

FACTORS INFLUENCING JOURNAL PUBLICATION CHOICE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN SELECTED STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the factors influencing the journal publication choice of academic staff in selected universities in south-south, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research design and used the total enumeration sampling technique to study the entire population. A total of 376 academic staff from seven selected state universities in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria were used for this study. Three (3) research questions guided the study and data were collected using an online questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was determined by checking the face and content validity and the instrument proved valid because the items in the instrument are appropriate in terms of subject contents. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and an index of 0.87 was obtained. This shows that the internal consistency of the instrument is high and good. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics such as frequency count and simple percentage. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents 367(98%) were motivated to carry out research by their desire to contribute to knowledge and other factors such as job promotion, tenure and assessment 232(62%). On the factors influencing their journal publication choice, it was observed that most of the academic staff indicated that the journal reputation, university acceptable journals and absence of journal publication fee are the major factors that influence their journal selection. It was also noted that high publishing fee, difficulty in accessing research funds and lack of sponsorship were the major barriers to academic research and publishing. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the school management should provide financial support to academics to publish in reputable journals with high publication fees and also sponsor them to important conferences and seminars.

Keywords: *Academic Staff, Journal, Publication, Choice and Barriers.*

Introduction

Teaching and research are the two major functions of any academic staff. Academic staff are the teaching staff in a university or any other tertiary institutions which are expected to carry out research and publish the results all through their profession

(Kumar, 2013). Academic staff develops status through their teaching function which involves control over the award of academic credentials and through their research function which is based on providing knowledge for practical applications (Martins, 1998). In spite of the fact that both teaching and research are

very essential in the university environment, research is much more highly appreciated than teaching because it is considered as a major aspect for the evaluation of academic staff. According to Joyce (2006) research output is one of the key factors used in determining academic productivity of academic staff. Lecturers with the required number of publications as stipulated by the university regulation are rewarded with promotion and salary improvement. Creamer (1998) noted that research publications don't only advance the career of lecturers but can also help enhance the image of an institution generally and attract research grants and other funding necessary to carry out more research (Lertputturk, 2008).

Academics all over the world are faced with constant pressure to publish their work in high quality journals in order to gain recognition and other many benefits derivable from research and publications. The process of finding appropriate and quality journals to publish the research findings requires a certain degree of skills and expertise, which not all the academics have. The choice of a journal is very important as the field is rapidly changing, with new publication opportunities constantly arising (online journals) and more traditional outlets of communication (print journals) adapting to new technology (Babor, Morisano, Stenius, Winstanley and O'Rielly, 2008) academics are having a hard time figuring out where to submit their work for publication (Langin, 2019). The choice is made all the more complex by the enormous demands of today's academic setting including working toward tenure and trying to secure funding, which can

depend largely on academics publication record. In addition, there are concerns over the numerous publishing houses so called online predatory journals frequently used by academics from developing countries especially India and Nigeria (Patwardian, 2015) that seek to financially profit from authors without providing any standard scholarly publishing services for the authors or their readership (Beshyah, 2019). The major problems for these journals is the possible lack of international visibility and not being indexed in major databases like Scopus, the PubMed® database (National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, USA). This lack of visibility might deny the work from being cited by other authors and may lead to low journal impact factor.

In selecting a particular journal for publication, different factors may influence the author's choice of journal but it largely depends on the authors' status and circumstances (Piterman and McCall, 1999). Other important factors pointed to by most seasoned authors include relevance of research field, impact factor, indexation, visibility of the journal, timeliness of the editorial office process, journal accessibility, publication costs and the governance of journal (Howard, 2013, Rousseau, 2002 and Thompson, 2007). Academics from developing or low income countries may have to choose between submitting to highly rated international journals, highly-priced open access journals of high repute or may unintentionally submit to predatory journals (Beshyah, 2017). For instance, high quality journals with high impact factor get at least ten times as many submissions as they are able to publish,

