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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LEVEL OF RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Research productivity in any university is the totality of research performed by academic staff members within a given period of time. The quality of teaching, research and community service of lecturers coupled with their publication in any university system depend on the quality of the electronic database they use. Literature attributed low level of research productivity of academic staff to the poor state of accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources. This study therefore, investigatedlevel of research productivity of academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design approach was adopted. A total of 935 academic staff in the 21 private universities were sampled. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 30% academic staff across the ranks in 21 private universities. The anaylysis showed low level of publication output among the academic staff. The weighted average of 2.02 shows a clear indication that the academic staff has a moderately low level of research productivityin private universities in South-west, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the strategies for determining research productivity is to assess the quantity of publications which researchers communicated through primary or other sources. Academic staff conduct research and their productivity is measured in various ways. Academic institutions primarily measure research productivity based on published works, externally funded grants and the number of citations the published works received (Middaugh, 2001). The most common productivity measures look at publications that are submitted, accepted (in press) or published. The published works could be journal articles (refereed and non-refereed), books (including edited books and textbooks), chapters inbooks, monographs, conference papers, and research proposals written to receive external and internal grants (Middaugh, 2001). According to Lertputarak (2008), research productivity in any university is the totality of research performed by academic staff members within a given period of time in universities. Creswell (1986) stated that research productivity includes research publications in professional journals and conference proceedings, writing a book or chapter, gathering and analysing original evidence, working with postgraduate students on dissertations and class projects, obtaining research grants, carrying out editorial duties, obtaining patents and licences, writing of monographs, developing experimental designs, producing works of an artistic or creative nature, and engaging in public debates and commentaries. Okonedo, Popoola, Emmanuel and Bamigboye (2015) state that, research productivity is expressed by the entirety of researches conducted by academic librarians in universities in their career over a specified time frame. Oloruntoba and Ajayi (2006) observed that research publication in the university is a major and most significant indicator of academic staff productivity, and that research attainment is determined by the number of published articles in refereed journals and conference proceedings of repute. Neil, Thomson and Gibson (2015) posited that a universal approach to measuring research productivity was to count the number of books, articles, technical reports, bulletins and book reviews published, as well as presentations given and grants received through reviewing curriculum vitae or other print materials.

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Nigerian Private Universities and Research Productivity

Private universities are universities owned and funded by an indidvidual, established primarily to support and cater for teaching, learning and research activities of parent institution. Private universities are set up primarily to deliver quality education. Quality, in turn, is a function of cost-effectiveness; the capacity to apply state-of-the-art technology; accountability and transparency in expenditure and governance; a strict

adherence to the requirements set out in the academic brief, master plan and strategic plan; and an uncompromisingly strict adherence to the estimates contained in the annual budget (Osagie, 2009). In the words of Isibor (2011), the positive impact private universities had on the development of education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. According to him, private universities have impacted positively on the education sector. In 1993, the federal government provided the law for the establishment of private universities in Nigeria; and in 1999, three pioneer private universities were established: Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo; Igbinedion University, Okada; and Madonna University, Okija. Thus, universities in Nigeria are managed by the federal and state governments, as well as individuals/organisations depending on ownership.

The universities that are managed by the federal or state governments are referred to as public universities, while those owned by individuals or organisations are private universities. Many of the private universities in Nigeria are relatively new and operate with a limited number of academic and other staff. One of the unique qualities of private universities in Nigeria is that they have very few regular staff. The general trend is that of a large number of part-time academic staff or sabbatical staff and a very few number of full-time academic staff. This feature is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. In a study carried out by Varghese (2004), it was found out that reliance on part-time academic staff is a common feature of private universities irrespective of their locations and orientations. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria presently has 40 federal universities, 44 state universities and 69 private universities. Globally, the top-ranking league universities are, indeed, private. Of the top 50 universities in the world in 2012, 35 were in the USA, and only one of them, University of California, Berkeley is public while the rest are private.

