



**Regional Crises and Corruption: The Eclipse of the Quality of Working Life in Nigeria**

Journal:	<i>Employee Relations</i>
Manuscript ID	ER-02-2018-0043.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Quality of working life, Nigerian workers, Regional crisis, Corruption, Work

## **Regional Crises and Corruption: The Eclipse of the Quality of Working Life in Nigeria**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – In recent years, there has been a rapid decline in the quality of working life (QWL) of Nigerian workers at all levels. This phenomenon is cryptic and knowledge thereof is inadequate due to a dearth of compelling research on QWL in Nigeria. This article seeks a deeper understanding of QWL among Nigerian workers by investigating the impact of corruption and regional crises on QWL in this non-western context. The study also examines what QWL means to Nigerian employees.

**Methodology** – The study employs qualitative data gleaned from semi-structured interviews.

**Findings** – The research reveals that corruption has a strongly negative effect on employees' QWL, which in turn affects their motivation, attitude towards their job, and the psychological contract between them and their employers. Furthermore, the findings revealed that regional crises (such as the heinous activities of the Boko Haram sect in the north-east, the continuing agitation of the secessionists (e.g. the Indigenous People of Biafra [IPOB]), in the south-east, and the tumultuous activities of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in the south-south, have combined to reduce employees' QWL.

**Research limitations/implications** – The extent to which the findings of this research can be generalised is constrained by the selected sample of the research (public sector employees).

**Originality/value** – These results and the practical implications thereof will be useful to the Nigerian government, policymakers and organisations for creating and enhancing good QWL in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Corruption, regional crises, quality of working life, Nigerian workers, psychological contract

## Introduction

Work occupies a major part of daily life and our thoughts. It determines who we are and how we want to connect with our world. For many people, the presence or indeed absence of work represents the connection that links us to the outside world (Martel and Dupuis, 2006). Ideally, work provides satisfaction (Clark and Farmer, 1998) and gives a sense of purpose and accomplishment to employees (Gambles et al., 2006; Guest, 2001). Thus, an enabling environment wherein employees' quality of working life (QWL) will be enhanced remains essential (Askari et al., 2018). The environment should be serene and devoid of environmental, political, and economical crises. Research on QWL has a long tradition, vestiges of which are rooted in classic job satisfaction and employee motivation research (see Blauner, 1964; Herzberg, 1966; Maslow, 1943; Mayo and Warner, 1931). The intervening years were characterised with a broad, sometimes contradictory, literature identifying the variables affecting QWL.

However, the need for and the potential value of good QWL cannot be underestimated. Enhanced QWL has been associated with a wide range of benefits, such as improved business performance, greater creativity, enhanced employee commitment, low employee turnover, low absenteeism, and so on. This is perhaps why employees have been identified as the most important resource in an organisation (Gabčanová, 2011). QWL is predicated on a set of objectives, organisational conditions, practices, and employees' perceptions that they are safe at work and that they will be able to grow and develop as human beings (Teryima, 2016). The administrative system and the work and social environments of an organisation also play a vital role in determining employees' QWL (Cunningham and Eberle, 1990). Furthermore, QWL also considers employees' professional wellbeing and the degree to which employees' work experience is rewarding, fulfilling, and devoid of negative personal consequences (Shamir and

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3 Salomon, 1985). The quality of work deservedly matters as much as the quantity  
4 thereof. Therefore, all work should be fair and decent, with realistic opportunities for  
5 development and fulfilment (Taylor, 2017).  
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10 Over the years, there has been a plethora of studies undertaken on employees' QWL,  
11 mostly in western countries (Fields and Thacker, 1992; Martel and Dupuis, 2006; Sirgy  
12 et al., 2008). Many studies have also been done in developing countries such as China  
13 (Shen et al, 2014), Hong Kong (Ng and Chiu (1997), South Africa (der Berg and Martins,  
14 2013), Taiwan (Lai et al., 2012), and Nigeria (Ogungbamila and Idemudia, 2016; Tongo,  
15 2015). Moreover, in developing countries, fulfilling one's obligations to one's families is  
16 often priority in QWL, and when a job provides such opportunities, then it is often  
17 deemed a high-quality job (Kiggundu, 1982). However, Africa, specifically Nigeria,  
18 remains an under-researched context. This study assumes that the organisational  
19 parameters, the economy, employees' needs, and the cultural and institutional  
20 frameworks of organisations in many developed nations are not the same as in Nigeria.  
21 Therefore, Nigeria-focused study, which this article seeks to contribute, is needed.  
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35 Since the return of democracy in 1999, Nigeria has continued to seek economic growth  
36 and prosperity. According to the Nigerian High Commission UK (2017), Nigeria has  
37 undergone a major economic transformation and is now one of the fastest growing  
38 economies in Africa. The questions, however, remain: Does Nigeria have the enabling  
39 environment to succeed? Does its workforce have the required QWL to excel? This  
40 article takes a two-pronged approach to these questions.  
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48 Firstly, unethical practices and corruption are some of the greatest challenges to African  
49 society and its leaders, threatening to undermine economic growth, democratic stability  
50 and sustenance, and general development efforts (Gbadamosi, 2006). The issues of good  
51 governance and transparency are critical in all societies, but more so in poor countries  
52 seeking to break the cycle of poverty and lack of development (Gbadamosi, 2006). This  
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3 is because corruption restricts investments and economic growth and undermines  
4 poverty alleviation, which are critical for Nigeria – and Africa at large. Corruption  
5 remains perhaps one of the greatest threats to the development of nations and it is  
6 perhaps therefore unsurprising that countries that have successfully controlled it are  
7 among the most developed. The relationship between QWL and a well-run society with  
8 a minimal level of corruption is therefore palpable.  
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16 Secondly, national and regional conflicts tend to hinder economic development and  
17 QWL. This is evident in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, the  
18 Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan (among others) given the evidence of  
19 the devastation of war and sectional crises. In the last decade, Nigeria has been in the  
20 news for many national, regional, and religious crises (Alao and Iyanda, 2017; Okpaga  
21 et al., 2012). Most of these crises have been debilitating for development; for example,  
22 the Boko Haram conflicts in the north-east, the militia groups in the south-south, the  
23 separationist agitations predominantly in the south-east and most recently the migrant  
24 herdsman killings largely in the north and sporadically in the south as well.  
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35 The combination of corruption and internal strife hinders cohesion and development  
36 among the citizenry and debilitates QWL of workers. The root cause of the recent  
37 decline in employee morale and commercial growth, the economic recession, the high  
38 rate of inflation, and the high unemployment rate (which is causing many organisations  
39 to reduce the sizes of their workforces) have primarily been attributed to pervasive  
40 regional crises and interspersed corruption (Fapohunda, 2013; Lawal et al., 2017;  
41 Onuba, 2017; Riti et al., 2017). Regional crises and corruption are endemic in Nigeria  
42 and they continue to threaten the existence of Nigeria as a nation (Lawal et al., 2017).  
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52 However, research on the impact of corruption and regional crises on the QWL of the  
53 Nigerian workers is limited. When investigating a broad societal challenge such as  
54 corruption and regional crises as indicators of QWL, the connection in terms of how  
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3 organisations are adversely affected is palpable. This paper thus positions the impact of  
4 QWL broadly on the economy and on employee performance within organisations.  
5 This article, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on the impact of corruption  
6 and regional crises on the QWL of Nigerian workers. In this regard, this article and the  
7 empirical evidence on which it is based make two contributions. Firstly, it positions  
8 regional crises and corruption as key elements that destroy employees' QWL. Secondly,  
9 it contributes to the literature on QWL in a non-western context, specifically Nigeria. In  
10 so doing, this article provides an opportunity to enhance understanding of employees'  
11 QWL in Nigeria. In pursuing these objectives, the article draws on the experiences of  
12 employees in the public sector across Nigeria. It is therefore hoped that this study will  
13 benefit researchers, organisations, policymakers, and the Nigerian employees in their  
14 efforts to study, comprehend, and achieve good QWL. The article is structured as  
15 follows: Firstly, QWL will be contextualised, followed by a description of the theoretical  
16 basis for the research. Subsequently, the methodology is outlined and the research  
17 findings and their implications are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn.  
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### 34 **Contextualising QWL**

