**Assessment of Research Output of Academic Librarians in Public Universities in South-West, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*This paper investigated research output of academic librarians in public universities in the South-West of Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives and two corresponding research questions. A survey research design method was adopted for the study. The total population for the study was two hundred and twenty (220) academic librarians in both federal and state universities in the South-West of Nigeria. Therefore, total enumeration was used since the population was manageable. A questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Two hundred and three (203) copies of the questionnaire were returned and used for the analysis. Statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentages, the mean, and the standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The result of the analysis revealed that academic librarians’ research output was moderate in terms of quality and quantity. The result showed that lack of funds and the high cost of publication were the major factors militating against the research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that time management culture be imbibed by academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria to have ample time for research activities.*

***Key Words:*** *Academic, Librarian, Public universities, Output, Research,*

 **Introduction**

Universities, as institutions of higher education, are a nation's intellectual strongholds, serving as both incubators of new ideas and archival repositories of historical factual knowledge. There are five main objectives of a university, namely: teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, pursuit of service to the community, and a storehouse of knowledge. Eruanga (2021) emphasises that universities' primary mission is to convey knowledge to enhance individuals' mind sets and to seek out new knowledge to add to the body of knowledge, potentially leading to knowledge development. The result of effective teaching is solid research output, and the same is true for knowledge-based community service. Research should be prioritised in universities to set them apart from other types of tertiary academic institutions. This is especially true for basic research aimed at creating new knowledge and applied research aimed at solving production issues with the help of new discoveries (University of Ibadan 2020).

The value of research output must be stressed as universities are increasingly thought of as knowledge producers. In today's academic system, research output has become a necessary factor in the career progression and advancement of librarians in academic institutions. Universities are seen as both generators and disseminators of knowledge. According to Ifijeh, Ogbomo, and Ifijeh (2018), the growth and development of a nation's productive sectors are considerably aided by the research undertaken at universities and other institutions of higher education. Javed and Khahro (2020) also emphasise that universities and degree-awarding institutes contribute significantly to a country's higher education and development. The university's long-term viability and ranking are determined not just by the quality of its faculty's teaching but also by their research output (Gangwani, Alhaif, & Ali, 2022).

As indicated by Jaffe, TerHorst, Gunn, Zambrano, and Molina (2020), research output has been associated with a country's intellectual and economic wealth.Research output is defined by the Association of Research Libraries (2014) as "the process by which research and other academic outputs are created, appraised for quality, communicated to the scholarly community, and archived for future use.” Mahar and Quiliam (2018) emphasised that one of the results of research is the publication of findings. Research output is seen as crucial indication of an institution's relative status and has developed into alternative measurements for the quality of teaching and course offerings in today's fiercely competitive global education market (Byrne, 2017). Weng'ua, Rotich, and Kogos (2018) state that the number of journal articles written by a university's faculty is used to determine the ranking of that university, and the number of scholarly articles written by faculty members is considered during the appointment and promotion processes.

The academic community as a whole agrees that academic research should produce high-quality output that is published in an acceptable format after a thorough peer-review process and made available in print or electronic formats like conference papers and proceedings, books (monographs), theses and dissertations, chapters in books, articles in scholarly journals, patents and trademarks, as well as creative works like exhibitions and performances. McGrail, Richard, and Jones (2016) affirm that publish or perish has long been used to evaluate faculty members performance, particularly in terms of promotion, salary increases, and contract renewal. Similarly, Omoluabi-Idiodi (2019) corroborated this assertion that the phrase "publish or perish" emphasises the importance placed on research output in any university, as research publications are a significant indicator of the efforts of an academic and a driver of academic career prospects for such academic staff.