thereby resulting to low acceptance rates (Guthrie & Parker, 2012). As a result, academics whose articles are rejected by top rated journals end up publishing in low quality journals without taking into consideration the potential low impact of their research. For most academics in developing countries, getting published is essential for promotion and tenure, as well as improving their personal and professional status. Deciding the exact journal for a manuscript can be a difficult task and many reasons are likely to influence the final decision. Hence, the objective of the study is to determine the important criteria academic staff consider while selecting journals for publishing their research or the factors influencing journal publication choice among academic staff in selected universities in South-South Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Universities and academic institutions generally insist that academic staff must publish scholarly research because the institutions rely on these publications to bolster their reputations and evaluate the authors to get promotion. Competition is fierce to get published in leading journals, but with the universal publication explosion and uncontrolled growth in the number of journals offering rapid publications and different models of open access have created new sorts of problem, complicating academics' choices further and diminishing the value of their papers which appear in journals with 'soft' quality controls and poor editorial practices. Choosing the right journal for submission of a manuscript in this kind of situation is a tough task for most academic

staff. This is why this study investigated factors influencing journal publication choice among academic staff in selected universities in South-South Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing journal publication choice among academic staff in selected universities in south-south Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the factors that motivate academic staff to carry out research
2. To determine the factors influencing the journal publication choice of academic staff
3. To ascertain the barriers to research and publishing

Research Questions

1. What factors motivate academic staff to carry out research?
2. What are the factors influencing the journal publication choice of academic staff?
3. What are the barriers to research and publishing?

Literature Review

'Publish or perish' has been a basic principle in the academic environment for a long time and the validity of this phrase is more important today than a decade ago. It is very important to note that academics job tenure rely tremendously on this very essential factor. Career promotions, salary enhancement, institutional honours, professional recognition and numerous advancements are determined by academics publication list (Asokan & Shaji, 2016; Cerulo, 2016; Méndez, Romero, & Henríquez, 2016; Rawat & Meena, 2014). In terms of scholarly

knowledge production, publications present innovative research and identify and fill gaps in the existing knowledge, moving the scholarly community forward. Although publishing attains such a significant importance, it is not so easy to accomplish these tasks unless the author selects the right publication venue. The process of choosing an appropriate outlet for publishing an article is key in the scholarly world.

Beshyah (2019) carried out a study on authors' selection of target journals and their attitudes to emerging journals. The study discovered that selection of target journals is driven mainly by journal impact factor, indexation status, free submission and the journal's international status. Edetanlen and Azodo (2019) investigated the factors influencing journal publication choice among University of Benin lecturers. The findings revealed that prestige of the journal, university acceptable journal for promotion and journal impact factor were the most important journal choice for publication. Adjei and Owusu-Ansah (2016) carried out a study on publishing preferences among academic researchers in Ghana. The study showed that journal reputation, open access, free submission and journal acceptance rate were the major factors influencing their preference for a particular journal.

Nagarajappa and Shilpa (2017) conducted a survey choosing the scientific journal for publishing research work among medical and dental researchers. The results showed that indexing of journal, online submission, impact factor, peer-review process and publication fees were among the most important criteria to

consider in journal selection. Wijewickrema and Petras (2017) investigated journal selection criteria among medicine and social sciences. The study reveals that authors of both areas consider 'peer reviewed' status as the most important factor. However, those in medicine give significantly more consideration to impact factor, the inclusion of the journal in abstracting and indexing services, publisher's prestige and online submission with tracking facility. Nwhator, Agbaje, Soroye, Isiekwe (2015) in their study discovered that the major determinant of journal choice among Nigerian medics is journal indexing followed by impact factor and ease of submission.

Howard (2013) noted that peer review and other quality factors are no longer the main determinants of submission choice. Instead, relevance of research field, impact factor and indexation in major databases are the top three factors pointed to by most seasoned authors while open access and journal publication fees come out to be the least important factors. Other surveys indicated that authors consider the journal impact factor as the crucial player in the field (Soreide and Winter, 2010, Ozcarar, Franchignoni, Kara and Muñoz, 2012) and that no alternative impact indicator has yet gained a comparable rank. Journal publishers and editors are in a good position to guide authors by displaying a variety of impact indicators on their journals' websites, by doing so the authors would make better choices when matching journals to the 'quality' of their papers (Bornmann, Marx, Gasparyan, Kitas, 2012).