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36 The first major research on the concept of QWL was undertaken in Europe in the early  
37 1960s (Martel and Dupuis, 2006). During this time, the Swedish government and  
38 policymakers supported employment policies focusing on employees' working  
39 conditions and wellbeing (Cherns and Davis, 1975; Davis and Cherns, 1975). The US  
40 followed them in the late 1960s when, for the first time, an employee of General Motors  
41 used the term 'QWL'. This paved way for US workers to be actively involved in the  
42 decision-making of their working conditions (Goode, 1989). QWL received major global  
43 attention following the International Conference on QWL in New York in 1972, which  
44 led to the creation of the International Council for QWL in 1973 (Martel and Dupuis,  
45 2006). Since this time, QWL has been a subject of empirical investigation, more so in  
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3 western countries. Nevertheless, a general acceptable definition of QWL remains  
4 elusive; for example, what constitutes QWL among employees and employers?  
5 (Loscocco and Roschelle, 1991; Vinopal, 2012). This, on the one hand, may be attributed  
6 to employee differences in terms of job satisfaction and individual working  
7 environments (Blackford, 2016). On the other hand, the lack of a generally acceptable  
8 definition of QWL may be attributed to the fact that many studies have focused on  
9 specific aspects of QWL rather than on the concept, thus rendering their definition of  
10 the concept not universally acceptable (Danish and Usman, 2010; Igbaria and  
11 Greenhaus, 2007; Koyuneu et al., 2006; Lazear, 2000; Morrison, 2004; Sperlich et al.,  
12 2012; Vandenberghe and Bentein, 2009; Wagner and Harter, 2006). For instance,  
13 according to Mirvis and Lawler (1984), QWL involves the characteristics of the work  
14 itself and the work environment, which have an enormous influence on employees'  
15 work lives, welfare, and wellbeing. For Lau et al. (2001), QWL is a constructive working  
16 condition in which employees receive adequate support, desired job satisfaction,  
17 rewards, job security, and career growth from their employer. Serey (2006) posited that  
18 QWL is achieved when employees can use their talents in: (a) their decision-making  
19 capability and initiative to succeed in difficult situations; (b) engaging in beneficial  
20 activities; (c) sufficient role clarity, which will enhance their goal achievement; and (d)  
21 genuinely having a sense of belonging and pride in their work. It is essential to note  
22 that QWL not only considers employee benefits but also employee commitment to the  
23 organisation and the environment in which that commitment can flourish (Walton,  
24 1975). The need to clearly understand the concept of QWL is vital so that organisations  
25 can assess and enhance employee QWL (Blackford, 2016). However, the factors relating  
26 to the concept are complex and multi-dimensional (Blackford, 2016).

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Lewis and Cooper (1999) noted the implications of the rising number of dual-income households on employees' QWL. This phenomenon requires employees to take care



