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## **The Role and Responsibility of the Library in Consolidating Research in Nigerian Private Universities: A Case Study of Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State**

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### **Introduction**

Research is crucial to human knowledge and scientific advancement. Okonofua (2008) states that research is essential to a university's mission for three key reasons. First, without research, teaching will be old-fashioned, monotonous, and static. Second, research helps the university provide special services to its immediate community. Third, only through research can the university make a contribution to the growth and development of the nation. It is through the production of graduates with new ideas that the university helps create innovations for the growth and development of industries and government, thereby promoting wealth and development.

Research and the library are interrelated and are not mutually exclusive. Sadiq (2005) notes that no good research is possible without a library. The library provides the needed required materials, data, information, and literature for research. Sadiq (2005) points out that the university library provides research facilities and resources to researchers, and in addition renders technical information services. Before embarking on any research work, the researcher should come to the library and discuss the research with a librarian. When the research has commenced, the library collects and collate information from different sources on the subject of study to inform the researcher on existing works in the area.

Mosuro (2000) observes that over the years, advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have offered library and information centres more efficient ways of acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating information to researchers. The purpose of this study is to examine

the impact of research on community development; the impact of the library on research work; the impact of research on universities' recognition and ranking; and the impact of library ICT on research.

## Literature Review

### Research and Community Development

According to Reitz (2005), research is "a systematic, painstaking investigation of a topic, or in a field of study, often employing technique of hypothesis and experimentation, undertaken by a person intent on revealing new facts, theories, or principles, or determining the current state of knowledge of the subject." The results are usually reported in a journal, conference proceedings, or a monograph. Universities undertake research for several reasons. For instance, The Association of African Universities (1999) states that without research, universities will lose the capacity to offer first class graduate studies, and to motivate and retain the best brains, and consequently lose the capacity to train the new generation of research fellows and scientists. University research is a powerful stimulus for economic growth and community development. Martin and Trudeau (1998) report that university research sustained five billion dollars in GDP and created 81,000 new jobs in one year. This was almost one percent of Canada's GDP in 1994-1995 and more than 0.5 percent of all jobs. Furthermore, Okonofua (2008) posits that university research is the opportunity to generate ideas and innovation and to fundamentally alter economic prosperity of nations and the quality of life of the citizens. Also, the influx of inquisitive minds produced by universities helps industries introduce new products (Okonofua, 2008).

Apart from the economic impact of university research, research is also an index for ranking universities. Okebukola (2004) stresses that the research output from universities is an important index for ranking universities internationally. According to the Centre for World Class Universities (2008), universities are ranked by several indicators of academic and research performance, including alumni and staff winning Nobel prizes and field medals, highly cited researchers, articles published in *Nature* and *Science*, articles indexed in major citation indices, and the per capita academic performance of an institution.

### Role of Library Services in Research

Reitz (2005) identified library services to research to include:

- Instructional programs for researchers
- Current awareness services
- Delivering traditional library services outside the physical walls of the library

Anyira (2008) enumerated the services rendered to researchers to include lending library materials for a long period; providing specialized reference services; organizing introductory and orientation sessions for new researchers; and providing a secure and pleasant reading and researching environment. Nwalo (2003) describes services to researchers to include answering reference queries, user education, compilation of reading lists and bibliographies, indexing and abstracting, interlibrary loan, and current awareness services.

### Research Resources in the Library

According to Reitz (2005), research resources are a comprehensive collection of materials in a specified field of interest selected to meet the information needs of serious researchers. These include books, journals, newspapers, reference works, music scores, microforms, maps, etc. They also include theses and dissertations, bibliographic databases, Internet sources, etc. In addition, Vickery (1995) identified library research resources to include textbooks, annuals, serials, electronic and non-print media.

