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**UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH
PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.**

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Abstract

This paper discusses utilization of library and information resources and its importance in research process. It views research as a systematic painstaking investigation of a topic or in a field of study often employing technique of hypotheses and experimentation, undertaken by a person intent on revealing new facts, theories or principles or determining skill and identification of research problems which is connected to the level of library and information resources usage and hence determines the productivity or output of researchers. It discusses library and information resources as resources that include all forms of information carriers that can be used to promote and encourage effective research activities and developmental projects including books, journals, periodicals, audio-visual etc. Impediments to the full utilization of library and information resources are highlighted. They include lack of adequate current or relevant materials, non-involvement of lecturers in book selection, lack of adequate professional library staff, lecturers' lack of awareness of new arrivals among others. The study concludes by recommending acquisition of current and relevant information sources particularly books and journals, well qualified, experienced and adequate professional and Para-professional library staff should be employed by the university, approval of more funds for university library, research productivity should be encouraged with adequate funding in form of grants to

lecturers/researchers in respect of their level and rank, lecturers promotion and entitlements should not be delayed, and Libraries and Librarians should embark on awareness and information literacy programs in order to improve on library patronage.

Keywords: Library, Research, Utilization, Research productivity, Nigeria, Library and information Resources, Nigerian Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Research plays an important role in facilitating the prosperity of a nation and the well-being of her people. Through research, Universities and other higher institutions of learning make important contributions to the growth and development of vital sectors of a nation, thereby promoting national and global development. Most of the research work in Nigeria occurs in the universities. Research is a process of rigorous, systematic, validating, verifiable, empirical, critical, analyzing and interpreting information to answer questions. Mason (2011) defined research as “the systematic quest for knowledge”. Research provides good platform for Lecturers to become accomplished scholars.

According to Reitz (2005) and Powell, Baker and Mika (2002) research is a systematic painstaking investigation of a topic or in a field of study often employing technique of hypotheses and experimentation, undertaken by a person intent on revealing new facts, theories or principles or determining skill and identification of research problems. Research outputs come in the form of journal articles, published books, chapters in books, technical reports, conference papers, seminar papers, edited works, workshop papers, thesis and other types of publications. These research outputs enable lecturers to earn recognition in academic circles nationally and internationally. Also, University recognition and advancement of academic staff depend largely on the quantity and quality of research productivity. Research productivity often serves as a major role in attaining success in academic circle as it is related to promotion, tenure, salary etc, of academic staff (Okonedo, 2015).

Research is a vital and indispensable activity in universities and research institutions. It has become essential for a university's prestige as well as the career of faculty. Research provides a good platform for faculty to become successful academics. This is because research develops their knowledge and reinforces the skills needed for effective knowledge transfer. It also inspires researchers towards hard work, fills the gaps of previous researches, and creates an opportunity for future research. According to Rashid (2001), research is conscious efforts to collect, verify, and analyze information. Research is essentially an investigation, a recording and an analysis of evidence for the purpose of gaining new knowledge. Research occupies a critical role in promoting the prosperity of a nation and its citizens' well-being. Research output and research productivity are often used interchangeably.

Research productivity is a means by which researchers contribute new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge. Research productivity in Nigerian universities is worthy of focus as the quality and quantity of publications are a determining factor in performance evaluation of academic. It has been reported that the quality of research productivity by academics in any university system depends largely on the quality and quantity of information resources at their disposal (Popoola, 2008). Powell (1997) maintains that research and publication help individuals to think critically and analytically.

Research productivity is one of the criteria that are used for the promotion of academic staff in universities and other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Research productivity contributes towards image building for universities as well as ranking, it becomes highly necessary for universities to invest more on access to library and information resources. Productivity is of primary concern to the management of every organization, including university libraries. Thus, the need to accord high premium to the welfare of the employees has been the

major preoccupation of management. Productivity is considered as an output of a staff on the job, measurable in terms of quality and quantity of job performed or done (Oduwole, 2004). The quality of research could be measured, according to Popoola (2002), by counting the numbers of books published, or journal articles produced over a period of time.

