

Personal Hostel Space Management Practices of Students: Case Study of Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State

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Abstract

This study focused on personal hostel space (PHS) management practices of students in Delta State University, Abraka as a case study. Specifically, it determined: factors that influence students' management of their personal hostel space, guidelines students adopt in planning their PHS; ways students arrange their PHS; challenges students encounter; and ways students could enhance management of their PHS. The study adopted survey research design. Population for the study was made up of 3,230 students from six university hostels. Instrument for data collection was a 4-point structured questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyse data. Findings reveal nine factors that influence students' management of their PHSs, including, home environment and background ($\bar{X} = 3.49$, $SD = 0.77$), etc; nine guidelines students can adopt in planning their PHS, including, setting a regular cleaning schedule record ($\bar{X} = 3.66$, $SD = 0.63$), and others. ($\bar{X} = 3.34$, $SD = 0.64$). Other findings are nine ways hostel space should be arranged including positioning the bed, table, and cupboards for easy movement ($\bar{X} = 3.55$, $SD = 0.59$), and so on. 14 challenges (physical, health and social challenges) students encounter in managing their PHS and eight ways students could enhance management of their PHSs, including, arranging belongings neatly ($\bar{X} = 3.25$, $SD = 0.62$), maximizing limited space to reduce congestion ($\bar{X} = 3.18$, $SD = 0.71$), among others. Based on the findings, six recommendations were including among others that students should come to hostels with only essential and functional materials in order to reduce cluttering and that they should cooperate with roommates to ensure cleanliness of their hostel living space.

Keywords: Hostel, Living, Space, Clutter, Declutter, Management, Practices, Students, University.

Introduction

Suitable hostel accommodation is a major requirement that can facilitate academic learning in tertiary institutions. Hostels are buildings designed for students to live in after payment has been made to the school authority to acquire it as their personal hostel space. Personal hostel

space is a living space that provides accommodation for each student. Students are allocated to a room with bed space. The personal hostel space affects the social, economic and moral wellbeing of the students and their academic performance. Hostel space is also viewed as a place where students experience a

sense of belonging by enjoying the sensation of homeliness (Lim & Aminuddin, 2019). Students develop a sense of friendship, learn the value of discipline, study with full concentration and inculcate neatness and healthful living practices (Tayo & Omotosho, 2021). However, the rise in population has indeed led to various problematic conditions for students which range from inadequate infrastructure facilities, to overcrowding resulting, to the unhygienic state of their personal hostel living space (Tayo & Omotosho, 2021).

Overcrowding in the hostel has become a big challenge because a room which is meant and structurally designed for two persons now accommodates eight to 12 students (Usman, 2021). This is because student's population is rapidly increasing, while the infrastructural amenities are not increasing, rather they are in deplorable states, and are overcrowded. In the addition, many students living in their personal hostel spaces have become too materialistic. Materialistic people consider things to be very important to them and they spend much money acquiring things for different reasons which include functional purpose (utility), social status, and emotional attachment (Kazuzuru, 2020). Has been reported that people engage in acquiring material possessions in an attempt to express self-identity, increase happiness, and overcome social exclusion (Hicks, 2020). Also, in a society that celebrates the acquisition of material possessions as a means of success, the accumulation of irrelevant possession is inevitable. Over consumption of material possession and difficulty in parting with them, even when the items no longer serve

the intended purposes, result in accumulation of clutter.

Clutter is anything that is untidy and messy in a space such as items that are no longer useful and items that are placed in the wrong place in the home. A cluttered living space is basically a living environment that is filled with excessive possessions often making the space crowded, disorganized, and making it difficult to move around (Chrissy (2024). It has been observed that most young adults appear to be materialistic. This is because they take pride in acquiring lots of personal possessions (Hicks, 2020). They also have the habit of not giving out old properties that they don't have need of or have become obsolete, as they move with the trend of technology to acquire the latest version of such items (Kazuzuru, 2020). There is also, the pressure to keep up with friends which may influence their need to acquire more new items as well as persistent delay in decision making (Marrison, 2020), particularly in carrying out housekeeping tasks when they move into school hostel. This makes their personal living space in the hostel overcrowded, lack sense of aesthetic coherence and organization. (Molly, 2019).