Elimna (2016) observed that academics worldwide place a premium on research and publication, not only because it is assumed to enrich teaching and learning while adding to the body of knowledge but also because it plays a major role in establishing the reputation of a given institution. Thus, research output serves the dual purpose of enhancing both one's own position and the institution's status for academic staff. Producing new knowledge through research increases an institution's prestige, encourages technological advancement and innovation, raises the calibre of its faculty, and boosts its financial status (Dhilon, Ibrahim, & Selamat, 2015). Academics' ability to disseminate their findings and garner respect from their colleagues relies heavily on their ability to get their work published. Thus, the visibility of researchers and their institutions increases as a result of their work being published (Rawat & Meena, 2014). Bibliometrics, technology merit, social merit, and scientific merit analyses are only some of the ways that research output can be measured.

Research output remains a high priority for many academic librarians, promotion of librarians to academic positions is a standard practise at universities globally. It all started in the 1940s in America and, after a struggle by librarians there, then spread to the United Kingdom and Canada in the 1980s. In the United States and Canada, academic librarians are often criticised for not publishing enough research to advance in their careers or earn tenure (Sassen & Wahl, 2014). The promotion of academic librarians in university libraries from one level to another, as argued by Igbokwe, Benson, and Enem (2019), necessitates the publication of multiple articles in both local and international journals, as well as the presentation of multiple articles at both local and international conferences. In the United States, professional librarians are often given the same status as faculty members and are subject to the same publication requirements for tenure and advancement as any other academic faculty member (Hoffmann, Berg, & Koufogiannakis, 2014).

In Nigeria, academic librarians in libraries and other related fields are among the privileged few who hold academic positions such as lecturers and instructors in post-secondary institutions (Benson, Amaechi, & Onuoha, 2017). After a prolonged industrial action embarked on by the Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria, the Nigerian government and the union finally settled their differences in 1993. After an agreement was reached, academic librarians at Nigerian universities now have the same status as their teaching colleagues. This accord, as reported by Omoluabi-Idiodi (2012), ended a situation in which academic librarians in Nigerian universities' libraries had claimed academic status. Due to their expansion, however, they are now expected to provide high-quality research that proves they deserve a place in the academic community. To level the playing field between academic staff and librarians, the National University Commission (NUC) instituted a new policy in 1990, as mandated by Decree 16. For academic librarians to succeed in their careers at Nigerian universities, they must produce as many articles as lecturers. According to Okonedo (2015), academic librarians have accepted the need to do original research and publish the results in peer-reviewed publications just like their teaching counterparts.

The number and quality of academic librarians' research outputs are highly indicative of their academic standing and prospects for promotion. Academic librarians in modern Nigeria are mostly judged for promotions based on the number and quality of scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings. According to Benson, Amaechi, and Onuoha (2017), academic librarians engage in research activities as part of the prerequisites for achieving the status accorded to them in the academic environment. Due to the importance of research and publication in all fields, academic librarians at universities throughout the world are not exempt from performing their own research (Ocholla, Ocholla, & Onyacha, 2012). Academic librarians, as pointed out by Chauhan and Mahajan (2017), are obligated by the established order to make significant contributions to expanding the body of knowledge in their field. This means that academic librarians must engage in scholarly research and disseminate the findings of their studies through scholarly journals. Academic librarians have become indispensable workers in Nigeria's academic higher institutions of learning as they serve as guardians of information (Adetayo, Suleiman, & Ayodele, 2022). Also, Badmus-Adegbite (2022) reiterated that in librarianship, research output is very significant because it improves the reputation of librarians in the academic community.

