Workload as Correlate of Publication Output of Academic Librarians in Universities

By

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Abstract

The concern about librarians' workload is considered crucial because of its relative effect on their publication output which has a consequent implication for their professional progress and career advancement. This study investigates workload as correlates of publication output of academic librarians in universities. The study adopted a descriptive research design taking a total enumeration of 107 academic librarians in private and government-owned universities in Ogun State. Findings from the study revealed that academic librarians' publication output was fairly high in terms of journal articles, but low in terms of textbooks, chapters in books, co-authored books, monographs and conference proceedings. Findings also show that their research publications were relevant to their career progress. Of the several sources of workload issues of academic librarians, inadequate staffing ranked highest as reported in the study. It also revealed that academic librarians experience heavy workload and that the workload they experience impacts their publication output negatively. The study concluded by recommending among others that, the University management should employ more staff to relieve academic librarians of their heavy workloads so as to give them ample time for conducting research thereby enhancing their publication output, professional progress and career advancement.

Keywords: publication output, workload, academic librarians, inadequate staffing, universities

Introduction

Publication output is seen as one of the outcomes of research activities (Mahar and Quiliam, 2018). Research according to Basiru, Okwilagwe and Adebayo (2018) is referred to as a very careful, observant, and vigilant study or investigation of phenomena, particularly to search and find out new particulars, information and facts. Over the years, publication output has been the channel through which academic librarians contribute their quota to the existing body of knowledge (Okonedo, 2015). These channels, according to the study, could be books, articles published in reputable journals, technical reports, conference papers and proceedings, chapter(s) in books, training and patent right and supervision of students' research work. In an academic environment such as the university, research publications cannot be underestimated because it is the most significant index of measuring academic librarian's productivity. This implies that publication has become an integral part of librarians' academic career.

In Nigeria today, the primary parameter used to assess librarians for promotion are quantity (the number) and quality of articles published in reputable journals, conference proceedings and papers (Okonedo, Popoola & Emmanuel, 2015). In order to justify the academic status accorded librarians and the importance attached to research and publications in universities in Nigeria, academic librarians have accepted the reality of conducting research and publishing their output in scholarly/reputable outlets like their teaching counterparts. The consequence of not been able to accept and flow with the research trend of getting published is tantamount to either becoming 'endangered species' in the academic environment or 'perishing' in the 'academic sea' of career stagnation. In line with this notion, Salaam and Agboola (2002) reported that failure of librarians in the university libraries to produce the requisite number of publications in learned journals would lead to forfeiture of their promotion opportunity despite having met other criteria.

Edem (1997) also reported that publication output enhances status or rank and salary position of librarians in the university environment. As important as research publication is to academic librarians, they hardly meet up to the publication requirement for their advancement in the profession. This is in line with the submission of Umar, Kabir, Dahiru and Amishe, (2017), who remarked that regardless of the benefits of publications to librarians, they do not conduct adequate research and publication. The question now is what could have been responsible for low publication output among librarians? It becomes crucial, however, to investigate those factors responsible for the low rate of publication output of librarians.

Research questions

1. What is the level of publication output of librarians in public and private universities in Ogun State?
2. What is the relevance of research publications on the professional progression and career advancement of academic librarians?
3. What are the sources of workload of academic librarians?
4. What are the effects of workload of librarians on their publication output?

Literature review

Level of Publication Output of Librarians

Over the years, research on publication output has become a prominent area of enquiring among scholars in library and information science field, especially among librarians in the academic environment. Okpe, Simisaye and Otuza (2013) investigated the level of publication output among faculty members in Babcock University within years 2001-2012. They found that on the average each faculty member produces one publication every year, which was minimal. They further recommend that the publication of faculty member should be improved upon. Also, Okeji (2018) carried out a bibliometric analysis within the period 2000- March 2018 on the growth of academic librarians research output in Nigeria. She concluded that only a few authors were productive in LIS field in Nigeria.