A disorganized and untidy living space causes anxiety, stress and depression. Also, it can be difficult to find what one needs when things are disorganized and not properly kept, which waste valuable time. Lack of organization in putting things in their right places in the hostels, can lead to cluttered living space resulting to poor personal hostel space management (Molly, 2019). Poor personal hostel space management can cause strained relationship when one's bed space partner is not comfortable with it. A poorly

managed hostel space may result in various negative consequences on a student's health and physical well-being. Due to the tight academic programmes which takes much time or lack of awareness of the effect of it, students may neglect keeping up with the need to clean and organize their personal hostel space. This causes dust and dirt to accumulate in the room, making it untidy and stuffy, which may be detrimental to the students' physical and mental health (Rebecca, 2020).

Mental health issues including depression, anxiety, allergens, respirator issues, headache and sleep problems are associated with poor hostel space management (Sander, 2019). It was reported that poor personal hostel space management drains the brain cognitive resources, thereby reducing its ability to focus, and that people who sleep in poorly managed space are likely to encounter difficulty falling asleep (Stumpf et al., 2018)). Poorly managed hostel space may hinder hostel cleaning and makes cleaning task difficult. This can result to build -up of dust, dirt and allergens in the space and students who are allergic to dust may get symptoms like sneezing, wheezing and itching of eyes (Rebecca, 2020). According to Yeasmin (2023) poorly managed hostel space may also hinder opportunity for walking and exercise, which can result in the risk of cardiovascular diseases and other problems.

In Delta State University, student hostels are always cluttered with items not needed in the hostels. Also, there exist limited personal space resulting to disorganization and chaotic hostel environment. Many students share small rooms with multiple roommates, leaving little space for storing personal

belongings. This is further constrained by inadequate hostel infrastructure and overcrowding of personal hostel space. Therefore, the need for decluttering. Hence, the study on personal hostel space management practices of the students: case study of Delta State University.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on personal hostel space (PHS) management practices of students in Delta State University, Abraka. Specifically, the study determined:

1. factors that influence students' management of their PHSs.
2. guidelines students adopt in planning their PHSs.
3. ways students arrange their personal PHSs.
4. challenges students encounter in managing their PHSs.
5. ways students could effectively enhance management of their PHSs.

Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students at 0.05 level of significance on:

- HO₁:** factors that influence students' management of their personal hostel living space.
- HO₂:** T guidelines students adopt in planning their personal hostel living space
- HO₃:** ways students arrange their personal hostel living space.
- HO₄:** challenges students encounter in managing their personal hostel living space.
- HO₅:** ways students could enhance management of their personal hostel living space.

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study was a descriptive survey.

Area of the study: The area of the study was Delta State. The study was carried out in University, Abraka in Ethiope East Local Government Area in Delta State, Nigeria. There are six student hostels owned by the school authority.

Population for the Study: The population for the study consists of 3,230 students (Students Affairs Office, June 2025). This comprised all the male and female students residing in the school hostels in Delta State University, Abraka comprising of Ethiope Hostel – 650 (all females); Council Hall hostel – 400 (all females), EcoBank Hostel – 640 (mixed gender); NDDC Hostel – 800 (all females), Abraka Hall hostel – 420 (all males), and Medical Hostel – 320 (mixed gender). The total population is 1, 130 males and 2, 100 females which gave a total population of 3,230 students residing in the school hostels.

Sample for the Study: The sample size for the study was 313 students. Multistage sampling technique was utilized for the study. In the first stage, three hostels; one male hostel (420); one female (650); and one mixed hostel (male and female 640) was selected out of the six hostels. In the second stage, systematic random sampling technique was then used to select every 5th person from each of the hostel registers. The sample size comprised of 177 females and 136 males. This gave a grand total sample size of 313 students.