Eruanga (2022) echoed the library's critical role as a component of the university as a whole. Librarians, as an academic subsystem, are required to produce and publish high-quality research, which will eventually affect their careers positively. Igbokwe, Benson, and Enem (2019) state that moving up the ranks of a university library requires several articles in peer-reviewed journals as well as conference presentations on both national and international platforms. According to Orji and Anunobi (2019), researchers in the field of library and information science rely heavily on scholarly publications as a means of both disseminating their findings and gauging the merits of potential hiring and promotion. Therefore, to plan their work as academics effectively, academic librarians are expected to teach, do research, and convey study conclusions, in addition to completing other administrative tasks. Tsafe, Basaka, and Mohammed (2016) emphasise that it is widely held that academic librarians who engage in research and publication are better equipped to adapt to new situations and foster positive working relationships with academic members. Ocholla, Ocholla, and Onyancha (2012) and Fennewald (2008) also state that academic librarians conduct research and publish for benefits that pertain to their careers, such as status enhancement, promotion, securing tenure or permanent appointment, acquiring recognition for creative thinking, visibility, and acceptability both inside and outside the university community, and satiating intellectual curiosity. Promotional factors for librarians in Nigeria place a premium on the number and quality of their scholarly production, which takes the form of articles published in journals, conference presentations, and other scholarly venues (Okonedo, Popoola, & Emmanuel, 2015)

 **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the research output of academic librarians in public universities in the South-West, Nigeria.

 The specific objectives are:

1. examine the level of research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria in terms of quality and quantity.
2. find out the factors militating against the research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

The study will answer the following research questions:

* + - 1. what is the level of research output of academic librarians in public universities in the South-West, Nigeria in terms of quality and quantity?

 2.What are the factors militating against the research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria?

**Literature Review**

Numerous studies have been conducted globally on the research output of academic librarians, some of which will be reviewed, for instance, on the level of research output of academic librarians by scholars:

Adamu (2022) carried out a study on information literacy skills, ICT skills, and psychological capital as determinants of the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in the North-East of Nigeria. A total of 165 librarians participated in the survey. The study employed a descriptive survey approach. A questionnaire was employed as an instrument. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study results revealed that librarians in the north-east of Nigeria had a low level of research output.

In the same vein, Igere (2020) investigated how electronic information resources affected the number of scholarly articles by academic librarians working in Niger Delta universities. The study employed a descriptive survey approach. A questionnaire was used as an instrument. Thirty academic librarians from Niger Delta University in Bayelsa and Delta State University in Abraka participated in this study. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study results revealed that the selected academic librarians had a low level of research output.

Furthermore, Lawal and Olawale (2020) investigated academic librarians' research productivity to information and communication technology (ICT) at Bowen University in Iwo, Osun State. The researcher used a survey to gather data. Ten academic librarians comprised the sample for this research. A questionnaire was used to collect their responses. A descriptive statistical technique was used to analyse the data. It was obvious that 50% of the academic librarians who responded asserted that they have published one research article in the last three years, while 40% have published two research papers, and the remaining 10% have published four papers in the last three years. The findings indicated that librarians' research output was low. The study suggested that academic librarians should work towards increasing their research output through training and the necessary skills in the use of new technology for research.

Ezeani, Ugwu, Okafor, and Anyawu (2018) analysed the scholarly communication habits of academic librarians in two federal universities in south-east Nigeria. The findings indicated that the level of librarians' publications in Nigeria's south-east zone is relatively average, with only 17 librarians having 40 or more publications, comprising 9 males and 8 females and accounting for 36.1 percent of respondents. As a result of this finding, many librarians' publications are woefully inadequate, posing a barrier to their career advancement.

In a related study, Ngene and Adesina (2021) investigated how academic librarians in Ekiti, Ondo, and Osun could increase their research output if they had better access to and made better use of electronic information resources. A survey research method was used for the study. As can be seen from the findings, librarians make extensive use of electronic information resources, both in terms of access and utilisation, but not in terms of actual research output. This indicates a low level of research output among academic librarians in selected states.

Contrary to studies on the low level of research output of academic librarians Eruaga (2021) looked into the awareness and perception of intellectual property protection rights as correlates of research productivity of librarians in public universities in Southern Nigeria.. The study found that between 2014 and 2017, Southern Nigerian public university librarians produced an average amount of research.  Largely, there appears to be a variation in the literature as regarding  the research output of academic librarians. From literatures, it is clear that the zeal of academic librarians and their capacity to accomplish and maintain research output have not been constant, a situation best described as fluctuating.

