

Institutional Culture And Academics' Research Output In Federal Universities, South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated institutional culture as a predictor of academic staff research output in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, with specific focus on collaboration and peer review. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 925 senior academic staff from five federal universities in South-South Nigeria, while a sample of 278 respondents was selected using Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Institutional Culture Questionnaire (ICQ) and Academic Staff Research Output Checklist (ASROC). The instruments were validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management and Planning, University of Uyo, and reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha statistic, which yielded reliability coefficients of .74 and .99 respectively. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression for research questions and F-ratio for hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that collaboration and peer-review significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The study concluded that institutional culture variables such as collaboration and peer review play a statistically significant but limited role in enhancing academic research output. It was recommended that peer review should be encouraged among academics as this will prevent dissemination of irrelevant findings, unwarranted claims, unacceptable interpretations, and personal views. Also, collaborative research culture should be enforced in the different department of universities to facilitate collaboration among faculty members and assist them to discuss different research problem and get in-depth knowledge about different types of research.

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1. Introduction

It is universally recognized that teaching, research and community service constitute the main functions of universities. The acquisition of knowledge is the mission of research, the transmission of knowledge is the mission of

teaching, and the application of knowledge is the mission of public service. One of the goals of university education is to expand the frontiers of knowledge through quality research which in no doubt contributes greatly to national development. The attainment of these goals as required of a university is a function of university academic staff.

Invariably, the output level of academic staff in universities is measured by the quality of research, community service and teaching they carry out. Any productive staff is expected to have carried out a number of quality researches that can be of benefit to national development. Research plays a significant role in developmental process of any nation. Hardly can any nation develop without research and that is why developed nations systematically invest hugely on research to improve the quality of lives of their citizens. Research if well-coordinated in a country could bring revolutionary changes in the society to make life more pleasant. Nations that are weak in research risk the intellectual erosion of their strength, lose their critical ability to assess claims to knowledge, and such nation become dependent on outsider for supply of knowledge (Bassey, et al. cited in Rajiet al. 2021).

It is important to note that research determines the quality of any higher institution and as such the importance of research output cannot be overlooked in a university environment. This is because the effectiveness of an institution is determined through the assessment of its various products, outcomes and processes against its mission, goals and plans. It may be pointed out that, output of research in any field of specialization are the number of articles per academic scholar that have appeared in a specific period of time in a set of prestigious journals' and it provides current information for growth, progress, development and an improved society. Research outcome is very significant, hence staff promotions in the university system are based majorly on it. It can enhance the social prestige of the academic staff status to the rank of a professor irrespective of his or her gender.

University academic staff also known as Lecturers are pivotal for the attainment of the blueprint of the University. Effiong (2021) maintained that Lecturers are university personnel that have a contractual obligation to carry out research. In essence, university academic staff are the personnel responsible for exposing students to the preamble of research procedures; coordinating institutional facilities available to produce tangible product(s) within every specific scope; enhancing institutional research strength by contributing ideas with vigour to provide remedies to societal challenges; as well as, ensuring interpersonal commitment with students and staff that has tenacity to breed effectiveness in teammates and efficiency in teamwork. The saturation of these goals enhances quality university academic staff that can produce satisfactory research output.

Atanda and Olasupo (2018) explained that university

academic staff research output is a measure of the number of quality articles in accredited journals, books, chapters in a book, conference proceedings published. Underscoring the importance of speed utilized in the publication of these knowledge documents in the measurement of academic staff output, Okon (2023) defined it as the quantity and quality of finished research works and publications produced by academics textbook, book chapters, citations, journal articles, technical reports, students' research work, monographs, conference papers, and occasion papers within a specific period. It is believed that the whole narrative of poor or low academic staff research output is dependent on the institution's culture.

