

**FIRE DISASTER AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS AMONG HALL PORTERS IN
SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIAN FIRST-GENERATION FEDERAL UNIVERSITY
HALLS OF RESIDENCE**

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Abstract

This study examined fire disaster awareness and preparedness among hall porters in halls of residence of first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, the study targeted all hall porters in the three first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. Through multistage sampling, 63 porters were selected from the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. A validated, self-developed questionnaire (with reliability coefficient of 0.77) was administered, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings revealed that hall porters possessed a moderately high level of fire disaster awareness (weighted mean = 2.84). In terms of preparedness, both institutional and individual readiness were found to be moderate but below the expected standard. The level of preparedness of halls of residence (weighted mean = 2.35) and that of hall porters (weighted mean = 2.24) indicated insufficient capacity to effectively respond to fire emergencies. Furthermore, the study revealed significant gaps in the availability of firefighting equipment, with only basic tools like fire extinguishers (71.4%) and sand buckets (58.7%) being fairly common, while advanced systems such as smoke alarms (9.5%), automatic sprinklers (4.8%) were largely absent. The study concludes that while hall porters possess reasonable foundational awareness of common hostel fire risks, moderate preparedness levels and severe infrastructural deficits undermine their effectiveness as the first line of defence. The study therefore underscores the need for improved training, better provision of firefighting equipment, and strengthened fire safety policies within Nigerian universities.

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Introduction

Fires in university halls of residence represent one of the most recurrent and potentially devastating emergencies confronting students and staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly within the densely populated residential halls of federal universities in the South-Western region. Fire disasters in educational institutions, particularly university halls of residence, represent a critical public health and safety concern globally, with disproportionate impacts in developing countries (Rush *et al.*, 2020).

A fire disaster occurs when combustible materials interact with oxygen, producing light, heat, and smoke (Oloke *et al.*, 2021). Numerous factors contribute to residential fire outbreaks, including both human and natural causes. Common causes include irregular electrical discharge, overvoltage, illegal electrical connections, improper fittings, use of substandard materials, inadequate supervision of children, and storage of contaminated fuel in homes (Oloke *et al.*, 2021). Many fire disasters result from brief acts of carelessness, lack of awareness, or failure to recognise evident hazards.

Fire disaster awareness denotes the extent of knowledge about disaster risks, and the factors that lead to disasters influence the actions that could be taken individually or collectively to address exposure and vulnerability to hazards (Ishak *et al.*, 2023). Fire disaster awareness, in this context, refers to the porter's recognition and understanding of the specific fire hazards that exist within the hostel environment, the early signs that indicate an impending or active fire, the typical pathways through which flames and smoke spread in multi-storey buildings, and the realistic consequences of delayed or inappropriate response. A hall porter who possesses high fire disaster awareness is more likely to notice suspicious smells of burning plastic, observe students attempting to cook food in prohibited ways, identify overloaded extension cords that are beginning to overheat, or recognise the sound of electrical arcing before these situations escalate. When awareness is low, small preventable fires continue to become major disasters; when awareness is high, many incidents are either stopped at source or managed long enough for orderly evacuation and professional intervention.

Fire disaster preparedness encompasses the measures that are taken to prepare for/reduce the effects of disasters (Ishak *et al.*, 2023). Fire disaster preparedness, as examined in this study, goes beyond mere awareness of danger; it encompasses the practical readiness of hall porters to act effectively when fire threatens. A well-prepared hall porter is expected to recognise the urgency of different fire classes, select and correctly deploy the appropriate extinguisher or

suppression method within seconds, raise the alarm in a calm but assertive manner, direct students toward the nearest viable escape route while preventing panic-induced congestion, assist vulnerable occupants (injured students, those on upper floors), and coordinate basic first-response measures until professional firefighters arrive. Preparedness also involves proactive habits: daily inspection of common risk areas, enforcement of no-cooking-in-rooms rules, immediate removal or confiscation of prohibited appliances, and consistent reporting of faulty wiring or overloaded sockets to maintenance units before these become ignition sources. When preparedness is weak, the burden of early intervention falls almost entirely on untrained students, whose reactions are often characterised by panic, indecision, or misguided attempts to fight the fire with water on electrical or oil fires. When preparedness is strong, a single alert and capable porter can buy crucial time, prevent injuries, limit property damage, and enable a more orderly evacuation.

