



Factors That Contribute to Research and Publication Output Among Librarians in Nigerian University Libraries



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ABSTRACT

Considering the relevance of research and publication in the career and professional development and growth of academic librarians especially in Nigerian Universities, this paper was used to find out the factors which contribute to high publication output among librarians in Nigerian University libraries. The main objectives of the study were to find out librarians' motivation for research and publication; find out the factors that contribute to high research productivity among librarians; find out the barriers to research and publication among librarians; and determine the strategies that will enhance research and publication among librarians. The population of the study comprised of 146 librarians of the university libraries in South-East Nigeria. Purposive sampling based on the level of publication output was used to select about 85 librarians as the sample of the study. The data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts and mean scores and presented in tables. Major findings showed that the desire to earn promotion and to develop one's self among others motivated the librarians to write and publish while collaboration and attendance to conferences among other factors contributed to high publication output. Lack of a research grant and a tight work schedule hinder research and publication while partnering with research funders and issuance of grants enhanced the opportunities for research and publication.

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INTRODUCTION

Like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, academic status was not handed to librarians in Nigerian university libraries on a silver platter. The 1970s saw librarians "struggling" with their various university administrations to be accorded academic status. The desired result eventually came in 1993 when the National Universities Commission (NUC) issued a circular to the various University Governing Councils "directing that librarians in federal universities in Nigeria be accorded academic status in promotions and appointments" (Ochai & Nedosa, 1998). The state universities followed subsequently. Ochai and Nedosa further pointed out that academic status for librarians meant that librarians in Nigerian universities could enjoy the benefits accorded to the teaching faculty such as study leave with pay, separate academic salary scale, extension of retirement age to 65 years as against 60 years for the non-academic staff, opportunities to attend conferences and other continuing professional development opportunities, accessibility of research grants and sabbatical leave.

However, with this change in status, new demands were made on librarians. For instance, no longer would it be sufficient for librarians to

advance in their career "based on such simple criteria as a waiting period of 2–3 years from the last promotion, availability of vacancies and satisfaction on the job evident from the Head of Department's recommendation" (Omoniwa, 2003). Instead, in addition to the above conditions, librarians like their teaching counterparts were expected to acquire higher degrees and contribute to research and knowledge by writing and publishing. Thus, librarians in Nigerian universities joined the "publish or perish" bandwagon. Anunobi and Emerole (2008) have outlined some of the many advantages of research and publication: it contributes significantly to the professional growth and development of academic librarians; it is important for problem solving and decision making in the work place; it makes professional practitioners critical consumers of the research literature and it equips librarians to better provide optimal information services to researchers in other fields. In the same vein, Powell et al. (2002) observed that research has always been the main approach to problem solving by all categories of professionals right from the ancient times.

However, this additional requirement has turned into a nightmare for many academic librarians in Nigerian universities because writing and publishing represent a major requirement for tenure, promotion or for professional development. In fact, separate studies carried out by Olorunsola and Ibegbulam (2003); Omoniwa (2003) and Onowakpor and Tiemo (2006) showed that low publication output was a major barrier to librarians' promotion and career advancement.

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Consequently, many librarians have experienced career stagnation and frustration causing them to question the sense in academic status. Olorunsola and Ibegbulam (2003) noted that “if the frustration [experienced] by some librarians continues as it is presently, not only will they be tempted to leave the academic environment but such experiences may also discourage others from entering the profession or field”. Additionally, it can pose a problem in the area of development of the body of literature in the field. This much was expressed by Wood and Park (2013) who observed that “scholarly contributions to the field are important for all professions and should be an ongoing responsibility for academic librarians”.

Motivation for this study stems from the authors' observation that although a fair amount of time has been devoted to studying the factors that pose as barriers to Nigerian academic librarians in the area of research and publication, there appears not to be any study that has investigated the factors that have contributed to high productivity in research and publication among librarians who are successful in this regard. While it is true that there are no general laws on productivity as noted by Fenwald (2008), it is important that this is also investigated to provide a guide to those librarians who are still experiencing challenges in this area. This is the main thrust of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies carried out elsewhere have identified some factors which motivate librarians to engage in research and publication. Schlackman (2009) cited in Clapton (2010) in his study of 130 UK librarians' motivation for writing identified the desire to improve practice in the organization and personal interest. Also cited in the same work, Powell et al. found that librarians' motivation stemmed from interest in “evidence-based practice improvement need to raise personal profile, career progression and desire to raise the library profile”.