A number of private universities, such as Afe Babalola university , Bowen university and Babcock university, now run very good medical programmes. Recently, surgeons from the Babcock University School of Medicine successfully carried out a heart surgery in their newly constructed Tristate Heart and Cardiovascular Centre (Daily Trust, Oct. 12, 2015, p. 14), while Landmark University is blazing a commendable trail in agriculture, in its attempt to be a world-class university with an agrarian focus. Redeemer's University Centre for the Genome of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID) came first of all the 19 ACEs in west and central Africa, and it is turning out to be a novel world-class centre of excellence, having been instrumental in the diagnosis of the first case of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Nigeria. ACEGID scientists also successfully sequenced the Ebola virus from Sierra Leone and have, indeed, developed a rapid response diagnostic tool that could detect Ebola virus in 15 minutes. Publications from their work are finding space in top impact journals such as Science, Nature, New England Journal of Medicine and *Cell* (Faborode, 2015). The quality and quantity of academic staff available in Nigeria are too short of the need of the public universities let alone having an adequate number of academic staff. Most of the senior academic staff used for accreditation purpose is either on sabbatical or on part-time appointment because they are fully employed by the public universities which have better conditions of service for them. Those on regular appointment with private universities are young graduates who are not Ph.D holders as prescribed by NUC to be the minimum appointment in the public university where they will equally enjoy better conditions of service. There is most likely to be a dearth of academic staff in private universities in the future if their conditions of service remain unattractive. As users of information community, academic staff members are faced with diverse, abundant information choices in their pursuit of knowledge because of the complexity of information sources and formats. This poses new challenges to academic staff members in evaluating and under standing the content. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose big challenges to any society. It is evident from literature that access to information resources can immensely improve academics' research productivity. One of the critical factors used in determining academic productivity is research output. "Apart from competence in professional duties, research and publications are compulsory indices or indicators of assessment of academic productivity of lecturers" (Joyce 2006). Information plays a central role in achieving successful work performance of academic staff. In the light of the foregoing analysis, this study, empirically determine level of research productivity of academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Review of the Literature

The importance of research in universities is underscored by the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. According to the 2015 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, five criteria are usually considered in accrediting universities. These are teaching, research, citations, international outlook and proportion of income from industry per faculty that the university is able to attract. Fresko (1997) and Gray (1998) explained the importance of research productivity in the light of its role in academic staff teaching effectiveness. They observed that academic staff teaching effectiveness depends, to a large extent, on research productivity. This is because efforts to produce quality publication output require extensive and effective utilisation of the resources in the library. This in turn exposes the academic staff to valuable information and better method of teaching. In like manner, Babbar, Prassed and Tata (2000) observed that publication output constantly keeps academic staff in touch with the latest development in their fields of study. They claimed that lecturers who are striving for a high number of publication output are more likely to be at the forefront of their disciplines. Research output, no doubt, adds to both the quality and the level of classroom experiences. Accordingly, academic staff with higher publication output are assumed to be generally more effective at instilling a critical approach to understanding complex research findings rather than a passive acceptance of facts.

Research productivity has been defined as the relationship between the outputs generated by a system and the inputs provided to create those outputs. It may also include the term "efficiency" and more importantly "effectiveness" which measure the total output or results of performance (Turnage, 1990). However, a report by Foster, Heppensta, Lazarz and Broug (2008) has revealed a low level of research productivity by academic staff in African universities; which they attributed to the poor state of accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources. Publication output of academic staff in African universities in international journals was used as the indicator of research productivity in the study. According to Foster et. al. (2008), the low publication output from African universities is essentially linked with lack of/inadequate accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources

by academic staff in research. Frankor and Akussah (2012) affirmed that academic staff in African universities "had little access to relevant and reliable information when making decisions" on their research activities. In Nigeria, Uzun (2002) observes a sharp decline in the research productivity of academics in terms of the number of articles published in Nigeria from 1980-1989 and 1990-1999 in an analysis of 21 core Nigerian Library and Information Science (LIS) journals indexed in Social Science Citation Index database. The same was also reported by Aina and Mabawonku (1998) when they observed that Nigeria has the highest proportion of rejected papers in Africa out of the papers submitted to the African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science (AJLAIS) for publication. Okenedo's (2015) findings on the research and publication productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria revealed that publication productivity of librarians was high within the period of 2009-2014. When ranking the publications by types, it was discovered that articles in learned journals ranked highest followed by conference proceedings and chapters in books. The reasons for this may be as a result of the fact that journal articles are easy, less time-consuming and cheaper to publish compared to textbooks, monographs and so on. The findings were also in agreement with the finding of Ogbomo (2010), who reported that librarians most often publish in refereed and non-refereed journals in the LIS field.