There are varieties of factors that influence the authors' choices of journal publication but the major concern for present authors is whether the publication options offer good chances for citations, which are crucially important for academic competitiveness. The citations are equally important for the journals, who are struggling to improve and maintain their ranks (Gasparyan, 2011, Gasparyan, Ayvazyan and Kitas, 2011). Publication quality is also of utmost importance when choosing publication venues in general, while free access and visibility are specifically noted incentives for selection of open access journals (Warlick and Vaughan, 2007). Therefore, free public availability and increased exposure may not be strong enough incentives for authors to choose open access over more traditional and respected subscription based publications, unless the quality issue is also addressed.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design and total enumeration sampling

technique was used to determine the sample size for the study. The entire population for this study was adopted as the sample size because the population is not large. The total number of respondents is 376 and their institutions used for this study are: University of Africa (UAT, 75), Niger Delta University (NDU, 67), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUOE, 56), Rivers State University (RSU, 46), Delta State University (DELSU, 54), Ambrose Ali University (AAU, 43) and Edo State University (ESU, 35). The researchers developed an online questionnaire titled "Factors Influencing Journal Publication Choice of Academic Staff Questionnaire" (FIJPCASQ) which was used to collect data for the study and the response format is the likert scales and multiple responses. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count and simple percentage. The results are presented below.

KEY: SA= Strongly Agree; A=Agree; SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree.

Results

The findings of the study are presented in the following tables with explanations.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Name of Inst.	Freq.	Gender	Freq.	Age Range	Freq.	Qual.	Freq.	Desg.	Freq.
UAT	75(20%)	Male	211(56%)	21-30	57(15.1%)	B.SC	76(20.2%)	G.A	55(15%)
NDU	67(18%)	Female	165(44%)	31-40	94(25%)	PGD	74(19.6%)	A.L	72(19%)
IAUOE	56(15%)			41-50	88(23.4%)	M.SC	123(33%)	L II	76(20.2%)
RSU	46(12%)			51-60	72(19.1%)	PHD	103(27%)	L I	62(16.4%)
DELSU	54(14.3%)			60 above	65(17.2%)			S.L	62(16.4%)
AAU	43(11.4%)							Ass.	49(13%)
EUI	35(9.3%)							Prof.	-
								Prof.	-

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the academic staff are from UAT 75(20%), NDU 67(18%), IAUOE 56(15%), DELSU 54(14.1%), RSU 46(12%), AAU 43(11.4%) and EUI 35(9.3%). Majority of the academic staff 211(56%) were male and 165(44%) were female. Majority of the respondents 94(25%) were within the age bracket of 31-40years, 88(23.4%) were within the age bracket of 41-50years, 72(19.1%) were within the age bracket of 51-60years,

65(17.2%) were 60years and above whereas 57(15.1%) were within the age bracket of 21-30 years. Similarly, 123(33%) were M.Sc holders, 103(27%) were Ph.D holders whereas 76(20.2%) and 74(19.6%) were B.Sc and PGD holders, respectively. Majority of the respondents 76(20.2%) were Lecturers 11, 72(19%) were Assistant Lecturers while 62(16.4%) were Lecturers 1 and Senior Lecturers respectively, 55(15%) were Graduate Assistants and 49(13%) were Associate Professors.

Research Question One: What factors motivate academic staff to carry out research?

Table 2: Factors that Motivate Academic Staff to Carry out Research

Motivating Factors to Carry out Research	Frequency
Contribution to Knowledge	367(98%)
Job Promotion, Tenure and Assessment	232(62%)
Marketability	64(17%)
Prestige	56(15%)

Table 2 reveals the factors that motivate academic staff to carry out research. Most of the respondents 367(98%) agreed that contribution to knowledge is one of the major factor that motivate them to carry out research followed by job promotion,

tenure and assessment 232(62%). This implies that academic staff are motivated by their desire to contribute to knowledge and other factors such as job promotion, tenure and assessment.

Research Question Two: What are the factors influencing the journal publication choice of academic staff?