Information Communication Technology has brought about innovation in librarianship where access to information is made possible to library users beyond the physical boundary of the university library. According to Pullinger (1999), the academic information environment has changed since most of the library and information sources are now available and as well accessible in electronic format, the electronic information resources have unprecedented contribution on library collections.

The utilization of library and information resources is very important as to the research output of researchers in universities, because it is perceived that the utilization of these resources may contribute to the research output and the development of the nation at large.

CONCEPT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

Library is defined as a collection of sources, resources and services organized to support teaching and research by the public, an organization or private individual. Resources are total means available for increasing production or profit. Library and information resources therefore include all forms of information carriers that can be used to promote and encourage effective research activities and developmental projects. No doubt that, what is at stake is the ability of academic libraries and librarians to deliver adequate, relevant, up to date and needed collections to their clientele. Books have always been the basic tool for education. Very little result can be

achieved without the use of books, journals, periodicals and audio-visual to academic institutions. They are the vehicle of communication and transmission of education, learning and culture of the society for the past, present and future. Ekpenyang (1990).

It might be interesting to also consider the book situation in academic institutions and Nigeria in general. Contributing to this aspect Bozimo (1993) lamented that the existing information sources in our higher institution libraries can no longer meet the needs of their patrons. She maintained that unless immediate positive and systematic efforts are made to improve their quality and quantity, it would become increasingly difficult to satisfy the academic activities.

Understandably, today, whenever the cost of education is discussed in Nigeria, books constitute a dominant project. However, giving the persistent issue of the problems in the provision of adequate reading materials and suggesting possible solutions of mitigating or removing the obstacles to make them available. According to Aguolu (2002) factors that have outstripped or rapidly eroded the rate of adequate provision of reading materials are summarized below as follows: -

1. The enormous concomitant growth in the number of institutions and users and the diversification of academic and research programmes with the available resources.
2. Poor and dwindling economy, coupled with the high inflation pressure of the materials.
3. Over dependence on foreign books as over 90% of the literature are imported contrary to the foreign exchange restrictions time lag and custom clearance which is difficult and with high tax.

4. Inability of the Nigerian publishing industries to publish higher educational books in bulk but mostly target towards meeting the needs of primary and post-primary schools.
5. Inadequate budget, as most of the institutions do not disburse to the libraries the five percent of their total budget endorsed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and others.

In spite of the aforesaid, recent pressures from the general public and educational institutions have called for an urgent action on the part of Government, publishers, Associations of Academic Libraries for possible solutions to the scarcity of books and other reading materials. From the aforementioned points to avoid lopsided collections or inadequacy of information sources, the collections should grow *pari-pasu* with academic programmes of the institution. There is the need to consider the institutions populace, particularly the enrolment of the students and academic staff. Aboyade (1990).

CONCEPT OF RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

Research productivity may be seemed as the relationship between the outputs generated by a system and the inputs provided to create those outputs. It may also include the term ‘efficiency’ and more importantly ‘effectiveness’, which measures the total output or results of performance. Research productivity is the outcome of two components they are; (i) knowledge creation (research) and (ii) knowledge distribution (productivity). Research productivity can include research publication in professional journals and in conference proceedings, writing a book or chapter, gathering and analyzing original evidence, working with post-graduate students

on dissertations and class projects, obtaining research grants, carrying out editorial duties, obtaining patents and licenses, writing monographs, developing experimental designs, producing works of an artistic or creative nature, engaging in public debates and commentaries.

Print and Hattie (1997) defines research productivity as the totality of research performed by academics in universities and related contents within a given time period. Research productivity, therefore, is expressed by the entirety of researches conducted by academics in universities in their career over a specified time frame. Research productivity is one of the criteria that are used for the promotion of faculty members in universities and other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Research productivity contributes towards image building for universities as well as ranking, it becomes highly necessary for universities to invest more on access to library and information resources. According to them, productivity is a major goal of any enterprise or organization. It is generally seen as the efficiency with which inputs are transformed into useful outputs within the production process. It is also the amount of output produced by each unit where outputs are measured in physical units. Research productivity has been mentioned in several studies relating to higher education. Uzun (2002) observes a sharp decline in the research productivity of academics in terms of the number of articles published in Nigeria from 1980 to 1999 in an analysis of 21 core Nigerian LIS journals indexed in the Social Science Citation Index database.