Beyond motivational factors however, some authors have identified factors which contribute to high publication among librarians. Fenwald (2008) investigated the factors that contributed significantly to high publication output among tenured librarians in Pennsylvania State University. He identified intellectual curiosity, education and institutional culture fueled by the expectation of publication for promotion and tenure. On their part Bahr and Zemon (2000) identified collaboration in authorship as a viable option for librarians who seek to increase their publication output. Other factors identified include establishment of mentoring programs in libraries, membership of research clubs and peer support groups, institutional support in funding and release time, possession of advanced degrees, and educational training (Burlingame and Repp, 1982; Black and Leysen, 1994; Johnston and McCormack, 1997; Camp et al., 1989; Jenkins et al., 1981; Sulo et al., 2012 cited in Wadesango, 2014).

In comparison, a fair amount of time has been devoted in the literature to investigating the factors that constitute barriers to publication output among librarians. Often cited is the fact that librarians run an inflexible work schedule which gives them little or no time to engage in scholarly research. This has led to calls that librarians be allowed release time at work within which they are free to do research (Zemon and Bahr, 1998; Black and Leysen, 1994; Ochai and Nedosa, 1998; Olorunsola and Ibegbulam, 2003; Omoniwa, 2003; McNicol, 2004; Joint, 2005; Onowakpor and Tiemo, 2006; Moahi, 2007; Swisher cited in Ogbomo, 2010). In the words of Black and Leysen, “release time does allow librarians to perform scholarly activities without interruption of the daily activities”. In disagreement however, Boice (1987) cited in Clapton (2010) posited that both librarians and their teaching counterparts have enough time in their schedule to undertake research and publication. He is rather of the view that librarians lack discipline which prevents them from making use of the free time they have in-between work to do research and publication. Instead, they spend such free time reading magazines and newspapers or as Clapton pointed out; in recent time—answering e-mails or online social networking.

In the view of Ochai and Nedosa (1998) the nature of the job of librarians constitutes a major barrier to them. According to them “a teacher has a research interest and he builds this into his teaching programs...the librarian does not have this type of opportunity...” On their part, Onowakpor and Tiemo (2006) in their study of publication output among librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria, Nigeria found that one of the major reasons for low publication was the fact that librarians were too individualistic and had too little professional interaction. The authors also observed that inaccessibility to research literature could be an inhibitor to research and publication. This may not be unrelated to the high cost of journal subscription in addition to the fact that access to most journals is closed requiring that interested users pay heavily before they can access them. Such restrictions are not research and writing friendly especially to academics and researchers in developing countries (Ohaji and Ibegbulam, 2010). Waldhart (1980) on the other hand is of the opinion that low publication output among librarians stems from librarians' failure to understand the purpose of publication, its limitations or how it might be effectively used. In the view of Powell et al. (2002) poor education or low level of education hinders the acquisition of adequate skills in research while Hancock et al. (1998), in their study found that administrative, committee, and teaching duties were the primary impediments to research productivity.

While most of the factors that constitute barriers to publication output as cited in the literature reviewed may sound plausible, the fact remains that librarians must not continue to apologize for their poor performance in this area; they should rather explore avenues to increase their publication output if they want to be taken seriously by their teaching counterparts (Olorunsola and Ibegbulam, 2003). Along this line, Wadesango (2014) recommended mentoring of novice researchers as a viable strategy to enhance research and publication. According to Durham University (2012) mentoring means that the mentor and the mentee would develop a close relationship throughout the research process from proposal writing to paper writing and subsequently to publication of the paper. In the same vein, Sulo et al. (2012) recommended that universities and the government at large must improve the research environment, funding, time availability and hire qualified staff in order to improve research output in the universities. Sedikadiwa (2005) also postulated that provision of adequate funds for research enhances research and publication productivity of intending researchers to a great extent. In the authors' opinion, many other strategies which could be utilized to improve on research productivity will be facilitated by availability of funds. In addition to this, publishers of journals should make many more of their journals open access as this will go a long way towards making restricted sources of literature accessible to researchers and writers in developing countries (Ohaji and Ibegbulam, 2010).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to high productivity in research and publication among librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to

1. Find out librarians' motivation for research and publication
2. Find out the factors that contribute to high research productivity among librarians
3. Find out the barriers to research and publication among librarians
4. Determine the strategies that will enhance research and publication among librarians.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey method was employed for this study. Data for the study were collected using a self-developed questionnaire. The population of the study comprised of 146 librarians in university libraries in

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