On the challenges of the research output of academic librarians, the majority of the available literature revealed that the biggest obstacles to their ability to do research are a lack of time and a demanding workload among

Moses and Onwukanjo (2022) investigated the availability, accessibility, and utilisation of electronic information resources as a predictor of academic librarians’ research productivity in federal universities in Nigeria's north-central region. The study was conducted using a survey research design. One hundred and nineteen (119) qualified academic librarians from seven government agencies made up the study's total population. Total enumeration was not carried out since the population was controllable. A questionnaire and an observation checklist were used to compile the data. There were 116 total questionnaires returned for review. The data was examined using statistical techniques such as frequency counts, percentage breakdowns, and mean and median comparisons. Librarians at federal universities in Nigeria's north-central area cited frequent power outages as their greatest challenge (104, or 92.9%). This was followed by 102 respondents not having enough money for fast, dependable internet service (91.1%). It was suggested in this study that academic librarians should have more time to engage in research activities.

Similarly, Fabunmi (2022) investigated the relationship between librarians' use of print and non-print materials and the quality of their research output in private universities in Nigeria's south-west. The study revealed that 58.7% strongly agreed that there was a high cost of publication, and 42.2% believed that there was a limited amount of time and a deadline for work. Furthermore, 63.3% of study respondents stated that there was a lack of research orientation among librarians, 56.9% attributed the difficulties to high internet access costs, and 42.2% stated that there was inadequate research infrastructure. The study concluded that academic librarians who want to make more time for themselves to do research should emphasise the need for good time management.

Furthermore, Abohwa (2022) examined librarians' information overload and research productivity. Through a descriptive survey research design, this study sought to gain insight into the experiences of academic librarians through a total enumeration sample strategy and a questionnaire as the major data collection instrument. The collected data was evaluated using only raw percentages and count frequencies. The majority of respondents cited insufficient knowledge of ICT and information retrieval as the major obstacles to their research output.

**Methodology**

In this study, a descriptive survey is employed as a research design. Nworgu (2006) defines survey research as "any research that examines a population or set of conditions through data collection and analysis from a sample size that is supposed to be representative of the whole. The population of this study comprised 220 academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria. This category of library staff was chosen based on the fact that they are academic in status and are expected to carry out research and publish reports of their findings in the form of journal articles, books, chapters in books, monographs, book reviews, conference proceedings, and patents for academic development and promotion. A total of 220 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to both federal and state public university librarians in South-West Nigeria; however, 203 were duly completed and returned. This represents 92.3% of the total questionnaires distributed among academic librarians in public universities selected for the study.

**Results and Discussions**

**Question One: What is the level of research output in terms of quality and quantity of academic librarians in public universities in the South-West, Nigeria?**