Borrowing from the above, universities in Nigeria has what they call promotion guidelines. These promotion guideline state clearly, the number of years of work and the number of publications before you can advance to the next level. Hassan, Tymms and Ismail (2008) examined research productivity as perceived by Malaysian academics. The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of Malaysian academics in relation to research

productivity and some factors affecting it. A large scale online questionnaire was used to gather information from six public universities. The most productive role in the eyes of the academics was found to be teaching, with research and administration coming second and third, respectively. Several factors were found to be related to productivity and some of these have policy implications. The universities themselves differed markedly and research productivity was related to the amount of time available, and linked negatively to the teaching load.

Recent reports indicate that the research productivity level has not been as expected. The need for productivity as a pre-requisite for academic excellence in our universities is not in doubt. Ochai and Nwafor (1990) as cited in Madu (2005), the issue of research productivity is taken for granted. According to them, academics place emphasis on research and publication because of their strong belief that research enhances teaching and the learning process as well as contributing to the body of knowledge. They concluded that productivity as expressed in research not only determines the prestige of the universities concerned but also the academics in enhancing their positions. Authorship therefore helps the academic staff in not only enhancing their positions but also in that of the prestige of the institutions they request. This is with the position of the present research which seeks to correlate information literacy with research productivity.

IMPACT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES ON RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

Ng Tye and Chau (1995) reported that one of the benefits of utilization of library and information resources is increased efficiency in the research process at university. Kaminer (1997) claimed that the use of library and information resources would enable scientists to be

more productive in their research. He attributed this to the fact that, with information resources, access to information is faster, which invariably promotes efficiency in the research process and would definitely lead to an increase in research productivity. A review by Costa and Meadows (2000) showed that there is a positive association between the use of library and information resources and research productivity among scholars. They carried out a survey to investigate the relationship between accessibility and use of library resources especially electronic resources and research productivity among social scientists in Brazil. It was found that the responses regarding the effect of electronic resources on research productivity confirmed the existence of a positive relationship (Costa and Meadows, 2000).

Furthermore, the study revealed that research productivity of social scientists increases with accessibility and use of library and information resources, as respondents (economists and sociologists) in the survey agreed that library and information resources have a positive impact on research productivity. Heterick (2002) used a survey to determine the perceived effect of information resources on research productivity in American universities and found a high degree of perception of the impact of information resources on research productivity among the respondents. In view of this, Heterick concluded that information resources are invaluable tools for research in America. A survey conducted with professors at the University of Idaho (UI), Moscow, by Jankowska (2004) in Russia on the impact of the use of library and information resources on research showed that the vast majority of the respondents believed that library resources have brought about an increase in research productivity.

Mahajan (2006) explored the perception of researchers on the effect of accessibility and use of library resources on productivity at the Punjab University, Chandigarh, India, across three academic disciplines: science, social science, and the humanities. It was found that most

scientists (99%) agreed on the positive effect of library and information resources on research productivity, whereas about half the social scientists (50%) disagreed, while all responses from researchers in humanities (100%) were negative. The article, therefore, concluded that scientists were accessing and using library resources more than their counterparts in the social sciences and humanities. A study of the perceived effect of use of library and information resources on research productivity by Vakkari (2008) showed a positive relationship between library resources and research productivity. Vakkari also found that the relationship varies from discipline to discipline.

Recently, Khan and Dominic (2012) conducted a survey to assess the perceived impact of electronic resources on the research productivity of academic staff in the engineering colleges of Moradabad, India. The results of that survey revealed that 50% of the respondents agreed on the productive impact of electronic resources on their research process. According to Nicholas, Williams, Rowlands, and Jamali (2010), electronic resources have made a tremendous impact on the research productivity of scholars in the United Kingdom, a view common in developed countries.