Institutional culture is a structural provision of acceptable research standard in an institution of learning conducive for smooth conduct, evaluation, testing and publicizing quality research knowledge. Institutional culture is the shared pattern of beliefs, values, assumptions and norms that shape the way of behaving and performance of an institution's workers (Lragi and Kyongo, 2023). In essence, it is a shared value, beliefs, attitudes and norms affecting the carrying out of research tasks in an institution. This implies that when institutional culture is unfavourable and inadequately provided to sustain increasing need of academic staff in research, the tendency is that their output will remain unimaginably low. Thus, understanding the variables that could likely constitute institutional culture and the extent they influence the academic staff output is strategic in the effective and efficient management of the university system in Nigeria. These variables include: collaboration and academic peer review

Collaboration is considered as a process in which entities share information, resources, and responsibilities to jointly plan, implement, and evaluate a program of activities to achieve a common goal (Ibe, 2016). Academic research collaboration is a prerequisite because it allows researchers to develop their skills in research, share ideas and as well give researchers access to human and material resources like expertise needed. When this variable is optimized in an institution, it could allow knowledge transfer; enhance the possibility for tacit knowledge and knowledge of technique as well as enhancing the productivity of individual lecturers. However, it could equally undermine productivity due to it transaction cost which require staying in touch with various media, waiting for others to comment, respond, or do their part as well as exerting more energies in engaging in social integration.

Academic peer review refers to the evaluation of work by one or more people with the similar competencies as the

producers of the work. It functions as a form of self-regulation by qualified members of a profession within an organisation. It is the process of having a draft version of a researcher's method and findings reviewed usually by anonymous individual, by experts or peers in the same field. Kovaniset al., (2016) posited that academic peer review requires a community of experts in a given academic field, who are qualified and able to perform reasonably impartial review. It is well known that this process enables the quality of published scientific papers to be maintained to a certain extent. Thus, it is vital to have sufficient peer reviewers which would enable authors to have feedback, revise the paper to improve upon or extend the paper to maintained quality standards, improve performance and provide credibility without which determination of academic papers suitability for publication may not be ascertain.

As significant as academic research output is in the university, difficulties are being encountered by academic staff. The implication is that the number of published research knowledge generated by academic staff determines their extent of effectiveness in ensuring quality output. Nevertheless, observation in some of the departments in some universities shows insufficient number of professors while it equally appears that majority of academic staff are more interested in teaching than research. Unfortunately, the relegation of research aspect of academic staff obligation has not only deprived faculty members quality platforms to become successful academics but equally undermine the process of development of academic knowledge, and reinforcing the skills needed for effective knowledge transfer. This has become highly inimical to the attainment of core mission for the establishment of universities. Although many studies attribute this unfortunate scenario to factors such as poor and irregular funding for research, declining research infrastructure, poor research motivation, inadequate research personnel and frequent industrial action. Therefore, the problem of this study is how does institutional culture predict academic staff research output in Federal Universities in South-South, Zone Nigeria?

Statement of the Problem

Research is an avenue for finding solutions to Nigeria's social, economic and technology related problems. Institutions of higher learning in general and the universities in particular have an important role to play in this process. However, at present both the quantity and quality of research output from these institutions seems to be generally regarded as too low to make the desired impact on national development and socio-economic well-being of its citizenry. It may be pointed out that research output in any

field of specialization provide current information for growth, progress, development and an improved society. It increases the social prestige of the academic staff status to the rank of a professor irrespective of his or her gender. Research output encourages hard work and fills in the gaps of previous researches and creates avenue for future investigations. As significant as academic research output is in the university, difficulties are being encountered by academic staff. The implication is that the number of published research knowledge generated by academic staff determines their extent of effectiveness in ensuring quality output. Nevertheless, observation in some of the departments in some universities shows insufficient number of professors while it equally appears that majority of academic staff are more interested in teaching than research.

Unfortunately, the relegation of research aspect of academic staff obligation has not only deprived faculty members quality platforms to become successful academics but equally undermine the process of development of academic knowledge, and reinforcing the skills needed for effective knowledge transfer. This has become highly inimical to the attainment of core mission for the establishment of universities. Although many studies attribute this unfortunate scenario to factors such as poor and irregular funding for research, declining research infrastructure, poor research motivation, inadequate research personnel and frequent industrial action. Despite the intensification of inefficiency, this research area seems to have been overlooked, especially in the context of institutional culture and academic research output in South-South Nigeria. Thus, creating a research gap around this study area. Therefore, the problem of this study was to investigate how institutional culture predict academic staff research output in Federal Universities in South-South, Zone Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which institutional culture predicts academics' research output in federal universities, South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study was to:

1. determine the extent to which collaboration predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria.
2. determine the extent to which peer-review predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the extent to which collaboration predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria?
2. What is the extent to which peer review predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at .05 level of significance.