Ifidon (2006) classifies research resources as monographic and multi-volume books, general and subject-based encyclopedias, and general and subject-based dictionaries. Others are almanacs, directories, handbooks, general factbooks, textbooks, bibliographies, biographies, abstracts and indexes, documents, reports, microforms, and vertical files (Ifidon, 2006). Wild (2007) classifies research resources into primary, secondary, and tertiary resources. According to him, traditional research work is first published in journal articles (primary), and then found in secondary tools that organize the primary literature.

Hopkins (2007) highlights sources of research information to include personal papers, letters, diaries and journals, photograph and paintings, maps, sketchers, advertisements, posters, banners, memoirs, news footage, newspaper articles, speeches, oral histories, minutes of meetings, material artefacts, computer software, e-mail archives, web documents, etc. They also include autobiographies, correspondence, literary works, interviews, personal narratives, political analysis, review of law and legislation, abstracts, chronologies, guidebooks and manuals, population registers, etc.

### **Role of ICT in Facilitating Research in the Library**

Okonofua (2008) states that investment in a good Internet and ICT system is a major resource needed for all Nigerian universities and their libraries. He further notes that much research information and innovation can now be obtained from the Internet. Without the Internet and other ICTs, Nigerian universities and their libraries will be cut off from the global exchange of knowledge (Okonofua, 2008)

Indeed, virtual libraries are now a major component of services provided by universities in western countries. There are open access resources available to researchers via their library Internet infrastructure (Bako, 2005). In Nigeria, more and more researchers are benefitting from their library's ICT infrastructure. For instance, the telecommunication giant MTN has established digital libraries in three prominent Nigerian universities: the University of Lagos, Ahmadu Bello University, and the University of Nigeria Nsukka (Mobile Telecommunication Network, 2009). According to Mosuro (2000), the role ICT plays in the library includes provision of unrestricted access to research information/data; the search for knowledge using different search criteria; reduction in travelling from one place to another in search of information; facilitating the communication of research information; allowing research collaboration among researchers in different locations; creating more services that the library renders to researchers; saves the time of the researcher in literature searching; and enhancing comfort in information seeking. In addition, Ajibola (2000) identifies the roles of ICT to include speed of access to information and cheap access to databases with multimedia capabilities. Also, ICT helps eliminate duplication of research, improves bibliographic control, helps with error reduction in data analysis, increases range and scope of research operations, leading to improved morale and prestige of researchers and reduction of research costs (Tiamiyu 2000).

### **Research Questions**

- Does research impact positively on community development?
- Do library facilities and Services support research?
- Does research output improve the recognition and ranking of the University?
- Does library ICT improve the quality of research?

### **Methodology**

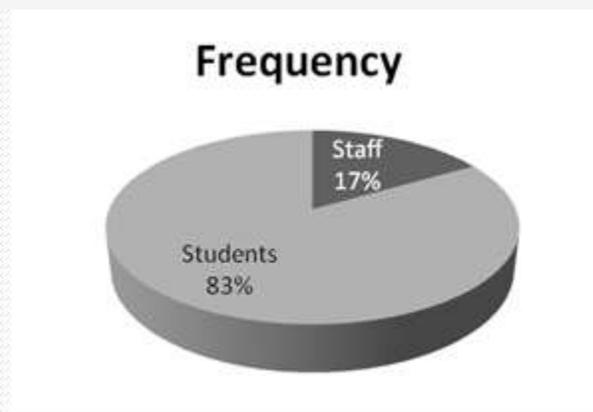
The study employed a case study approach to investigate the role and responsibility of the library in consolidating research in Nigerian private universities. The Western Delta University library, Oghara, Delta State was used as a case study. The main instrument used for data collection is the structured questionnaire. Data were also gathered through interviews and observation. A total of 150 copies of the

questionnaire were administered to respondents, 120 to students and 30 to academic staff. Out of the 120 administered to students, 100 were returned, while out of the 30 administered to academic staff, 20 were returned. In all, a total of 120 questionnaires representing 80 percent were completed and returned. Data were analyzed using simple percentage and statistical charts.

