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WORKLOAD AS PREDICTOR OF RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY OF LIBRARIANS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Joseph Kehinde Fasae
University Library, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.
ORCID: 0000-0003-4383-8594 kennyfash2000@gmail.com 08066275070
&
Dr. M. O. Ogbomo
Department of Library & Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State
mogbomo@yahoo.com 08133911689

ABSTRACT

The research investigates the impact of workload on the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west Nigeria, employing a descriptive research design. The study encompasses a population of 265 librarians across 18 public universities, utilizing total enumeration sampling techniques. Data collection relies on a structured questionnaire, and the analysis involves statistical mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), considering a criterion mean of 2.50. The findings disclose a low research productivity among librarians from 2017 to 2022, accompanied by a high extent of workload affecting their research activities. Furthermore, a significant relationship is established between workload and the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west Nigeria. The study concludes that workload stands as a crucial predictor of research productivity among librarians in the region. The study recommended among others that librarians should engage in more research activities to improve their productivity, and management should conduct a comprehensive workload evaluation to identify areas for potential administrative burden reduction or delegation.

Keywords: Workload, Research productivity, Librarians, Public Universities, Nigeria

Introduction

In today's society, research is a crucial element for public universities to function as catalysts for national development. The substantial knowledge produced by universities through teaching, research, and community service activities necessitates the collection and preservation of knowledge, leading to the establishment of university libraries. Librarians, responsible for managing the knowledge within these libraries, play a pivotal role in enhancing their universities' research productivity through research activities. The productivity of research is measured by various indicators such as number of publications, number of grant proposals submitted, funds secured, and engagement in professional development opportunities like conference presentations and research seminars (Haliso et al., 2020). Research productivity has become a significant factor in a librarian's job

evaluation, reputation, and academic acceptance. The publication of works by librarians which is part of their workload, contributes to the body of knowledge in their profession and fulfills a critical requirement for promotion that is pivotal for career advancement.

The contradictory nature of librarians' responsibilities is evident in the relationship between increased workloads, more publications, and research funding. While a moderate workload can enhance research productivity, excessive workloads may impede output and result in negative effects such as fatigue and despair. Bowling and Kirkendall (2012) identify factors within the work environment and individual employee factors as reasons for librarian workload. The demand for efficient services and user satisfaction can lead to increased workload, prompting librarians to invest more time than usual.

Hollister and Jensen (2023) undertook a study to determine the quantity, types, and perceived impact of research and scholarly activities on the professional duties of librarians overseeing scholarly communication. The research unveiled a strong correlation between librarians' ability to produce studies and their capacity to fulfill professional responsibilities. The study emphasized the necessity of making research productivity a job requirement, considering it an integral part of professional activities, regardless of institutional aspirations for professional advancement. Scholarly communication librarians tasked with promoting research productivity identified conference presentations, peer-reviewed journal papers, and non-peer-reviewed journal articles as the most prevalent forms of research production.

Ali and Elbadawy (2021) conducted a study on African research output from 2015 to 2019, assessing and comparing the top African countries based on the number of papers indexed on the Web of Science. The top 10 African countries, including South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria, Algeria, Kenya, Morocco, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda, accounted for 92.2% of all articles. Despite having over five times as many universities as South Africa, Nigeria's research output was slightly more than a third of South Africa's across all sectors. Okpe et al. (2013) examined the publication output of faculty members at Babcock University in Nigeria between 2001 and 2012, finding an average of one publication per faculty member annually, which is notably low.

Okeji (2018) analyzed research output using 1,106 papers from the Current Index to Journals in Education and Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstract databases between 2000 and March 2018. The study evaluated the collaboration and authorship patterns among librarians in Nigeria. The findings indicated a scarcity of authors in the field of library and information science in Nigeria, with significant contributions coming from academic librarians in 2011 and 2012. Despite the advantages of research publishing for academic librarians in Nigeria, Okeji (2018) observed that only a small number of librarians frequently publish in prestigious journals listed in Scopus, commonly recognized among scholars. Adegbaye et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the workload and research output of

academic librarians at government-run and privately-owned universities in Ogun State. The study revealed low publication output for co-authored books, textbooks, book chapters, conference proceedings, and monographs but high output for journal articles. Importantly, research articles authored by librarians were found to impact their career advancement.

A librarian's workload encompasses the entirety of tasks and responsibilities that must be completed within a specified timeframe (Adegbaye et al., 2019). Excessive workload can lead to academic burden, a complex term encompassing instructors' psychological commitment to teaching, the application of intellectual prowess, and the demonstration of skills generated through academic work (Ugwu et al., 2015). The workload of librarians is influenced by both self-directed efforts and collaborative engagement in task assignment and determination.

