

Factors that Influence Research Output of Academic Librarians in Niger State

By

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Abstract

The survey was carried out to determine the factors that influence research output of academic librarians in Niger state. It was aimed at providing the reality of the opinion on research output of academic librarians who are working in Niger state. Questionnaire were designed and distributed to (65) sixty five of the (85) eighty five academic librarians in Niger states and fifty two (80%) of the distributed questionnaire were completed and returned. The results were analyzed and presented using means, percentages and tables. A highest score of response in every item as bench-mark to consider as positive or otherwise opinion for responses on percentage scale. The results of the survey revealed that majority of the academic librarians have published their publications dated beyond the last ten years (36.8%). And the publications are mostly in the local journals (39.5%). most academic librarians depend on internet connectivity for research publication is very high; this is based on (86.5%). There is the need for provision of affordable and efficient internet connectivity both in working places and residences of the academic librarians.

Introduction

Research and publication have been identified as the life wires of all professions as they contribute to their growth and development. Although many researches have been carried out on research and publication output of academic librarians, most of such researches were made in the USA and Europe (Vasilevsky, et al.2013). Studies made in Africa were predominately in South Africa, many of which are case studies (Manda, 2000; Msuya, 2005). Literature on research output in Nigeria has been sparse especially with reference to internet connectivity and research output. Preliminary study carried out in many of the regions in Nigeria shows a low research output. Again majority of the researches in African countries as conducted by Msuya (2005) and Levin (2013) shows that academic librarian do not carry out enough research hence do not publish enough. Therefore there is the need to carry out a survey to confirm the reason for the low research output with a view to addressing the problem. Parvin&Kabir (2011) noted that poor working conditions (physical surroundings) were some factors that accounted for low job satisfaction which could influence their job performance. This meant that most librarians were not satisfied with their working conditions in Nigerian universities. However, there have been successful improvement in technology and we feel we are having everything with ease, unfortunately much of those results have not been applied to support people with their current situation in their studies or work environment (Larson, 1998).

This work therefore, in this premise focus on internet connectivity effect on research output of Academic librarians in Niger state, by and large this is evident in the fact that these variables play key roles on the publication output of academic librarians.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of this study.

1. To identify the research output of the academic librarians in Niger state.
2. To examine the impact of internet connectivity on research output of academic librarians in Niger state.
3. To investigate the strategies adopted to overcome some of the challenges faced by academic librarians in Niger state.

Review of Related Literature

The publication requirement for academic librarians varies among different tertiary institutions. Studies have described characteristics of academic librarians and their scholarly publication. In general, such studies look at a large group of publications from librarians who are employed at a wide variety of colleges and universities (Ogbomo, 2010). Another useful strategy is a detailed study of the publication of librarians in a single institution. Hart (1999) remarks that, "this narrow focus is particularly appropriate when looking at trends in publication because the type of college or university in which a faculty member works has been known to be key factor in influencing his or her publication patterns." Since 1993 the National University Commission (NUC) issued a circular directing all librarians in Federal Universities should be accorded academic status in appointment and promotions (Ochai, 1998). The designation "assistant librarian" was changed to "graduate assistant." This therefore nullified the possibility of being promoted from Assistant Librarian to Librarian II. Michael and Osei-Boadu (2013) observe that academic librarians play a vital role in public university libraries by providing varied library services and assisting clients with their research through the provision of necessary information. The roles of the academic librarians have continued to change over the years, mainly

from being a caretaker of books to that of being creators of intellectual knowledge. Academic status had caused some setbacks for librarians. It appears as if the gains have been swallowed up by the pains. The question is: do the gains justify the pains? Why is it so difficult for the librarians to meet the publication requirements? Are librarians adequately prepared academically and professionally for academic status? These and many issues constitute the kernel of this study.

The requirements for promotion of academic librarians are similar to those of teaching staff. The argument for not having different set of guidelines is based on the following assumptions:

- a. Librarians receive the same benefits as teaching faculty.
- b. Librarians perform professional and academic services.
- c. The necessary facilities to complete research, publication, and higher degrees are open to them.

With the introduction of the Internet, Nigerian researchers have been able to consult more information resources. Research is an important aspect of human development, and our libraries cannot provide us with adequate and current materials for our research needs. The Internet also provides us with the means of carrying out research online by acting as the main engine for exchanging information and publishing. According Ogunjobi and Fagbami (2012) “will lead the academic community [in Nigeria] to exploit opportunities that will make them to be educated, more literate and conscious of the potentials for research”. Egberongbe (2011) states that “scholar and researchers will use this medium to transform ways of reviewing and using information in conducting research.” In spite of the Internet, Nigerian researchers have continued to depend on traditional ways of doing research. This dependency on traditional methods is contributing to the low level of research output in Nigeria. It is commonly believed that researchers and students in Nigerian higher education institutions are battling the problem of inadequate and out-of-date materials. It could be argued that the only way to pursue knowledge is through research; however, research is changing. The Internet as a developmental agent has a profound impact on the research process and dissemination of information (Kamba, 2008).

