

Public-Private Partnerships and the Dynamics of Students Housing Supply at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Abdulateef Iyanda BAKO; Musa Yusuf JIMOH; Bukola Baheedoh MOSHOOD*; Rasheed Abiodun KURANGA

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Abuja, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: bukola.moshood@uniabuja.edu.ng 08103934571

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20478769>

Abstract

University of Ilorin, like many Nigerian universities is grappling with a mounting challenge in accommodating its burgeoning student population, which has currently surpasses 50,000. The resultant escalating demand for accommodation has consistently outpaces the available supply, resulting in overcrowded conditions and sub-standard living arrangements on campus. This pressing issue highlights the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to address the housing shortage and improve the overall living conditions for the University students. This study investigates the pivotal role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the delivery of students' housing in University of Ilorin by assessing the rationale behind the university's decision to engage in PPP arrangements for student housing. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing interviews as the primary data collection method, to delve into the critical role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in addressing the student housing challenges faced by the students. Qualitative interviews with key stakeholders revealed essential insights into the dynamics of PPP-driven student housing at the University of Ilorin. The study revealed that the University's decision to adopt PPP arrangements for student housing was largely influenced by inadequate financial allocations from the Federal Government. Consequently, the partnership under the Build, Operate, and Transfer (BOT) model emerged as a viable strategy to bridge the substantial demand-supply deficit. The study concludes that Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) have significantly contributed to expanding student housing capacity at the University of Ilorin, although a gap between accommodation demand and supply still exists. To address the housing deficit and improve the student housing experience, the study recommends continued engagement in PPP arrangements to enhance housing capacity, prioritization of vulnerable student groups, and greater attention to housing quality and affordability. The study further emphasizes the importance of long-term planning, sustainability, and stronger engagement with the local community in addressing student accommodation challenges.

Keywords: *Public-Private Partnership; Students' Housing; Build, Operate, and Transfer (BOT); University of Ilorin*

1. Introduction and Background to the Study

Housing is a fundamental human requirement that provides security, privacy, and personal identification, which significantly affects the health of a community, its efficiency, and social well-being (Adama *et al.*, 2018). However, housing inadequacy is a worldwide challenge despite its importance because of population increase and rural-urban migration and natural calamities (Raheem and Jimoh, 2019). This problem can be found not only in cities but also in such institutions as universities where the housing requirements of students are frequently not fulfilled.

Within the academic sector, housing becomes a pressing need especially in the tertiary institutions where students pursue academic excellence. Research indicates that there is a high level of housing inefficiency and discontent among the students, particularly in the Nigerian state-owned schools (Ajayi *et al.*, 2015; Akinpelu, 2015; Adama *et al.*, 2018). The increase in student population in the public universities, however, has led to involvement of the private sector due to the reduction in government funding for student accommodation and over 70-80 percent of students in tertiary institutions live in the private premises. Although the involvement of the extensive private sector is well-developed, their impact in the campus setting is under-researched (Ghani, *et al.*, 2018). This deficiency is particularly pronounced at the University of Ilorin where a number of students depend on off-campus accommodation that in most cases is privately owned and thus presents other challenges like higher rents, transportation problems and security dilemmas.

To overcome these challenges, the University of Ilorin has embraced Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) as a strategic solution to the increased need of student accommodation. It was made under the influence of various factors, such as the constant increase in the number of students and the insufficiency of the available housing facilities to cover the needs (Ghani,

et al., 2018; Ogunyemi, 2022). Also, the declining capital investments in federal universities in Nigeria have also led to the need to use alternative funding sources to develop infrastructure (Adama *et al.*, 2018). In 2004, the Federal Government gave directives to tertiary institutions to embrace the involvement of the private sector in the provision of student accommodation. In 2006, PPP as a policy requiring new hostels to be built was introduced (Utile, 2024).