1. Collaboration does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria
2. Peer review does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria

Literature Review

Olatunji and Aina (2022) conducted a study on research collaboration and academic productivity among university lecturers in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the extent to which collaborative practices influence research output. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all academic staff in federal universities in South-West Nigeria, with a sample of 320 lecturers selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Research Collaboration and Productivity Scale (RCPS)." The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that both intra-institutional and inter-institutional collaboration significantly predicted research output. The study concluded that collaboration enhances publication rate, citation impact, and access to research funding.

Ezeet al(2023) investigated the influence of international collaboration on research productivity of academic staff in federal universities in South-East Nigeria. The objective was to determine how global research partnerships affect publication output. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population consisted of 2,150 academic staff, from which a sample of 400 respondents was drawn using multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-developed instrument titled

"International Collaboration and Research Output Questionnaire (ICROQ)." The instrument was validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for analysis. The findings showed a strong positive relationship between international collaboration and research output, particularly in high-impact journal publications. The study concluded that academics involved in international collaborations tend to have higher research visibility and productivity.

Adeyemi and Okeke (2021) investigated the influence of peer review practices on academic staff research output in federal universities in Southern Nigeria. The objective of the study was to determine how peer review processes affect the quantity and quality of scholarly publications among lecturers. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all academic staff in federal universities in the South-South and South-East regions of Nigeria, totaling approximately 8,500 lecturers. A sample size of 420 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across faculties. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Peer Review and Research Productivity Questionnaire (PRRPQ). The instrument was validated by experts and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82 using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between peer review and research output, indicating that effective peer review enhances publication quality and acceptance rate. The study concluded that strengthening peer review mechanisms and mentoring systems would significantly improve academic staff research productivity.

Okon and Ekpenyong (2023) investigated institutional support, peer review engagement, and research output among academic staff in South-South Nigerian universities. The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which participation in peer review activities influences research productivity. The study utilized a descriptive correlational design. The population comprised 7,100 academic staff in federal universities within the region. A sample of 500 respondents was selected using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled Academic Research Engagement and Peer Review Questionnaire (AREPRQ). The instrument was validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that academic staff who actively participate as peer reviewers tend to have higher research output compared to those who do not. The

study concluded that engagement in peer review enhances research skills, critical thinking, and publication productivity

Research Method

The study was conducted in South-South geographical zone of Nigeria. The Correlational survey research design was used for this study. Correlation research design is used to discover or clarify relationships between heterogeneous variables. The population of the study consisted of 925 senior academic staff from five Federal Universities in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria that have faculty of Education. They were made up of Professors, Associate professors and Senior lecturers. The sample of this study consisted of 278 respondents. The sample size was determined through the use of Taro Yamane formular. The instrument used in gathering information for the study was a researcher structured questionnaire tagged “Institutional culture Questionnaire (ICQ) and Academic Staff Research

Output Checklist (ASROC) to be responded by academics in the selected Federal Universities in South-south, Nigeria. The instruments were validated by two validates in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, and three experts in Educational Management and Planning. Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The reliability coefficients (.74 and .99) obtained were used to assess the strength of consistency of the instrument in eliciting information for the study at any given time. Simple linear regression coefficient (R) was used to answer research questions while the F-value of the simple linear regression statistic was used for testing null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

What is the extent to which university collaboration predicts academic staff research output in Federal Universities in the south-south, Nigeria?

Table1: Simple linear regression analysis for the extent to which collaboration predict Academic Staff Research Output in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Variable	R	R Square	Extent of Prediction	Remark
Collaboration				
Academic Research output	.218	.048	.4.8 %	Low Extent

a. Predictors: (constant), research collaboration. Source: Field work (2023)

Result in Table 1 shows the value of regression coefficient (R) and its corresponding R2 of .218 and .048 respectively. The value of which R2 of .048 indicates that only .4.8 % of academics’ research output is predicted by collaboration. This result reveals that collaboration determine to a low extent academics research output in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What is the extent to which peer review predicts academic staff research output in Federal Universities in the South-South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis for the extent to which peer-review predict academic staff research output in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Variable	R	R Square	Extent of Prediction	Remark
Peer-review				
Academic Research output	.131	.017	.1.7 %	Low Extent

a. Predictors: (constant), peer-review. Source: Field work (2023)

Result in Table 2 shows the value of regression coefficient (R) and its corresponding R2 of .131 and .017 respectively.