Among all categories of staff in halls of residence, hall porters stand out as the most continuously present and immediately accessible personnel. They serve as the first point of contact for students, responsible for monitoring movement, enforcing basic rules, responding to student complaints, controlling access to common areas, and, crucially, serving as the first human line of defence when smoke or flames appear. In the critical early minutes of a fire - before the arrival of the fire service, security personnel, or any external help - the awareness, quick thinking, and decisive actions of the hall porter frequently determine whether a minor spark is extinguished with a bucket of water and a fire blanket or whether it grows into a blaze that engulfs entire floors.

In Nigeria, recurrent fire incidents in university accommodations have underscored vulnerabilities in infrastructure, awareness, and response mechanisms. For instance, in December 2014, PM News reported a fire outbreak in a room in the Moremi Hall, a female hostel at Obafemi Awolowo University. Between January and October 2018, three separate fire incidents occurred across different hostels at the same university. In 2014, 2017 and 2019, The Cable News highlighted fire incidences at Madam Tinubu Hall, Amina female hostel and Henry Carr postgraduate hall, University of Lagos, which left several residents injured. The University of Ibadan has recorded multiple fire incidents; in 2013, 2014, 2019 and 2024, fire engulfed a block of shops at Tedder Hall, the Kuti Hall butterfly, Obafemi Awolowo Hall, Queen Elizabeth II Hall causing significant damages. It is in the light of this that this study assessed fire disaster

awareness and preparedness among hall porters in south-western Nigerian federal university halls of residence.

This study is grounded in the Health Belief Model, which posits that perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, and barriers influence preventive behaviours. By evaluating hall porters' awareness and preparedness, this study provides baseline data for policy interventions. Objectives include answering two research questions: (1) What is the level of fire disaster awareness among hall porters? (2) What is the level of fire disaster preparedness in hostels?

Method

The research design used in this study was a descriptive survey. All hall porters at South-West Nigeria's first-generation federal universities made up the population. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select the sample of 63 hall porters from two out of three first-generation federal universities in south-west Nigeria (University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife). A validated self-developed questionnaire was used in the study with reliability coefficient 0.77. The completed questionnaires were collected, coded and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean, percentages and standard deviation to analyse demographic information of the respondents and to provide answers to the research questions.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographical characteristics of hall porters of federal universities in South-West, Nigeria

S/N	Variables	Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Less than 30 years	5	7.9
		31 - 40 years	20	31.7
		41 - 50 years	24	38.1
		51 - 60 years	12	19.0
		61 years and above	2	3.2
2	Gender	Male	43	68.3
		Female	20	31.7
3	Educational qualification	SSCE and below	4	6.3
		Above SSCE	59	93.7
4	Years of work experience	1-10 years	5	7.9
		Above 10 years	58	92.1

Table 1 showed the demographic data of hall porters in first generation federal universities across South-West Nigeria in the study. The age distribution showed that majority of hall porters

fall within the 41–50 years range (38.1%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (31.7%) and 51–60 years (19.0%). Minority of the porters are less than 30 years (7.9%), and 3.2% are 61 years and above. These revealed that most hall porters are in their middle-age years, indicating stability and long-term engagement in their roles. In terms of gender, 68.3% of the respondents are male, while 31.7% are female, highlighting a significant gender imbalance in favour of males in this occupation.

When considering educational qualifications and work experience, a large majority of the hall porters (93.7%) possessed qualifications above SSCE, showing a well-educated workforce. Only 6.3% have SSCE or below, indicating that minimal formal education is rare among them. Additionally, most hall porters (92.1%) have more than 10 years of work experience, which points to a seasoned workforce with substantial institutional knowledge and service longevity. Only a small portion (7.9%) has 1–10 years of experience, further confirming that the role is typically occupied by individuals with long-term career stability.