In the same vein, while reporting on low research output in Nigerian universities, The World Education News and Review (2006) stated that Nigerian academics' research output is relatively low. The report shows that out of over 70 universities in the country as at the time of the study, only 20 were found to have performed creditably in terms of academic research production. This view has been corroborated by Agarin and Nwagwu (2006) to the effect that in 2005, Nigeria was ranked next to the least of the countries in the world with the evidence of scientific research. Literatures reveal that a few studies have been conducted into the research productivity of academic staff members in Nigeria. Nwagwu (2006) carried out a bibliometric and documentation analysis of biomedical authors' literature in Nigeria between 1967 and 2002, using Lotka's law. Lotka predicates his analysis on the power of relation. The law is generally useful for understanding the productivity patterns of an author in a bibliography (Gupta, 1987). Using this method, Nwagwu (2006) reported that only the co-author category differs from the inverse power of the law, while the other categories do not. This accounts for why African universities are reportedly lagging behind their counterparts in advanced and industrialised countries in research productivity, as they are not "information friendly"; that is, they do not value information and invest in it as a vital resource for research. Since African universities are unable to provide equitable access to modern research tools – the information and communication technologies (ICTs); particularly reliable Internet connectivity that enhances information handling and management, their publication output is said to be impeded and, of course, is apparently and significantly not quantified in international arena. The provision of timely information in the universities due to the modern ICT infrastructure has reportedly led to maximal benefit and increased research productivity in developed nations, even though this still poses a question as to whether given an equal opportunity of accessing and using electronic information resources can lead to a comparative increase in research productivity in African universities. However, from the findings of Foster et al. (2008) and Frankor and Akussah (2012), it is likely that if academics in African universities have access to relevant electronic information resources, the quality of their research will improve and this will bring corresponding increase in their research productivity or publication output on the international scene.

Okafor and Dike (2010) undertook a study entitled, "Analysis of Research Output of Academics in Science and Engineering Faculties in Southern Nigeria." The study adopted a descriptive survey approach. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 6 universities out of 13 in the area of study. The sampled population was 291 academics. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyse the data collected. The study found that the mean of publication output varied in two faculties with the Faculty of Science publishing more articles with a grand mean score of 10.02 while the Faculty of Engineering published less with a grand mean score of 7.58. It equally found out that there was a significant difference in the publication output between the academic staff in the Faculty of Science from those in the Faculty of Engineering. In a related research, Bassey, Akuegwu, Udida and Udey (2007) studied academic staff research productivity in universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. An ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. The population was 3120 academic staff in the 11 universities in the zone. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in the selection of 480 respondents made up of 280 males and 200 females. The findings of the study revealed that male academic staff in Nigerian universities engage in more research activities that their female counterparts and that married academic staff turn out more publications than their unmarried colleagues with a mean score of 17.12 research productivity for married academics against 14.05 mean score for the single academics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

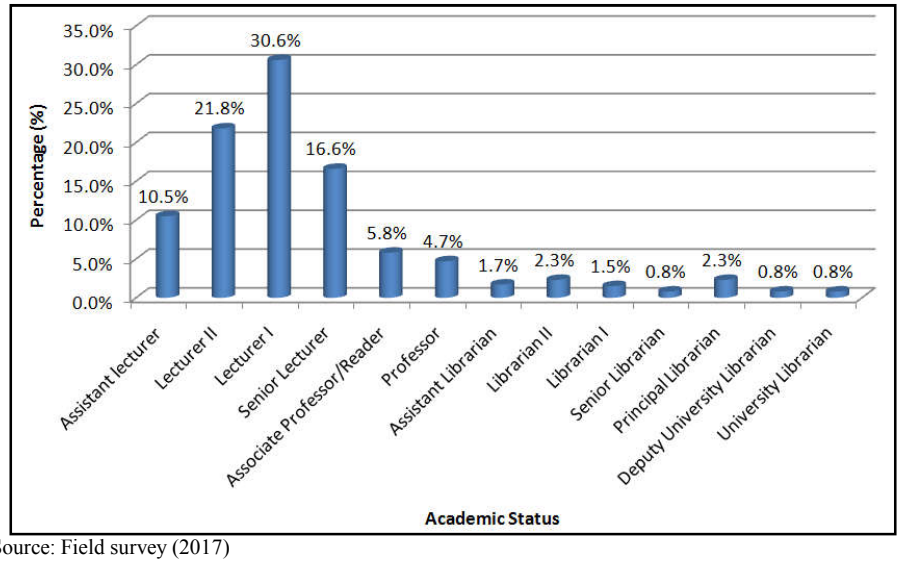
The population for this study were lecturers in the twenty (27) private universities in South-west, Nigeria. Twenty-one (21) out of the twenty seven (27) privateuniversities established and approved between 1999 and 2012 in south-west, Nigeriawere purposively covered in the study. (Table: 1.1). Descriptive survey research design approach was adopted. The stratified random sampling technique based on probability proportionate to size method was adopted in selecting 935 (30%) academic staff from the population size of 3116 in the Twenty-one (21) privateuniversities established and approved between 1999 and 2012 in south-west, Nigeria. The main research instruments used to collect data for the study was questionnaire. Data generated were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In each of the selected private universities, 30% of the total estimated population of academic staff were selected for the study. Consequently, a sample size of 935 were selected for the study. See table 1.1