Librarians are primarily engaged in three activities: professional practice, research and scholarly contributions, and service. However, the specific pattern of a librarian's professional activity may vary among individuals (University of Toronto Library, 2020). Philip and Effiong (2018) contend that working in a library is one of the most stressful jobs, with stress being more prevalent among librarians. Consequently, librarians may face challenges in fulfilling their general and professional obligations. Steenkamp and Roberts (2018) discovered that librarians' workload often leads them to seek alternative employment, diverting their focus from teaching, service, and research. While tasks assigned to librarians differ, they generally allocate 80% to 90% of their time to professional practice for the library, with the remaining 10% to 20% dedicated to other obligations (University of Hawaii, 2018; University of Toronto Library, 2020).

Jung (2012) argues that a heavy workload frequently serves as a distraction from research work, and according to Mustapha and Ghee (2013), excessive workload contributes to stress and burnout, impeding librarians from dedicating ample time to research. As a consequence, research productivity tends to decline. Lindsay et al. (2012) found that workload affects research output in both positive and negative ways. Bitzer (2007) suggests that, besides teaching, librarians are involved in moderating student evaluations, leading library orientations, and participating in numerous academic boards. Bentley and Kyvik (2013) propose that the workload and responsibilities assigned to librarians should allow sufficient time for research, and they should be provided with training materials to enhance proficiency in this area.

Philip and Effiong (2018) explored the productivity, workload, and job satisfaction of librarians across various academic institutions in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Their research revealed that heightened work pressure negatively impacts motivated librarians, suggesting that librarians with heavier workloads experience lower career satisfaction compared to their counterparts with lighter workloads. Adebayo et al. (2018) corroborated these findings, highlighting the adverse effects of workload challenges on librarians' research productivity, including job overload, disproportionate duties, and disruptions from customers. The study emphasized that

overwork is a primary contributor to employee burnout, hindering librarians from generating the necessary publications for promotion requirements, akin to challenges faced by colleagues in the teaching profession.

Ajiboye (2019), as cited in Kelvin (2021), conducted a descriptive study investigating the correlation between workload and the publication production of academic librarians. The study concluded that research publications significantly contribute to the professional advancement of librarians. Amini-Philips and Okonmah (2020) focused on the productivity and workload of lecturers in Delta State universities, revealing a strong negative relationship between lecturers' productivity and their workload in teaching, marking, supervising student projects, conducting research, and participating in community service.

Another factor contributing to librarians' workload is understaffing, as identified by Adegbaye et al. (2019). The literature review by Ilo (2016) emphasized the connection between workload pressure and understaffing, a pervasive issue in most universities, public or private, likely exacerbated by Nigeria's economic challenges. Studies have consistently shown that Nigerian universities often face gross understaffing, leading to suboptimal and unsafe working conditions (Okocha & Eyiolorunshe, 2017). The rigid 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. work schedule in Nigeria significantly limits librarians' ability to meet promotion requirements.

Fiawotoafor et al. (2019) investigated the publications of professional librarians in Ghana's public university libraries, revealing that a strict work schedule, heavy workload, and lack of time hindered librarians from publishing as much as desired. Baro et al. (2013) attributed this outcome to a shortage of time resulting from a high workload. Onifade (2004), as cited in Onifade et al. (2020), highlighted that librarians struggle to balance their schedules due to the relative rigidity of their work hours, exacerbated by involvement in extracurricular activities such as meetings, junior staff training, and library instructions, consuming a significant portion of their time.

Despite the potential benefits, including reputation and prestige, empirical investigations into the research productivity of librarians indicate a relatively low number of publications. This raises the question of whether the demanding workload carried by librarians acts as a hindrance, potentially impeding their ability to produce high-quality papers that can successfully navigate rigorous peer-review processes. Motivated by this query, the present study aims to explore how workload serves as a predictor of the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What is the extent of the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria between 2017-2022?

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ii. What is the extent of workload of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

i. There is no significant relationship between workload and the research productivity of the librarians.

Research Method

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. A descriptive survey is considered appropriate for the study because the study aimed at exploring the current nature of the event under investigation without manipulating the independent variables. The descriptive research design involves the systematic collection of data from a target population through the use of structured research instruments. The design provides a summary of an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterize individuals or groups (Oyedokun, 2020). The population of the study is 265 librarians in the libraries of the 18 accredited public universities in South-west, Nigeria. These comprise seven federal universities and 11 state universities in South-west, Nigeria. This was obtained by visiting the libraries of the selected public universities, while phone calls were made to the universities that the researcher was unable to visit. A structured questionnaire was used as a research instrument to collect the data. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the respondents' characteristics. Research questions were answered using statistical mean and standard deviation with a criterion mean of 2.50. The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Presentation of Results

The answers to the research questions were presented below:

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria between 2017-2022? Data in Table 1 provide the answer to this question.