Nonetheless, despite the active role of the private sector, there are still difficulties, in particular, with the affordability of the commercial accommodations and the necessity to provide constant control over the quality and accessibility of all students. Therefore, the current study explores the contributions made by the university management and the private sector in such alliances, specifically in accommodation facilities and room quality. It also aims at determining the capacity of the university owned hostels, as well as the total number of bed-spreads offered by the university owned and the PPP constructed hostels. In addition, the paper focuses on the connection between the demand and supply side of accommodation among students and determines the challenges related to PPP arrangement in student housing provision at the University of Ilorin.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, focusing on interviews as the primary method of data collection. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in student housing provision at the University of Ilorin. By engaging in qualitative inquiry, the study aims to explore and analyze the constructs and experiences related to PPP arrangements in a nuanced and detailed manner.

Primary data were gathered by interviewing the key stakeholders such as hostel developers, porters, Works Department, and the Unit of Student Affairs. These interviews gave some information on the different dimensions of the PPP arrangements like the number of beds available in the hostels, the distribution of the bed spaces depending on gender, and general occupancy of students. The secondary data were obtained through: institutional reports of the University of Ilorin (reports of the Physical Planning Unit and Student Affairs Division), and dissertations. These documents were used in conjunction with the primary data, but

they added background to the analysis.

Interviews were conducted using structured interview guides designed to address the specified research objectives comprehensively. These guides included questions designed to elicit detailed responses on the rationale behind PPP adoption, hostel management practices, student characteristics, and the challenges associated with PPP arrangements. The interviews were conducted using manual note-taking and digital recording with a smartphone voice recorder, after which the recordings were transcribed and analyzed thematically. This thematic analysis focused on identifying key themes and categories emerging from participant responses, providing a rich understanding of the issues under investigation.

The sample frame consisted of hostels built through PPP arrangements, with thirty-six (36) of such hostels identified through a reconnaissance survey. Data collection involved engaging with various stakeholders, including the Student Affairs Unit, Physical Planning Unit, hostel managers, and students. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved identifying and categorizing key themes that emerged from participant responses. This process included: Coding the interview transcripts to highlight significant quotes and insights. Grouping related codes into broader themes, such as the rationale for PPP arrangements, roles played by the partners, accommodation standards, and challenges faced by students. The interpretation of these themes provides a comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding student housing provision through Public-Private Partnerships at the University of Ilorin.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Roles of the School Management and Private Sector

Being one of the main goals of the current study, the roles of the university management and the partners of the university in the PPP arrangements were explored. Interpretation of interviews with the key stakeholders who were interviewed, such as the representatives of the Student Affairs Unit, the hostel developers, and the University management show that each of the parties had different responsibilities they played in the partnership. The PPP scheme used in the University of Ilorin is based on the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) scheme. This system places the responsibility of funding, designing, building, maintaining and running the projects of hostels in the hands of the private developers in the rest of the conces-

sion period (twenty one academic session leasehold), and the ownership will be handed over to the University at the end of the concession period. The Physical Planning Unit (PPU) of the university manages the project

development and provides the description of the deliverables the project is expected to have and, at the same time, it provides a reference framework through the project lifecycle.

Table 1: Roles of the School Management and Private Sector

School Management	Private Organization
Provision of land	Comply with building and planning regulations in the design and construction of the hostels
Power supply and Accessibility	Undertake the design and physical construction of the hostel units
Sets the target	Funding the construction work
Supervision and Monitoring	Advertise and marketing of the completed hostel units
Set minimum standard and ensure compliance	Management and Maintenance of the hostels
Provision of Legal and Economic Policy Frameworks	Set the prices of hostel units
Awareness creation and Marketing of the completed hostels	

Source: Authors' Computation (2023)

The involvement of the university in such PPP arrangements is quite complex, including the supply of land, regulation, and compliance with building standards. The design, construction, funding, and management of hostel projects are carried out by the private sector associates. Although the private organization is free to determine the prices of the housing units, they are agreed with the university management to make them affordable and sustainable. In addition, the profitability margin that enables the participation of private developers is an essential stimulus that would enable them to remain in the PPP arrangements. This margin is settled in the stage of negotiation and guarantees the developers the opportunity to retrieve their investments and receive profits within the frame of the concessions. The PPP model ensures sustainability of the partnership by providing a reasonable ROI that keeps the developers interested and committed in the initial construction as well as the sustainability of the hostels maintenance. Table 1 summarizes the roles outlined between the university management and the partners in the private sector.