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3 both at home and work, bringing QWL under scrutiny (Offerman and Gowing, 1990). In  
4 contrast to the archaic notion of 'a good company', which basically means an  
5 organisation with a good financial footing, QWL has been included *inter alia* in the  
6 contemporary indicator of 'a good company' (Rose et al., 2006). Over 20 years ago,  
7 Loscocco and Roschelle (1991) argued that the most common assessments of QWL are  
8 the employees' attitudes. They argued that employees' attitudes determine their QWL.  
9 This may be because the manners in which individual employees approach their job  
10 affect their personal happiness and productivity (Rose et al., 2006). Many studies have  
11 also highlighted the influence of age on attitudes to work (Loscocco and Roschelle, 1991;  
12 Rhodes, 1983). Most of the studies found that older employees are more satisfied with,  
13 more involved in, and more committed to their work than younger workers. In other  
14 words, age has a compelling influence on the employees' QWL. An older employee  
15 with familial responsibilities may have a different attitude to work compared to their  
16 younger counterparts, who have less/no familial responsibilities. Role expectations  
17 between the work and family domains often result in conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996)  
18 and always affect employees' mental health, wellbeing, and QWL (Higgins et al., 1992).  
19 This may be why many researchers have argued that a satisfactory work-family life is a  
20 positive indicator of good QWL (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1980; Shaffer, 1987).  
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40 In sum, the evolutionary development of QWL as a concept has been varied. The  
41 majority of QWL research focuses on job satisfaction rather than employee experience  
42 as a determinant of QWL (Bowling et al., 2010; Green and Heywood, 2008; Lopes et al.,  
43 2014), while others have focused on specific places of work or industries (Bitmis and  
44 Ergeneli, 2011; Campion et al., 1993; Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Medina et al., 2005). These  
45 fragments the picture of QWL and makes the concept difficult to decipher (Blackford,  
46 2016). Furthermore, the lack of appreciable studies undertaken in Africa, specifically  
47 Nigeria, leaves the continent an understudied area/region of enquiry. The plethora of  
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3 studies undertaken in western countries does not represent QWL in Nigeria. This is due  
4 to the differences between the two contexts in terms of employees' needs, satisfaction,  
5 and human resource management (HRM) approaches.  
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## 10 **QWL in Nigeria**

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13 Despite that QWL has been identified as one of the compelling indicators of a successful  
14 organisation in terms of attracting and retaining the best employees (CIPD, 2015),  
15 organisations (both private and public) in Nigeria do not seem to have fully recognised  
16 these lofty benefits. This is because it has become normal in Nigeria for employees (in  
17 both private and public organisations) to engage in industrial actions lasting for months  
18 due to poor QWL (Okenet, 2007; Okpaga et al., 2012; Owoye, 1994). A similar situation  
19 has also been reported in other African countries (Chinomona et al., 2013; Chinomona  
20 and Dhurup, 2014). In a recent study, Tongo (2015) found that QWL encourages the  
21 Nigerian workers in the private sector to positively contribute to society. The public  
22 sector, however, is characterised by corrupt practices (Ijewereme, 2015). The Economic  
23 and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC, 2014) emphasised the lack of organisational  
24 commitment among public sector workers, which the commission claimed has a  
25 negative effect on Nigeria's economic development. Support for this assertion can be  
26 drawn from several studies (Ajibade and Ayinla, 2014; Bambale et al., 2012; Faloye,  
27 2014; Okurame, 2009). It is, however, unclear whether organisational commitment has  
28 any correlation with QWL.  
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46 Although the amount of research undertaken on QWL in Nigeria is limited, researchers  
47 have made progress. For example, Fapohunda (2013) investigated the perceptions and  
48 experiences of QWL in Nigeria and found discrepancies in terms of the indicators of  
49 QWL among male and female employees. Anyaoku (2016) researched QWL of a  
50 segment of Nigerian employees (librarians) and reported that they have good QWL in  
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3 some respects, but also bad QWL in other aspects, such as remuneration, training and  
4 development, and job security. Using a private sector sample in Nigeria, Tongo (2015)  
5 found that QWL correlates significantly and positively with a worker's motivation to  
6 contribute to society. However, the workers considered in their study showed more  
7 lethargy to contribute to the government sector that is known globally for its  
8 corruption, and more vigour to make contributions to the social infrastructural sectors.  
9 Similarly, Ogungbamila and Idemudia (2016) found in Nigeria that male police  
10 personnel had better perceptions of their QWL than their female counterparts, thus  
11 revealing that gender considerations are important in police personnel's QWL. Others  
12 have researched QWL among segments of Nigerian workers in specific locations of the  
13 country (Awosusi, 2010; Mamedu, 2016; Sev et al., 2016). Nevertheless, relative to those  
14 undertaken in western countries, much less empirical studies have been reported in  
15 Nigeria and do not reflect or represent the true state of the impact of corruption and  
16 regional crises on the QWL of Nigerian workers. An empirical study of this nature is  
17 thus essential.

### 33 34 **Regional Crises and Corruption in Nigeria**

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36 The proliferation of regional crises in Nigeria has been described (Alao and Iyanda,  
37 2107; Okpaga, Ugwu and Eme, 2012) as the root cause of insecurity in Nigeria and this  
38 has had a direct impact on Nigerian workers. Crises in Nigeria can be attributed to  
39 many different factors such as psychological, socio-psychological (the group dynamic),  
40 and sociological (Basseyy and Asuni, 2008). Regional crises in Nigeria include the  
41 heinous activities of Boko Haram sect in the north-east (Grill and Selander, 2014), the  
42 agitation of the secessionist movement in the south-east as exemplified in two  
43 prominent bodies: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Movement for the  
44 Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), both associated with *Igbo*  
45 nationalism, supporting the recreation of an independent state of Biafra. The tactics of  
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3 the former are more confrontational and disruptive than the latter (Adeyemi, 2017), and  
4 the abhorrent activities of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in the south-south  
5 (Owolabi, 2017). Additionally, crises in Nigeria have also erupted due to communal  
6 clashes over land, intra-clan disputes, and vicious conflicts over succession to  
7 traditional thrones (Otite and Albert, 1999). It is, therefore, logical to attribute all these  
8 crises to the sheer ineptness of the various institutions in the Nigerian heterogeneous  
9 state to ensure a peaceful co-existence of the regions (Suberu, 1999). However, it is  
10 essential to note that these crises have had a detrimental effect on Nigerian social  
11 formation and possibly on the QWL of Nigerian workers, especially those working in  
12 the regions known for such unrest.  
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24 Corruption, on the other hand, is prevalent in Nigeria and has been described as  
25 Nigeria's biggest challenge (Uzochukwu, 2017). A Transparency International  
26 Corruption Perceptions Index annual publication reported Nigeria as ranking 136<sup>th</sup> out  
27 of 175 nations in terms of corruption in 2016, and 138<sup>th</sup> out of 180 in 2017. The  
28 corruption ranking of Nigeria averaged 119 from 1996 until 2016, reaching an all-time  
29 high of 152 in 2005 and a record low of 52 in 1997 (Transparency International, 2017).  
30 Although there is no universally acceptable definition of corruption, the United Nations  
31 Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) (2001) described it as 'abuse of power  
32 for private gain'. Similarly, the World Bank and Transparency International (WBTI)  
33 (2017) described corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain of the  
34 holder of the office or some third party. There is corruption everywhere in Nigeria  
35 (Magu, 2016), in the public and private sector, large and small organisations (ActionAid  
36 Nigeria, 2015; Forgues-Puccio, 2013). Defining corruption is not a primary concern of  
37 this article; nevertheless, the views of Osoba (1996) are instructive and have therefore  
38 been adopted for our purpose: 'corruption is a form of antisocial behaviour by an  
39 individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its  
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3 perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral  
4 ethos of the land, and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate  
5 authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members of  
6 society in a just and equitable manner' (Osoba, 1996, p. 372).  
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12 Corruption threatens fair business practices, the democratic process, good governance,  
13 and sustainable development. Furthermore, corruption derails administrative goals,  
14 results in the displacement of organisational goals, and has drastically reduced the  
15 image of Nigeria in the international community (Smith, 2008). This study thus seeks to  
16 investigate the impact of this issue on QWL of Nigerian workers.  
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### 23 **Theoretical Background**