Research Question One: What is the level of fire disaster awareness among hall porters in halls of residence in first-generation federal universities in South-West, Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of Fire Disaster Awareness among Hall Porters in Halls of Residence

S/N	Items	Not aware	Little awareness	Aware	Enough awareness	Very aware	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	Electrical faults	1 1.6%	4 6.3%	6 9.5%	14 22.2%	38 60.3%	3.33	1.000
2	Cooking in rooms and not kitchenette	4 6.3%	3 4.8%	7 11.1%	17 27.0%	32 50.8%	3.11	1.179
3	Placing of gas cylinders in kitchenette	9 14.3%	7 11.1%	11 17.5%	17 27.0%	19 30.2%	2.48	1.401
4	Careless smoking	11 17.5%	4 6.3%	8 12.7%	15 23.8%	25 39.7%	2.62	1.497
5	Playing with flammable materials	6 9.5%	6 9.5%	8 12.7%	17 27.0%	26 41.3%	2.81	1.330
6	Unsafe handling of flammable liquids and gases	8 12.7%	4 6.3%	6 9.5%	17 27.0%	28 44.4%	2.84	1.394
7	Overloading of electrical circuits	5 7.9%	1 1.6%	4 6.3%	27 42.9%	26 41.3%	3.08	1.126
8	Use of candles	11 17.5%	3 4.8%	7 11.1%	16 25.4%	26 41.3%	2.68	1.490
9	Decorating with combustible	9 14.3%	7 11.1%	8 12.7%	14 22.2%	25 39.7%	2.62	1.464

	materials							
10	Use of boiling rings	9 14.3%	5 7.9%	5 7.9%	15 23.8%	29 46.0%	2.79	1.461
Weighted Mean =2.84								

Key: 0= Not Aware, 1= Little Awareness, 2=Aware, 3= Enough awareness, 4= Very Aware

Table 2 showed the level of fire disaster awareness among hall porters in halls of residence across first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The study revealed a moderately high level of awareness. Based on the weighted mean score of 2.84, the overall awareness level is just below the enough awareness benchmark. Among the ten fire risk items assessed, electrical faults recorded the highest awareness, with 60.3% of respondents indicating they are very aware and a mean score of 3.33, showing strong familiarity with this potential hazard. Similarly, significant awareness was recorded for overloading of electrical circuits ($\bar{x}$ = 3.08) and cooking in rooms ($\bar{x}$ = 3.11), indicating that hall porters are more alert to everyday fire risks that are frequent and visible in hostel environments. Conversely, lower levels of awareness were observed in areas such as the placement of gas cylinders in kitchenettes ($\bar{x}$ = 2.48), careless smoking ($\bar{x}$ = 2.62), and decorating with combustible materials ($\bar{x}$ = 2.62), where fewer respondents demonstrated high awareness. The item with the lowest mean score; gas cylinder placement had 14.3% of respondents not aware at all, indicating a knowledge gap in this critical safety area. Overall, while hall porters showed a moderately high level of awareness of several common fire hazards, there remains a need for targeted training to boost awareness in less obvious but equally dangerous fire risk areas.

The result of a moderately high level of fire disaster awareness among hall porters suggests that the hall porters possess a reasonable understanding of fire risks, prevention strategies, and response protocols. Hall porters, as frontline staff in university hostels, play a critical role in ensuring the safety of students and the security of hostel facilities. Their moderately high awareness implies that they are generally equipped with the knowledge to identify potential fire hazards, such as faulty electrical appliances, unsafe handling of flammable materials, or unsafe cooking practices, which are common in hostel environments. However, the "moderately high" descriptor indicates that there is still room for improvement, as full or optimal awareness has not been achieved. Several factors may contribute to the observed level of fire disaster awareness among hall porters. First, the educational and training programmes provided by university management likely play a significant role. Federal universities in South-West Nigeria may have

implemented fire safety workshops or orientations for non-academic staff, including hall porters. These programmes typically may have covered topics such as fire prevention, evacuation procedures, and the use of firefighting equipment like extinguishers. The moderately high awareness suggests that such initiatives are in place but may not be comprehensive or frequent enough to achieve optimal knowledge retention and application. Second, the exposure of hall porters to real-life fire incidents or near-misses within or outside the university environment may heighten their awareness. Incidences of fire outbreaks may have been experienced in various other settings, including markets and residential areas, which may have indirectly influenced porters' understanding of fire risks. Media coverage and community discussions about these incidents could further reinforce their knowledge, as noted in Aluko *et al.* (2023), who highlighted the role of environmental cues in shaping safety awareness among workers.

