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Working Conditions and Welfare of Adjunct Faculty in Liberian Universities: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This study examines the working conditions of adjunct faculty in selected Liberian universities, focusing on employment security, remuneration, institutional resources, and opportunities for professional and scholarly development. The study was guided by Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Precarity Theory (Standing, 2011), which provide complementary perspectives for understanding resource constraints and employment insecurity among adjunct faculty. A qualitative research design was employed, and data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 60 adjunct faculty members purposively selected from four Liberian universities: the University of Liberia, Cuttington University, African Methodist Episcopal Zion University, and African Methodist Episcopal University. Fifteen participants were selected from each institution based on predefined eligibility criteria. Data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively, with attention to emerging codes and themes, and continued until additional interviews yielded no substantively new information. Findings indicate that adjunct faculty commonly experience semester-based appointments, uncertain course assignments, low and delayed remuneration, inadequate workspace and institutional resources, limited career advancement opportunities, and constrained opportunities for research and professional development. Participants also described reliance on multiple academic appointments as a strategy for managing financial and employment insecurity. COR Theory highlights threats to financial, material, temporal, and professional resources, while Precarity

Theory illuminates the insecurity associated with temporary employment and limited pathways to full-time academic positions. The study recommends transparent pathways to full-time employment, appropriate national standards for adjunct faculty compensation and utilization, timely payment, improved institutional resources, and expanded professional development opportunities.

Keywords: Adjunct faculty; Working conditions; Employment precarity; Remuneration; Conservation of Resources Theory; Precarity Theory

1. Introduction

Higher education systems increasingly rely on non-tenure-track and part-time faculty to meet teaching needs. The expansion of adjunct employment has generated sustained debate concerning remuneration, job security, institutional inclusion, professional development, and the conditions under which teaching is performed. Shulman (2019), for example, describes the growth of adjunct employment and the economic incentives institutions may have to rely on part-time faculty. Pons et al. (2017) similarly identify the diversity of reasons individuals undertake part-time teaching and emphasize that adjunct faculty should not be treated as a homogeneous group. Kezar and Sam (2010) also distinguish among different forms of non-tenure-track employment and draw attention to the varied experiences and expectations of faculty working outside traditional tenure arrangements.

The international literature suggests that adjunct faculty may experience limited access to office space, professional development, institutional decision-making, benefits, and career advancement. These conditions matter not only for faculty welfare but also for the institutional environment in which teaching takes place. Eagan et al. (2015) found that job satisfaction among part-time faculty is related to institutional support, autonomy, professional relationships, resources, and opportunities for advancement. Chun et al. (2019) likewise demonstrate that institutions communicate different levels of support for adjunct faculty through their policies and institutional practices.

The Liberian higher-education context provides an important setting in which to examine these issues. The manuscript's institutional records, as reported in the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 2024), indicate substantial reliance on adjunct faculty in several Liberian universities. The reported figures include at least 50% adjunct faculty at the University of Liberia, approximately 63% at African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU), a predominantly adjunct teaching workforce at African Methodist Episcopal Zion University (AME Zion University), and substantial adjunct representation at Cuttington University's graduate and undergraduate programs. These figures indicate that adjunct employment is not a marginal feature of the system but an important component of how teaching is organized. At the same time, adjunct faculty in Liberia may occupy different positions in the labor market. Some may have permanent employment outside the university, while others may seek full-time academic employment but remain in part-time positions. This distinction is important because voluntary and involuntary forms of adjunct employment may be associated with different expectations, levels of satisfaction, and perceptions of institutional support (Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2010). Treating all adjunct faculty as a single category may therefore obscure important differences in their experiences.

Against this background, we examine the working conditions and welfare of adjunct faculty in four Liberian universities. The study

focuses on appointment practices, remuneration, payment procedures, institutional resources, professional advancement, and participants' perceptions of how these conditions affect their teaching and professional engagement. The study does not attempt to establish causal relationships between working conditions and educational outcomes. Rather, it documents participants' experiences and interpretations and considers their implications for higher-education policy and institutional practice.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study has two objectives:

1. To examine the working conditions of adjunct faculty in four Liberian universities, including workload, remuneration, institutional resources, and professional support.
2. To explore adjunct faculty members' perceptions of how their working conditions affect their teaching, professional engagement, institutional participation, and opportunities for scholarly activity.

2.1. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the experiences of adjunct faculty in four selected Liberian universities. Particular attention is given to contractual arrangements, course allocation, remuneration, payment timing, office and teaching resources, opportunities for professional development and advancement, and the reasons participants continue to undertake adjunct teaching. The study also considers participants' accounts of financial pressure, work across multiple institutions, and the perceived implications of these conditions for teaching and scholarly engagement. Because the study is qualitative and institutionally bounded, its findings are not intended to represent all adjunct faculty or all universities in Liberia.

3. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

3.1. Adjunct Faculty and Faculty Welfare

Adjunct faculty occupy a varied position within higher education. Some individuals teach part-time while maintaining established careers outside academia, whereas others use adjunct teaching as a route into academic employment. Pons et al. (2017) identify career-enders, specialists or professionals, aspiring academics, and freelancers as broad categories of part-time faculty. This typology is useful because it highlights the heterogeneity of adjunct employment and cautions against assuming that all part-time faculty experience their employment in the same way.

Faculty welfare in this study is understood broadly as the conditions that shape adjunct faculty members' professional and economic experience of academic work. These conditions include remuneration, employment security, access to institutional

resources, professional recognition, opportunities for advancement, and the ability to perform teaching and student-support responsibilities under reasonable institutional conditions. Faculty welfare is therefore treated as a multidimensional concept rather than as a synonym for job satisfaction.

3.2. Voluntary and Involuntary Adjunct Employment

The distinction between voluntary and involuntary adjunct employment is central to understanding faculty experiences. Voluntary adjunct faculty may prefer part-time teaching because it complements another occupation, provides professional engagement after retirement, or offers flexibility. Involuntary adjunct faculty, by contrast, may prefer full-time academic employment but accept part-time appointments because alternative opportunities are limited. Eagan et al. (2015) report differences in satisfaction associated with these employment preferences. In the Liberian context, this distinction is particularly relevant because participants may enter adjunct employment for different economic and professional reasons.

3.3. Underemployment

Underemployment refers to situations in which individuals work fewer hours than they would prefer or perform work that does not fully utilize their skills and qualifications. The concept is relevant to adjunct faculty who possess advanced academic qualifications but have limited course assignments, limited employment security, or restricted opportunities to use their expertise beyond classroom teaching. The consequences of underemployment may include dissatisfaction with advancement opportunities, insecurity, and reduced organizational commitment (Eagan et al., 2015). In this study, however, underemployment is treated as a conceptual lens rather than as a condition automatically applicable to every adjunct faculty member.

3.4. Institutional Support and Satisfaction

Research suggests that institutional support is associated with faculty satisfaction. Eagan et al. (2015) identify relationships between satisfaction and factors such as administrative relationships, respect, office arrangements, access to computers, alignment between professional expertise and assigned courses, and recognition of teaching and research. These findings suggest that remuneration alone does not capture the full welfare experience of adjunct faculty. The availability of basic institutional resources and professional recognition may also influence how adjuncts experience their work.

3.5. Motivation

Motivation can involve both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Intrinsic motivation concerns engagement in an activity because it is inherently meaningful or satisfying, whereas extrinsic motivation is associated with separable outcomes such as income, recognition, or career advancement (Kaplan et al., 2009; Pons et al., 2017). For adjunct faculty, teaching may provide intrinsic rewards such as professional identity, interaction with students, and intellectual engagement even when extrinsic conditions are less favorable. The coexistence of satisfaction with teaching and dissatisfaction with employment conditions is therefore analytically possible and should not be treated as contradictory

4. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two complementary theoretical perspectives: Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Precarity Theory. The two theories were selected because they provide a focused framework for examining the material and employment-related conditions experienced by adjunct faculty in Liberian universities. COR Theory directs attention to the resources faculty members possess, lose, or struggle to protect, whereas Precarity Theory focuses on employment insecurity, instability, and limited control over the conditions of work. Together, the theories provide an analytical framework for examining remuneration, delayed payment, institutional resources, workload, contractual uncertainty, and limited career progression shape adjunct faculty members' experiences.

Rather than treating the two theories as separate explanatory models, we use them as complementary interpretive lenses throughout the study. COR Theory is particularly relevant to questions concerning remuneration, time, workload, institutional resources, and the pressures associated with teaching across multiple institutions. Precarity Theory is particularly relevant to questions concerning temporary appointments, uncertainty about future course assignments, lack of career progression, and the reasons faculty remain in adjunct employment. The two perspectives therefore provide a direct connection between the research objectives, interview questions, coding process, interpretation of themes, and discussion of findings.