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25 This study is underpinned by fairness theory and self-theory. Fairness theory has been  
26 used in management to explain the relationship between employers and employees,  
27 specifically to explain employee reactions to the actions of organisations (Azar and  
28 Darvishi, 2011; Brockner et al., 2007). Fairness theory is concerned with moral  
29 righteousness (Cropanzano and Rupp, 2003; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001) and  
30 integrates the components of justice with the global theory of fairness (Folger and  
31 Cropanzano, 2001). Fairness theory suggests that when employees are in certain  
32 working conditions, they tend to make cognitive comparisons in terms of 'what is' and  
33 'what might have been', which is known as 'counterfactual thoughts' (Elovainio et al.,  
34 2005; Nicklin et al., 2011; Colquitt and Zipay, 2015). The situation is further  
35 contextualised by employees' experiences, thoughts, and sense of reasoning, which  
36 differ from one employee to another (Azar and Darvishi, 2011). Basically, employees  
37 react to and make judgements in terms of 'what should', 'what could', and 'what  
38 would' be (Collie et al., 2002; Colquitt and Zipay, 2015; Cropanzano et al., 2004; Duffy et  
39 al., 2006). It is essential to understand that cognition and emotion influence employees'  
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3 perceptions of justice (Barsky and Kaplan, 2007; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001).  
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5 Furthermore, 'counterfactual thoughts' are also relevant to accountability and influence  
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7 employees' perceptions of injustice (Ganegoda and Folger, 2015). Consequently, these  
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9 perceptions have an impact on employees' attitudes and behaviours (Lind, 2001; Tyler  
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11 and Blader, 2003).  
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14 Self-theory, on the other hand, is based on the premise that human beings have a  
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16 fundamental need to maintain or enhance the phenomenal self (Snyder and Williams,  
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18 1982). Generally, self-theory deals with a complex, organised, and dynamic system of  
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20 beliefs, attitudes, and opinions which employees hold to be true about QWL. The theory  
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22 is concerned with the different ways in which employees perceive 'the self' and make  
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24 sense of their 'self-concept and self-esteem'. The rationale behind the use of this theory  
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26 is to explain that employees' attitudes to work is predicated on the integration of the  
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28 dispositional and situational descriptions of work, upon which the principle of QWL is  
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30 based. This article thus seeks to discover how corruption and regional crises could  
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32 enhance or adversely affect employees' abilities to achieve QWL. It is assumed that they  
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34 have an impact on the employees' sense of judgement and self. It is important to note  
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36 that the word 'self' in the context of this article means the entire personality or  
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38 individuality of an employee.  
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## 40 41 **Methodology**

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43 There are not many studies on QWL in Nigeria. Perhaps the challenge deciding an  
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45 appropriate research methodology is one of the reasons. Thus, as this study is inductive  
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47 in nature, an in-depth qualitative research approach has been adopted (following  
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49 Cassell and Symon, 1994; Mason, 2002; Tenzer et al., 2014). The crucial rationales behind  
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51 the use of a qualitative approach are that (a) it sets out to gain an understanding of how  
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53 participants make sense of and decipher certain situations, (b) it exploits the human  
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55 potential to analyse and interpret and provides accurate, comprehensive, and  
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3 descriptive foundations; and (c) it can provide rich insights into issues of great  
4 importance which will benefit both management practitioners and researchers (Bryman  
5 and Bell, 2011; Cassell, 2009).  
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10 Furthermore, many studies undertaken on QWL in Nigeria are categorised according to  
11 the state or region in which the studies were undertaken (Awosusi, 2010; Fapohunda,  
12 2013; Mamedu, 2016). Hence, an empirical study that cuts across all the political zones  
13 in Nigeria is essential. This study was conducted in the public sector (government  
14 ministries and local governments) in Nigeria. This is because public sector employees  
15 are likely to have access to good QWL (Ford and Collinson, 2011), and have mostly been  
16 associated with unethical corrupt practices (Gbadamosi and Joubert, 2005; Gbadamosi  
17 et al, 2007). **Moreover, private sector employees have been previously investigated in  
18 Nigeria (Tongo, 2015).**  
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29 The interviews were guided by a semi-structured format with the aim of exploring the  
30 biographical components of employees' QWL and how regional crises and corruption  
31 have impacted QWL. The study is based on data from interviews with 103 employees  
32 across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. While efforts were made to obtain a  
33 representative sample spread, however, the restriction imposed by the voluntary nature  
34 of participation meant much of the sample selection was a mix of purposive and  
35 snowballing sampling. This was done to capture the employees' views and experiences  
36 about the subject matter and to achieve a fair representation of the Nigerian workers.  
37 The data collection exercise for this study took place between May and September 2017.  
38 The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted at the  
39 respondents' places of work. Interviews were conducted in the English language and  
40 were recorded and transcribed. Twenty-one respondents declined permission to record  
41 their voices during the interview and meticulous notes were taken instead. In this case,  
42 a research assistant was hired to also take notes. The two sets of notes were compared at  
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the end of the interview process to ensure that nothing had been omitted. The respondents were provided with a brief overview of the study and their anonymity was assured. They were also informed of their right to end their participation at any stage during the interview process. Following the principle of induction (Tenzer et al., 2014), the interviews began with open-ended questions. This allowed the respondents to explain their subjective views and experiences on the issue. The respondents were from government ministries and local governments, and they occupy managerial and non-managerial positions in the public sector, which make them appropriate respondents for this study.