Methodology

The population of this study is made up of academic librarians who are working in the libraries of higher institutions and research institutes in Niger state. The instrument for collection of data will be a self-constructed

questionnaire. A questionnaire tagged Factors that affect Research Output of Academic Librarians Scale (FARALS) will be used in this study. The questionnaire has been designed under seven (4) different headings and harmonized in one single questionnaire that contains: Section A, which requests for demographic information, Section B, is designed to measure librarians’ research output (LRO), Section C, contains instruments on Internet Connectivity, while the last section, D, will focus on what strategies were adopted to overcome some of the impediments of research output of the academic librarians. Data collected from the questionnaire administration would be coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage and frequency count) would be used to get answers to the research questions and determine the specific objectives.

Results

Demographic profiles of the respondents

A breakdown of the demographic variables of the respondents of the study is indicated in Table 1

Table1 Demographic profiles of the respondents

Qualifications	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's	26	50.0
Master's	25	48.1
PhD	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

From Table 1 above it shows that the response rate for academic qualifications of the academic librarians during the course of this research indicated that majority of them have a bachelor degree with (50.0%), master degree account for (48.1%) and a doctorial (PhD. Degree) with (1.9%) this shows with time most of the staff still can rise to obtain more qualification.

Descriptive Analysis

This section analyses and discusses data collected in respect of the research questions raised for the study.

Research output of academic librarians in Niger state

In order to determine the frequency of publication output of academic librarians, the respondents were asked to identify with some statements that could reveal how frequently they publish and in which type of journals (local or international). The finding is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Research output of academic librarians in Niger state

Statements	Responses	
	N	Percent
I don't have Knowledge of publication	7	6.1%
I have Published in the last two years	8	7.0%
I have published in the last ten	42	36.8%
I have never had a publication	2	1.8%
I Published in local journal	45	39.5%
Publish in international journal	10	8.8%
Total	114	100.0%

Table 2.reveals that majority of the academic librarians have published and have their publications dated beyond the last ten years (36.8%). And the publications are mostly in the local journals (39.5%). This shows that majority of the academic librarians have no recent publications and are not visible internationally since most of their publications are in the local journals. This finding is in agreement with Ogbomo, (2010) which revealed that majority of the librarians in Delta state have not published in the last two years.

Table 3: Type of publications by documents

Type of publications	Responses	
	N	Percent
Articles	45	33.8%
Books	6	4.5%
Thesis	37	27.8%
Book Review	4	3.0%
Proceedings	40	30.1%
Microform	1	.8%
Total	133	100.0%

The responses in Table 3 revealed that publications output of the classified according to the type of document published are more in articles which has a score of (33.8%), and proceedings had (30.1). on the other hand, publications in book form (4.5%) and microforms had (.8%). This shows that the academic librarians in this studies are not too much involved in book publications but publish more of articles which is easier or cheaper compared to that of book and publication in microform are not even visible among the academic librarians.

Table 4: Motivations/Reasons for research publication by Academic librarian

Reasons for research publication	Responses	
	N	Percent
Promotion	47	20.4%
Availability of fund	8	3.5%
Problem Solving	45	19.6%
Self visibility	43	18.7%
Inspiration	40	17.4%
Contribute to knowledge	42	18.3%
For pleasure	5	2.2%
Total	230	100.0%

From Table 4, some reasons were highlighted for the librarian to either affirm or reject, which it was disclosed that the reason or purpose for academic librarian publication is mainly for promotional purpose, which score (20.4%), this was followed by problem solving with (19.6%) and on the other hand publication for pleasure purpose rank (2.2%) as the lowest.

Effects of internet connectivity on research output of Academic librarians

To determine the effects of internet connectivity on the research output of the academic librarians, the respondents were asked to identify some statements that could reveal the effects of internet connectivity on research output of academic librarians in Niger state. The findings are presented in table 5 – 8.

Table 5: My research depend, so much on the availability of internet connectivity

Dependent on internet connectivity	Frequency	Percent
YES	45	86.5
NO	7	13.5
Total	52	100.0

The responses from Table 5 revealed that the dependence of the academic librarians in Niger state on internet connectivity for research publication is very high, this is based on (86.5%) score of the respondents that yes option score from the academic librarian.