Instrument for Data collection: Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire made up of two sections. It was developed based on literature review and purposes of the

study. Section one focused on demographic data of the respondents. Section two of the questionnaire comprised of four sections A-D, constructed on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1), based on the specific purposes of the study.

The instrument was validated by three university experts in Home Economics education. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study using 30 students in the medical hostel, who were part of the population but not sampled for the study. Using the test-retest method, the instrument was administered on the same students twice, within an interval of two weeks. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The instrument had a coefficient of 0.88.

Method of Data Collection: A total of 313 copies of questionnaires (177 females and 136 males) were administered to the students by hand through the hall porter in each of the selected hostels. All the 313 copies questionnaire (176 female and male 136) were returned except one copy which gave a high return rate of 99.7 percent.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used for testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for results obtained from research questions was 2.50. Therefore, any item with a mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 2.50 and above was regarded as “agreed” and a mean ($\bar{X}$) score below 2.50 indicated “Disagreed”. The null hypotheses of no significant difference were accepted if P- values were greater than 0.05 level of significance while hypotheses of no significant difference

was rejected if P – value were less than 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation and t-test Results on Factors that Influences Students Management of their Hostel Space.

S/N	Factors	$\bar{X}_1$	SD_1	$\bar{X}_2$	SD_2	$\bar{X}_g$	t	R
1	Access to cleaning materials	3.17	0.84	3.02	0.84	3.10	1.541	NS
2	Financial ability to purchase cleaning materials	2.57	0.97	3.10	0.90	2.84	-4.955	S
3	Students' knowledge and awareness	2.97	0.90	2.82	0.89	2.90	1.463	NS
4	Available facilities (furniture, water, waste disposal system etc)	3.34	0.62	3.24	0.61	3.29	1.437	NS
5	Academic workload	3.03	0.96	2.91	0.96	2.97	1.077	NS
6	Hostel rules and regulations can motivate students	3.21	0.91	3.02	0.68	3.12	2.033	S
7	Peer influence	3.33	0.69	3.10	0.67	3.22	2.917	S
8	Home environment and background	3.66	0.64	3.32	0.89	3.49	3.837	S
9	Personal habits and self-discipline	3.47	0.54	3.44	0.60	3.46	0.462	NS

N₁: Number of Female Students = (176); N₂: Number of male Students= (136); $\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of Female Students; SD_1 = Standard Deviation Female Students; $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of Male Students; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Male Students; $\bar{X}_g$ = Grand Mean; t = t-test Results; R = Remarks; p= 0.05 Degree of freedom (Df) = 310

Table 1 shows the mean responses of male and female students on factors that influences management of their hostel space. The values of the grand mean range from 2.84 to 3.49. These values were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items were factors influencing management of student hostel space. Independent samples t-tests revealed

statistically significant gender differences for 4 items ($t(310) = -4.96, 2.03, 2.92$, and 3.84) respectively, $p < .05$. No statistically significant gender differences were observed for the remaining five factors ($p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant differences was upheld for each item except for four items.

Table 2: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation and t-test Results on Guidelines Adopted in Managing Hostel Space.

S/N	Factors	$\bar{X}_1$	SD_1	$\bar{X}_2$	SD_2	$\bar{X}_g$	t	R
1	Arrange furniture to allow easy movement	3.44	0.63	3.24	0.64	3.34	2.74	S
2	Keep frequently used items within reach	3.20	0.72	2.96	0.73	3.08	2.90	S
3	Keep only necessary items to avoid cluttering	3.41	0.58	3.25	0.59	3.33	2.41	S
4	Storing items in bags, shelves, cupboard and under bed	3.36	0.69	3.16	0.70	3.26	2.54	S