3.2 Accommodation Provision and Room Standards

According to interviews held and data received at the Physical Planning Unit of the University, and as sum-

marized in Table 2, it is clear that, currently, there are thirty-six (36) hostels that are built under PPP arrangement. The hostels built using PPP have varying number of rooms ranging between 6 and 180 rooms. Based on the hostels and bed space, it is estimated that there are at least 2,000 habitable rooms which were provided by PPP. The total number of bed spaces offered by these hostels is 9,701 to serve both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and serve the male and female population. It is important to note that male hostels form about one third (10) of the overall hostels that have been set up under the PPP arrangement. In terms of bed space capacity, the ASUU Hostel has the smallest capacity, accommodating 40 bed spaces, whereas the Arafims Hostel has the largest capacity, providing 720 bed spaces. It means that the PPP arrangements would support the accommodation requirements of 9,701 students in the University. Moreover, as per the information provided by the Physical Planning Unit of the University three more hostels (all female) are undergoing construction. These are Karistec Hostel, Strasborg Int. Plc and Albanic Nig. Ltd Hostel 2.

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the PPP-built hostels. The table shows that PPP arrangements have provided various types of hostel accommodation offering diversification of choices to students. The difference in room capacities is linked to the attempts to accommodate students with different needs, but the existing overcrowding in larger hostels is also a possible issue. This can be attributed to the previous findings that

Table 2: Characteristics of PPP Hostels

S/N	Name of Hostel	Numbers of Bed Spaces	Gender
1.	Scientific Co-operative	90	Female
2.	Sasakawa	88	Female
3.	Probitas Co-operative	100	Female
4.	ASUU	40	Female
5.	Union Co-operative	100	Female
6.	Academic Co-operative	80	Female
7.	Micheal	258	Female
8.	Kam Abioye	234	Female
9.	Robiat Ajike	202	Female
10.	El-Mubarak	214	Female
11.	Edge Contracting	86	Female
12.	Gulf Pearl Nig. Ltd	316	Female
13.	Arafims Hostel	720	Male
14.	Rubiks System	264	Female
15.	Hawa Hostel	320	Female
16.	Albanic Nig. Ltd	200	Female
17.	Synergy Hostel	240	Female
18.	Pyramid Nig. Ltd	252	Male
19.	Sandakata Hostel (Primrose Hostel)	240	Female
20.	Bumok Hostel for PG students	108	Female
21.	Unilorin Healthcare	200	Male
22.	Ibidun Hostel	268	Female
23.	Arafims 2 Hostel	520	Male
24.	Al-Muttawwakil	240	Female
25.	Takleema Hostel	259	Male
26.	Isalu Property Hostel (Sanusi)	320	Male
27.	Al-Bishar/Zapel Hostel	264	Male
28.	Atlantic Height Hostel	512	Female
29.	Easy and Quiet Hostel (COHS)	312	Male
30.	Easy and Quiet Hostel (COHS)	312	Female
31.	Bethany Hostel	216	Female
32.	Queens (Las Vegas) Hostel	550	Female
33.	Interfem Hostel	412	Male
34.	Isalu Edu Hostel (Sanusi 2)	320	Male
35.	Shayasi Hostel	220	Female
36.	Easy and Quiet Hostel (Main Campus)	624	Female

Source: Physical Planning Unit, University of Ilorin, 2023

even the private projects can have issues related to optimal room density and quality (Ajayi *et al.*, 2015; Akinpelu, 2015).

