



Collaborative Research Among Academic Librarians in Public Universities Libraries in North – Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated collaborative research among academic librarians in public university libraries in North –Central Nigeria. The descriptive survey method was employed for this study. The purposive sampling method was used to select 6 public universities in the North central Nigeria. The random sampling method was employed to choose five (5) academic librarians from each of two universities in six states, making a total of sixty (60) librarians. A questionnaire was used to gather data from respondents. Sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire were administered, and 50 were retrieved, giving a response rate of 91.7%. The data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the academic librarians engage in research collaboration with colleagues within and outside the university and have collaborated with their colleagues in the last two years. The study revealed Google+ and Whatsapp as the major tools for collaborative research. The study also revealed that collaborative research has helped to increase the number of publications, and increase the rate of research, problem of access to internet connectivity and lack of collaborative research funding were the major challenges facing academic librarians in collaborative research. The study recommended that academic librarians should double their efforts and engage in collaborative research both within and outside the country; reliable internet facilities with fast bandwidth should be provided for collaboration.

Keywords: Collaborative, Research, Library, Academics librarians, Universities.

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I. Introduction

Universities are built globally to raise future leaders and generate the high-level personnel essential for any country's growth and development. This aim will be impossible to realize unless researchers work together actively through collaboration. Collaboration happens when a group of individuals join forces to share their knowledge and experience in order to achieve a single goal, project, or objective.

Ultimo (2021) describes collaboration as a partnership, a union, or the process of generating something together. Two or more people can work together, whether they are complete strangers or close friends. When working together, one must be open to the idea of producing something better than what could be done alone.

Collaboration is described by Melin & Persson (1996) as "a vigorous kind of contact that permits effective communication as well as the sharing of knowledge and

other resources. Therefore, collaborative research is a study that involves cooperation between researchers, institutions, organizations, and/or communities. A project may benefit from this collaboration's particular skill set. The five types of collaboration include voluntary, consortia, federation, affiliation, and merger. There are also five degrees of collaboration, including interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and national vs. international. The sharing of ideas across disciplines, the development of new skills, the acquisition of funds, the creation of findings of higher quality, radical advantages, and individual variables like fun and pleasure are all made possible through collaborative research (Bansal, Mahendiratta, Kumar, Sarma, Prakash, & Medhi, 2019).

According to Aiyebilehin (2022), most academics' research behaviour has been driven by the need to achieve the publishing standards imposed by various institutional authorities. This is because publications are increasingly being used as a criterion for development in academic

institutions. Because of this, researchers are now collaborating.

According to Onyancha (2010), the global ranking of universities causes competition for positions and recognition in terms of standards, and there has been an increase in the rate of collaborative research in different sectors around the world, yielding incredibly positive results as well as helpful discoveries in the areas of health, economy, education, business, environment, engineering, technology, and general sciences, among other things. There are many different methods for researchers to collaborate. There is a spectrum here, ranging from the conventional academic collaboration between two faculty members to instances when one researcher uses another's resources, such as tools, a biological strain, or a database.

As library and information science (LIS) became a more multidisciplinary profession, the amount of scholarly writing in the area has increased dramatically over time (Prebor, 2010), which can be attributed to collaboration.

Moseley claims that people collaborate to find a solution (2021). When a group of individuals combine their knowledge, skills, and expertise, then talk out problems and discuss potential solutions, projects that have stuck will start to move ahead once more.

The importance of librarian collaboration on research has been highlighted by Adegbaye et al. (2020). As scholars have collaborated more in recent years, librarians have been under growing pressure to do the same, which has affected their standing and identity.

A lot of factors can be attributed to the challenges facing collaborative research. According to Yusuf (2012), there are glaring gaps in higher education research in Nigeria because of low motivation, inadequate funding, out dated research infrastructure, a lack of qualified research staff, a general lack of research focus, and a poor connection between researchers and the industrial sector. These constraints severely limit higher education institutions' capacity and capabilities for conducting research.

II. Literature Review

Collaboration is without doubt a typical occurrence in research. Olaifa & Oyeniyi (2012) Whether working alone or in a group for collaborative research, librarians need to exhibit a wide range of abilities and qualities. There is ample evidence that collaborative research generated by higher education has contributed to the global knowledge economy's rise and expansion

Atkinson (2019) identified a few qualities and talents that academic librarians must have, either individually or as a team. He listed the following as necessary personal qualities: the capacity for networking and network activation; familiarity with technology, including social media; the capacity for time management and multitasking; the capacity for general social skills and communication; and the capacity for planning, project management, prioritization, and negotiation.

Atkinson (2019) also identifies the following personal qualities and traits as being necessary for collaboration: a general self-confidence to present oneself as visible and approachable to colleagues, an open approach and a willingness to freely share knowledge, information, and skills, personal conviction and commitment, emotional resilience, the courage to persevere in the face of adversity, a willingness to challenge conventional thinking, and an ability to bring to bear diverse perspectives.