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The distribution of the respondents by academic status as shown in Fig. 4.1 indicates that 69(10.5%) were assistant lecturers, 143(21.8%) were lecturer II, 201(30.6%) were Lecturer I, 109(16.6%) were senior lecturers, 38(5.8%) were associate professors/readers, 31(4.7%) were professors, 11(1.7%) were assistant librarians, 15(2.3%) were librarian II,

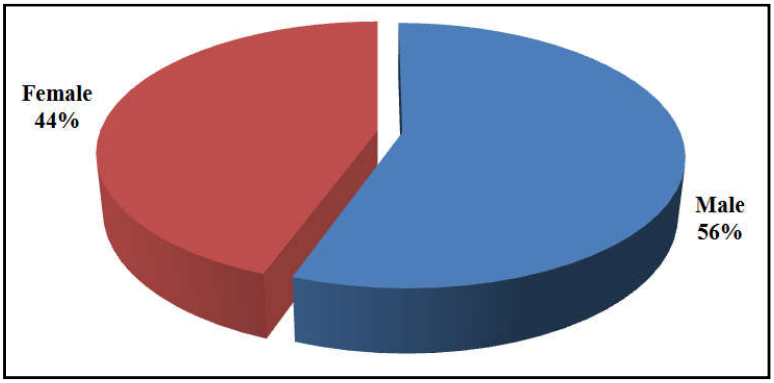
Table 1.1 Selected private universities and their population

	Names of universities	Year approved	No. of Academic staff	Sample Size 30%
1.	Achievers University, Owo	2007	61	18
2.	Adeleke University, Ede	2011	126	38
3.	Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti - Ekiti State	2009	451	135
4.	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2005	113	34
5.	Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo	1999	360	108
6.	Bells University of Technology, Ota	2005	191	57
7.	Bowen University, Iwo	2001	164	49
8.	Caleb University, Lagos	2007	79	24
9.	Covenant University, Ota	2002	559	168
10.	Crawford University, Igbesa	2005	72	22
11.	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2005	89	27
12.	Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin	2012	54	16
13.	Fountain University, Osogbo	2007	103	31
14.	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji	2006	98	29
15.	Lead City University, Ibadan	2005	127	38
16.	McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo	2012	39	12
17.	Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu - Osun State	2009	69	21
18.	Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos	2002	128	38
19.	Redeemer's University, Ede	2005	143	43
20.	South-western University, Ijebu Ode	2012	41	24.6
21.	Wesley Univ. of Science & Tech.,Ondo	2007	41	12
	Total		3116	935



Source: Field survey (2017)

Fig. 1.1. Bar chart showing distribution of respondents by academic status



Source: Field survey (2017)

Fig. 1.2. Pie chart showing distribution of respondents by gender

10(1.5%) were librarian I, 5(0.8%) were senior librarians, 15(2.3%) were principal librarians, 5(0.8%) were deputy university librarians and 5(0.8%) were university librarians. This implies that most respondents are Lecturer I, II and Senior lecturer. Figure 1.2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The result shows that out of the 657 respondents who were part of this study, 365(55.6%) were male while 292(44.4%) were female.