4.1. Conservation of Resources Theory

Conservation of Resources Theory was developed by Hobfoll (1989) to explain how individuals seek to obtain, retain, protect, and build resources and how stress may arise when valued resources are threatened or lost. Resources may include material and financial resources, time, social support, employment conditions, and other resources that individuals value or use to achieve desired outcomes. From this perspective, resource loss is particularly important because individuals may experience strain when the resources required to perform their roles are insufficient or uncertain (Hobfoll, 1989). COR Theory is appropriate for this study because the welfare of adjunct faculty cannot be understood solely in terms of whether they are employed. The quality and stability of the resources associated with that employment are also important. For adjunct faculty, relevant resources include remuneration, timely payment, teaching facilities, office space, access to institutional technology, time for preparation and research, professional recognition, and institutional support. Where these resources are limited, delayed, or uncertain, faculty may have to use additional personal resources to meet their academic responsibilities. The theory therefore guides the study's examination of the material and institutional conditions under which adjunct faculty work. For example, questions concerning delayed payment examine the availability and predictability of financial resources; questions concerning multiple institutional appointments examine the expenditure of time and energy; and questions concerning office space, internet access, and teaching facilities examine institutional resources available to support academic work. COR Theory also guides the interpretation of participants' accounts. During coding, statements concerning financial insecurity, delayed remuneration, excessive or fragmented workload, inadequate facilities, lack of institutional support, and limited time for scholarly activity can be grouped as indicators of resource constraints or resource threats. The resulting themes can then be interpreted in terms of how participants

perceive the accumulation, depletion, protection, or absence of resources necessary to perform their academic roles. Importantly, COR Theory is used in this study as an interpretive framework rather than as evidence that specific working conditions directly cause stress, burnout, or poor teaching performance. Because the study is qualitative, the analysis focuses on participants' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions rather than attempting to establish causal relationships.

4.2. Precarity Theory

The second theoretical perspective is Precarity Theory, particularly Guy Standing's analysis of precarious and insecure employment. Standing (2011) describes precarity in relation to forms of employment characterized by insecurity, unstable occupational identities, limited employment protection, and uncertain future prospects. His analysis is useful for examining work arrangements in which individuals may remain employed but lack the stability, predictability, and security normally associated with more established forms of employment. Precarity Theory is particularly relevant to the reported use of semester-based appointments and uncertain course assignments among adjunct faculty. Where faculty members are appointed for limited periods and cannot predict whether they will receive courses in subsequent semesters, employment may be experienced as uncertain even when teaching opportunities remain available. The theory therefore allows the study to examine not simply whether adjunct faculty have work, but the degree of stability, predictability, and professional security associated with that work. The theory also provides a framework for examining limited opportunities for career advancement. If adjunct faculty remain in temporary positions for extended periods without a transparent pathway toward more stable academic employment, their employment may be characterized by continuing uncertainty. This perspective is particularly important for participants who report that they would prefer full-time academic employment but continue to depend on adjunct appointments. Precarity Theory consequently guides both the interview process and the analysis. Interview questions address the duration and predictability of appointments, expectations concerning future course assignments, opportunities for promotion or transition to full-time employment, reasons for remaining in adjunct positions, and the extent to which faculty combine teaching at several institutions. During coding, these responses can be organized around themes such as employment insecurity, contractual uncertainty, limited career progression, constrained choice, and dependence on multiple appointments. The theory also helps explain why adjunct faculty may remain in employment arrangements they perceive as unsatisfactory. Remaining in adjunct employment does not necessarily mean that faculty are satisfied with their circumstances. Some may value academic teaching, while others may remain because of limited alternatives, financial needs, professional identity, or the hope of obtaining more stable employment. Precarity Theory therefore allows the analysis to distinguish between the existence of employment and the quality and security of that employment.

4.3. Integrated Theoretical Proposition

Taken together, COR Theory and Precarity Theory suggest that adjunct faculty welfare can be understood through two interconnected dimensions: resource security and employment security. Resource security concerns whether faculty have adequate and predictable financial, material, institutional, and temporal resources to perform their academic roles. Employment security

concerns whether faculty experience their appointments as stable, predictable, and capable of providing a meaningful pathway for professional development. The relationship between these dimensions provides a useful framework for interpreting the study. An adjunct faculty member may have an appointment but experience limited resource security because remuneration is low or delayed. Similarly, a faculty member may possess adequate teaching resources but experience employment insecurity because future course assignments are uncertain. The combined framework therefore avoids reducing adjunct welfare to salary alone and recognizes that employment conditions involve both the resources available for performing academic work and the stability of the employment relationship.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design and Data Collection

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and working conditions of adjunct faculty in selected universities in Liberia. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of adjunct employment, including employment arrangements, remuneration, institutional support, career development, and challenges associated with financial insecurity.

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted both in person and through secure digital communication channels. The semi-structured format provided consistency across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on experiences that were particularly relevant to their circumstances. The interview guide focused on four broad thematic domains: (1) the nature of part-time contracts and payment practices; (2) working conditions, including access to institutional resources and professional support; (3) opportunities for research, career advancement, and institutional inclusion; and (4) financial and personal pressures associated with adjunct employment.