The moderately high level of awareness has significant implications for fire safety management in university halls of residence. On the positive side, it indicates that hall porters are likely capable of performing basic fire prevention and response tasks, such as conducting routine checks for hazards, educating students on fire safety, or initiating evacuation during emergencies. This is particularly important in hostel settings, where large numbers of students reside in close quarters, increasing the risk of rapid fire spread if not managed promptly. This finding aligns with studies like Ogunyemi (2019), who noted that while awareness of fire safety is present among non-academic staff in Nigerian universities, gaps in practical application and training often limit effectiveness. The result also goes in line with a study by Akanmu & Arokoyo (2023) on fire hazards awareness and preparedness which revealed that the respondents were aware of some fire dangers in their immediate environment and the underlying consequences. The finding also tallied partially with a study conducted by Ishak *et al.* (2023) on understanding the level of awareness and knowledge of fire safety, where most of the respondents (70.5%) had a good level of awareness of fire safety measures, whereas only 29.5% of respondents had a moderate level of awareness. However, the finding seems not to be in agreement with a study on fire safety measures in educational environment in Nigeria by Sholanke *et al.* (2024) which revealed that majority of the participants are either not aware or uncertain of the fire safety measures. With only over 33.33% of respondents are aware of the fire safety precautions, compared to 25.49% who are completely unaware and 41.18% who are unsure.

Research Question Two: What is the level of fire disaster preparedness in halls of residence in first-generation federal universities in South-West, Nigeria?

Table 3: Halls of Residence's Level of Fire Disaster Preparedness

S/N	Items	Not prepared	Slightly prepared	Prepared	Enough preparedness	Very prepared	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	Electrical fire	4 6.3%	6 9.5%	19 30.2%	18 28.6%	16 25.4%	2.57	1.160
2	Gas fire	7 11.1%	5 7.9%	18 28.6%	15 23.8%	18 28.6%	2.51	1.294
3	Cigarette and candle fire	9 14.3%	3 4.8%	21 33.3%	20 31.7%	10 15.9%	2.30	1.227
4	Wood and solid fuel fire	10 15.9%	5 7.9%	19 30.2%	18 28.6%	11 17.5%	2.24	1.292
5	Trash fire	8 12.7%	10 15.9%	16 25.4%	18 28.6%	11 17.5%	2.22	1.276
6	Liquid fuel fire	8 12.7%	8 12.7%	13 20.6%	23 36.5%	11 17.5%	2.33	1.270
7	Heater fire	9 14.3%	9 14.3%	12 19.0%	22 34.9%	11 17.5%	2.27	1.310
Weighted Mean =2.35								

Key: 0 = Not Prepared, 1 = Slightly prepared, 2 = Prepared, 3 = Enough preparedness, 4 = Very prepared

Table 3 showed the level of halls of residence's fire disaster preparedness in first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The study revealed moderate level of readiness for fire emergencies. With a weighted mean of 2.35, the overall preparedness level falls below the enough preparedness threshold, indicating that many halls of residence are only somewhat equipped to handle fire-related incidents. The highest level of preparedness was recorded for electrical fires ($\bar{x}$ =2.57) and gas fires ($\bar{x}$ =2.51), where a notable proportion of hostels indicated being either prepared or very prepared. However, even in these categories, about 15–17% of hostels reported being not or slightly prepared, which raises concern about the consistency of safety measures across institutions. Preparedness for other types of fire hazards such as cigarette

and candle fires, wood and solid fuel fires, and trash fires is particularly low. These items recorded mean scores ranging between 2.22 and 2.30, indicating that most hostels hover around basic preparedness, with significant percentages falling into the not prepared or slightly prepared categories. 14.3% of hostels are not prepared for cigarette and candle fires, and 15.9% are unprepared for wood and solid fuel fires.