Table 2 Continues

5	Grouping and labelling items	3.39	0.96	3.19	0.97	3.29	1.82	NS
6	Setting regular cleaning schedule	3.72	0.62	3.60	0.63	3.66	1.69	NS
7	Disposing waste regularly	3.26	0.87	3.06	0.88	3.16	2.01	S
8	Have rules for cleaning, noise level among roommates	2.96	0.98	2.70	0.88	2.83	2.46	S
9	Safety considerations to prevent accident	2.76	0.78	2.65	0.86	2.71	1.81	NS

N_1 : Number of Female Students = (176); N_2 : Number of male Students = (136); $\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of Female Students; SD_1 = Standard Deviation Female Students; $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of Male Students; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Male Students; $\bar{X}_g$ = Grand Mean; t = t -test Results; R = Remarks; $p = 0.05$ Degree of freedom (Df) = 310

Table 2 shows the responses of male and female students on guidelines adopted in managing hostel space. The values of the grand mean range from 2.71 to 3.66. These values were above the criterion of 2.50 indicating that all the items were guidelines adopted in managing hostel space. The independent samples t -test

revealed statistically significant gender differences in six items (1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8). However, no statistically significant gender differences were observed for three items (5, 6 and 9). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant differences was upheld for each of the three items except for five items.

Table 3: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation and T-test Results on Ways Students Should Arrange their Personal Hostel Space

S/N	Factors	$\bar{X}_1$	SD_1	$\bar{X}_2$	SD_2	$\bar{X}_g$	t	R
1	Arranging clothes properly by folding or hanging	3.62	0.59	3.46	0.60	3.54	2.37	S
2	Use laundry bag for dirty clothes to avoid clutter	3.25	0.79	3.05	0.80	3.15	2.21	S
3	Position bed, table and cupboards for easy movement	3.63	0.58	3.47	0.59	3.55	2.42	S
4	Storing items in bags, shelves, cupboard and under bed	3.61	0.52	3.45	0.53	3.53	2.67	S
5	Keep bed neat and use under bed space for storage	3.47	0.61	3.27	0.62	3.37	2.83	S
6	Arrange books neatly on desk/shelve	3.42	0.53	3.22	0.54	3.32	3.27	S
7	Keep unnecessary items away from floor and table	3.50	0.43	3.32	0.44	3.41	3.64	S
8	Use wall space) hooks, small racks etc) to free floor space	3.41	0.50	3.21	0.51	3.31	3.45	S
9	Limit decorations on the walls	3.60	0.52	3.44	0.53	3.52	2.67	S

N_1 : Number of Female Students = (176); N_2 : Number of male Students = (136); $\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of Female Students; SD_1 = Standard Deviation Female Students; $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of Male Students; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Male Students; $\bar{X}_g$ = Grand Mean; t = t -test Results; R = Remarks; $p = 0.05$ Degree of freedom (Df) = 310

Table 3 shows the responses of male and female students on ways students should arrange their personal hostel space. The

values of the grand mean range from 3.15 to 3.55. These values were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that all

the items were ways students should arrange their hostel space. The independent-samples *t*-test revealed statistically significant gender differences in all the items. These findings indicate

that male and female students differed significantly in their perceptions regarding all the identified ways of arranging personal hostel space.

Table 4: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation and t-test Results on Challenges Students Encounter in Managing Their Personal Hostel Space