The areas covered in the questionnaire include impact of research on community development, impact of research on university ranking, impact of Library services and resources on research, and the role of library ICT in research.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using percentage and statistical charts



Respondent distribution

Chart 1 shows that staff were 17 percent of the respondents, while students formed 83 percent.

Does research impact positively on community development?

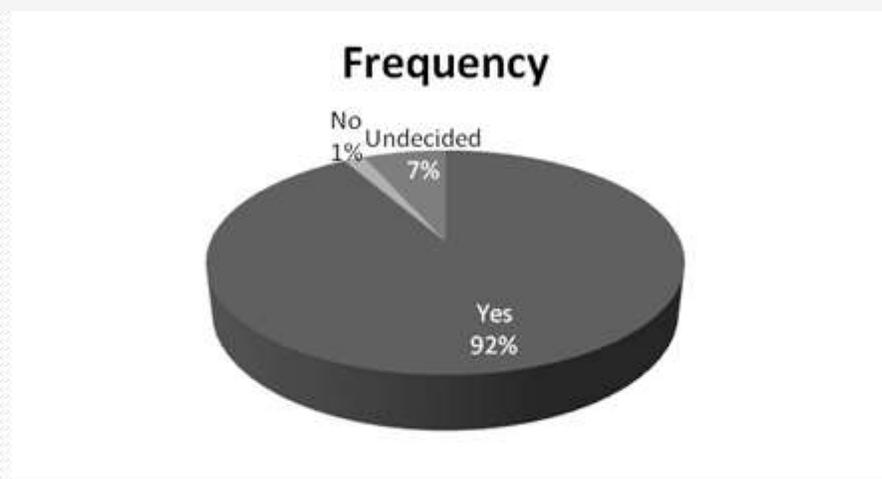


Chart 2: Research impact on community development

Chart 2 reveals that the respondents believe that research impacts positively on community development.

Does research output improve the recognition and ranking of Universities?

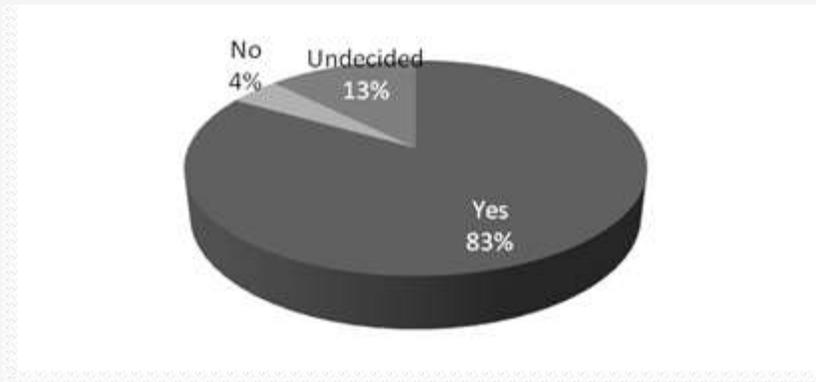


Chart 3: Impact of research on university's recognition and ranking

Chart 3 shows that 83 percent of respondents agreed that research improves recognition and ranking of universities.

Does the library provide adequate information resources for research?