 **Table 1:**  *Descriptive Statistics for Research Outputs of academic librarians in public universities in South- West, Nigeria*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N****1.****2** |  **Research Outputs** | **12 and above****(1)** | **9-11****(2)** | **6-8** **(3)** | **5-3** **(2)** | **2 – 0 (1)** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| **Research Quality**  |  |  |  |  |  | **2.80** | **.97** |
| Our articles are indexed by Google Scholar | 50(24.6) | 47(23.2) | 47(23.2) | 47(23.2) | 12(5.9) | 3.37 | 1.24 |
| Our articles are indexed by JSTOR | 22(10.8) | 55(27.1) | 48(23.6) | 55(27.1) | 23(11.2) | 2.99 | 1.20 |
| Our articles are indexed by SCOPUS | 11(5.4) | 4(31.5) | 56(27.6) | 51(25.1) | 21(10.3) | 2.97 | 1.10 |
| Our articles are indexed by directory of Open Access Journals | 17(8.4) | 33(16.3) | 81(39.9) | 53(26.1) | 19(9.4) | 2.88 | 1.06 |
| Our articles are indexed by ERIC | 14(6.9) | 53(26.1) | 59(29.1) | 45(22.2) | 32(15.8) | 2.86 | 1.17 |
| Our articles are indexed by Pubmed Central | 9(4.4) | 44(21.7) | 55(27.1) | 38(18.7) | 57(28.1) | 2.56 | 1.23 |
|  Our articles are indexed by MEDLINE | 11(5.4) | 20(9.9) | 27(13.3) | 32(15.8) | 113(51.7) | 1.94 | 1.26 |
| **Research Quantity**  |  |  |  |  |  | **2.66** | **.87** |
| Total number of all types of peer reviewed publications (The total output within 3 years.) | 21(10.3) | 55(27.1) | 67(33.0) | 50(24.6) | 10(4.9) | 3.13 | 1.05 |
| The total number of my peer reviewed in journals publications | 24(11.8) | 51(25.1) | 67(33.0) | 48(23.6) | 13(6.4) | 3.12 | 1.09 |
| The total number of my peer reviewed research output produced in a year. | 14(6.9) | 27(13.3) | 86(42.4) | 53(26.1) | 23(11.3) | 2.78 | 1.03 |
| The total number of my peer reviewed chapters in books | 10(4.9) | 23(11.3) | 74(36.5) | 56(27.6) | 40(19.7) | 2.54 | 1.08 |
| The total number of my peer reviewed papers published in conference proceedings | 8(3.9) | 23(11.3) | 74(36.5) | 56(29.1) | 39(19.2) | 2.52 | 1.04 |
| The total number of my peer reviewed textbooks published | 9(4.4) | 23(11.3) | 72(35.5) | 53(26.1) | 46(22.7) | 2.49 | 1.09 |
| The total number of monographs produced | 12(5.9) | 11(5.4) | 45(22.2) | 44(21.7) | 91(44.8) | 2.06 | 1.19 |
| **Research Output (Weighted Mean = 2.73, Standard Deviation = .83)** |

Source: Field work (2023)

**Decision Rule:**

 If mean is 1.0 to 1.79 = 0-2/Very low Level;

 1.80 to 2.59 = 5-3/Low Level;

 2.60 to 3.39 = 6-8/Moderate Level;

 3.40 to 4.19 = 9-11/High Level;

 4.20 to 5.0 = 12 and above/Very High Level.

 Criterion Mean = 3.0.

Table two presents the results of descriptive statistics The analysis indicate that research quality sub-scale attracted a weighted mean score of *x̅* = 2.80, SD=0.97, with some of its items falling above the criterion mean. The item ‘Our articles are indexed by Google Scholar (x̅ = 3.37)’ polled moderate level mean score under the subscale. This signifies that the level of articles indexing by Google Scholar in public universities in the South-West, Nigeria was moderate. Also, the level of articles indexing by JSTOR (x̅ = 2.99), SCOPUS (x̅ = 2.97), directory of Open Access Journals (x̅ = 2.88), ERIC (x̅ = 2.86) and Pubmed Central (x̅ = 2.56) were also at moderate level. Unsurprisingly, the level of article indexing by MEDLINE was low (x̅ = 1.94). This implies that in overall public university academic librarians in South-West, Nigeria had a moderate level of research quality. The findings contradicts Okonedo-Adegbaye (2015) findings that research publication output of librarians in public universities, South-West Nigeria was high

 Further findings revealed that the level of research output in term of quantity was moderate (*x̅* = 2.66, SD = 0.87) among academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria with most of the research items following the trend. This study is inconsistent with, Ngene and Adesina (2021), who found that the level of research output of academic librarians was low. This study is also inconsistent with the submission of Orji, Anunobi, and Chinwe (2019)who indicated low level of research output among academic librarians.. The finding is also inconsistent with the study of Adamu (2022) who submitted that librarians in North-East of Nigeria had a low level of research output

The finding established that the level of peer reviewed publications within 3 years (x̅ = 3.13), peer reviewed in journals publications (x̅ = 3.12), peer reviewed research output produced in a year (x̅ = 2.78), peer reviewed chapters in books (x̅ = 2.54) and papers published in conference proceedings (x̅ = 2.52) were at moderate level. Nonetheless, the levels of peer reviewed textbooks published (x̅ = 2.49) and monographs produced (x̅ = 2.06) among the librarians were low. By implication, public university librarians in South West, Nigeria have not given serious attention to the production and publishing of peer reviewed textbooks and monographs.