3.3 Number of Students Accommodated by University-Owned Hostels

According to results presented in Table 3, the University-owned hostels provide a total of 3,154 bed spaces. Among these, Lagos Village I and II offer the highest number of bed spaces at 880 (27.9%) each. Trunil hostel provides 240 bed spaces, accounting for 7.61% of the university's total bed space allocation. Compared to PPP hostels, university-owned hostels

charge lower rents, ranging between ₦28,000 and ₦35,000 per session, making them more affordable for students with limited financial capacity.

Despite accounting for only 24.54% of total bed spaces, university-owned hostels remain crucial for maintaining affordability and social equity in student housing. The rent differential with PPP hostels highlights the tension between cost recovery for private developers and access for financially constrained students (Owotemu *et al.*, 2022).

Name of Hostel	Gender	No of Bed space	%No of Bed space
Village I (Lagos)	Male	880	27.90%
Village II (Lagos)	Female	880	27.90%
Village III (Abuja and Kwara)	Female	434	13.76%
Village IV (Zamfara)	Female	720	22.83%
Village V (Trunil)	Female	240	7.61%
Total		3154	100.00%

Source: Authors' Field Work, 2023

3.4 Total Number of Bed Spaces Provided by Both University-Owned and PPP-Built Hostels

Table 4 reveals that the total number of bed spaces available at the University of Ilorin is 12,855. This indicates the university's capacity to accommodate 12,855 students across its campuses with the assistance of private sector partnerships. The student housing constructed through PPP contributes 75.46% of the available bed space, while University-owned hostels contribute 24.54%.

This confirms the growing reliance on private sector participation in infrastructure delivery within Nigerian public universities. The dominance of PPP-built accommodation aligns with the observations of Ahmed *et al.* (2023) and Adama *et al.* (2018), who noted that public universities increasingly depend on private capital due to inadequate government funding for housing infrastructure.

Table 4: Total Number of Bed Spaces Provided by Both University-Owned and PPP-Built Hostels

Hostel Type	No of Bed Spaces	%No of Bed spaces
PPP Hostel	9701	75.46%
University-owned Hostel	3154	24.54%
Total	12855	100.00%

Source: Authors' Field Work, 2023

3.5 Relationship between Students' Accommodation Demand and Supply

In order to determine the relationship between the demand and supply of hostel accommodation in the study area, it is important to define the demand and supply of hostel accommodation. The demand of hostel accommodation is the total number of students

requiring to be accommodated. Although the 2022/2023 academic session saw almost 50,000 students admitted in the institution (Unilorin Bulletin, 2023), not all students are supposed to stay in the school hostels.

The demand in hostel accommodation was taken to be 33% of the total population of students to

use in this study. This percentage is pegged on the policy, which was enforced in the 1980s, after the instituting of second generation universities in 1975 which led to the cutback in funding allocation to the universities. This policy required universities to offer accommodation to 33 percent of the overall number of students attending the university (Olanrewaju, *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the number of students who will require hostel accommodation is given as 33 per cent out of 50,000 students, which will be 16500 students.

Hostel accommodation delivered through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements represents the aggregate number of bed spaces provided under such initiatives. In this case, PPP schemes account for 9,701 bed spaces. When combined with institution-owned hostels, the total available accommodation capacity amounts to 12,855 bed spaces.

Table 4: Demand and Supply of Students' Accommodation

Variable	Count
Total number of Students	50000
% to be Accommodated	33.00%
Number of Students to be Accommodated	16500 (33% of 50000)
No of Students Accommodated	12855
% Accommodated	25.71%
Supply-Demand Gap	3645 (16500 - 12855)
% Shortfall	22.09%
% of Demand Met	77.91%

3.6 Challenges Associated with PPP Arrangements in Students' Housing Provision

Based on the interviews with hostel managers, developers, and students, some key challenges related to PPP arrangements in student housing provision were as follows: first is inconsistency in government policies as the changes or instability in regulations has been a major factor in funding and implementation of these projects. The respondents pointed out that such policy changes hinder the acquisition of long term funding both as educational institution and the privatized partners.