Table 1: Research Productivity of Librarians

S/N	Publications	VHE (above 9)	HE (6-8)	LE (3-5)	VLE (0-2)	Mean	STD.
1	Book review	12	65	88	60	2.13	.87
2	Chapters in book	15	88	71	51	2.30	.89
3	Textbook	12	60	64	89	1.98	.94
4	Edited book	12	78	85	50	2.23	.86
5	Conference proceeding	09	108	88	20	2.47	.71
6	Conference/seminar presentation	24	108	72	21	2.69	.78
7	Workshop	20	112	51	42	2.49	.90
8	Editorial note	12	78	79	55	2.22	.88
9	Monographs	12	49	92	72	2.00	.87
10	Occasional paper	09	50	85	81	1.94	.86
11	Article in learned journal (Local)	120	90	12	03	3.45	.66
12	Article in learned journal (International)	90	116	13	06	3.29	.70
Aggregate Mean						**2.43**	**.77**
Criterion Mean						**2.50**	

Results in Table 1 revealed that the extent of research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria between 2017-2022 was low. This is due to the fact that the aggregate mean of 2.43 is lower than the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of workload on librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria?

Table 2: Extent of Workload of the Librarians

S/N	Workloads	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	STD.
	Professional Workloads (Within the Library)						
1	Acquisition/collection development	67	120	18	20	3.04	0.86
2	Cataloging and classification of information resources	72	120	23	10	3.13	0.77
3	Digitization of information resources	67	95	49	14	2.96	0.88
4	Library automation services	78	98	38	11	3.08	0.84
5	Management of circulation services	59	119	20	27	2.93	0.91
6	Serials management	42	124	25	34	2.77	0.92
7	Management of reference services	34	153	20	18	2.90	0.74
8	Indexing and abstracting	14	114	72	25	2.52	0.77
9	Current awareness services	38	115	62	10	2.80	0.76
10	Selective dissemination of information	60	80	72	13	2.83	0.89
11	Bibliographic control	38	128	41	18	2.83	0.80
12	Populating library database	49	126	38	12	2.94	0.77
S/N	**Workloads**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**	**Mean**	**STD.**
13	Lecturing/Teaching	95	115	10	05	3.33	0.67
14	Assessment of students' performance	58	150	12	05	3.27	0.65
15	Preparation of lecture notes	85	119	15	06	3.16	0.61
16	Instructional services	80	128	12	05	3.26	0.70
Sub-Mean						**2.98**	**0.78**
	Research and Scholarly Workloads						
17	Conducting research	100	118	07	-	3.41	0.55
18	Writing and publishing in reputable outlets	118	98	09	-	3.48	0.58
19	Providing editorial responsibilities	44	100	17	05	3.34	0.71
20	Participating in conferences	75	100	45	05	3.09	0.79
21	Receiving fellowships, grants or awards	10	55	115	45	2.13	0.78
Sub-Mean						**3.09**	**0.68**
	Services to the University and Professional Bodies						
22	Serving in learned and professional bodies/societies (NLA, LRCN, IFLA)	58	100	52	15	2.89	0.87
23	Serving on library committees	84	89	50	02	3.13	0.79
24	Serving on universities committees	81	75	45	24	2.95	0.99
25	Serving on faculty committees	60	81	67	17	2.82	0.92
26	Serving on various advisory boards	12	119	68	26	2.52	0.77
27	Serving as guest lecturer for courses in LIS and other disciplines	10	93	75	77	1.98	0.82
28	Providing essential contributions to the community	15	76	89	45	2.27	0.86
Sub-Mean						**2.65**	**0.86**
Aggregate Mean						**2.92**	**0.72**
Criterion Mean						**2.50**	

Results in Table 2 showed that the extent of the workload of the librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria was high. This is because the aggregate mean of 2.92 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between workload and the research productivity of librarians.

Data in Table 3 provide the answer to the hypothesis:

Table 3: The Relationship between Librarians' Workload and Research Productivity

		Workload of Librarians	Research Productivity of Librarians
Workload of Librarians	Pearson Correlation	1	.969**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	225
Research Productivity of Librarians	Pearson Correlation	.969**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

*P < 0.05.

