

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AS DETERMINANT OF LIBRARIANS RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY, NORTH-WEST, UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study investigates the influence of institutional support on librarian's research productivity in North-West, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted to determine the influence of institutional support on librarian's research productivity, public universities, North-West, Nigeria. Study population was derived from 376 librarians working in 18 public universities in North-West, Nigeria. A sample size of 213 respondents was determined through Taro Yamane sampling formula while the stratified sampling technique was used to select each respondent from the university being studied. The researcher developed a self-constructed questionnaire and administered 30 copies of questionnaire as pretest at Tafawa Balewa university. Construct reliability and ethical consent was sought at Babcock university. The response rate of the questionnaire was 85.5%. Study findings revealed that the level of institutional support to librarians was high and institutional support has significant influence on librarian's research productivity. The study recommended that university management should harness its resources to collectively fund, train and formulate policies that encourages research productivity of academic librarians in North-West, Nigeria.

Keywords: Institutional support, Research productivity, Academic librarians, Funding, Public universities

Introduction

From a global perspective, Africa's research productivity, and especially that of Nigeria, has been described as abysmally low, representing less than one percent of the world's research productivity (Mba & Ekechukwu, 2019). AU-NEPAD (2014) referred specifically to Nigeria as a large research system which produces so little. South Africa with 20 universities had a research output of about forty seven thousand (47, 000) publications, Egypt had thirty thousand (30,000) publications while Nigeria's research output stood at only ten thousand (10, 000) publications despite having over one hundred and seventy (170) universities apart from research and allied institutes, polytechnics and colleges of education (Mba & Ekechukwu, 2019; Fonn, Ayiro, Cotton, Habib, Mbithi, Mtenje & Ezech, 2018). The gloomy picture notwithstanding, Olumide, Olubukola, Florence and Otunba (2019) reported that things are changing as Nigeria is witnessing a gradual increase in research publication output. However, this increase is not equal across disciplines, as there are evidence of increased publications from life and health sciences compared to social sciences and engineering. (Institute of International Education (IIE), 2017).

Looking specifically at the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) from a global point of view, it was revealed that more than 43% of LIS publications between years 2003–2012 were authored in the United States and the United Kingdom. Canada also made great contributions followed closely by Chinese researchers (Weller, Hurd & Wiberley, 2014; Jabeen, Yun, Rafiq & Jabeen, 2015). Similarly, after analyzing scholarly contributions in LIS journals between 2007 to 2012, Walters and Wilder (2015) reported that the most prolific academic librarians were from Europe and Asia. In Africa, South Africa is reported to be in the lead in LIS publication output (Muia & Oringo, 2016). Looking at South-East, Nigeria, from a study of four university libraries by Anyanwu (2013), it was revealed that academic librarians from this region have poor research and publication output and that they published mainly in local journals. In the same vein, research productivity of academic librarians in Northern Nigeria was found to be quite low (Kabir, Dahiru & Amishe, 2017; Tsafe, Chiya, & Aminu, 2016).

However, there seems to be an inconsistency in literature as regarding the quantity of research productivity of academic librarians in Nigeria. Before 2012, some researchers reported that the research output of

librarians in Nigeria was at a very poor level (Moahi & Ogbomo, 2010; Okoye & Ejikeme, 2011; Onohwakpor & Tiemo, 2006). More recently, some scholars reported an increase in research productivity (Okonedo, Popoola, Emmanuel, & Bamigboye, 2015). Most recently however, Okeji, (2018) reported a decline in librarians' research productivity. From these studies, it is clear that the zeal of academic librarians and their capacity to achieve and maintain their research productivity has not been consistent, a situation best described as fluctuating.

Research productivity of academics could be enhanced by institutional support in the form of enabling environment, incentives and motivation of staff. Nguyen's (2022) study showed the role of Vietnamese university management in increasing staff productivity, they had a vision for research, staff were sensitized and trained to adopt the plan. Also, additional incentive was given to researchers willing to published in international journals. Institutional support refers to the strategies adopted by the management of academic institutions to advance research activities. These may be in the form of funding, training, favourable policies and building of research networks for its scholars (Asubiaro, 2019). University leadership can significantly motivate researchers to collaborate with scholars in other disciplines and geographical locations by providing funds for projects execution, developing policies guiding quality research endeavors, and recognizing staff for publishing in reputable journals. Funding is a financial incentive given to support a program. In the context of this study, funding refers to the act of providing money to academic staff conduct quality studies. Academics require money and approval of leaves from management to conduct research. Bhardwaj's (2017) studies revealed that study leave, sabbatical leave, and travel grant were some incentives that Indian researchers enjoyed in doing research. Additionally, management can acquire and maintain facilities that supports research such as up-to-date library resources, power supply, and internet infrastructure to encourage research activities.