5.2. Population of the Study

The study population comprised adjunct and part-time faculty members working at four selected universities in Liberia: the University of Liberia, Cuttington University, African Methodist Episcopal Zion University, and African Methodist Episcopal University. These institutions were selected to provide representation of different institutional settings within Liberian higher education.

5.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who met the study's eligibility criteria and possessed direct experience of adjunct employment. Fifteen adjunct faculty members were selected from each of the four participating universities, resulting in an achieved sample of 60 participants.

Participants were eligible for inclusion if they (1) were currently employed as part-time or adjunct faculty; (2) relied on teaching as either a primary or secondary source of income; and (3) had taught for at least two consecutive semesters.

The sample of 60 participants was treated as the achieved sample rather than as a universal numerical requirement for qualitative research. Data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively, with attention to emerging information, codes, and themes. Adequacy of the sample was assessed in relation to the richness and relevance of the data and whether additional interviews were generating

substantively new information relevant to the research questions. Guest et al. (2006) reported substantial thematic saturation within a relatively limited number of interviews in their particular study; however, their findings do not establish a universal numerical threshold for qualitative sample sizes. Accordingly, the present study considered the sufficiency and depth of the interview data, rather than reliance on a fixed numerical rule, when assessing the adequacy of the sample.

5.4. Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

The authors recognize that their professional experience as adjunct faculty places them in an insider position in relation to the phenomenon examined in this study. This positionality provided contextual familiarity with adjunct employment and informed the researchers' understanding of the issues explored during data collection. At the same time, the authors recognized the possibility that their experiences and expectations could influence the framing of interview questions, interactions with participants, and interpretation of the data. To address this consideration, the researchers maintained a reflexive approach throughout the research process, distinguishing their own experiences from participants' accounts and grounding the analysis in the interview data and emerging themes. The authors did not treat their personal experiences as participant data or as a basis for generalizing the findings. This approach was intended to strengthen transparency and analytical credibility while recognizing the researchers' relationship to the subject under investigation.

6. Findings

6.1. Working Conditions of Adjunct Faculty in Liberian Universities

The interviews revealed several recurring concerns regarding the working conditions of adjunct faculty across the four participating universities. These concerns related primarily to temporary employment arrangements, remuneration and payment delays, access to office space and institutional resources, and limited opportunities for career advancement.

6.2. Part-Time Contracts and Employment Security

Participants described adjunct appointments as predominantly temporary and semester-based, with teaching assignments generally determined according to institutional needs and available courses. Several participants indicated that they received no assurance that they would be retained or assigned courses in subsequent semesters. Participants also described considerable dependence on departmental decision-making concerning course allocation and continued engagement.

Many participants reported that they would prefer more stable or full-time academic appointments but had remained in adjunct positions because opportunities for permanent employment were limited. Participants further indicated that they were not aware of clearly defined institutional pathways through which long-serving adjunct faculty could transition to full-time academic positions. The accounts also suggested that some faculty members had remained in adjunct positions for extended periods without access to promotion or a clearly defined career progression mechanism. These experiences point to concerns about employment security and professional advancement within the participating institutions.

6.3. Remuneration and Payment Practices

Participants reported substantial differences in compensation among the four universities. According to the information provided during the study, terminal-degree holders at the University of Liberia received approximately US\$200 per course, while master's-degree holders received approximately US\$150 per course. At Cuttington University, participants reported approximately US\$250 per course for terminal-degree holders and US\$150 for master's-degree holders. Participants reported that African Methodist Episcopal University paid approximately US\$100 per course regardless of academic qualification, while African Methodist Episcopal Zion University paid approximately US\$50 per course regardless of qualification.

Participants also consistently identified delays in payment as a major concern. Several reported that adjunct faculty could wait until the end of a semester before receiving payment for courses taught, whereas full-time faculty were generally paid on a regular monthly basis. Participants described these payment delays as creating substantial financial difficulties during the academic term, particularly for individuals who depended on teaching income to meet routine living expenses.

Some participants additionally reported concerns about inappropriate requests or expectations associated with course allocation and continued employment. Because these accounts constitute participants' reports, they should be understood as reported experiences rather than independently verified institutional practices.

6.4. Office Space and Institutional Support

Participants reported limited or no access to dedicated office space for adjunct faculty at the participating institutions. This was described as particularly problematic because adjunct faculty were expected to meet with students for academic advising, consultation, or counseling.