The Relevance of Publication Output on the Career Progression of Librarians

Much has been said about the relevance of publication output of librarians on the introductory part of this paper. Nevertheless, the relevance of publication output on the career progression of librarians cannot be overemphasised as several studies have reported a strong connection between publication output of librarians' and their career advancement (Ogbomo, 2010). To corroborate this finding, Okonedo (2015) affirms that publication output is the most prominent factor in determining the decision on the career progression of librarians. Her study reported that a majority of librarians publish articles majorly for the purpose of promotion, which in turn, influences their career advancement. Career progression is reflected in the development in career and opportunities for professional enhancement (Ajah & Walt, 2017). Career progression of librarians is, therefore, advancing in library and information related profession up to the pinnacle of the profession through promotion and appointment. Several studies have emphasized the importance of publication output of librarians' with their career

advancement (Ogbomo, 2010). Research has established that librarians are faced with some factors that make it difficult for them to publish like their teaching counterpart. Among these factors is the workload variable. In light of this, it has become pertinent to accentuate the workload of academic librarians.

Sources of workload of Academic librarians

According to Gharib, Jamil, Ahmad and Ghouse (2016), workload refers to the concentration or amount of assignments and tasks, which employee (librarians) responsible for at work. Similarly, workload can also be referred to as the number of tasks and obligations that is to be performed or completed within a specific time frame. A library employee's workload can be excessive or sustainable. If excessive, he/she may feel their work schedule is overloaded. 'Heavy workload', 'work overload' or 'high job demand' as it is been referred to in most extant literature happens when assigned work exceeds one's capability (Knani & Fourier, 2014; Khuong &Yen, 2016).

While considering what could contribute to workload, Bowling and Kirkendall (2012) identified a number of factors that could potentially be a source of workload for employees. They classified these factors into two namely, factors within the work environment and factors within the individual employee.

a. Factors within the work environment- those factors from within the work environment that can contribute to the excessive workload for employees (including librarians) include varying patterns of work demands, leader behaviours, organizational and occupational culture and most importantly inadequate staffing conditions. Varying patterns of work demand might create periods of high and low workload. Librarians from time to time experience considerable fluctuation in workload. For instance, they may experience an increase in workload as such period prior to faculty or departmental accreditation. Also, a heavy workload can be triggered due to increasing pressure to deliver efficient services to users, in such cases librarians found themselves working beyond normal. Leader (one's superior at work) behaviours too can contribute to workload issues. Leaders who lack knowledge about how much work their subordinates can reasonably complete, for example, may assign too much or too little work. Rutherford (2001) asserts that some libraries, for example, might have a culture that encourages employees to work exceptionally hard. In such cases, issues relating to workload will keep popping. prevalent

Inadequate staffing condition in most universities is another source of workload for librarians. While reviewing the literature on workload issues related to librarians, it was confirmed that there is a link between inadequate staffing and workload (Baro, Fyneman, & Zoukemefa, 2013; Ilo, 2016). Inadequate staffing has been one of the

challenges faced by most institutions irrespective of whether they are public or private institutions, this is probably because of the recession being experienced in Nigeria today. It has actually become a source of workload for librarians. Findings of several researchers indicated that there is gross inadequate staffing condition prevalent in both public and private institutions in Nigeria (Okocha, 2016; Lawal-Solarin, 2016). This shortfall in staff strength has resulted in negative and unhealthy work conditions, for instance, a worker having to do work that is meant for two individual in the workplace. Consequently, under such condition, librarians can hardly dedicate time for research activities especially in universities where librarians perform a dual role of working in the library as well as teaching in classrooms. In order to curb workload issues among librarians, Baro, Fyneman, and Zoukemefa (2013) recommended that the number of librarians, specifically, cataloguers in university libraries in Nigeria needs to be increased to reduce the backlog of books and workload.

b. Factors within the individual employee- factors within the individual librarian may include ability and time management skills. Individual differences may impact upon one's perceptions of workload and they may influence one's tendency to let work "pile-up", as well as one's tendency to take on large workloads. Job-relevant abilities can include both mental abilities (e.g., general intelligence) and physical abilities (e.g., motor skills). These abilities probably influence qualitative workload (difficulty of the work one has) more than they influence quantitative workload (the amount of work one has) because the lack of these abilities can make one perceive that the work is difficult. Poor time management culture impact strongly on workload (Ifijeh, 2012). Librarians with poor time management culture/ skills, for example, may report high workloads because they use their time at work inefficiently. As a result, these librarians often experience a marked increase in workload immediately prior to deadlines (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012). However, Peterson (1994) asserts that proper time management by librarians can help them identify priorities in order to balance conflicting demands, this, in turn, could help them to create time for research. Other factors that could contribute to the workload of employees including librarians as revealed in the literature include additional job duties, training other employees, cutbacks to funding, lack of resources, New technology and intensity (speed-up) of work (CUPE, 2014).