Institutional support is the planned strategy by the university management to achieve organizational goals in teaching, learning, and research. In the review, institutional support would be in the context of research. The funding of research by an individual may be limited in scope and quality hence the need for institutions of learning to assist with various support. In Nigeria, public Institutions of learning partner with the Tertiary Educational Trust Fund to award academic scholarships for pursuing higher degrees, payment of article publishing fees, and travel grants (Anorue & Ikediugwu 2020). The incentives enabled librarians to attend international conferences and publish collaborative research. This form of institutional support provides opportunities for staff to develop research capacity for future research opportunities.

Abramo, Angelo and Murgia (2017) observed that Institutional support is a strong determinant of research productivity. Faculty of university can pursue higher studies due to the fund's released scholarship. Financing of research-related activities as travel grant enables staff to travel abroad for international studies. Yemini (2021) identified the proximity of team members to each other as a factor that facilitates international cooperation. Some librarians may not access global research networks without institutional support, such as scholarships. An example is a supervisors-supervisee relationship that impacts the skills and experience of the supervisee. Some librarians have used institutional support grants to pursue international studies that culminated in research collaboration and increased research output. Incentives as stipends from management ensured that projects were executed within the stipulated time frame. Katz (2019) also observed that the provision of additional remunerations by management enhanced project execution.

Igbokwe, Benson and Enem (2019) stated that the organization of seminars, workshops, and encouragement of mentor-mentee collaborations are strategies adopted by the institution's management to train staff in skills acquisition. To better develop the research capacity of librarians, management plan, sponsor resources person within or outside the institutions to strengthen the research skills. Crampsie, Neville and Henry (2020), Moradi, Zargham-Boroujeni (2020) observed that approval of leaves by management for librarians' participation in exchange programs, sabbatical leave, and post-doctoral programs enables librarians to have time away from work and concentrate in learning skills for research. Another avenue to access training is to pursue mentorship relationships with colleagues. Experienced librarians in the office can also train other staff in skill acquisition. Some institutions facilitate in-house training by organizing workshops for the

training of staff. More knowledgeable associates train other staff to learn skills that positively impact their research activity and careers. The studies of Pasek, Judith and Mayer, (2019) reported that students training with mentors improved their data management skills and other research skills. Training provides a practical learning experience for theory-based training in conventional library schools to be complimented with experiential knowledge. Kozaka (2020) stated that training enabled researchers to draft research titles, formulate problem statements, and acquire methodological skills. The training experience reinforces interest in research and confidence to engage in research with other scholars. The upskilling of previously learned skills positively impacts the quality of work. Librarian employed in an institution of learning as trainers in information literacy skills and research support staff requires regular training to improve job performance.

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, particularly in public universities, some interventions from Tertiary Education Trust Fund and needs assessment have been deployed to increase research productivity, yet others implement policy change as strategy to increase research productivity. Despite the benefits of research productivity to academics, it appears little has been achieved as low research productivity seems to be the prevailing situation amongst academics and librarians. Shonhe (2020) investigated the research productivity of information professionals globally using bibliometrics studies, the result also revealed low research productivity. Low research productivity was also reported by Ramos-eclavia et al. (2018) bibliometrics study in six Asian countries. Similarly, Obliopas and Medeja (2020) reported same trend in Philippine. The result of the bibliometrics study showed that number of research produced by academics was increasing but productivity in terms of number of published articles declined. This implies that academics research findings were not published in peer review papers but other formats. The problem of low research productivity among academics in Nigerian was observed by Simisaye (2019) in South-West, Nigeria, the survey result revealed that academics publish predominantly journals articles and conference proceedings. Also Oyeyemi, Oyeyemi et.al (2022) and Umar and Babalola (2021) discovered a similar trend in their study of research productivity among academic staff of federal universities in North-East Nigeria. The problem of low research productivity was reported amongst librarian in North-East, Nigeria by Adamu (2022) and Fabunmi (2022) study in South-West, Nigeria titled the “Use of print and non-print resources as factor influencing research productivity of librarians in private universities in southwest, Nigeria”.