In the absence of dedicated office facilities, participants reported using available common areas, restaurants, or other informal spaces to meet students. Participants who maintained employment elsewhere indicated that they sometimes relied on offices or facilities outside the university to address student-related matters. These circumstances were perceived as limiting the professional environment in which adjunct faculty could interact with students.

6.5. Effects of Working Conditions on Faculty Engagement and Service Delivery

Participants' accounts indicated that the conditions associated with adjunct employment affected their ability to engage fully in academic activities. A recurring theme was the need to teach at multiple institutions to supplement income. Because adjunct appointments were generally limited in scope and duration, participants reported accepting teaching assignments at several universities, which resulted in extensive travel and fragmented schedules.

Participants associated these circumstances with difficulties in maintaining continuity, preparing adequately for classes, meeting with students, and participating in broader institutional activities. However, because the study relied on qualitative accounts, these findings are best understood as participants' perceptions of how employment conditions affected their professional engagement rather than as a quantitative measure of teaching effectiveness.

Financial insecurity was another prominent theme. Participants described delayed compensation and the absence of income between academic periods as sources of considerable financial pressure. Several participants indicated that these circumstances affected their concentration, morale, and ability to devote time and resources to academic responsibilities.

Some participants also expressed concern that financial hardship could create conditions in which unethical practices, including inappropriate financial relationships between faculty and students, might occur. These accounts warrant attention; however, the qualitative data do not establish the prevalence or causal relationship between financial insecurity and academic misconduct. The findings therefore point to a perceived institutional risk rather than demonstrating that adjunct faculty generally engage in grade-related misconduct.

6.6. Limited Opportunities for Research and Career Development

Participants further described limited opportunities to engage in research, professional development, and institutional decision-making. The combination of teaching across multiple institutions, financial pressures, and the temporary nature of adjunct appointments was perceived as reducing the time and institutional support available for scholarly activities.

Participants indicated that their primary contribution was often concentrated on classroom teaching, with limited opportunities to participate in research or other activities associated with broader university missions. The findings therefore suggest that the conditions of adjunct employment may constrain faculty participation in research and institutional development, particularly where adjunct faculty lack access to research support, institutional resources, or pathways for professional advancement.

Findings

6.7. Working Conditions of Adjunct Faculty in Liberian Universities

The interviews revealed recurring concerns regarding employment insecurity, remuneration and payment practices, access to institutional resources, career advancement, and the financial pressures associated with adjunct employment. These findings are interpreted through the complementary lenses of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Precarity Theory (Standing, 2011). COR Theory draws attention to the availability, loss, and protection of material, temporal, social, and institutional resources, while Precarity Theory focuses on employment insecurity, limited protection, uncertain future prospects, and constrained career progression.

6.8. Part-Time Contracts and Employment Security

Participants described adjunct appointments as predominantly temporary and semester-based, with teaching assignments generally determined according to institutional needs and available courses. Several participants indicated that they received no assurance that they would be retained or assigned courses in subsequent semesters. Participants also described considerable dependence on departmental decision-making concerning course allocation and continued engagement.

From the perspective of Precarity Theory, these experiences reflect employment characterized by uncertainty and limited predictability. Although participants remained employed, their

employment did not necessarily provide the stability normally associated with more secure academic appointments. The inability to predict future teaching assignments was particularly significant because continued access to courses was closely connected to participants' income and professional continuity.

Many participants reported that they would prefer more stable or full-time academic appointments but had remained in adjunct positions because opportunities for permanent employment were limited. Participants further indicated that they were not aware of clearly defined institutional pathways through which long-serving adjunct faculty could transition to full-time academic positions.

These accounts also reflect the resource concerns emphasized by COR Theory. Employment continuity represents an important resource because it provides income, professional stability, and the ability to plan for future needs. When continued employment is uncertain, participants may perceive their financial and professional resources as vulnerable. Thus, the findings suggest that contractual uncertainty operates not only as an employment issue but also as a potential threat to resources upon which faculty depend.

6.9. Remuneration and Payment Practices

Participants reported substantial differences in compensation among the four universities. According to the information provided during the interviews, terminal-degree holders at the University of Liberia received approximately US\$200 per course, while master's-degree holders received approximately US\$150 per course. At Cuttington University, participants reported approximately US\$250 per course for terminal-degree holders and US\$150 for master's-degree holders. Participants reported that African Methodist Episcopal University paid approximately US\$100 per course regardless of academic qualification, while African Methodist Episcopal Zion University paid approximately US\$50 per course regardless of qualification.

Participants also consistently identified delays in payment as a major concern. Several reported that adjunct faculty could wait until the end of a semester before receiving payment for courses taught, whereas full-time faculty were generally paid on a regular monthly basis. Participants described these delays as creating substantial financial difficulties during the academic term.