Effect of workload of librarians on publication output

Extant anecdotal and empirical studies have established a link between heavy workload and several negative work outcomes in organizations especially, among librarians in the academic environment (Ilo, 2016; Gharib, Jamil, Ahmad & Ghouse, 2016; Gill, 2017). Khuong and Yen (2016) posit that when an employee (in this case, librarians) feels pressurised, or when their job becomes persistently demanding, this is likely to result in

varying physical, behavioural and mental problems. Given such state of affair, it may be difficult for such employee to be productive especially in research activities (publication output). Heavy workload has been known to be a major precursor of stress and burnout at the workplace. For instance, having large piles of work in a given targeted time limit will result in librarians becoming fagged out. Empirically, working under deadlines and undue pressures has been linked to stress (Miclellan, 2011) as well as burnout (Schmoldt, Freeborn, Klevit, 1994: Moczydłowska, 2016). Gill (2016) asserts that excess workload compared with a shortage of resources, especially with insufficient opportunity for recovery, can deplete energy and lead to exhaustion. All these, in turn, have negative consequences on publication productivity of librarians.

Similarly, Bolin (2008) in Berg, Jacobs and Cornwall (2013) remark that a contingent of authors and librarians feel librarians are ill-prepared to take on research due to the demands of an already heavy workload. Olorunsola and Ibegbulam (2003) stressed that librarianship, being an 8:00 am to a 4pm job in Nigeria and requiring constant job presence severely limits the librarians' ability to meet promotion and tenure expectations. For those librarians in institutions where library courses are offered and/or use of library are taught, their workloads revolve around teaching duties, performance of library routines and other responsibilities. Baro and Ebhomeya (2012) posited that the combination of professional duties with the rigours of academic work such as publishing in journals is the greatest obstacle to career advancement in librarianship.

Olorunsola and Ibegbulam (2003) stated that in order for librarians to achieve research success within the academic environment, a convenient work-schedule equivalent to that of their teaching colleagues is a *sine qua non*. Adebayo, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Osayande (2018) reiterated this by admitting that there are workload issues such as work overload, responsibilities not matched to support system, obnoxious patrons etc., experienced among librarians in academic libraries. They added that excessive workload is the cause of employee burnout which, in turn, affects a librarian's ability to produce the required publications to meet their promotion requirement like that of their teaching counterparts. Similarly, in a study of publication output among librarians and academics in universities in the South-South Geo-political zone of Nigeria, Baro, Fyneman and Zoukemefa (2013) reported that low publication output of librarians was linked to lack of time occasioned by a high workload.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study. The target population consists of the academic librarians of government and private owned universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Total enumeration of the study population was taken due to the size of the target population. Afolabi (1999), cited by Obaje (2014) asserted that an entire population can

be covered if it is manageable in terms of cost and accessibility to the subjects of the study.

Five (5) private universities and three (3) government-owned universities (8 altogether) in Ogun State were selected for the study based on age and year of establishment. These universities are Covenant University, Crescent University, Babcock University, Bells University, Crawford University, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, and Tai Solarin University of Education all in Ogun State. The instrument used to collect data from the respondents was the questionnaire. Out of one hundred and seven (107) copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of hundred (100) copies were valid and yielded an effective response rate of 93.4% (see Table 1). Data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Sample size and questionnaire return rate
Result