The danger of low research productivity includes career stagnation, lack of empirical data for policy formulation and reduced evaluation tools to proof librarians use public funds for research. The problem of low research productivity had led to the inaccessibility of research grants, lack of locally produced information resources and low-level representation at international forums because academics are not known nor recognized for their contributions to disciplinary knowledge(Oyeyemi et al. 2022). This implies that if librarians do not perform research to improve their productivity levels, they may not be invited to support policies affecting the profession in home country nor receive support for developmental project.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to study how institutional support influence research productivity of librarian research productivity in public universities, North-West, Nigeria.

1. find out the level of institutional support available to librarians in public universities, North-West, Nigeria,
2. ascertain influence of institutional support on research productivity among librarians in the North-West, Nigeria,

Hypotheses

The alternate hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.5 level of significance.

H01: Institutional support has no significant influence on research productivity of librarians in public universities in North-West Nigeria.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. population of the study was drawn from 373 librarians working in 18 public universities in North-West, Nigeria (Administrative offices of the University libraries of the institutions 2022). A sample size of 193 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the respondents. However, structured and validated questionnaire was used to collect data. The research instrument was subjected to reliability and validity test. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.63 to 0.95 while the return rate of 93% of research instrument was achieved. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics comprised simple and multiple.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

Research question 1: What is the level of institutional support available to librarians in North-West, Nigeria public universities?

Table 1 The level of institutional support available to librarians in public universities of the North-West, Nigeria

Institutional Support	Very High (4)	High (3)	Low (2)	Very Low (1)	Mean	Std.
Funding					2.87	0.80
<i>In my institution, availability of ...</i>						
scholarship to pursue higher studies is ...	69 (38.3%)	82 (45.6%)	26 (14.4%)	3 (1.7%)	3.21	0.74
subscription to up-to-date library information resources (databases/books) is ...	41 (22.8%)	98 (54.4%)	36 (20%)	5 (2.8%)	2.97	0.73
Travel grants to present papers at conferences is ...	45 (25%)	79 (43.9%)	45 (25%)	11 (6.1%)	2.88	0.85
internet facilities for research purpose is ...	27 (15%)	104 (57%)	39 (21.7%)	10 (5.6%)	2.82	0.73
funding of journal publication is ...	27 (15%)	53 (29.4%)	74 (41.1%)	26 (14.4%)	2.45	0.97
Training					2.73	0.81
<i>In my institution, availability of ...</i>						
In-house training for librarians to acquire research skills is ...	40 (22.2%)	89 (49.4%)	43 (23.9%)	8 (4.4%)	2.89	0.79
Sensitization programs for library staff on the importance of research productivity is ...	31 (17.2%)	95 (52.8%)	45 (25%)	9 (5%)	2.82	0.77
Experts to train academic librarians in research is ...	29 (16.1%)	85 (47.2%)	57 (31.7%)	9 (5%)	2.74	0.78
Partnership with other institutions for training in research skills and techniques is ...	28 (15.6%)	68 (37.8%)	69 (38.3%)	15 (8.3%)	2.61	0.84
Research center where staffs make inquiries on research related matters is ...	28 (15.6%)	66 (36.7%)	67 (37.2%)	19 (10.6%)	2.57	0.87
Research Policy					2.68	0.85
<i>In my institution...</i>						
availability of research leave/sabbatical for librarians is ...	45 (25%)	86 (47%)	45 (25%)	4 (2.2%)	2.96	0.76

the level of parity given to co-authors during promotion is ...	36 (20%)	69 (38.3%)	57 (31.7%)	18 (10%)	2.68	0.90
Recognition/remuneration of research efforts of librarians is ...	31 (17%)	79 (43%)	52 (28%)	18 (10%)	2.68	0.87
institutional assistance in identifying prospective collaborators is ...	27 (15%)	68 (37.8%)	67 (37.2%)	18 (10%)	2.58	0.86
Availability of exchange program for librarians is ...	24 (13.3%)	61 (33.9%)	76 (32.2%)	19 (10.6%)	2.50	0.85
Grand mean					2.76	0.83

Decision rule: if mean 1-1.74=Very low, 1.75-2.49 Low, 2.5-3.24= High, 3.25-4.0=Very high

Table 1 results reveal the level of librarian’s institutional support in public universities North-West, Nigeria. The grand mean (2.76, SD 0.83) indicates that librarians institutional support in public universities, North-West, Nigeria was high based on the decision rule. The response for all the indicators as funding (mean = 2.87), training (mean =2.73) and policy (mean =2.681) were all high. This implies that librarian’s level of institutional support in terms of funding, training and policy in public universities North-West Nigeria is high. For each of the indicators of institutional support, particularly training, librarians agreed that they were awarded scholarship to pursue higher studies mean (2.97) while funding of journal publication was the least mean (2.45). In terms of training, Librarians in public universities, North-West, Nigeria attested that in-house training for the acquisition of research skills had the highest mean of (2.87) while establishment of research center where staff make inquiries on research related matters had the least mean of (2.57). In terms of institutional support policy, librarians agreed that their institutional policy covered research and sabbatical leave with a mean of 2.96 while institutional policy that assisted in the identifying perspective collaborators (2.58) and exchange of program for librarians mean (2.50) was the least.