However, as indicated in Table 4 on hostel accommodation supply and demand, a deficit of 3,645 bed spaces persists, demonstrating that existing provision falls short of student demand. Consequently, only 77.91% of the total accommodation requirement is currently met.

These figures suggest that while PPP initiatives have substantially enhanced overall accommodation capacity, they have not fully resolved the housing shortfall. This finding aligns with the observations of Olanrewaju *et al.* (2022), who argue that the policy benchmark of 33% accommodation provision remains inadequate in the face of rapidly expanding student enrolment in Nigerian universities. Thus, PPP interventions appear to function more as a mitigating mechanism than a comprehensive solution to the accommodation deficit.

Source: Authors' Field Work, 2023

Financial viability is another common problem as has been indicated in the interviews. There is also the fear that the PPP projects might not be sustainable financially in the long-run because of fluctuation in student enrolment, changes in school fees and increases in the cost of operations. This confusion makes it even harder to sustain PPP initiatives in the long run.

Another common problem brought about by the students was the more expensive price of renting in PPP-built hostels compared to the school-owned ones. The average rent of PPP constructed hostels ranged between N75,000 and N290,000 per bed space in a session, while the school owned hostels were much lower ranging between N28,000 and N35,000. Such difference imposes financial burden on students who are already struggling with financial problems.

Lastly, the students complained about their non-inclusion in the decision making processes on the running of the hostels. This non inclusion slows down prompt and adequate maintenance of facilities and services. Besides that, lack of Wi-Fi in certain PPP hostels only made the matters worse and especially in accessing academic resources and communication among the students.

Based on the results, affordability became one of the central issues as the PPP hostel rent is much more expensive in comparison to the university owned hostels. This observation aligns with the findings of Owotemu *et al.* (2022) who found that PPP housing schemes in Nigeria are frequently driven by cost recovery and profitability. The increased rental rates represent the necessity of profit-making among private developers to make up the capital investments during the periods of concession, which supports the conflict between economic feasibility and social fairness when establishing PPP.

The problem with overcrowding and non-observance of the minimum standards is a reflection of the previous research on the quality of student housing in Nigerian universities. Indicatively, Ajayi *et al.*, (2015) and Akinpelu (2015) reported that students were not satisfied with the hostel facilities especially room density and the maintenance of facilities. The current paper builds on this discussion by showing that even privately funded hostels cannot get off regulatory and quality issues particularly in areas that have poor monitoring system.

In addition, issues of governance especially discrepancies in policy formulation and low student involvement in the management decision-making process demonstrate the structural weaknesses in PPP implementation frameworks. This conclusion can be substantiated by the argument of Raheem and Jimoh (2019), who stated that institutional coordination and regulatory clarity are the key factors to effective housing management in Nigerian universities.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed how Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have contributed to the issue of student housing provision in the University of Ilorin. The results indicate that the PPP arrangements, especially on Build Operate Transfer (BOT) model, have greatly increased the accommodation capacity providing well over three quarters of the available bed spaces in the university. This goes to illustrate the fact that PPP has taken over as the student housing delivery mechanism within the institution.

Nevertheless, even with the significant role played by PPP in housing supply in the universities, there is still a long-term demand-supply gap. The analysis also indicates that although PPP enhances the provision of infrastructure, it poses serious issues in terms of affordability, regulatory adherence, and student involvement in running of hostels. The increased rental rates in the PPP constructed hostels relative to the university owned ones imply a conflict between financial feasibility and social justice agendas. Therefore, PPP in the student housing is not a holistic solution to the accommodation problems, but a supply-enhancing approach.