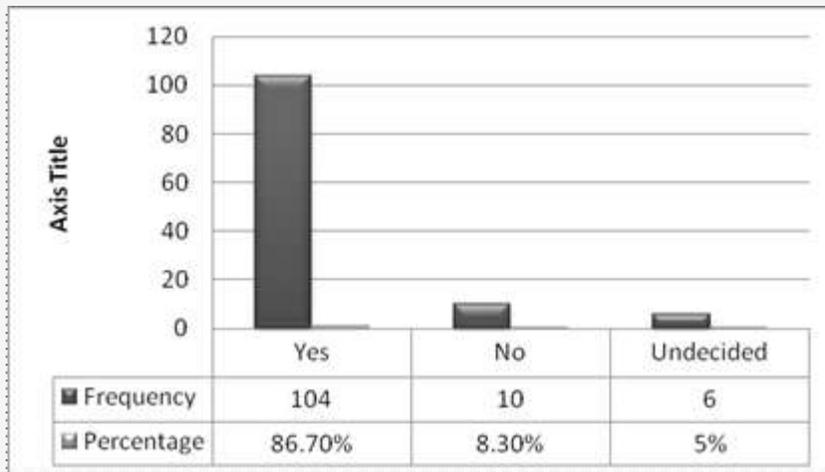


Chart 4: Impacts of Library Resources on Research

Chart 4 indicates that 86.7 percent of the respondents are provided adequate information for research.

Are library services tailored towards meeting the needs of researchers?

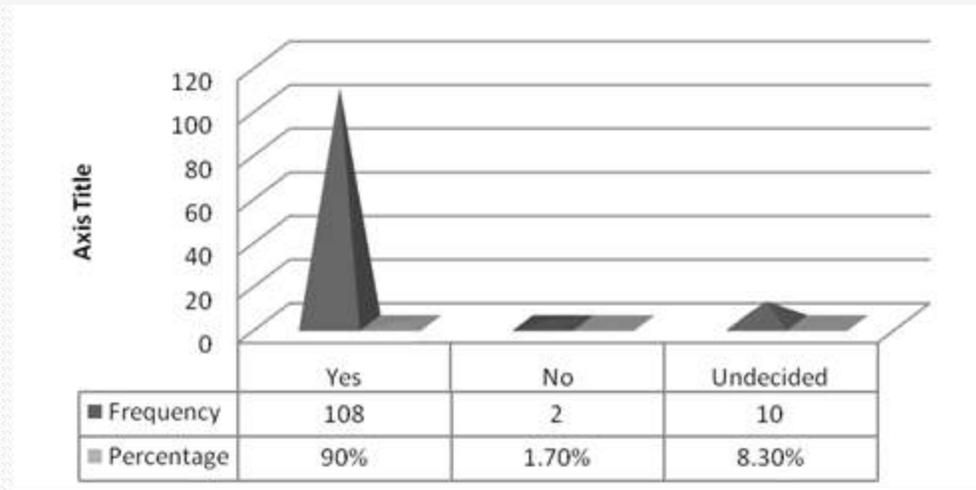


Chart 5: Impact of library services on research

Chart 5 shows that 90 percent of respondents said that library services are tailored towards their research needs.

Is the library a quiet environment conducive to research?

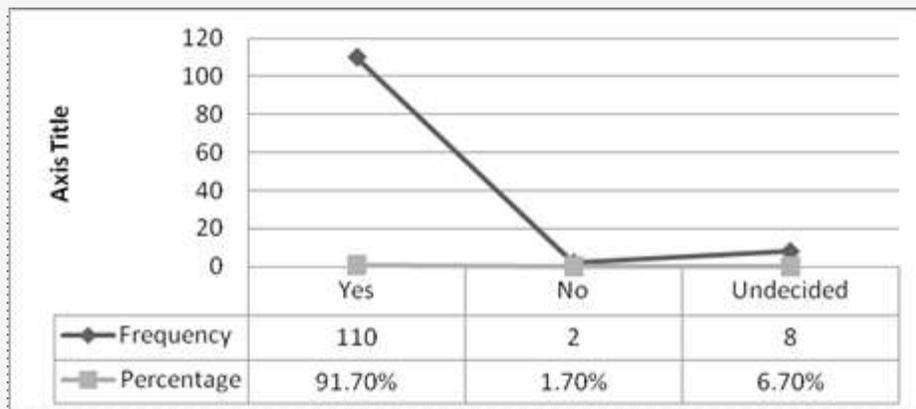


Chart 6: Impact of library environment on research

More than 90 percent of respondents said that the library environment is conducive to their research work.