Transcripts were analysed through close reading and re-reading, resulting in the emergence of related themes which were repeatedly highlighted by the respondents. For the sake of clarity, a narrative summary of each interview was prepared. Subsequently, open coding (identifying key points first) was applied (Boeije, 2005). At this stage, the researchers critically examined the words and phrases used by the respondents in the interviews and ensured that they were interpreted correctly (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The codes were then grouped into categories and marked with different colours. Thereafter, the categories were further fine-tuned until a representative overview was achieved. Investigator triangulation was applied (Polit and Beck, 2004) and periodic briefings were undertaken by the researchers to ensure reliability.

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. There were 51 females and 52 males, and the respondents' ages ranged from 34 to 55 years old. Respondents were all married and they have a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 15 years of work experience.

**Table 1**

Respondents	Age	Local	Ministries	Years in Service	Marital Status
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		<b>Governments</b>			
Male (52)	36 – 55	30	22	5 – 15	All married
Female (51)	34 – 53	17	34	7 – 12	All married

## Findings

The research findings are organised around the three major focuses of the study. Firstly, the study attempts to discover what QWL means to the respondents. Secondly, the relationship between corruption and QWL is presented. Finally, the relationship between regional crises and QWL is highlighted.

### The meaning of QWL to the Respondents

It is important, in this study, to investigate what QWL means to the respondents, as this constitutes a major objective of this article. The respondents were, therefore, asked this question, and the data analysis identified a variety of components which constitute good QWL for the surveyed Nigerian employees. This is summarised in Table 2, which also presents the five key themes emerging from the analysis, along with an example of the illustrative extracts for each theme from the respondents.

**Table 2 Emerging Themes with Illustrative Extracts**

<b>Overarching Research Question</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Illustrative Extracts</b>
What constitutes excellent QWL for you?	Receiving salary on time	'Getting salary on time is number one for me and I think it will be for all of my colleagues as well. It is 27 September and we are yet to receive our May salary. Sometimes, we are six months in arrears. Therefore, getting my salary when due is the first step in achieving an excellent QWL'.

	Job security	'For me, it is job security. People are losing their jobs on a daily basis. Four of my colleagues were made redundant last month. We now live in an era when you have a job in the morning and by the lunchtime you are jobless. That happens a lot now in Nigeria'.
	Safe working environment	'A safe working environment is number one for me. In this part of Nigeria, the murderous activities of Boko Haram terrify us (workers) and have even made some people emigrate elsewhere. We are always afraid that they are coming for our lives. A few months ago, they went to a local government council burnt it and killed about seven workers'.
	Financial rewards and benefits	'I think financial rewards and benefits in terms of paying them appropriately and paying them on time is most important in QWL. Such monies don't exist here at the moment'.
	Flexible work arrangements	'Flexible working arrangements will make my life a lot easier and add quality to both aspects of it (I mean work and nonwork). At the moment, it is a bit rough and hectic'.

From the accounts of respondents, the critical issues for QWL are the five themes summarised in Table 2. Nevertheless, the priority levels of the above five components of QWL differ among the respondents. For example, the respondents from north-east Nigeria mostly prioritised a safe working environment over other components, while workers from other parts of the country classified being paid on-time and job security as the most important components of QWL. The themes were, however, prevalent across all areas of the country.

### Corruption and QWL

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3 Generally, the employees' experiences in terms of the impact of corruption on their  
4 QWL were negative. An overwhelming majority of the respondents acceded that  
5 corruption is primarily responsible for the poor QWL currently experienced by  
6 Nigerian workers. The respondents commented on the ruthless embezzlement of funds  
7 by some senior government officials and how this impacted employees' QWL. One  
8 respondent commented:  
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16 'I think that employees' QWL would be excellent if our system could be rid of  
17 corruption. This vitiate has pervaded every aspect of public organisations and has a  
18 huge impact on employees' QWL. Can you imagine that money, meant to provide us  
19 with adequate security, never reached us? The council chairman was sacked for  
20 making incessant enquiries about it' (Respondent Q).  
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24 Another respondent agreed more succinctly:

25 'Every level of government is laced with corruption and this is what I mean. Monies  
26 that are meant for employees' welfare never got to them. Some people working for  
27 the government often embezzled the money. It has a negative effect on workers'  
28 QWL and standard of living' (Respondent M).  
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32 Another respondent cited an example of such embezzlement:

33 'I have never received any benefits. I am in my sixth year in this employment.  
34 Recently, we had another Head of Department who disbursed some packages to us  
35 last Christmas. To our surprise, this was not a new practice and it had been going on  
36 for more than ten years. We never received such packages and nobody mentioned  
37 them to us. The same thing for the training and development fund which is budgeted  
38 and allocated every year but never gets to us' (Respondent U).  
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43 Other respondents commented:

44 'For example, we have not received our April 2017 salary and this is September. The  
45 federal government said it has released the money to the state government, but we  
46 (the workers) have not received it. Last year, it was revealed how governors and local  
47 council chairmen kept workers' salaries in their accounts for months in order to  
48 generate bank interest. It's terrible, isn't it?' (Respondent Y).  
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52 'My annual leave and sick leave entitlements for last year were not paid. I was told  
53 that the money had been released by the government but got missing somewhere in  
54 the hierarchy. All my efforts to get it failed. A senior manager advised me not to talk  
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3 about it again, lest I might lose my job. He said that his advice was unofficial but  
4 candid' (Respondent H).  
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8 The data shows that the majority of the respondents felt that this is not fair to the  
9 workers and attributed the unfair treatment to the negative attitudes of some  
10 government workers towards their jobs. One respondent commented:  
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14 'Government workers (specifically those who work for state and local governments)  
15 are not fairly treated in terms of receiving salaries on time and getting financial  
16 rewards and other benefits. For example, I have not received my salary for five  
17 months. I think it's not fair and I think that is why most of the workers are not  
18 dedicated' (Respondent W).  
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22 Another respondent, who is a manager in her department said:  
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24 'Workers attitudes toward their jobs have been bad. The reason for that is primarily  
25 because of unpaid salaries. For example, in my department, only eight people came  
26 to work today. Five called in sick and two did not even bother to leave messages why  
27 they were absent. Do you blame them? They have not received their April 2017  
28 salaries and this is September. Would such a practice motivate them? I don't think so.  
29 They are not motivated' (Respondent B).  
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34 The respondents also commented on nepotism as another form of corruption. The  
35 promotion of junior and less qualified employees over more senior and experienced  
36 ones based on their relationships with top politicians or senior members of the  
37 organisation. This affects their QWL. One respondent shared her experience:  
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42 'I am sorry I cannot mention names (she pleaded). We are fourteen in my department  
43 and I was the most senior in terms of years in service and experience. Two senior  
44 positions were created on the authority of the chairman of the council...to my  
45 surprise; the positions were given to two junior colleagues. One is a family member  
46 of the chairman's wife and the other shares membership of a particular social group  
47 with the executive secretary of the council. This is despite that the two of them only  
48 joined the council less than three years before the appointments were made. To me  
49 and indeed to all of us, it was the zenith of the corruption that affects our working  
50 lives in terms of our psyche, motivation, attitude towards our jobs, and our  
51 relationship with the newly installed boss and management' (Respondent F).  
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5 As evidenced, the impact of corruption on the employees' QWL is particularly serious  
6 and has a negative effect on their living standards. This finding also suggests that  
7 employees' attitudes to work in terms of their commitment are adversely affected.  
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### 10 11 **Regional Crises and QWL** 12

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14 The findings with respect to the regional crises suggest that the QWL of employees  
15 working in some regions, especially north-east Nigeria, has been adversely affected due  
16 to the raging Boko Haram crisis there. The Boko Haram is a terrorist group that  
17 established itself as one of the relatively few *jihadi* movements to succeed in the capture,  
18 control, and governance of territory in Africa (Kassim, 2018), as evidenced by their  
19 previous proclamation and hoisted flags in some parts of north-east Nigeria. Starting  
20 from 2009 when they made their first proclamation, they terrorised people in the region  
21 until the last two years, when some semblance of Nigerian governmental control seems  
22 to be in place. Boko Haram is believed to have strong links with the notorious Al-Qaeda  
23 (Gaffey, 2017; Kassim, 2018). At the time of this research, some local government  
24 councils and government parastatals in this region are still practically deserted. The  
25 activities of this terrorist organisation are not only a source of considerable tension in  
26 this region but have also had a huge impact on employees' QWL. The following  
27 quotations typify the respondents' shared experiences:  
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43 '...In this part of Nigeria, the murderous activities of Boko Haram terrify us  
44 (workers) and have even made some people migrate elsewhere. We are always afraid  
45 that they are coming for our lives. A few months ago, they went to a local  
46 government council (I am sorry I cannot mention names), burnt it, and killed about  
47 seven workers' (Respondent P).  
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51 Another respondent shared her experience:

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53 'We were in that office (she pointed at a dilapidated building) in 2014 and we heard a  
54 bang, a bomb had just been detonated. Two of my colleagues lost their lives and I  
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3 and a few others got injured. Since then, I cannot get the incident out of my head and  
4 it affects me a lot' (Respondent M).  
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7 A senior member of the organisation commented:

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9 'This crisis has hugely affected the workers. They work in fear that their workplace  
10 could be attacked and they could lose their lives. In some areas within this region,  
11 some workers have stopped going to work and those that still go to work are not  
12 consistent. It is a big problem' (Respondent O).  
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15 While there are various crises in other parts of Nigeria, the Boko Haram crisis is  
16 particularly devastating and has caused huge damage to employee QWL. Furthermore,  
17 the respondents described their experiences with the IPOB's unrest in south-east  
18 Nigeria and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)'s activities in the south-south. These  
19 activities instil fear in workers, interrupt their work activities, and sometimes make  
20 their workplaces unsafe for them. For example, one respondent described her  
21 experience:  
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30 'A few weeks ago, the IPOB group gave orders that nobody should go to work in  
31 order for the federal government to take their agitation for secession seriously. On  
32 the other hand, a memo was circulated at work that whoever was absent without a  
33 good reason would lose their job. I went to work...the IPOB members stormed our  
34 office, harassed us, destroyed valuables, and forced us to go home...some of my  
35 colleagues were injured' (Respondent I).  
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39 A respondent from the south-south region described how her colleague lost her life in  
40 one of the NDA's attacks:  
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44 'The NDA struck some months ago. They destroyed oil pipes and killed two people  
45 in the oil company downtown. We were unable to go to work for a few days because  
46 a stray bullet had hit and killed my colleague who was returning from their lunch  
47 break. These people make life difficult and the work environment fearful'  
48 (Respondent X).  
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51 The respondents' accounts portray an intricate, multifaceted picture of terror,  
52 disturbances, and distractions in the workplace, which undoubtedly has a huge impact  
53 on employees' QWL.  
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## Discussion

The research has investigated how corruption and regional crises affect QWL and how these issues might affect workers' self-judgement, based on fairness theory and self-theory. The respondents' understanding of QWL confirmed that they identify the various components of good QWL to include receiving their salary on time, job security, a safe working environment, financial rewards and benefits, and flexible working arrangements. The aforementioned findings also highlight the impact of corruption and regional crises on Nigerian employees' QWL.

