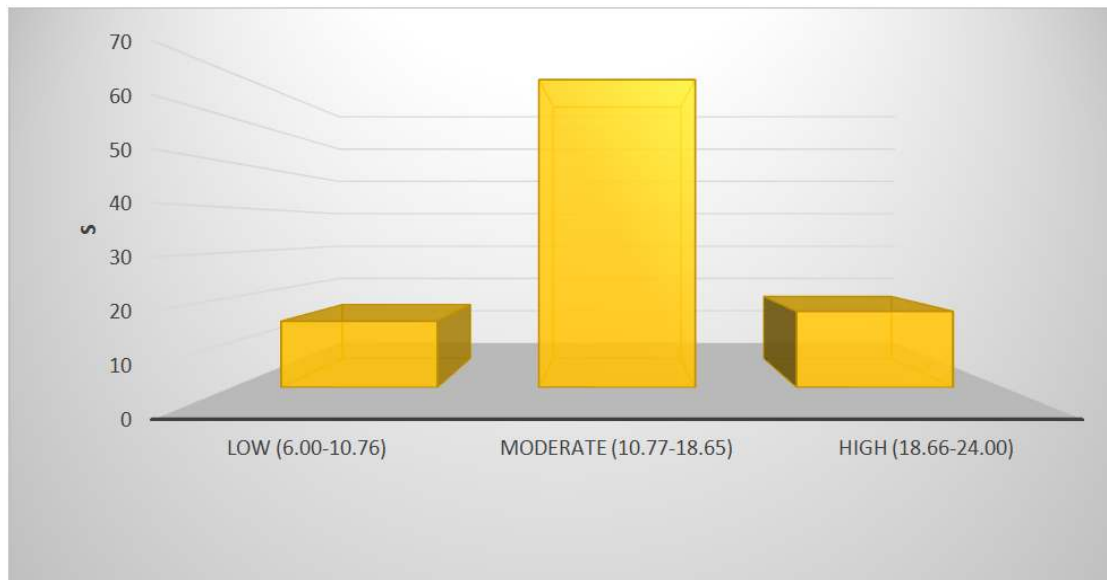
There is no significant difference between university staff and students' perception of student support services in Nigerian Universities.

In testing the hypothesis, the mean score of staff and students' perception on student support services in Nigerian universities were compared for statistical significance using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 7.

Table 7 revealed that the mean difference between the perception of students and staff on level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities was statistically significant at 0.05 level ( $t = 3.130, p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was significant difference between staff and students' perception of level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities.

### 4.2 Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities.



**Fig. 5. Level of provision of student support services in Nigerian university system**

In testing the hypothesis, the mean score of level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities were compared for statistical significance using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 8.

Table 8 revealed that there was significant difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities ( $t = 9.455$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there was significant difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities.

### 4.3 Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between the level of student support services and level of quality of university education.

In testing the hypothesis, the mean score on level of provision of student support services and level of quality of university education were compared for statistical significance using Pearson product correlation analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 9.

Table 9 showed that there was low, positive but significant, relationship between the level of provision of student support services and level of quality of university education ( $r = 0.258$ ,

$P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was significant relationship between the level of provision of student support services and level of quality of university education.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The study established a moderate level of provision of student support services in Nigerian universities with 68.4% of universities' staff and students' respondents adjudging the level of provision of student support services as moderate. The study also revealed that the provision of these services at the state and federal universities were also at a moderate level with 66.4% of state universities' respondents and 70.4% of federal universities' responding perceiving the level of provision of student support services as moderate. 70.7% of staff and 66.6% of the student respondents also adjudged the level of provision of student support services as moderate. These findings corroborated NUC [2] report of the inadequacy of relevant physical facilities and services in Nigerian universities.

The study revealed a significant difference between the staff and students' perception of student support services in Nigerian universities; and a significant difference between the level of provision of student support services in the state and federal universities. The significant difference established between the state and federal

**Table 7. t-test showing staff and students' perception of student support services in Nigerian universities**

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-table
Students	1200	14.87	4.07	1498	3.130*	1.960
Staff	300	14.08	3.36			

\* $P < 0.05$

**Table 8. t-test showing level of provision of student support services in federal and state universities**

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
State	750	13.78	4.03	1498	9.455	0.000
Federal	750	15.65	3.62			

$P < 0.05$

**Table 9. Pearson Correlation of student support services and quality of university education**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	P
Student support services	300	14.08	3.36	0.258	0.006
Quality of university education	300	33.50	8.78		

$P < 0.05$

universities might be due to the difference in ownership and the means of funding among others. The significant relationship established between the level of provision of student support services and the level of quality of university education corroborated Ibijola [6] submission that the quality of university education when viewed from the quality of inputs perspective comprises the quality of the admission processes, quality of staffing procedure, quality of facilities, quality of curriculum and quality of the student support services. Chinwuba [14] further corroborated this finding when he submitted that, decent and affordable students' hostels would contribute to better academic performance, catapulting Nigerian universities into the worldwide rankings. The finding also implied that an increase in the provision of student support services will yield a higher level of quality of university education. The finding also corroborated Ibijola [26], who concluded that quality can only be acquired when set standard is achieved, and that the success of the university system depends on how well the NUC is able to monitor and evaluate the provision of these educational inputs in which the student support services is inclusive. Dabesaki [8] also supported this finding when he posited that, poor customer service affects the delivery of quality education in Nigeria.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The moderate level of provision of student support services established in the study was an indication that these support services are not optimally provided in Nigerian universities. Also, the moderate level of provision of student support services and the corresponding moderate level of quality of university education established by the study, and the significant relationship established between the level of provision of student support services and the level of quality of university education were all indications that, these variables are directly dependent on each other. This implies that, where student support services are adequately provided, it would have a corresponding positive influence on quality of university education.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the established findings of the study, most especially the significant relationship established between the level of provision of student support services and the quality of university education, it was recommended that;

- i. The Nigerian universities must ensure that these support services are adequately provided in compliance with National Universities Commission (NUC) benchmark to enhance the quality of Nigerian university education.
- ii. The NUC should enforce the provision of these support services in Nigerian universities.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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