S/N	University	Number Administered	Number Returned	%
1	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. (FUNAAB)	24	23	95.8
2	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago -Iwoye. (OOU)	16	16	100
3	Tai Solarin University Education, Ijebu -Ode. (TASUED)	10	9	90
4	Covenant University, Ota	20	19	95
5	Babcock U niversity, Ilisan-Remo	18	16	88.8
6	Crescent University, Abeokuta	6	6	100
7	Bells University of technology, Ota	9	8	88.8
8	Crawford University, Igbesa	3	3	100
	Total	**107**	**100**	**93.4**

Demographic information

The study revealed that librarian II (entry level) constituted the highest academic status among the studied population. This was followed by librarian I. By implication, the university libraries in Ogun state have more of new entrants into the profession. It was discovered in this study that there are more female than male librarians in the universities examined. The study also revealed that a majority of the librarians in the universities covered were holders of a master's degree. Only a few among them had either an M.Phil or PhD degrees. It was also revealed by the study, that a majority of the librarians had worked between 6-11 years as librarians.

Table 2: Level of research publications among librarians in public and private universities in Ogun State

S/N	Publications	Level of Publications		
		Librarians without publications	Librarians with publications	Aggregate Publications by Librarians
1	Textbooks	88 (88.0%)	12 (12.0%)	21
2	Chapters in books	74 (74.0%)	26 (26.0%)	56
3	Co-authored textbooks	83 (83.0%)	17 (17.0%)	30
4	Monographs	98 (98.0%)	2 (2.0%)	2
5	Occasional papers	99 (98.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1
6	Articles in learned journals	1 (1.0%)	99 (99.0%)	1,152
7	Conference proceedings	65 (65.0%)	35 (36.0%)	91

N=100

As reported in Table 2, 88(88.0%) respondents had never published any textbook, however, only 12(12.0%) of them had published 21 textbooks. For chapters in books, only 26 (26.0%) had 56 chapters in books. For co-authored textbooks, 83(83.0%) respondents do not have any, while only 17(17.0%) had 30 publications in co-authored textbooks. For the monographs, only 2(2.0%) of the respondents indicated that they have 1 monographic publication each, while 98 (98.0%) of respondents had no

monographic publications. Occasional papers were the least published papers. Only 1(1.0%) of the respondent had 1 occasional paper. The highest level of publications of the respondents was in learned journals which recorded 1,152 articles, this amount to 99(99.0%) of the respondents. Finally, 65(65.0%) of the respondents had 91 publications in conference proceedings. The result shows that librarians publish more articles in learned journals than other publication outlets. It is, therefore, deduced from the above table, that while librarian's publication level was found to be fairly high in terms of journal articles, others were low.

Table 3: Relevance of research publication on the career progression of academic librarians

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
1.	I cannot do without writing, papers, if I want to be relevant in my profession	46 6.0%	52 52.0%	2 2.0%	-	3.44	.62
2.	My institution place so much importance on publications	44 44.0%	55 55.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.43	.52
3.	My publications can earn me both national and international recognition as an author	43 43.0%	56 56.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.42	.52
4.	My promotion as an academic librarian is strictly by number of publications	43 43.0%	54 54.0%	3 3.0%	-	3.40	.55
5.	Promotion is the only means by which I can progress in my career as a librarian	42 42.0%	56 56.0%	2 2.0%	-	3.40	.53
6.	I carry out research because I don't want to be stagnated	45 45.0%	48 48.0%	7 7.0%	-	3.38	.62