These findings are particularly relevant to COR Theory because remuneration constitutes a direct material resource. The issue identified by participants was not simply the amount of compensation but also its predictability and timing. Delayed payment may make it more difficult for individuals to manage other valued resources, including time, transportation, household expenses, and professional obligations. Participants' accounts therefore suggest that uncertainty surrounding financial resources formed an important component of their experience of adjunct employment.

From a precarity perspective, irregular and delayed remuneration may further reinforce employment insecurity. An appointment that provides work but does not provide predictable or timely income may offer limited economic security. Thus, the findings demonstrate the distinction between being employed and experiencing secure employment.

Some participants additionally reported concerns about inappropriate requests or expectations associated with course allocation and continued employment. These accounts are presented as participants' reported experiences and should not be

interpreted as independently verified evidence of institutional misconduct.

6.10. Office Space and Institutional Resources

Participants reported limited or no access to dedicated office space for adjunct faculty at the participating institutions. This was described as problematic because adjunct faculty were expected to meet with students for academic advising, consultation, or counseling.

In the absence of dedicated office facilities, participants reported using available common areas, restaurants, or other informal spaces to meet students. Participants who maintained employment elsewhere indicated that they sometimes relied on offices or facilities outside the university to address student-related matters.

These findings are consistent with the resource perspective of COR Theory. Office space, institutional technology, teaching facilities, and other forms of organizational support constitute resources that can facilitate the performance of academic responsibilities. Where such resources are unavailable, faculty may need to draw upon personal resources, including their own time, money, transportation, and alternative workspaces, to perform institutional responsibilities.

The issue therefore extends beyond physical facilities. The findings suggest that limited institutional resources may require adjunct faculty to compensate through the expenditure of additional personal resources.

6.11. Effects of Working Conditions on Faculty Engagement and Service Delivery

Participants' accounts indicated that the conditions associated with adjunct employment affected their ability to engage fully in academic activities. A recurring theme was the need to teach at multiple institutions to supplement income. Because adjunct appointments were generally limited in scope and duration, participants reported accepting teaching assignments at several universities, resulting in extensive travel and fragmented schedules.

From the perspective of COR Theory, multiple appointments can be understood as an effort to obtain or protect financial resources while simultaneously requiring the expenditure of additional resources, particularly time and energy. Participants may therefore experience a tension between acquiring financial resources through additional teaching and expending the time and energy necessary to travel between institutions and fulfill multiple teaching responsibilities.

Precarity Theory provides a complementary interpretation. The need to combine appointments across several institutions may reflect the limited economic security associated with individual adjunct positions. Rather than indicating professional preference alone, multiple appointments may represent an adaptation to uncertain and insufficient employment opportunities.

Participants associated fragmented schedules with difficulties in maintaining continuity, preparing adequately for classes, meeting with students, and participating in broader institutional activities. Because the study is qualitative, these findings are interpreted as participants' perceptions of how employment conditions affected their professional engagement rather than as a quantitative measure of teaching effectiveness.

Financial insecurity was another prominent theme. Participants described delayed compensation and the absence of income between academic periods as sources of considerable financial pressure. Several participants indicated that these circumstances affected their concentration, morale, and ability to devote time and resources to academic responsibilities.

Within COR Theory, these accounts can be interpreted as experiences of threatened or depleted resources. Participants described circumstances in which financial resources were uncertain while time and energy were increasingly required to sustain employment. The findings do not establish that these conditions caused stress or reduced teaching effectiveness; rather, they demonstrate how participants perceived the relationship between resource constraints and their professional experiences.

Some participants also expressed concern that financial hardship could create conditions in which unethical practices, including inappropriate financial relationships between faculty and students, might occur. These accounts warrant attention but do not establish the prevalence or causality of academic misconduct. They are therefore interpreted as participants' perceptions of institutional vulnerability rather than evidence that adjunct faculty generally engage in unethical conduct.

6.12. Limited Opportunities for Research and Career Development

Participants described limited opportunities to engage in research, professional development, and institutional decision-making. The combination of teaching across multiple institutions, financial pressures, and the temporary nature of adjunct appointments was perceived as reducing the time and institutional support available for scholarly activities.

COR Theory provides a useful framework for interpreting these findings because time is itself a valued resource. When substantial amounts of time and energy are devoted to multiple teaching assignments and travel between institutions, fewer resources may remain available for research, publication, professional development, and other scholarly activities.

Precarity Theory further illuminates the career-development dimension of these findings. Participants who remain in temporary appointments without transparent pathways toward more stable academic employment may experience continuing uncertainty regarding their professional futures. The absence of promotion opportunities or pathways to full-time employment may therefore reinforce the perception of adjunct work as a continuing rather than transitional employment arrangement.