Does library ICT improve the quality of research?

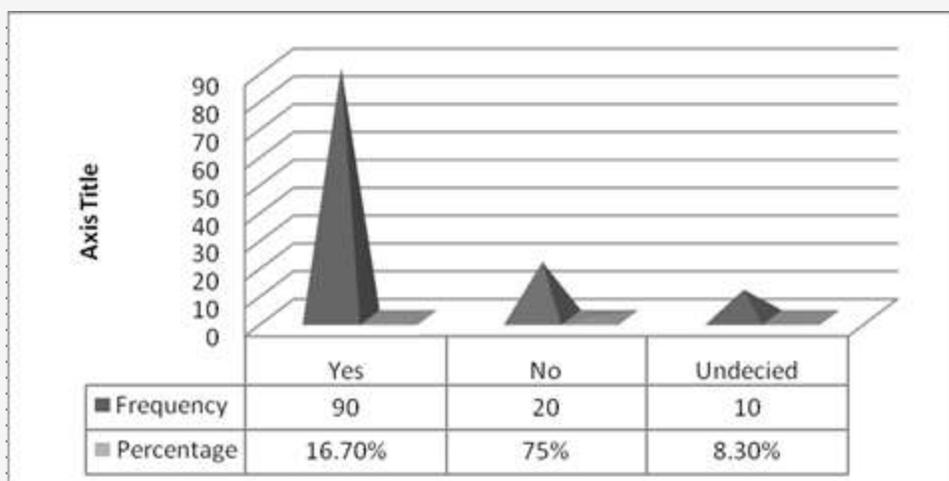


Chart 7: Impact of library ICT on research

Three-quarters of respondents said that ICT improves the quality of research.

### Discussion of Findings

The respondents indicate overwhelmingly that research impacts positively on the university's host community. This finding is a further confirmation of Okonofua's (2008) findings, which showed that community development is partly the responsibility of universities.

It was also found that research output influences the recognition and ranking of universities. Again, there is agreement with Okonofua (2008) and Okebukola (2004) who discovered that research output is an index in ranking universities in the international arena. The Centre for World Class Universities (2008) also reported this fact.

The results of this study indicate that the library provides researchers with adequate information resources for their investigations. Its now obvious why Okonofua (2008) emphasizes that inadequate resources in our libraries are a major factor in the decline of universities research.

Meanwhile, the result of the study also showed that library services are tailored toward meeting the needs of researchers. Some of these services are enumerated by Reitz (2005) to include selective dissemination of information, abstracting and indexing, information services and so on. Further more, the study's result showed that the library provides serene environment for effective research. This result coincides with Anyira (2008) who stated that the quiet environment that characterizes the library is an advantage to researchers.

Notwithstanding, the study's result further reveals that library ICT improves the quality of research. This is understandable. Though most Nigerian University library have computers, the adoption of ICT is still at its infancy. The reason for the low level of ICT adoption in university libraries is recommended for further research.

### Conclusion

No meaningful research will be successful without the deliberate support of the library. The decline in the quality of research may be partly linked to the decline of library budget or researchers'

refusal to use the library for their research. Universities with adequate library resources can produce research works that can conform with international standard, irrespective of research location and time. However, Private Universities, just as the name sounds, lack the financial muscle to dish out funds for equipping their libraries for quality researching. Whether rich or poor, any university library that is not computerized in this information age is not a good library.

## Recommendations

After a careful examination of the subject matter and conclusions reached, the following are recommended:

- The University Budgeting Authority should allocate at least 10 percent of their annual budget to their library as recommended by the NUC. This is because the library not only serves the institution information-wise, but it is an index for accreditation.
- A state-of-emergency should be declared on library Internet connectivity and computerization projects.
- Researchers should put the library to effective use, and concentrate their research works on topics that can be applied to solve society's problems.
- The authority should also make research grant available and accessible to researchers carrying out investigation on the university's areas of interest.

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