Nigerian workers suffer late and erratic payment of monthly salaries, sometimes up to six months in arrears. The respondents commented on the importance of job security for their QWL and despaired of the spate of job losses in the country. According to Gospel (2003) and Srivastava and Kanpur (2014), job security is one of the key elements of and an enhancer of QWL. The findings also reveal that a safe working environment remains a top priority for respondents, specifically workers in north-east, south-east, and south-south Nigeria. For example, the atrocious activities of the Boko Haram sect have made employees' working lives in the area miserable and hazardous. This group has destroyed many lives and properties in north-east Nigeria (Skyes, 2017; Zenn, 2018). Respondents live in fear of and have experienced emotional trauma due to various attacks unleashed on them at work, home, or during their commute by Boko Haram. Employees, particularly those who live and work in this region desire other components of QWL but considered a safe working environment as the most important component of good QWL. The European Union Employment Strategy agrees that employee safety at work is one of the essential indicators of QWL (Royula et al., 2008). Financial rewards and benefits are also considered important and respondents complained that they do not receive them. This is perhaps the reason Armstrong and Taylor (2017) described financial rewards and benefits as a panacea for achieving good



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3 QWL. Flexible working arrangements formed the last of the components of QWL. This  
4 reflects the findings of Canibano (2011) and the Future of Work Institute (2012), who  
5 found that flexible working arrangements often enhance the overall QWL of employees.  
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10 The empirical evidence provided in this study has revealed various corrupt practices  
11 which do not only affect workers' QWL but also affect their psyche and motivation to  
12 work. This evidence is supportive of the findings of other studies (Uwak and Udofoia,  
13 2016; Ijewereme, 2015), which found that corruption is a recurrent issue in Nigeria and  
14 one that has affected and ruined almost all aspects of life in Nigeria. The findings of this  
15 study add that corruption has disadvantaged Nigerian workers and has negatively  
16 affected their QWL. Employees' attitudes toward their job have been affected because  
17 they make cognitive comparisons and believe that they have been unfairly treated by  
18 'the system' and authorities. This resonates with fairness theory, which suggests that  
19 when employees find themselves in certain working conditions, they tend to make  
20 cognitive comparisons in terms of 'what is' and 'what might have been', which is  
21 known as 'counterfactual thoughts' (Cropanzano and Rupp, 2003; Elovainio et al., 2005;  
22 Folger and Cropanzano, 2001; Nicklin et al., 2011). It is therefore appropriate to argue,  
23 in the context of fairness theory, that people perceive an outcome as unfair when it has  
24 a negative effect on their interests and especially when others and not themselves can  
25 be held accountable for the outcome (Nicklin and Williams, 2009), as is the case with the  
26 corruption and regional crises examined here.  
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45 In this paper, we have defined QWL through the prism of the respondents themselves  
46 and have focused exclusively on two activities (corruption and internal regional crises)  
47 which are considered significantly disruptive to good QWL. This study has identified  
48 QWL measures to include corruption and internal strife that disrupt a peaceful life, both  
49 having rarely been explored in the study of QWL. Martel and Dupuis (2006) argued that  
50 with the help of reliable tools, developed based on rigorous theoretical models, it  
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3 should be possible to better assess QWL and thus intervene more effectively. They also  
4 highlighted the ambiguity concerning our understanding of QWL and argued that the  
5 concepts selected in its measurement or understanding make it possible to develop an  
6 operational measurement strategy for QWL. The aforementioned findings therefore  
7 support this position, demonstrating the value of contextualising our investigation and  
8 specifying the value of knowledge derived from additional variables, such as those  
9 investigated here, providing additional support to fairness theory.  
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12 The main contribution of this study is to bring corruption and regional crises into the  
13 discussion of QWL. Both concepts have emerged as barriers to achieving good QWL for  
14 Nigerian workers. This study offers two main contributions to the field. The first  
15 contribution relates to an understanding of what QWL means to Nigerian workers and  
16 the second is derived from insight into the effects of corruption and regional crises on  
17 employees' QWL. The findings revealed that top government officials can manipulate  
18 the pay system such that monies meant for employees' welfare and security are  
19 diverted for personal gain. The pervasiveness of this crime is further aided by the  
20 archaic and ineffective criminal justice system in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2008;  
21 Ogunode, 2015) which, despite the many cases of corruption, have seen only a few  
22 convictions recorded and those convicted faced relatively little or no prison time (EFCC,  
23 2015). Furthermore, this research highlights inconsistencies in the payment of workers'  
24 salaries. Many workers who participated in this study had not received their salary for  
25 three months or longer. This does not only affect their QWL, but also their morale and  
26 job motivation. Research evidence which is consistent with this reported finding has  
27 identified that QWL correlates significantly and positively with employees' motivation  
28 and the ability to contribute positively to society through their jobs (Shankar, 2014;  
29 Tongo, 2015). In addition, this finding challenges the conventional wisdom of the  
30 Institute of Employment Research (IER), modern civil society, and breaches the  
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3 contractual agreement between employer and employee. Workers should receive their  
4 salaries/wages promptly when due (Taylor, 2017).  
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7 Furthermore, anecdotal reports show that many Nigerian workers (especially those in  
8 the public sector [state and local governments]) receive relatively low salaries. This  
9 phenomenon is further deteriorated by a backlog of unpaid salaries. For example, the  
10 Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) criticised the government  
11 for up to 16 months of unpaid salaries (Premium Times, 2017). Additionally, this study  
12 unearthed a multiplicity of corrupt practices including the embezzlement of employees'  
13 financial benefits and practices of favouritism and nepotism. Workers have been  
14 deprived of financial rewards and benefits and appointments to positions have been  
15 made based on family and social group affiliations rather than on merit. These practices  
16 disadvantage employees and negatively affect their psyche, emotions, attitudes toward  
17 work, and relationships with management. Consequently, their QWL is negatively  
18 affected. This article indicates that regional crises upset employees' wellbeing and  
19 safety. For example, Boko Haram has made working in north-east Nigeria dangerous.  
20 This group has killed and injured scores of workers. A safe working environment, in  
21 this region has become almost impossible (Obi and Eboreime, 2017; Zenn, 2018).  
22 Furthermore, the IPOB's agitation and the NDA's unrest have distressed employees,  
23 planted fear in them, and often make the working environment unsafe. These  
24 phenomena depict a picture of terror in the working environment which undoubtedly  
25 has a strong negative impact on employees' QWL. The notion of QWL may go beyond  
26 an individual employee; however, it is essential that the employees' components of  
27 QWL are contextualised in workplace policies and practices. This will allow employers  
28 the capacity to improve employees' QWL. QWL of Nigerian workers (especially those  
29 working in the state and local governments) is dire. Achieving good QWL is restricted  
30 by various corrupt practices and abhorrent regional crises. However, based on the  
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3 results obtained by this study, it is safe to infer that employees may continue to struggle  
4 to achieve good QWL if the situation does not change.  
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### 7 8 **Implications** 9