Participants indicated that their primary contribution was often concentrated on classroom teaching, with limited opportunities to participate in research or other activities associated with broader university missions. The findings suggest that the conditions of adjunct employment may constrain faculty participation in scholarly and institutional activities, particularly where adjunct faculty lack access to research support, institutional resources, or career-development opportunities.

7. Discussion of Findings

The findings provide insight into the precarious nature of adjunct employment within the four participating Liberian universities. Participants consistently described employment insecurity, delayed and relatively low compensation, limited institutional resources,

and restricted opportunities for career advancement. The two theoretical perspectives employed in this study provide complementary explanations for these experiences.

Precarity Theory helps explain the structure and quality of the employment relationship, while COR Theory helps explain the resource implications of that relationship for faculty members. Together, the theories provide a framework for understanding why the existence of employment does not necessarily equate to employment security or adequate working conditions.

The reliance on short-term or semester-based appointments emerged as a central concern. Participants described uncertainty regarding subsequent course assignments and considerable dependence on departmental decisions concerning teaching opportunities. From a Precarity Theory perspective, these circumstances represent important dimensions of insecure employment because the continuation, predictability, and future value of work remain uncertain. Participants' reports of remaining in adjunct positions for extended periods without clear pathways toward full-time employment further illustrate the persistence of employment insecurity.

The findings also demonstrate the relevance of COR Theory. Continued access to employment represents an important resource because it provides income and supports professional and personal planning. When future course assignments are uncertain, participants may perceive not only their employment but also the financial and professional resources associated with it as vulnerable. The findings therefore suggest that employment insecurity and resource insecurity are interconnected dimensions of adjunct employment.

The remuneration findings reinforce this relationship. Participants reported low compensation, substantial differences in payment across institutions, and delays in receiving payment. From the COR perspective, financial compensation represents a fundamental material resource, while timely payment provides predictability and facilitates the protection of other resources. When compensation is both limited and delayed, participants may need to expend additional personal resources to meet their financial obligations.

Precarity Theory provides an additional interpretation of this finding. Employment that offers teaching opportunities but does not provide predictable and timely income may provide limited economic security. Thus, the findings support a distinction between employment availability and employment security. An individual may technically be employed while simultaneously experiencing considerable uncertainty regarding income, duration of employment, and future work opportunities.

The findings concerning multiple institutional appointments further demonstrate the interaction between the two theories. Participants reported working at several institutions to supplement income. From a COR perspective, this strategy can be understood as an attempt to obtain or protect financial resources. However, the strategy also requires expenditure of time, energy, transportation resources, and organizational effort. The attempt to protect one resource may therefore place pressure on other resources.

From the perspective of Precarity Theory, the need to combine multiple appointments may also reflect the limited security associated with individual adjunct positions. Where one appointment does not provide sufficient or predictable income,

faculty may depend on several appointments to sustain their livelihoods. Multiple employment can therefore be understood not simply as a personal choice but, for some participants, as an adaptation to insecure employment conditions.

Limited office space and institutional support provide another illustration of resource constraints. Participants described having to use informal locations to meet students because dedicated office space was unavailable. COR Theory helps interpret this finding by drawing attention to the additional personal resources faculty may have to expend when institutional resources are insufficient. Time, transportation, personal finances, and alternative workspaces may become substitutes for resources that would ordinarily be provided by the institution.

The findings concerning research and career advancement are also significant. Participants described limited opportunities to conduct research and advance professionally. COR Theory suggests that extensive teaching commitments and financial pressures may consume resources that could otherwise be invested in scholarly activities. Precarity Theory, meanwhile, highlights the uncertainty associated with remaining in temporary employment without a clear pathway toward more stable academic positions.

The absence of a clear progression pathway may therefore have implications beyond promotion. It may contribute to a continuing sense of occupational uncertainty, particularly among faculty who have accumulated substantial teaching experience but remain in temporary positions. The accounts of participants who reported many years of adjunct teaching illustrate the distinction between length of service and employment security.

The findings also contribute to understanding the broader implications for higher education. Universities depend upon faculty resources to fulfill teaching, research, and community-engagement functions. When adjunct faculty experience persistent resource constraints and employment insecurity, their capacity to participate in activities beyond classroom teaching may be limited. The present study does not establish that adjunct employment conditions directly reduce educational quality or research productivity. Rather, the findings indicate that participants perceived these conditions as constraining their capacity to engage fully in broader academic responsibilities.