Table 3 shows the reactions of librarians with regards to the relevance of their research publication on career progress. 98(98.0%) of the respondents agreed that they cannot do without writing papers, if they wanted to be relevant in their profession with the mean score of ($\overline{X}$ =3.44, S.D. =0.54). Also, 99(99.0%) of the respondents agreed that their institution place so much importance on publications with the mean score of ($\overline{X}$ =3.43, S.D. =0.52). Similarly, 99 (99.0%) of the respondents agreed that their publications can earn them both national and international recognition as an author ($\overline{X}$ =3.42, S.D. =52). 97(97.0%) of the respondents agreed that their promotion as an academic librarian is strictly by the number of publications ($\overline{X}$ =3.40, S.D. = 55). Furthermore, 98(98.0%) of the respondents agreed that p romotion is the only means by which they can progress in their career as librarians ($\overline{X}$ =3.40, S.D. = 0.53). Finally, 93(93.0%) of the respondents agreed that they carry out research because they don't want to be stagnated ($\overline{X}$ =3.38, S.D. = 0.62). In consideration of the analysis of the respondents, one can therefore, infer that the publication output of the librarians examined is very relevant to their career progress.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
1.	Inadequate staffing increases the workload of academic librarian	50 50.0%	49 49.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.49	.52
2.	Lack of time management skill contribute to workload problems	49 49.0%	50 50.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.48	.52
3.	Incessant pressure to deliver efficient services to users, compounds my workload	47 47.0%	52 52.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.47	.52
4.	Lack of resources to work with	44 44.0%	55 55.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.43	.52
5.	Patterns of work demand triggers excessive workload	48 48.0%	51 51.0%	1 1.0%	-	3.38	.62

Table 4: Sources of workload of academic librarians

Table 4 shows the reaction of respondents regarding the sources of workload. Inadequate staffing increases the workload of an academic librarian was ranked the highest by mean score rating ($\overline{X}$ =3.49, S.D. = 0.52). This was followed in succession by lack of time management skill contribute to workload issues ($\overline{X}$ =3.48, S.D. = 0.52). Incessant pressure to deliver efficient services to users, compounds my workload ($\overline{X}$ =3.47, S.D. =.52), Lack of resources to work with ($\overline{X}$ =3.43, S.D. = 0.52), Patterns of work demand triggers excessive workload ($\overline{X}$ =3.38, S.D. =0.62). It can be therefore inferred from the above that inadequate staffing top the highest among sources of workload of librarians in the study.

Table 5: Effect of librarians' workload on their publication output

S/N	Workload and publication productivity	SA	A	D	SD	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
1.	I experience heavy workload	11 11.0%	78 78.0%	10 10.0%	1 1.0%	2.99	.50
2.	The level of my workload is light	-	15 15.0%	83 83.0%	2 2.0%	2.13	.39
3.	I have more work to do than can be comfortably accomplished	5 5.0%	86 86.0%	9 9.0%	0 0.0%	2.96	.37
4.	The heavy workload I experience hinders my publication output	12 12.0%	76 76.0%	12 12.0%	0 0.0%	3.00	.49
5.	A lighter workload will give me the opportunity to engage in more research work	12 12.0%	87 87.0%	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	3.11	.35
6.	My workload makes me have anxiety/psychological effect on my publication output negatively	9 9.0%	64 64.0%	27 27.0%	0 0.0%	2.82	.58

Table 5 reported the effect of workload of librarians on their publication output. In order to ascertain whether the librarians' workload affects their publicatio n output, the respondents were asked if they experienced heavy workload. Majority of the respondents 89(89.0%) agreed that they did experience heavy workload with a mean score of ($\overline{X}$ =2.99, S.D. =0.50). Only a few respondents 15(15.0%) a greed that their workload was light with a mean score ($\overline{X}$ =2.13, S.D. =0.39). 91(91.0%) of the respondents agreed that they had more work to do than could be comfortably accomplished ($\overline{X}$ =2.96, S.D =0.37). Also, 88(88 .0%) of the respondents agreed that the heavy workload they experienced hindered their publication output ($\overline{X}$ =3.00, S.D. =0.49). when asked if lighter workload would give them the opportunity to engage in more research work, majority 99 (99.0%) of the respondents agreed with a mean score of ($\overline{X}$ =3.11, S.D. =0.35). Up to 73(73.0%) of the respondent agreed that their workload made them have anxiety that their publication output is affected negatively with a mean score of ($\overline{X}$ =2.82, S.D. =0.58). From the above table, one can deduce that the respondents experienced heavy workload that affects their publication output.

Discussion of Findings

Level of Publication Output among Librarians in Public and Private Universities in Ogun State

In terms of the level of librarians' research publication, this study reveals that research publication output of librarians on the fairly high in terms of articles in learned journals, but low in terms in textbooks, chapters in books, co-authored books, monographs and conference proceedings. A larger number of the librarians had no publication in textbooks, chapters in books, co-authored books and monographs. It was discovered that almost all the librarians publish more of their articles in learned journals than other publication outlets. The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that articles in learned journals are often rated higher during promotion compared to other publication channels. This corroborates the finding of Ogbomo (2010) that, librarians most often publish in refereed and non-refereed journals in the Library and Information Science field than other publication outlets.