S/N	Factors	$\bar{X}_1$	SD_1	$\bar{X}_2$	SD_2	$\bar{X}_g$	t	R
Physical Challenge								
1	Inadequate storage facilities	3.59	0.53	3.43	0.54	3.51	2.66	S
2	Overcrowding and congestion of rooms	3.35	0.47	3.19	0.48	3.27	2.96	S
3	Limited hostel space	3.40	0.53	3.24	0.54	3.32	2.66	S
4	Poor ventilation and lighting	3.69	0.47	3.53	0.48	3.61	2.96	S
5	Pest infestation	3.51	0.37	3.34	0.38	3.43	4.03	S
6	Weak enforcement of rules and regulations	3.31	0.52	3.27	0.49	3.29	0.70	NS
Health Challenge								
7	Fatigue, depression and stress	3.37	0.69	3.35	0.47	3.36	0.31	NS
8	Sleep problem	3.26	0.63	3.21	0.51	3.24	0.77	NS
9	Inability to focus	3.47	0.61	3.42	0.58	3.45	0.74	NS
Social Challenge								
10	Conflict among roommates	3.06	0.88	2.99	0.77	3.03	0.74	NS
11	Strained relationship with bed mate	3.16	0.89	2.75	0.87	2.96	4.10	S
12	Lack of self-confidence	3.24	0.97	2.94	0.98	3.09	2.70	S
13	Inability to invite friends over	2.85	0.85	2.65	0.86	2.75	2.04	S
14	Isolation	2.75	0.87	2.69	0.95	2.72	0.58	NS

N₁: Number of Female Students = (176); N₂: Number of male Students = (136); $\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of Female Students; SD_1 = Standard Deviation Female Students; $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of Male Students; SD_2 = Standard Deviation of Male Students; $\bar{X}_g$ = Grand Mean; t = t-test Results; R = Remarks; p = 0.05 Degree of freedom (Df) = 310

Table 4 shows the responses of male and female students on challenges students encounter in managing their personal hostel space. The values of the grand mean range from 2.72 to 3.61. These values were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items were challenges students encounter in managing their personal space. The independent-samples t-test revealed statistically significant gender

differences for 8 items. These findings indicate that male and female students differed significantly in their perceptions regarding the 8 items. However, no statistically significant gender differences were found for six items. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant differences was upheld for each of the six items except for 8 items.

Table 5: Mean Responses, Standard Deviation and t-test Results on Ways Students could Enhance Management of their Personal Hostel Space.

S/N	Factors	$\bar{X}_1$	SD_1	$\bar{X}_2$	SD_2	$\bar{X}_g$	t	R
1	Arrange belongings neatly	3.25	0.59	3.24	0.64	3.25	0.14	NS
2	Return items to their proper places after use	3.16	0.70	2.94	0.98	3.05	2.28	S
3	Set regular schedule for daily and weekly cleaning	3.19	0.97	3.06	0.88	3.13	1.24	NS
4	Maximize limited space to reduce congestion	3.60	0.63	2.76	0.78	3.18	10.32	S
5	Declutter regularly	3.25	0.59	2.65	0.86	2.95	7.28	S
6	Create functional zone to improve efficiency and comfort	3.20	0.72	2.96	0.73	3.08	2.90	S

N₁: Number of Female Students = (176); N₂: Number of male Students= (136); $\bar{X}_1$ = Mean of Female Students; SD_1 = Standard Deviation Female Students; $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean of Male Students; SD_2 =Standard Deviation of Male Students; $\bar{X}_g$ = Grand Mean; t = t-test Results; R = Remarks; p= 0.05 Degree of freedom (Df) = 310

Table 5 shows the responses of male and female students on ways students could enhance management of their hostel space. The values of the grand mean range from 2.95 to 3.25. These values were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items were ways students could enhance management of their hostel space. The independent samples test revealed statistically significant gender differences in respondents' ratings of four items. However, no statistically significant gender differences were observed for two items. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant differences was upheld for each of the two items except for 4 items.

Discussion of Findings

The results on factors influencing students' management of their personal hostel space include available facilities such as (water, waste disposal, furniture), home environment and background, personal factors and self-discipline and so on. These findings are consistent of Ezeigweneme & Egolum (2020) who noted that management of students' hostels involves complimentary facilities like steady water and power supply, toilet

facilities and a clean common space to ensure and enhance the students' comfort. In the opinion of Ohaeri & Omorojor (2020) it is the duty of the students and the hostel administrators to manage the hostels as they are the end users. Sharma (2025) asserted that convenience, relating to accessibility of services and facilities, is a significant factor that influences management of space and satisfaction. It was also noted that natural light, ventilation, and noise insulation significantly improve satisfaction levels in accommodation zones. The result also revealed statistically significant gender differences for four and no statistically significant gender differences were observed for the remaining five items ($p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant differences was upheld for each item except for four items. The reason for the variation in the opinion of the respondents could be attributed to their different home background, peer influences, cultural expectations, variations in daily living patterns and their experiences. This is in line with Amole (2017) who reported that male and

female students differ in their attitudes towards residential environment.