The two theoretical perspectives therefore provide a complementary interpretation of the findings. Precarity Theory explains why adjunct faculty may remain employed while experiencing substantial uncertainty regarding the continuity, predictability, and future security of their work. COR Theory explains how those employment conditions may involve the availability, depletion, and protection of financial, temporal, institutional, and professional resources. The combination of the two perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding of adjunct employment than either perspective alone.

Importantly, the theories are used as interpretive frameworks rather than as evidence of causal relationships. The qualitative design permits examination of participants' experiences and perceptions but does not establish that particular institutional practices directly cause stress, poor teaching performance, burnout, or academic misconduct. These issues should therefore be examined in future research using designs capable of testing such relationships.

8. Conclusion

This study examined the experiences and working conditions of adjunct faculty at four selected universities in Liberia. The findings indicate recurring concerns regarding employment insecurity, low and delayed compensation, limited access to institutional resources, restricted opportunities for research and career advancement, and the financial pressures associated with temporary academic employment.

Viewed through Precarity Theory, these findings demonstrate how adjunct faculty may remain employed while experiencing uncertainty concerning the duration, predictability, and future security of their work. Viewed through Conservation of Resources Theory, the findings demonstrate how financial uncertainty, fragmented employment, limited institutional facilities, and restricted time for scholarly activity may involve the threat, depletion, or inadequate provision of resources that faculty consider necessary to perform their roles.

The interaction between employment insecurity and resource constraints is particularly important. Participants' reports suggest that attempts to compensate for insufficient or uncertain income may require them to take on additional teaching assignments, thereby increasing demands on their time and energy. Similarly, inadequate institutional resources may require faculty to use personal resources to fulfill academic responsibilities. These patterns illustrate how employment insecurity and resource constraints can intersect within adjunct academic work.

The findings do not establish that adjunct employment conditions directly cause poor teaching, psychological distress, academic misconduct, or reduced research productivity. Rather, they provide contextualized evidence of how adjunct faculty perceive and experience their working conditions within the participating institutions.

Improving adjunct employment conditions may therefore require attention to both employment security and resource provision. Transparent appointment and course-allocation procedures, timely compensation, appropriate workspace and institutional resources, opportunities for professional development and research, and clearly defined pathways for career progression could provide greater stability and support for adjunct faculty. Such measures may also strengthen the capacity of universities to sustain effective teaching, research, and broader academic engagement.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the employment conditions and institutional challenges experienced by adjunct faculty in the participating universities.

9.1. Establish clear pathways to full-time academic employment.

Liberian universities should develop transparent, policy-driven pathways through which long-serving adjunct faculty can be considered for full-time academic positions based on qualifications, teaching performance, experience, institutional needs, and other clearly defined merit-based criteria. Such pathways would provide greater predictability in career progression while enabling institutions to retain experienced faculty.

9.2. Establish standards for the appropriate use of adjunct faculty.

The NCHE should consider developing national guidelines governing the proportion of courses that may be assigned to adjunct faculty relative to full-time faculty. Such guidelines should encourage universities to maintain an adequate core of full-time faculty while allowing appropriate and academically justified use of adjunct appointments. The standards should take into account institutional size, program requirements, faculty availability, and disciplinary needs.

9.3. Develop minimum standards for adjunct faculty compensation and timely payment.

The NCHE, in consultation with universities and other relevant stakeholders, should consider establishing national minimum standards for adjunct faculty compensation that recognize differences in academic qualifications, disciplinary expertise, and teaching responsibilities. The framework should also establish clear expectations regarding the timely payment of adjunct faculty and discourage prolonged delays in compensation. Any national compensation framework should be developed with consideration of institutional capacity and the broader regulatory and economic context of Liberian higher education.

9.4. Improve access to institutional resources and workspace.

Universities should provide adjunct faculty with appropriate shared workspace and essential institutional resources, including secure access to internet connectivity and suitable areas for student consultation, academic preparation, and research. Where dedicated offices are not feasible, institutions should establish adequately managed shared facilities that protect student and faculty confidentiality and support the professional performance of academic responsibilities.

9.5. Strengthen institutional policies governing adjunct employment.

Universities should develop or strengthen written policies governing adjunct appointments, course allocation, compensation, contract renewal, grievance procedures, professional development, and opportunities for career advancement. Clear and transparent procedures would reduce uncertainty and provide adjunct faculty with a better understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities within the institution.

Expand opportunities for adjunct faculty participation in research and professional development.

Universities should consider providing qualified adjunct faculty with reasonable opportunities to participate in research projects, scholarly activities, professional development programs, and other academic initiatives. Where feasible, access to institutional research resources, libraries, seminars, and professional development activities should not be unnecessarily restricted solely because of adjunct status.

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