Table 6: Identify the kind of Internet Access from the Home

kind of Internet Access from the Home	Frequency	Percent
Narrow Band (Telephone)	10	19.2
Broad band (DSL AND Wire)	5	9.6
3g Wireless Modem	18	34.6
Dial up and GPRS	16	30.8
Others Forms	3	5.8
Total	52	100.0

Result of Table 6 showed that the use of 3g wireless modem by academic librarians for research purpose is very high, with score of (34.6%), this was followed by Dial up and General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) for connectivity with score of (30.8%) and on the other hand, broad band digital subscriber line (DSL) (9.6%) the lowest among the type of internet services available to the librarians in their various houses for research purpose.

Table 7: There is sufficient internet connectivity in my working place

Internet connectivity in my working place	Frequency	Percent
YES	39	75.0
NO	13	25.0
Total	52	100.0

The responses in Table 7 revealed that there is availability of internet connectivity in the working places of most of the academic librarians in Niger state. This is based on high score of (75.0%) by the respondents. This finding therefore, shows that the availability of internet connectivity in the working places of the academic librarians will definitely enhance the application of internet utilization on research output of the librarian.

Result from Table 8 revealed that out of seven items listed for the academic librarians to indicate the nature of problem encountered when using internet connectivity for research purposes or when searching for information online, showed that six yielded high scores of yes these are inadequate conducive environment (80.8%), High cost of airtime (75.0%), Shortage of computers (67.3%), Regular system breakdown (61.5%), Inadequate electricity supply (55.8%) and Slow internet access (55.8%) respectively while on the other hand, inadequate internet searching skills have (61.5%) that is searching skills is not much a problem with librarians. The implication of the above findings is that most of the problems with the utilization of internet connectivity faced by librarians are technical or infrastructural.

The study investigated the investigated factors that affect research output of academic librarians in Niger state. Summary of the findings and conclusion drawn from the study are presented. Recommendations for action and for further studies are also proposed

Table 8: Problems encountered when using the internet connectivity for research purpose

S/no.	Problems encountered when using the internet	Yes	No	Undecided
a.	Inadequate internet searching skills	20(38.5%)	32(61.5%)	-
b.	Shortage of computers	35(67.3%)	17(33.2%)	-
c.	Slow internet access	29(55.8%)	23(44.2%)	-
d.	Inadequate electricity supply	29(55.8%)	23(44.2%)	-
e.	High cost of airtime	39(75.0%)	4(7.7%)	9 (17.3%)
f.	Regular system breakdown	32(61.5%)	10(19.2%)	10(19.2%)
g.	Inadequate conducive environment	42(80.8%)	10(19.2%)	-

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- i. Majority of the academic librarians in Niger state had their publication, output beyond last ten years
- ii. Most of the publication output done by the academic librarians in the selected institutions in Niger state were mostly in the local publications
- iii. The desire to get promotion, solve problems arising in the course of their work are the major reasons or motivational factors that made the academic librarians involve in publishing
- iv. The academic librarians in Niger state depend so much on internet connectivity for research publication
- v. The academic librarians in Niger state do have access to internet connectivity in their working place and use 3G wireless modem for connectivity at home to access internet for the purpose of research work.
- vi. Most of the librarian can search the web for the purpose of research but mostly are faced with technical problems such as inadequate conducive environment, High cost of airtime, Shortage of computers, Regular system breakdown, Inadequate electricity supply and Slow internet access.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study one would say that internet connectivity are momentous to enhanced research output of academic librarians in Niger state. Therefore, there is the need for improved in the level of power supply in Niger state, provision of enabling and conducive environment for in the institutions and organizations where the librarians are working and provision of affordable and efficient internet connectivity both in working places and residences of the academic librarians. Once these factors are carefully taken care of in academic and other related institutions where the librarians are working in Niger state, the level of research output of the academic librarians is expected to increase.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made to improve the research output of the academic librarians in Niger state:

1. Academic Librarians' professional associations and journal publishing firms should organize workshops and seminars on the ways, how and when for research and publishing towards the growth and

development of individuals and the professional, in order to enable them produce quality publication in foreign journals

2. Use renewable energy systems and energy-efficient technologies, such as the provision of solar panel in every library buildings to provide power supply to the ICT facilities that are in the various libraries and internet facilities in particular.
3. Enough funds should be released to academic and research institutions where the librarians are working by the various concern government. This would enable them equip their organizations with adequate physical facilities, internet facilities and other electronic devices
4. Conducive environmental factors should be provided in the buildings that the academic librarians are accommodated to conduct their research, daylight radiation should adequately put into control that is through provision of enough curtains around the offices (library) where the librarians are accommodated during the working hours. Implement day lighting and indoor air quality solutions to make the libraries healthier place to conduct research.

Suggestion for further research

This study investigated the factors that affect research output of academic librarians in Niger state. It would be necessary to conduct a similar research on factors that affect research output of lecturers in Niger state. The outcome of such a study will be useful to the management of academic institution of learning in planning and implementing programmes that will encourage greater research output of all categories of the academics.

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