Although some fire safety measures are in place, they are insufficient to guarantee complete protection against fire emergencies in university halls of residence, according to the weighted mean of 2.35, which is below the threshold for enough preparedness. This moderate level of preparedness suggests that while basic fire safety equipment, like fire extinguishers, may be present in halls of residence, they are probably inconsistent or poorly maintained. The below-threshold score underscores a critical need for enhanced preparedness to safeguard students, staff, and property in densely populated hostel environments where fire risks are heightened due to factors like overcrowded rooms, electrical faults, and improper cooking practices. The moderate level of fire disaster preparedness has significant implications for the safety of students and staff in university hostels. Hostels are high-risk environments due to high occupancy, frequent use of electrical appliances, and occasional unauthorised cooking practices, all of which increase the likelihood of fire outbreaks. A preparedness level below the sufficient threshold indicates that these institutions are vulnerable to severe consequences in the event of a fire, including loss of life, injury, and property damage. The finding underscores the urgency of addressing deficiencies in fire safety infrastructure to protect the university community. Moreover, the moderate preparedness level may erode confidence among students and parents regarding the safety of hostel accommodations. This could impact enrollment rates or lead to reputational damage for federal universities in South-West Nigeria, particularly if a major fire incident occurs. The finding also highlights the need for alignment with national and international fire safety standards, which emphasise comprehensive preparedness through equipment, training, and regular drills.

Table 4: Hall Porters' Level of Fire Disaster Preparedness

S/ N	Items	Not prepare d	Slight ly prepar ed	Prepar ed	Enoug h prepar ednes s	Very prepar ed	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	I have gained enough information about disaster risk reduction	4 6.3%	6 9.5%	9 14.3%	16 25.4%	28 44.4%	2.92	1.24 8
2	I am informed about disaster prone areas	5 7.9%	7 11.1%	11 17.5%	25 39.7%	15 23.8%	2.60	1.19 9
3	I have established relationship with disaster management organisations in the hostel's community	10 15.9%	10 15.9%	11 17.5%	19 30.2%	13 20.6%	2.24	1.37 6
4	I have prepared a personal emergency plan	10 15.9%	12 19.0%	13 20.6%	21 33.3%	7 11.1%	2.05	1.27 5
5	I have prepared a hostel emergency plan	9 14.3%	12 19.0%	14 22.2%	16 25.4%	12 19.0%	2.16	1.33 4
6	I am completely aware of my hostel's evacuation strategy and method.	4 6.3%	11 17.5%	12 19.0%	22 34.9%	14 22.2%	2.49	1.20 3
7	I have taken special training in disaster risk reduction in my hostel	8 12.7%	7 11.1%	5 7.9%	25 39.7%	18 28.6%	2.60	1.35 1
8	I have trained other porters in the hostel	8 12.7%	22 34.9%	9 14.3%	12 19.0%	12 19.0%	1.97	1.35 6
9	The hostel has signed up with organisations that provide emergency news or alert systems	11 17.5%	18 28.6%	10 15.9%	9 14.3%	15 23.8%	1.98	1.45 3
10	I have a personal disaster survival kit	23 36.5%	16 25.4%	10 15.9%	6 9.5%	8 12.7%	1.37	1.39 5
Weighted Mean =2.24								

Key: 0 = Not Prepared, 1 = Slightly prepared, 2 = Prepared, 3 = Enough preparedness, 4 = Very prepared

Table 4 showed hall porters' level of fire disaster preparedness in halls of residence at first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The study revealed a generally moderate level of preparedness. With a weighted mean of 2.24, the responses mostly fall between prepared

and enough preparedness, indicating that while some basic fire preparedness measures are in place, a significant gap remains in comprehensive readiness. The item with the highest level of preparedness is “I have gained enough information about disaster risk reduction” with a ($\bar{x}$ =2.92), where 44.4% of the porters consider themselves very prepared. Similarly, many porters indicated they had taken special training in disaster risk reduction ($\bar{x}$ =2.60) and are informed about disaster-prone areas ($\bar{x}$ = 2.60), indicating that awareness and knowledge are moderately established in some areas.