Table 1.2. Level of research productivity of academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria (N=657)

S/No.	Research Productivity	15above (5) N (%)	10 to14 (4) N (%)	5 to 9 (3) N (%)	1 to 5 (2) N (%)	None (1) N (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std.D
1	Total articles in learned journals	113 (17.2%)	141 (21.5%)	113 (17.2%)	201 (30.6%)	89 (13.5%)	2.90	1.34
2	My annual research publication	36 (5.5%)	48 (7.3%)	124 (18.9%)	381 (58.0%)	68 (10.4%)	2.27	0.88
3	Ongoing research	31 (4.7%)	57 (8.7%)	46 (7.0%)	386 (58.8%)	120 (20.8%)	2.27	0.99
4	Papers published in conference proceedings	21 (3.2%)	48 (7.3%)	139 (21.2%)	324 (49.3%)	125 (19.0%)	2.13	0.85
5	Lecture seriesmaterials	57 (8.7%)	48 (7.3%)	88 (13.4%)	262 (39.9%)	202 (30.7%)	2.09	1.15
6	Chapters in books	48 (7.3%)	72 (11.0%)	36 (5.5%)	366 (55.7%)	135 (20.5%)	2.07	0.87
7	Books edited/reviewed	48 (7.3%)	57 (8.7%)	67 (10.2%)	242 (36.8%)	243 (37.0%)	1.90	0.94
8	Total number of textbooks published	-	42 (6.4%)	48 (7.3%)	231 (35.2%)	336 (51.1%)	1.57	0.81
9	Curriculum development	-	48 (7.3%)	42 (6.4%)	211 (32.1%)	356 (54.2%)	1.55	0.81
10	Supervision of PG students on dissertations	-	48 (7.3%)	42 (6.4%)	241 (36.7%)	326 (49.6%)	1.53	0.62
11	Technical papers	21 (3.2%)	48 (7.3%)	21 (3.2%)	144 (21.9%)	423 (64.4%)	1.44	0.85
12	Monographs	-	-	48 (7.3%)	247 (37.6%)	362 (55.1%)	1.41	0.49
13	Community service	-	48 (7.3%)	21 (3.2%)	190 (28.9%)	398 (60.6%)	1.38	0.55
14	Bibliographies compiled	-	21 (3.2%)	48 (7.3%)	159 (24.2%)	429 (65.3%)	1.36	0.66
		Weighted Average =		2.02				

Source: Field survey (2017)

This is an indication that majority of the respondents were male. The ratio is on a 5-point scale, 15 and above (5), 10 to 14 (4), 5 to 9 (3), 1 to 5 (2), none (1). In Table 1.2, the mean score computed for the level of research productivity of the academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria shows that they published most of their articles in learned journals (mean=2.90, SD=1.34). This is closely followed by ongoing research (mean=2.27, SD=1.34) and papers published in conference proceedings (mean=2.13, SD=0.85), while other research productivity such as the curriculum development, occasional paper, monographs, working paper and bibliographies were poorly considered by academic staff. The weighted average of 2.02 shows a clear indication that the academic staff have a low level of research productivity.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Level of research productivity of academic staff: In order to know the level of research productivity of academic staff in Nigerian private universities, the respondents responded on the number of publications and academic activities on the job within the last 10 years. The result of the analysis showed that they published most of their articles in learned journals (mean=2.90, SD=1.34). This is closely followed by ongoing research (mean=2.27, SD=1.34) and papers published in conference proceedings (mean=2.13, SD=0.85), while other research productivity such as the technical papers, curriculum development, monographs, community service and bibliographies were poorly considered by academic staff. The weighted average of 2.02 shows a clear indication that the academic staff have a moderately low level of research productivity. This result is quite unexpected because of the importance of research productivity in the lives of academic staff. Literature reviewed show that publication output is highly associated with academic staff appointment, tenure, promotion/career advancement, contribution to knowledge as well as personal/institutional visibility. What this means is that copyrighted inventions were low among academics in Nigeria. Thus, the analysis establishes the fact that the research productivity of the academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria is higher in journal publications, conference papers, chapters in books and books reviewed. Furthermore, the research productivity of the academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria is on the average in total number of textbooks published, chapter in books/co-authored books, However, the research productivity of the academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria is lower in technical papers, curriculum development, working papers, bibliographies compiled, monographs, patents and certified inventions. In Nigeria, university regulations state that academic staff members are to be evaluated for promotion every three years. The result shows that 381 representing 58.0% of the respondents had between 1 to 5 articles in learned journals as annual research publication. This result strongly confirms the culture of publish or perish that is a popular cliché among academics in Nigerian university settings. The result as obtained in the study is in line with the findings of Popoola (2002) who used a questionnaire to find out the research output of social scientists in Nigerian universities to determine the research output of the number of their publications that appeared in the refereed publication outlets in the preceding three years by types of publication. The publication types were: books, chapters in books, journal article, conference proceedings and technical reports. Journal articles top the list of research output of the respondents in the three years (1999-2001) with mean of 12.0. On the whole, the social scientists in the Nigerian university system produced an average of 7.0 publications from 1999 to 2001 with an average of approximately two publications per year. In another study, Oduwole and Ikhizama (2007) used survey method to ascertain research output of librarians in Nigerian agricultural research institutes. They found out that the librarians' research output, although generally low, was related to their work experience.Cheimeke et al. (2009) also investigated the research output of Nigerian tertiary institutions using nine journals randomly selected from African Journals Online (AJOL). They found out, among other things, that research papers from Nigeria in the journal accounted for 39.1% of the total number of publications in the journals during 1999-2005. However, these findings corroborate the results posted by some other studies on publication output of academic staff. For instance, Tower, Desai, Carson and Cheng's (2005) study revealed a low level of publication output among academic staff in Accounting in Australian universities. Also interesting is the work of Ogbomo (2010) which reported a low level of publication output among academic librarians in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Ogbomo's study is equally surprising because observations have shown that academic librarians in Nigeria engage in extensive research and have