The value of which R2 of .017 indicates that only .1.7 % of academics’ research output is predicted by peer-review. This reveals that peer-review determine to a low extent academics’ research output in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One

Collaboration does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria

Table 3: F-ratio of the prediction of collaboration and academic staff research output in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Source of variation	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-cal	Decision @ P<.05
Regression	1237.054	1	1237.054	13.066	.000 ^b
Residual	24805.852	262	94.679		
Total	26042.905	263			

Dependent variable: Academics research output. R =.218; R2 = .048

Predictors constant: research collaboration

The result in Table 3 indicates that the calculated R value of .218 and F-value of 13.066 is significant since the p-value of .000 is less than the .05 level of significant at 1 and 263 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which claims that collaboration does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities is rejected. Therefore, the result means that collaboration significantly predict academic staff research

output in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Peer review does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria

Table 4:F-ratio of the prediction of peer-review and academic staff research output in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Source of variation	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-cal	Decision @ P<.05
Regression	450.290	1	450.290	4.610	.033 ^b
Residual	25592.615	262	97.682		
Total	26042.905	263			

Dependent variable: Academics research output. R =.131; R2 = .017

Predictors constant: research peer-review

The result in Table 4 indicates that the calculated R value of .131 and F-value of .017 is significant since the p-value of .000 is less than the .05 level of significant at 1 and 263 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which claims that peer-review does not significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities is rejected. Therefore, the result means that peer-review significantly predict academics’ research output in South-South, Nigeria.

The result of the analysis presented in hypothesis one revealed that collaboration significantly predicts academics’ research output in Federal universities South-South Nigeria. The result implies that there is a significant relationship between collaboration and academics research output. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. While. The result came out positive because; academics’ takes collaboration as a tool that leads to more exposure, and provides room for a wider participation in academic activities along with access to information relevant to research work which in turn enhances productivity and

Discussion of Findings

keeps the academics abreast of knowledge with current developments. On the other way around, academics who do not engage in collaborative research could be left behind in their academic pursuit and subsequently slow their professional growth. The findings of this hypothesis agree with the findings of Olatunji and Aina (2022) whose findings revealed that both intra-institutional and inter-institutional collaboration significantly predicted research output. The result also conforms to that of Ezeet al(2023) whose findings showed a strong positive relationship between international collaboration and research output, particularly in high-impact journal publications.

The result of the analysis presented in hypothesis two revealed that peer-review significantly predicts academics' research output in South-South, Nigeria. The result implies that there is a significant relationship between peer-review and academics research output. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result came out positive because; academics' regards peer review as a tool that improve their articles. Thus, academics research output is a function of peer-review. This therefore follow that, the more academics embrace peer-review, the more productive they become in-terms of research in South-south zone, Nigeria. The result of this hypothesis conforms to the findings of Adeyemi and Okeke (2021) whose findings revealed a significant positive relationship between peer review and research output, indicating that effective peer review enhances publication quality and acceptance rate. The result also, is in line with of Okon and Ekpenyong (2023) whose findings revealed that academic staff who actively participate as peer reviewers tend to have higher research output compared to those who do not. Academics are therefore encouraged to embrace collaboration and peer review, as these will enhance their research out put and make them more professional in their field.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that institutional culture such as collaboration and peer review, significantly predicts academic staff research output in federal universities in south-south Nigeria. Thus, adequate attention is required to address the inadequacies in the above variables in order to improve academic research output in South-south Zone, Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Collaborative research culture should be enforced

in the different departments of universities to facilitate collaboration among faculty members and assist them to discuss different research problems and get in depth knowledge about different types of research.

2. Peer review should be encouraged among academics as this will prevent dissemination of irrelevant findings, unwarranted claims, unacceptable interpretations, and personal views.

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