Hypothesis H02: Institutional support has no significant influence on librarian’s research productivity in public universities North-West Nigeria.

Table 2
influence of Institutional Support on Research Productivity

Variables	Std. Error	β	T	Sig.	R ²
(Constant)	1.889		4.223	.000	0.040
Institutional Support	0.045	0.199	2.706	.007	

Dependent Variable: Research Productivity *Note: β = Standardized Coefficient, significant at*

Table 2 shows the linear regression analysis of institutional support on research productivity of librarians in public universities, North-West, Nigeria. The result shows that R² (.040) of the regression model indicates that 4% of the change in research productivity was explained by institutional support. The result further reveals that institutional support on research productivity ($\beta= 0.199, t(178) = 2.706 p < 0.05$) shows that institutional support has significantly influence on research productivity of librarians in public universities North-West, Nigeria. This implies that the level of institutional supports of librarians predicts librarians research productivity. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and restated as institutional support has significant influence on librarian’s research productivity in public universities, North-West, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study set out to ascertain the level of institutional support available to librarians in North-West, Nigeria public universities and to determine the relative influence of the indicators of institutional support on research productivity among librarians in the study local. The result of the descriptive statistics revealed that institutional support in terms of funding, training and policy was available for librarians to conduct research activities. Librarians agreed that they were awarded scholarship to pursue higher studies while funding of journal publication was least funded. Funding of article processing fees is important in improving the research productivity of librarians in public university, North-West, Nigeria. Research center is key to accessing research funding and networks for improving research productivity. The study also indicated that institutional support in terms of research policy adequately supported sabbatical leave to allow librarians perform research, however management needs identifying prospective collaborators and exchange program for librarians to access mentorship for research. Policies formulation and signing of memorandum of understanding with other infrastructural rich institution would grant librarians access to alternative sources of funding.

Finding on research question two showed that level of institutional support for librarians in public universities in North-West Nigeria is high. This is in alignment with Abramo, Angelo and Murgia (2017) who reported high institutional support among Italian academics. The study findings also correspond to Albarillo et al. (2022) that observed that librarian and academics had high institutional support for research activities at United State of America. However, the study findings contradicts Anorue and Ikediugwu's (2020) that reveal low-level implementation of institutional support for academic staff in public universities, South-West, Nigeria and those of Iwu-James et al. (2021) who reported inadequate institutional support for librarians research activities in South-West, Nigeria.

This study also found that institutional support had significant influence on the research productivity of librarians in public universities North-West, Nigeria. This finding is in alignment with Zhao, Pan and Hua's (2021) study, who reported that institutional supports through funding of research positively increased the research productivity. The study is in consonance with Nguyen (2022) whose study reported that institutional support correlated with research productivity of Vietnamese academics. However, the study contradicts Fabunmi's (2022) findings that discovered that low institutional support resulted in low productivity of librarians working in private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The study findings that high institutional supports did not translate to higher research productivity may be linked to librarian's workload that does not avail them time for research despite the institutional support made available for librarian's research activity.

Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the influence of institutional support to librarian's research productivity employed in public university, North-West, Nigeria. The purpose of the research was to provide empirical evidence for university funders as Tertiary Educational Trust fund and regulatory bodies (Nigeria University Commission) on the state of institutional support granted to librarians for research purpose. The study also aims to create awareness on university management and librarians on the strategies adopted by government to promote research productivity. The level of institutional support to librarians was perceived to be high, also institutional support has significant influence on librarian's research productivity. University management should harness its resources to collectively fund, train and formulate policies that encourages research productivity of academic librarians in North-West, Nigeria as individual indicators would not improve librarian productivity.

Recommendations

1. Librarians should also seek alternative was of publishing research findings other than journals that pay subscription fees.
2. Management of institutional in public universities, North-West, Nigeria should establish research unit for encouraging access to research network.

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