10 The findings reveal that corruption affects QWL and explicitly affect employees'  
11 motivation and their attitudes toward work. For example, the respondents decried the  
12 promotion of junior and less qualified employees over the more senior and experienced  
13 ones. This practice is based on familial connections and social/political affiliations and  
14 has a strongly negative effect on employees' morale and performance. This is  
15 antithetical to the moral rectitude and justice required by fairness theory (Cropanzano,  
16 2001; Cropanzano and Rupp, 2003; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001). Organisations must  
17 ensure that promotion is based on competency, experience, and merit. Additionally, a  
18 system to ensure that employees receive adequate salaries, financial rewards, and  
19 benefits (on time) should be put in place in order to enhance employees' QWL. This is  
20 because working without salary affects the employees' beliefs, attitudes, and opinions  
21 about QWL. Furthermore, it affects employees' fundamental need to maintain or  
22 enhance themselves as propounded by self-theory (Snyder and Williams, 1982).  
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37 In addition, regional crises have claimed many employees' lives and have caused fear in  
38 the minds of others. An unsafe working environment is detrimental to employees'  
39 QWL. It is therefore logical to argue that all the abovementioned issues are clear  
40 breaches of the psychological contract between employer and employee, which is based  
41 on expectations, beliefs, reciprocity, and obligations from both sides (Bellou, 2009; De  
42 Cuyper and De Witte, 2006; De Hauw and De Vos, 2010; Rousseau, 1989). Thus, one  
43 implication of the above findings is the urgent need to generally promote and  
44 acculturate positive corporate governance as well as international best practices in good  
45 governance at the national, state, and local government levels in Nigeria. It is  
46 particularly noteworthy that the reported occurrences of pervasive social corruption  
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3 and horrendous social crises (all of which have had spillover effects on QWL) are  
4 evident products of a multitude of structural challenges of governance and  
5 development, including a lack of inclusive governance and symmetrical development  
6 across the vast and hugely diverse geopolitical landscape of Nigeria. Another  
7 implication of the research findings bodes well for organisational management  
8 purposes in terms of general strategic HRM-driven action which could catalyse QWL.  
9 This will enhance plans and programmes for the achievement of sustainable employer-  
10 employee relations and organisational development. In addition, there are concerns  
11 about the possibility of the systematic mitigation of the continuing experience of the  
12 pangs of social impoverishment by the working populace, which again impacts QWL.  
13 The likely achievement thereof requires the combined functions of strategic  
14 organisational management, symmetrical social policies on employment and labour  
15 markets, and good governance in general.  
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30 The results of this study also have important implications for both economic and public  
31 policy. The research contributes to the body of knowledge on QWL by specifying the  
32 value of isolating different potential contributors to a deeper conceptual understanding  
33 of QWL. With the results evidenced here, corruption and regional crises adversely  
34 affect employees' QWL and ultimately their performance and productivity. They also  
35 influence public attitudes and affect quality of life more broadly. Therefore, these  
36 problems call for urgent attention and a consideration of novel solutions for these  
37 issues, which are critical not only in the lives of the general citizenry, but specifically in  
38 the QWL of employees. Paying full attention to these issues with a determination to  
39 address them should therefore be a public policy priority. Furthermore, the government  
40 and the management teams of various organisations must provide a safe working  
41 environment for employees where they will be able to work without fear, exploitation,  
42 and intimidation. This will enhance their QWL and performance at work. Future  
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3 studies should investigate other crises, the general and specific organisational practices  
4 that inhibit QWL, and broad social-contextual factors which tend to affect employees'  
5 QWL in Nigeria, perhaps through the usage of different research strategies and study  
6 methodologies.  
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## 11 **Conclusion**

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14 This study has investigated the impact of corruption and regional crises on employees'  
15 QWL in Nigeria. The aim of the study was to uncover not only the impact of but also  
16 the components of QWL for Nigerian workers. The findings suggest that 'receiving  
17 salary on time, job security, a safe working environment, financial rewards and benefits,  
18 and flexible working arrangements matter to employees and constitute good QWL for  
19 them. In other words, Nigerian workers refer to these factors when they discuss QWL.  
20 Finally, this study also revealed the impact of regional crises on employees' QWL. The  
21 terrorist group Boko Haram, the secessionist movement IPOB, and the militia group  
22 NDA have all made work environments unsafe due to their dangerous activities in  
23 different regions of Nigeria. Many employees have lost lives and are fearful due to the  
24 unsafe nature of their working environment. Corruption and regional crises have  
25 negatively impacted the QWL of many respondents. This study thus suggests that the  
26 system should be sanitised of its corrupt practices and regional crises to enhance  
27 employees' QWL, which will positively impact their productivity.  
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