The Relevance of Publication Output on the Career Progression of Academic Librarians

The opinions of respondents pertaining to the relevance of publication output on the career progress showed that their research publications were relevant to their career progress. Furthermore, the study shows that most librarians realized that they could not do without writing papers if they are to be relevant in their profession. To further buttress the relevance of publication output of librarians to their career progression, the

respondents opined that promotion as an academic librarian is strictly by the number of publications. What this implies is that, without requisite number of publications, librarians cannot ascend to the peak of the career. In other words, they can be stagnated if not adequately published. In a similar manner, they agreed that promotion was the only means by which they could record a appreciable level of career progress as librarians. This is in line with Ogunrombi (1991) who submitted that librarians in Nigerian universities are expected to publish the same number of papers as lecturers before they could advance in the profession. This also conforms to the submissions of Agboola and Oduwole (2005) who noted that research promotes advancement and recognition for librarians. This study confirms that librarians undertake researches in order not to be stagnated, and are also of the opinion that, their publications can earn them both national and international recognition as authors.

Sources of workload for academic librarians

There are several factors that can contribute to workload issues of academic librarians. In this present study, it was revealed that inadequate staffing top the list among the sources of excess workload of librarians. Majority of the academic librarians agreed that the shortage of staff imposes excessive workload on them. The reason for this may be linked to the study of Ayo-Sobowale and Akinyemi (2011) who observe that fund from the government has failed to relieve the heavy burdens of public universities and as such, affected adequate staffing. It is quite clear how these unfortunate circumstances eventually led to heavy workload issues experienced today in most universities. These realities are also true for most private universities as found by this study. Another contributor to workload as revealed in the study is lack of proper time management. All most all the respondents agreed that they are facing the problem of not been able to schedule their time properly, and as a result increases their workload. Incessant pressure to deliver efficient services to users also contributes to workload issues of librarians as indicated in the study. The least source of workload is varying patterns of work demand triggers excessive workload. Librarians do also agree that the varying pattern of their work could lead to workload issues.

Effects of workload of librarians on their publication output

Information on the effects of workload on the librarians' publication output shows that the librarians experience heavy workload and that the workload they experienced impacts their publication output negatively. Similarly, librarians have more works to do than they can actually accomplish. Almost all the librarians agreed that a lighter workload would give them the opportunity to engage more in research. A good number of the respondents agreed that the workload they experience induce in them anxiety and psychological effect that in turn affect their publication output. This finding confirms the

findings of Baro, Fyneman, and Zoukemefa, (2013) that most of the respondents (60.4%) disagreed that the emphasis placed on research and publication is appropriately balanced with daily cataloging responsibilities.

Conclusion

A library is regarded as the hub of any university system; hence, librarians occupy a central position in the university system, and have academic status. In order to justify this, they must publish to avoid the slogan of 'perishing in the academic sea". This can thus be made possible by reducing to the barest minimum, the librarians' workload of that has been established in this study as impediment to the publication productivity of academic librarians. Paramount, provisions should be made for more staff so that workload issues are reduced.

Recommendations

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

1. Librarians should be encouraged to publish in textbooks, co-authored works, chapters in books, monographs etc. this can be made possible if university management in the country de-emphasizes the high level of rating given to journal articles during promotion as against other publication channels.
2. To cushion the effect of heavy workload as it impinges on librarians' publication output, the University management should employ more staff to relief academic librarians of their heavy workload so as to be more productive in terms of publications. And also librarians should imbibe the culture of time management and proper scheduling of their daily activities in order to create time for research.
3. The university management should make the grant available to sponsor librarians to conferences, workshops and seminars in order for them to contribute to the frontier of knowledge through publications.
5. In order to avoid been stagnated on their career ladder, librarians should publish more, since their publication output determines their promotion which, in turns, determines their career and professional progress.

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