**Research Question Two: What are the factors militating against research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria?**

**Table one:** *Descriptive Statistics on Factors Militating against academic librarians' research output*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Factors** | **Yes**  | **No**  |
| Lack of fund | 183(90.1) | 20(9.9) |
| High cost of publication | 181(89.2) | 22(10.8) |
| Erratic power supply | 180(88.7) | 23(11.3) |
| Strict work schedule | 175(86.8) | 28(13.8) |
| Lack of time due to library routine | 175(86.3) | 28(13.8) |
| Inadequate research infrastructure | 174(85.7) | 29(14.3) |
| Lack of orientation among librarians | 171(84.2) | 32(15.8) |
| Absence of mentorship | 168(82.8) | 35(17.2 |
| Absence of favourable environment | 167(82.3) | 36(17.7) |
| High cost of internet access | 165(81.3) | 38(18.7) |
| Lack of support from senior colleagues | 157(77.3) | 46(22.7) |
| Absence of research direction | 153(75.4) | 50(24.6) |

 Source: Field work (2023)

The response to research question five is presented in Table 2. The result shows that lack of funds had the highest percentage score (Yes = 90.1%), followed by high cost of publication (89.2%); erratic power supply (88.7%), strict work schedule (86.8%), lack of time due to library routine (86.3%), inadequate research infrastructure (85.7%), lack of orientation among librarians (84.2%), Finding agrees with, Agbo, Ihekwoaba, and Okwor (2020),Eliezer and Enuma (2021), Igiri etal (2021), Moses and Onwukajo (2022), and Fabunmi (2022) that the major challenges of academic librarians in their quest to publish are lack of funds, high cost of publication, erratic power supply, strict work schedule, lack of time due to library routine, inadequate research infrastructure, lack of orientation among librarians, absence of mentorship, absence of favourable environment, high cost of internet access, lack of support from senior colleagues and absence of research direction. By implication, the key challenges to research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria such as lack of fund, high cost of publication, erratic power supply, strict work schedule, lack of time due to library routine, inadequate research infrastructure, lack of orientation among librarians, absence of mentorship, absence of favourable environment, high cost of internet access, lack of support from senior colleagues and absence of research direction warrant urgent consideration.

**The major findings of the study are:**

1. Academic librarians in public universities in South-West, Nigeria, have a moderate level of research output in terms of research quality and quantity
2. The key challenges to the research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria are lack of funds, high cost of publication, erratic power supply, strict work schedule, lack of time due to library routine, and inadequate research infrastructure, lack of orientation among librarians and absence of mentorship.

**Conclusion**

Research output is an important indicator of academic librarians’ performance in universities. Librarians conduct research and publish their findings in reputable outlets in the form of books, book chapters, co-authored books, journal articles, and conference proceedings. Literature and observation reveal a moderate level of research output in terms of quality and quantity by academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria. The key challenges to research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria are lack of funds, high cost of publication, erratic power supply, strict work schedule, lack of time due to library routine, and inadequate research infrastructure, lack of orientation among librarians and absence of mentorship, all the aforementioned challenges warrant urgent attention.

**Recommendations**

1. The federal and state ministries of Education, Nigeria University Commission, and other non-governmental organizations should provide more funds to academic librarians in both federal and state universities for training and development to carry out research.
2. Time management culture should be imbibed by academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria to have ample time for research activities.
3. Academic librarians should endeavour to publish more textbooks, journal articles, conference proceedings, monographs, book chapters, and technical reports, especially as it affects the profession, to further develop the profession and create more scholarly literature in the field of librarianship and other related fields.

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