In Africa, a comparative study to investigate the relationship between the use of electronic journals by academic staff at the University of Natal and the University of Zululand in South Africa and their research productivity were conducted. According to the study, when asked about whether there is correlation between use of electronic journals and research productivity, “some 29% indicated a correlation whereas 13% indicated no correlation” and others were undecided (Mgobozi and Ocholla, 2002, p. 42).

Badu and Markwei (2005) claimed that electronic Ani et al. 3 resources are versatile tools for scholarly research in African universities. Their survey indicated that 64.2% of academics at the University of Ghana were in agreement that library resources impact positively on research productivity. When respondents were asked in the survey to rank the usefulness of library and information resources in research, 69.4% of the respondents said they are “useful.”

FACTORS THAT IMPEDE THE USE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

Some of the major challenges that impede the use of library and information resources for research productivity in Nigerian universities are discussed as follows:

Lack of Adequate Current/Relevant Materials: One of the major impediments to the use of the library and information resources for research productivity is the inadequacy of current and relevant information sources. This is because university lecturers are concerned with current and relevant information sources to update their knowledge in their fields of specialization. The provision of current and relevant library and information resources to relevant users is very strategic in the overall increase of research productivity.

Non-Involvement of Lecturers in Book Selection: Non- involvement of lecturers in book selection is also another impediment to Lecturers use of the library and information resources. Involving lecturers in book selection policy will enable lecturers to list books that are directly relevant to the curriculum they teach. The involvement of lecturers in the book selection policy of the university will certainly ginger more lecturers into library use.

Lack of Adequate Professional Library Staff: Most Academic libraries are faced with this challenge. Staff of academic libraries is inadequate and therefore overstretched. There is every

need for the library staff members to be increased for effective and efficient service delivery. This agrees with Ifidon (1999) who states that the right quantity and quality of the library staff must be a minimum of one librarian to 200 readers up to a maximum of 40 librarians for 8,000 readers. Agreeing with the issue of quality and quantity of staff, Aguolu (2002) added, that the staff should be adequate and continuously motivated, stimulated and professionally challenged through in-service training, seminars, workshops and conference attendance.

Lecturers Lack of Awareness of New Arrivals: Another impediment of the library and information resources use by lecturers is that lecturers are always not aware of new arrivals in the library. There is every need for adequate publicity for newly acquired materials which will keep lecturers informed and probably encourage their use of library and information resources. This view agrees with Nelson (2003) who stressed the importance of publicizing and promoting newly acquired materials in the library. The impediments to library use by lecturers confirms the works of Ochogwu (2007) Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) who catalogued problems of library use to include lack of funds, facilities, inadequate staff and lack of proactive librarians. This assertion is true because information service delivery involves funds, good condition of service for personnel as well as qualified staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above impediments, the following recommendations are made: -

- ❖ Current and relevant information sources particularly books and journals should be acquired. Multiple copies of heavily used books should be acquired by the library management.

- ❖ Well qualified, experienced and adequate professional and para-professional library staff should be employed by the university.
- ❖ More funds should be approved for the university library. The National University Commission's directive of commitment of 5% of the university's annual budget to the library should be implemented. This will enable the university library to meet all its financial obligations.
- ❖ Research productivity should be encouraged with adequate funding by the University Management. University Management should provide grants to lecturers irrespective of their level and rank. Lecturers' promotion and entitlement should not be delayed
- ❖ Lecturers should be regularly informed of newly acquired information sources. This could be done by sending list of currently received publications to each head of department. Lecturers should equally be involved in the book selection policy of the university.
- ❖ Libraries and Librarians should embark on awareness and information literacy programs in order to improve on library patronage.

CONCLUSION

The utilization of academic library and information resources is imperative for attaining high level research productivity. Lack of adequate current and relevant materials, non-involvement of lecturers in book selection, lack of adequate professional staff etc have affected the extent of research productivity in Nigerian universities. University management should

ensure that necessary facilities that enhance high level of utilization of library resources are adequately provided and work pressure should be reduced. This will make lecturers bear up the challenges of research productivity.

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