Result on guidelines students should adopt in managing their personal hostel space include: arranging furniture to allow easy movement, keeping frequently used items within reach, keeping only necessary items to avoid cluttering, and so on. These findings are consistent with those of (Chrissy, 2024) who reported that avoiding cluttering, arranging items for easy movement, disposing waste regularly are guidelines for management of a living space. Also the findings are in line with those of (Molly, 2019) who reported that a frequently neglected hostel space is associated with unintended clutter with piles of dirty items, making the space lack sense of aesthetic coherence.

Results on ways students should arrange their personal hostel living space include: arranging clothes properly, using laundry bags for dirty clothes, positioning bed, tables and wardrobes for easy movement, keeping bed neat and using underbed space and others. These findings are aligned with those of Fred (2023) who reported that decluttering can be achieved through proper arrangement of items, keeping beds neat and keeping items away from floor. The result from test of hypothesis three in Table 3 showed that there was a significant gender difference in all the items. These findings indicate that male and female students differed significantly in their perceptions regarding all the identified ways of arranging personal hostel space. The reason for the variation in the opinion of the respondents could be attributed to differences in priorities, preferences, perception of comfort, personality, cultural expectations, organizational habits and individual differences. This

finding aligns with Amole (2017) who noted that female students generally exhibit greater concern for organization, territorial definition and domestic spaces. The author also observed gender differences in students' attitude towards residence hall design, use of facilities and living preferences which may influence how hostel spaces are arranged and utilized.

Findings on physical, health and social challenges students encounter in managing their personal hostel living space are consistent with those of Ibrahim & Musa (2019) indicated that overcrowding is the primary challenge plaguing university hostels, contributing to many issues adversely affecting students' wellbeing and academic engagement. Also, Omotayo & Adewolu (2023) noted that hostel facilities were over stretched as hostel accommodation capacities were over-loaded with students. As underscored by Usman (2021), institutional hostels grapple with overwhelming demand, resulting in unacceptable levels of overcrowding, increased stress on existing facilities and frequent service breakdowns. On health challenge, in line with the study, Stumpf et al., (2018) noted stress, depression, sleep problem and anxiety as challenges students encounter in overcrowded hostel living space.

Findings on ways students could enhance management of their personal hostel living space include arranging belongings neatly, returning items to their proper places after use, maximizing limited space to reduce congestion, decluttering regularly, creating functional zones to improve efficiency and comfort, agreeing on shared responsibilities among roommates, setting regular schedule for

daily and weekly cleaning and adopting good personal hygiene. These findings are consistent with those of Chrissy (2024) who reported small space could be aesthetically pleasing when cluttering is avoided and items are properly arranged for easy movement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that a lot of factors influence students' management of their personal hostel living space. These factors have resulted to physical, health and social challenges. However, these physical, social and health challenges can be reduced if students maximize limited space to reduce congestion, overcrowding and declutter the hostel living space regularly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should come to hostels with only essential and functional materials in order to reduce cluttering.
2. Students should cooperate with roommates to ensure cleanliness of their hostel living space.
3. School management should frequently visit the hostel to monitor students and watch their routine activities.
4. School management should regulate the number of personal possessions that students are allowed to bring to the hostel.
5. The hostel supervisors should organize enlightenment programmes to create more awareness of the negative impact of cluttered living space and the benefits of decluttering.
6. There should be regular inspection of living space of students by the hostel

supervisors and hall representatives to ensure that students organize, tidy up and clean their living spaces.

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