From a policy and planning perspective, this study brings to the discussion the topic of alternative infrastructure funding in tertiary institutions of learning in developing economies. It emphasizes the necessity to strike a balance between efficiency and profitability and accessibility in PPP-based housing plans.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The university management should enhance monitoring mechanisms to ensure strict compliance with approved room standards, occupancy limits, and facility maintenance requirements.
2. A structured rent regulation or cost-benchmarking framework should be introduced to prevent excessive rental charges and protect economically vulnerable students.
3. Priority allocation policies should be developed for first-year students, physically challenged students, and other vulnerable groups to promote equity in access to on-campus housing.
4. The university should continue to invest in renovating and expanding university-owned hostels to reduce over-dependence on private developers.
5. Mechanisms should be established to incorporate student feedback into hostel management decisions to improve service delivery and responsiveness.
6. Future PPP agreements should integrate enrolment projections, sustainability standards, and risk-sharing frameworks to ensure long-term viability.

REFERENCES

- Adama, J. U., Aghimien, D. O., and Fabunmi, C. O. (2018). Students' Housing in Private Universities in Nigeria: Influencing Factors and Effect on Academic Performance. *International Journal of Built Environment And Sustainability*, 5(1), 12-20. <https://doi.org/10.11113/ijbes.v5.n1.242>
- Ahmed, Y., Dogara, M. U., and Saleh, A. (2023). Public Private Partnership Model for Affordable Housing Provision in Nigeria. *Journal of Engineering, Computational and Applied Sciences (JECAS)*, 6 (01). <https://journals.gjbeacademia.com/index.php/jecas/article/view/259>
- Ajayi, M., Nwosu, A., and Ajani, Y. (2015). Students' Satisfaction with Hostel Facilities in Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(34), 402-415. <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/6739>
- Akinpelu, O. P. (2015). Students' Assessment of Hostel Facilities in the Polytechnic Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria: Realities and Challenges. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(17), 74-81. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/view/26068>
- Ghani, Z.A., Sulaiman, N. and Mohammed, M.I., 2018. Student housing a resilient housing rental market: Case of Federal Polytechnic neighbourhood Bauchi, Nigeria. *Traektoriâ Nauki = Path of Science*, 4(3), pp.4008. <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.32-7>
- Oladimeji, S. B., Joseph, O. P., Suleiman, A. R., and Alomaja, J. A. (2021). Causes and Effects of Abandoned Build-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT) Hostel Building Projects in Public Universities: A Case Study of University of Ilorin, Nigeria. *Adeleke University Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 4(2), 119 -125. <https://aujet.adelekeuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/aujet/article/download/228/156/>
- Olanrewaju, S., Garba, G. and Onigbogi, O., 2022. A Review on Students' Housing in Nigerian Universities. *LAUTECH Journal of Civil and Environmental Studies*, 9(1), 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.36108/laujoces/2202.90.0150>
- Owolabi, B. O. (2015). The Effects of Students' Housing on Academic Performance at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, 1118 - 1132 6 (3), 1118 - 1132.
- Owotemu, A. E., Daniel, C. O., and Abubakar, H. S. (2022). Evaluating the Management of Public Private Partnerships for the Provision of Affordable Housing in Nigeria. *Journal of Service Science and Management*, 5(4), 392-415.
- Raheem, W. M., and Jimoh, M. Y. (2019). Challenges of Students' Off-campus Housing in Nigerian Universities: The University of Ilorin Experience. *International Journal of Environmental Studies and Sustainability*, 40-55. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288839091_CHALLENGES_OF_STUDENTS'_OFF-CAMPUS_HOUSING_IN_NIGERIAN_UNIVERSITIES_THE_UNIVERSITY_OF_ILORIN_EXPERIENCE
- Unilorin Bulletin, 2023. Facility Managers of University Hostels. *Unilorin Bulletin*, 11 June.
- Utile, T. (2024). Student Hostel Accommodation Challenge in Nigerian Universities and the Public-Private Partnership Option. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*(31), 527-540.