However, deeper institutional and personal preparedness appears lacking. The lowest mean was recorded for “I have a personal disaster survival kit” ($\bar{x}$ =1.37), with 36.5% of porters not prepared at all, highlighting a critical weakness in individual readiness. Other low-scoring areas include the training of other porters ($\bar{x}$ =1.97), hostel engagement with emergency alert systems ($\bar{x}$ =1.98), and personal and hostel emergency planning ($\bar{x}$ = 2.05 and 2.16, respectively). The study indicated that while awareness exists, practical implementation and preparedness actions are not widespread or consistent.

The findings from the study on hall porters’ level of fire disaster preparedness in halls of residence at first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria provide valuable insights into the state of fire safety readiness within these institutions. The overall weighted mean of 2.24 suggests a moderate level of preparedness, indicating that while some foundational measures are in place, there are notable deficiencies in achieving comprehensive fire disaster readiness. The weighted mean score of 2.24, falling between "prepared" and "enough preparedness," reflects a moderate level of fire disaster preparedness among hall porters. This suggests that while porters have some awareness and basic skills to handle fire-related emergencies, their readiness is not robust enough to address complex or large-scale fire incidents effectively. This moderate preparedness aligns with findings from similar studies in educational institutions, where basic fire safety measures, such as fire extinguishers or evacuation plans, are often present but not consistently implemented or well-practiced (Yunus, 2019). The moderate score highlights a critical need for more comprehensive training, resources, and institutional support to elevate preparedness to a level that ensures safety in high-risk environments like student halls of residence, which are often densely populated and prone to fire hazards due to electrical faults, cooking appliances, or human negligence.

The finding aligns with previous research, such as Adeyemi & Olamide (2022), which noted that many Nigerian universities struggle with implementing robust fire safety systems due to resource constraints and administrative oversight. In contrast, in a study by Zul *et al.* (2024) on level of knowledge, attitude, and practice of fire safety systems and preparedness at higher learning institutions in Malaysia, a significant majority (96.2%) exhibited a good understanding, while a small percentage (3.8%) demonstrated a moderate level. A study by Salmawati *et al.*, (2022) on the influence of knowledge, attitude and action on fire disaster preparedness among workers in Palu City Health Center, Indonesia, result revealed that 74.1% of the workers indicated having good preparedness for fire disaster. This also does not totally go in line with the moderate preparedness level of this study.

Table 5: Availability of Firefighting Equipment/Facility in Halls of Residence

S/N	Firefighting equipment	Not available	Available
1	Fire extinguisher	18(28.6%)	45(71.4%)
2	Sand bucket	26(41.3%)	37(58.7%)
3	Hose reel	53(84.1%)	10(15.9%)
4	Smoke alarm	57(90.5%)	6(9.5%)
5	Automatic fire sprinkler	60(95.2%)	3(4.8%)
6	Fire blanket	54(85.7%)	9(14.3%)

Table 5 showed the availability of firefighting equipment and facilities in halls of residence of first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The study revealed that while some basic fire safety tools are in place, the overall provision is limited and uneven. Fire extinguishers are the most commonly available equipment, present in 71.4% of the halls of residence, followed by sand buckets at 58.7%, indicating some level of preparedness for minor fire incidents. However, more advanced and crucial firefighting facilities are significantly lacking: only 15.9% of halls of residence have a hose reel, 9.5% have a smoke alarm, 4.8% are equipped with automatic fire sprinklers, and 14.3% have fire blankets. The low availability of these essential and often life-saving facilities highlights a serious gap in comprehensive fire protection infrastructure, indicating that most halls of residence are not adequately equipped to detect or control fire outbreaks effectively, especially in emergencies.