From Table 3, Pearson Correlation coefficient (r) yielded 0.969, since the significant value (Sig.2-tailed) is 0.000 (which is less than 0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, implying that there is a significant relationship between workload and the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

According to the study, between 2017 and 2022, librarians at public universities in South-West Nigeria produced relatively little research. This finding aligns with that of Okeji (2018), which found that only a tiny percentage of librarians write regularly in reputable journals that are listed in Scopus and are generally well-known among academics. This supports the assertion made by Musa et al. (2017) that, despite the advantages of publication for librarians, they do not do high-quality research. Babalola (2013) discovered that in the previous three years, 28.9% of librarians had not published any articles in professional journals. In contrast, 12.6% had published one, 26.1% had published two, 16.6% had published three, and only 3.1% had published more than three. This result corroborated Babalola's findings. Furthermore, after starting their jobs, 28.9% of the librarians had never published in a professional journal. Moreover, 58.7% of the librarians had never co-authored a paper with a professional or academic colleague for publication in a professional journal, and 50.8% of them had not finished any research in the preceding three years. This demonstrated that some librarians were not conducting research as effectively as they could have. The results align with Ogbomo's (2010) observation that most participants had not completed a paper within the preceding three years. She noted that even while librarians benefit from

research output, the number of research and publications they produce is still rather small.

A possible reason for the low productivity could be that some librarians are overburdened with work, which can be distracting with all the various daily tasks involved in serving current and potential library users. It might also arise from the institution's policy, a librarian's lack of research experience and expertise, challenges finding reliable books or journals, or rigor in meeting the necessary publication standards. To compete in the academic setting, librarians nowadays, like other faculty members, are under pressure to perform research and publish articles. Furthermore, it is a statutory requirement that librarians engage in research activity as a critical component of advancement.

According to the study, the workload of librarians at public universities in South-west Nigeria is high. The finding agreed with Jung (2012) which emphasized that a busy schedule is a distraction from the research study. Heavy workloads, particularly when librarians are burdened with administrative duties or routine tasks, may leave them with limited time and energy to engage in research activities (Okocha & Eyiolorunshe, 2017). Higher workloads can potentially hinder librarians' ability to conduct research, publish papers, and contribute to scholarly activities. The result also supported Bitzer's (2007) claim that librarians have a heavy workload since they teach, lead library orientations, preside over student exams, and participate in various academic board meetings. This implies that librarians engage in a significant number of daily activities in their place of work. The reason for the high workloads could be because of the nature of the profession and the statutory responsibilities attached to it. Moreover, it may be due to the inadequate workforce in the public universities where university libraries in Nigeria are not excluded, because of the dwindling funds being allocated to the education sectors that negatively influence employing more hands in the university libraries.

The study discovered that there is a significant relationship between workload and the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria. This implies that an increase in the librarians' workload leads to a corresponding decrease in their research productivity. The finding is in agreement with the one of Hollister and Jensen (2023) which found that there was a high correlation between a librarian's ability to do their professional duties, and how much of their own scholarship they produced. Additionally, it supported the findings of Houston et al. (2006), Fiawotoafor et al. (2019), and Olorunsola and Ibegbulam (2003) as cited in Idowu et al. (2019), which established that librarians had to work after hours to complete tasks and that their working hours were under pressure due to the demands of their jobs. According to the survey, librarians' heavy workloads left them with little to no time for research.

The result, however, differs from those of Ogbomo and Adekoya (2019), which found that librarians' academic workload and research production were low and that there was no significant correlation between the

two variables in university libraries in South-west, Nigeria. Probably, the increase in the librarian's workload, which is professional workload, research and scholarly contributions, or service that gives little or no room for research, may influence the librarians to know more about time management. In other words, if their workload is in excess, it may negatively affect the librarians' research output, and if the excess workload is properly managed, it may positively influence their research productivity.

Conclusion

The research delved into the impact of workload on the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west Nigeria, prompted by the evident discrepancies in promotion practices linked to research output. The study was spurred by the realization that librarians, crucial contributors to academic institutions, were not receiving the recognition commensurate with their efforts. This lack of acknowledgment adversely affected both individual librarians and the overall standing of their respective institutions. The findings revealed a notable deficiency in the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west Nigeria, coupled with a high workload. Significantly, the study established a robust relationship between the workload and the research productivity of librarians. In conclusion, workload is a pivotal factor in predicting the research productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west Nigeria. The study underscores the essential role of managing workload to provide librarians with the necessary space and resources for meaningful engagement in research activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made:

i. Librarians should engage in more research activities to improve their productivity. They can do this with a personal commitment to keep up-to-date with the latest trends, methodologies, and tools in library and information science through conferences, workshops, webinars, and professional development courses.
ii. To improve librarians' knowledge and research-related abilities, university management should offer opportunities for professional development and continuous education programmes through online courses or workshops.
iii. A comprehensive workload evaluation should be conducted by the management to identify areas with a high administrative burden and routine duties that can be reduced or delegated, in order to open up librarians' time for research-related activity.

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