produced a high level of publication output. On the other hand, one may associate the low level of publication output among the academic staff of private universities in South-west, Nigeria to their average level of electronic database utilisation. By not utilising electronic databases extensively, these staff obviously lacked the necessary information for high-level publication output because publication output is fundamentally a product of adequate utilisation of electronic databases. The result of this study is also in line with the report by Foster, Heppensta, Lazarz and Broug (2008). They revealed a low level of research productivity by academic staff in African universities; which they attributed to the poor state of accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources.

The result is also in line with Anyaogu and Mabawonku (2014) who investigated the impact of resources availability and utilisation on the productivity of law lecturers in Nigerian universities. Using descriptive survey research design, the study reported that legal information resources such as law textbooks, periodicals, reference materials, law reports, legislations and statutes, newspapers, indexes and abstracts, digests and so on are readily available to the lecturers; electronic resources and online legal databases are less available; law reports, periodicals, legislations and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law textbooks, e-resources and so on are used by law lecturers in the course of research activities. The study concluded that "the research productivity of the law lecturers was higher in the publication of journal articles, chapters in books, conference proceedings, and foreign journals but low in co-authored books, textbooks and occasional papers. The result of this study is at variance with the findings of Okenedo (2015) on the research and publication productivity of librarians in public universities in South-west, Nigeria. The result reveals that publication productivity of librarians was high between 2009 and 2014. When ranking the publications by types, it was discovered that articles in learned journals ranked highest followed by conference proceedings and chapters in books. The reasons for this may be as a result of the fact that journal articles are easy, less time-consuming and cheaper to publish compared to textbooks, monographs and so on. However, the respondents' comments on research productivity were compared with that of research publications, and it was found that academic staff in Covenant, Babcock, Bowen and Redeemers universities were more productive than their counterparts in other private universities surveyed, particularly interms of international publications as captured by *The Web of Science*. The importance of international publication as noted by Atakan et al. (2008) cannot be overemphasized as international publication is considered as the most important factor in assessment and evaluation of academic staff and universities around the world. The result of the level of research productivity is consistent with that of Aniand Onyancha (2011) who found that the University of Ibadan was the most productive university in Nigeria while the University of Calabar was placed at the10th position. It is also evident that most academic staff in private universities are publishing more papers in the local/national journals (or journals) that are not indexed by *The Web of Science*. Mullen (2008) stated that, "If the journal isn't part of Web of Science, it is less likely to be considered "prestigious" by some faculty bodies. If it is not included in Web of Science, it will not have a published "impact factor". This is because journals with high impact factor are often more cited than other journals and, therefore, considered prestigious. Thus, publishing in such journals will provide visibility as well as impact in the field of the discipline. The low level of publications of academic staff t most private universities in international journals is attributed to their relative average level of awareness and utilization of electronic databases of high impact journals.

Conclusion

The result of this study shows a clear indication that the academic staff have a moderately low level of research productivity. This result is quite unexpected because of the importance of research productivity in the lives of academic staff. Literature reviewed show that publication output is highly associated with academic staff appointment, tenure, promotion/career advancement, contribution to knowledge as well as personal/institutional visibility. But the outcome of this study has shown that, there was a low level of publication output among the academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria What this means is that copyrighted inventions were low among academics in Nigeria.

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