The findings from the study on the availability of firefighting equipment and facilities in the hostels of first-generation federal universities in South-West Nigeria provide critical insights into the state of fire safety preparedness in these residential facilities. The results reveal a mixed picture: while some basic fire safety tools are relatively common, the overall provision of

firefighting equipment is limited and unevenly distributed, with significant deficiencies in advanced fire suppression and detection systems. The study indicates that fire extinguishers are the most commonly available firefighting tool, present in 71.4% of the hostels, followed by sand buckets at 58.7%. This suggests a moderate level of preparedness for handling minor fire incidents, as both fire extinguishers and sand buckets are effective for extinguishing small, localized fires, particularly those involving flammable liquids or electrical equipment. The relatively high availability of fire extinguishers aligns with basic fire safety requirements, as these devices are portable, easy to use, and widely recognised as essential for emergency response in residential and institutional settings. Sand buckets, while less sophisticated, are a cost-effective option for combating small fires, particularly in resource-constrained environments. However, the fact that nearly 30% of halls of residence lack fire extinguishers and over 40% do not have sand buckets raises concerns about the consistency of fire safety provisions across the sampled institutions. The uneven distribution of these basic tools suggests disparities in resource allocation, maintenance practices, or adherence to fire safety regulations among the universities. Halls of residence without these fundamental tools are at heightened risk of fire escalation, as the absence of immediate firefighting resources could delay response efforts and exacerbate damage or injury. The study highlights a significant gap in the availability of more advanced firefighting facilities, which are critical for managing larger or more complex fire incidents. Only 15.9% of halls of residence are equipped with hose reels, 9.5% have smoke alarms, 4.8% possess automatic fire sprinklers, and 14.3% have fire blankets. These low percentages indicate a systemic lack of investment in comprehensive fire safety infrastructure, leaving most hostels ill-prepared to detect, control, or mitigate fires effectively.

Conclusion

This study has assessed fire disaster awareness and preparedness among hall porters in first-generation federal university hostels across South-West Nigeria, directly addressing two research questions. On awareness, hall porters demonstrated a moderately high level, with particularly strong recognition of everyday hazards such as electrical faults, circuit overloading, and cooking in rooms. This indicates that hall porters are attuned to the most frequent and visible threats. Fire disaster preparedness emerged as moderate for both hostels and the porters themselves. Electrical and gas fires received the highest readiness scores, yet even these fell below the “enough preparedness” threshold. Critical deficiencies included the near-total absence of advanced

systems - hose reels (only 15.9% of hostels), smoke alarms (9.5%), automatic sprinklers (4.8%), and fire blankets (14.3%) - as well as porters' lack of personal survival kits, formal emergency plans, and peer training. These shortfalls leave hostels reliant on basic tools that are inconsistently available and poorly maintained. Conclusively, the results confirm that hall porters serve as the primary frontline defence in university hostels, yet moderate preparedness and equipment shortages undermine their effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. Universities should institute mandatory, annual, hands-on fire-safety training programmes specifically addressing identified knowledge and awareness gaps. Training must include practical simulation drills using real extinguishers and smoke machines.
2. Federal universities must immediately budget for and install:
 - a. Fire extinguishers on every floor;
 - b. Smoke alarms and fire blankets in all hostels;
 - c. Visible, illuminated fire-exit signs and evacuation maps on every corridor and room;
 - d. At least one hose reel per building and automatic sprinklers in high-risk blocks. A centralised procurement and maintenance policy should ensure annual inspection and certification of all equipment.
3. Hall porters should be empowered and provided with the necessary support to enforce safety regulations in halls of residence, such as the prohibition of cooking within rooms and the use of unsafe electrical appliances. Clear definitions of sanctions for violations should be established and applied consistently.
4. Hall porters should be supplied with personal emergency kits containing essential safety tools to bolster individual readiness during fire incidents.
5. Government authorities and university administrations should conduct a review of existing fire safety policies and allocate adequate funding to enhance disaster preparedness infrastructure within university halls of residence.

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