Table 3: Factors Influencing Journal Publication Choice

Factors Influencing Journal Publication Choice	SA	A	D	SD
Reputation/Prestige/Quality of the Journal can Influence Publication Choice	251(67%)	125(33%)	-	-
Journal Impact Factor can Influence Publication Choice	175(47%)	175(47%)	26(6%)	-
Indexation of Journal in major Databases can Influence Publication Choice	201(53%)	138(37%)	37(10%)	-
Frequency/Speed of Publication can Influence Publication Choice	175(47%)	151(40%)	43(11%)	7(2%)
Journal Citation and Ranking can Influence Publication Choice	188(50%)	174(46%)	14(4%)	-
Visibility of the Journal can Influence Publication Choice	217(58%)	125(33%)	34(9%)	-

Quality of Peer-Reviewed Process can Influence Publication Choice	181(48%)	188(50%)	7(2%)	-
Quality of Editorial Board Personnel can Influence Publication Choice	146(39%)	172(46%)	53(14%)	5(1%)
Absence of Journal Publication Fee can Influence Publication Choice	225(60%)	107(28%)	44(12%)	-
Acceptance/Rejection Rate can Influence Publication Choice	80(21%)	176(47%)	113(30%)	7(2%)
Online Submission can Influence Publication Choice	175(47%)	167(44%)	34(9%)	-
Electronic/Print Format can Influence Publication Choice	131(35%)	176(47%)	69(18%)	-
Length of Review can Influence Publication Choice	103(27%)	207(55%)	59(16%)	7(2%)
International Status of the Journal can Influence Publication Choice	193(51%)	157(42%)	19(5%)	7(2%)
University Acceptable Journal can Influence Publication Choice	249(66%)	113(30%)	14(4%)	-
Relevance of Research Field can Influence Publication Choice	217(58%)	146(39%)	13(3%)	-
Recommendation from Colleagues can Influence Publication Choice	121(32%)	225(60%)	25(7%)	5(1%)

Table 3 shows the factors influencing journal publication choice of the respondents. Majority of the respondents, that is, 251(67%) and 125(33%) agrees that the reputation/prestige/quality of the journal, university acceptable journals 249(66%) and 113(30%) and lastly

absence of journal publication fee 225(60%) and 107(28%) are the three major factors influencing journal publication choice of academic staff. This implies that the major factor influencing journal publication choice is the journal reputation.

Research Question Three: What are the barriers to research and publishing?

Table 4: Barriers to Research and Publishing

Barriers to Research Productivity	Frequency
High Publishing Fee	367(98%)
Long Waiting Period for Peer Review	231(61%)
High Rate of Rejection	159(42%)
Lack of Sponsorship	247(66%)
Difficulty in Accessing Research Funds	303(81%)
No Writing Experience	63(17%)
Inadequate Research Facilities	191(51%)
Lack of Professional Mentorship	199(53%)
Poor Motivation	183(49%)

Table 4 reveals the barriers to research and publishing. It is evident that majority of the respondents 367(98%) agrees that high publishing fees, difficulty in accessing research funds 303(81%) and lack of

sponsorship 247(66%) are the major barriers to research and publishing activities. This implies that high publishing fee, difficulty in accessing research funds and lack of sponsorship are

the major barriers to academic research and publishing.

Discussion of Findings

- Majority of the academic staff are motivated by their desire to contribute to knowledge and other factors such as job promotion, tenure and assessment. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Adjei and Owusu-Ansah (2016).
- Most of the respondents indicated that the journal reputation, university acceptable journals and absence of journal publication fee are the major factors influencing their journal publication choice. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Edetanlen and Azodo (2019) who also found that the reputation of the journal is the major factor influencing journal selection decision of academics.
- Majority of the respondents agrees that high publishing fee, difficulty in accessing research funds and lack of sponsorship are the major barriers to academic research and publishing. This finding is not conformity with the study of Okoduwa, et al (2018) who found that long waiting period for peer review, no writing experience and inadequate research facilities are the major barriers to research and publishing.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study investigated the factors influencing journal publication choice of academic staff. This study found that academic staff are motivated by their desire to contribute to knowledge. It was also discovered that the journal reputation

is major factor influencing their journal publication choice. High publishing fee, difficulty in accessing research funds and lack of sponsorship are the major barriers to academic research and publishing. The researchers wish to recommend that the school management should provide financial support to academics to publish in reputable journals with high publication fees and also sponsor them to important conferences and seminars.

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