Cooperative research's importance cannot be overemphasized. "Everyone may benefit from one another's knowledge," claims Shneiderman (2016). While it is obvious that having a diverse range of experiences and abilities is beneficial, team members may also work well together by striking a balance between breadth and depth, fundamental and applied research areas, and quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Collaboration in research exposes academic librarians to new knowledge and enables them to exchange sociocultural concepts with others. Regardless of the reasons why academic librarians don't interact, participation in cooperation is required of all academics, including academic librarians. Librarians may learn a lot about the research process by working on research projects with academics.

According to Adegbaye et al. (2020), collaborative research is viewed as extremely valuable and highly regarded in today's university settings because it combines skills, knowledge, and resources, allows for the division of labour, and enables the study of more challenging problems, such as interdisciplinary ones. This is true whether the research is conducted within the same institution, between institutions within the same country, or abroad. Additionally, it expands the researchers' network of connections, profile, and visibility.

According to Brann et al. (1992), collaborative research enhances the chance that the necessary knowledge, skills, and methodologies will be accessible among the collaborators, minimizing the time spent learning new knowledge or skills. In view of the growing complexity of research, this is particularly significant. Often more successful than traditional classroom education, knowledge and skill transfer occurs regularly in collaborative research interactions. A single research perspective would not be able to stimulate innovation and knowledge advancement, but sharing perspectives and ideas may. Researchers may also benefit from collaborative partnerships by having rare opportunities to work with colleagues they may not otherwise meet, boosting the likelihood of collaborative publications, which are very significant and advantageous to researchers' careers.

According to Enahrire Chista and Tella (2020), collaborative research enhances learning, research quality, and the teaching component of librarianship. It also fosters collaboration and coordination, which in turn raises member levels of intensity, tenacity, and interaction.

By bringing together individuals with complementary

areas of knowledge, collaborative research, according to Clowes and Shefer (2013), enhances the quality of published works. Through teamwork during research, partners may help each other write better. Writing abilities and confidence among collaborators are both improved by working on research projects with a more seasoned researcher (s).

According to Bansal et al. (1999), there are several difficulties with collaborative research. Research collaborations can occasionally provide challenges. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that when more than two individuals work together to achieve a similar objective, credit and responsibility are shared. Sometimes a refusal to cooperate or work together might hinder collaborative research. Collaborations are commonly derailed by participant misconceptions, such as conflicts about what and when to publish, as well as frustration with a sluggish collaborator.

Academic librarians often engage in very little joint research. Jabeen et al. (2017) cite a few factors, including a lack of institutional funding support and fewer research incentives for librarians, as explaining the low degree of collaborative research.

A lack of suitable ICT infrastructure in some university libraries, according to Livina, Ukwoma, and Nwamaka (2017), makes collaborative research challenging. They continued by stating that there are a variety of problems, including, but not limited to, sluggish network access, low internet capacity, and epileptic power supply. The majority of libraries have also not fully digitized institutional repositories, which are part of their intellectual output, as well as other library materials that could have been used for collaborative research. As a result, some associates are having problems locating resources for their joint research projects.

Most researchers who have co-authored articles for publication, whether with one or twenty collaborators, have a story about wrangling over author names appearing in the by-line. Every journal publisher, big or small, has to deal with author disputes on a regular basis (Levsky, Rosin, Coon, Enslow, & Miller, 2007).

Whether there were one or twenty co-authors on an article, most academics who have co-authored studies for publication have a tale concerning disagreements over who should be listed in the byline. Author conflicts are a common problem for all journal publishers, regardless of size (Levsky, Rosin, Coon, Enslow, & Miller, 2007).

Research on librarian collaborations was done by Enakhire Chista and Tella (2020), with comments based on observation and interview research reports from three Nigerian and Zimbabwean institutions. The difficulties cited include the disastrous effects of negative work, cultural, and stylistic parameters, such as concept, attitude, and professional barriers; the dominance impact of collaboration policies and procedures; the exploitation of weak members; a lack of clarity and justification for collaboration; members' resistance to change in collaboration; a lack of socialization; and the size of the group.

Specifically, when it comes to empirical studies,

Livina, Ukwoma, and Nwamaka (2017) stressed that librarians lack the time to participate in joint research. The number of empirical articles published demonstrates this. For instance, librarians have to cope with an expanding number of students they will eventually educate and other information services library users may occasionally need. In addition, there is a dearth of personnel to help academic librarians with these duties. This affects the way researchers collaborate.

III. Research Methodology

The descriptive survey method was employed for this study. The purposive sampling method was used to select six public universities in north-central Nigeria. The random sampling method was employed to choose five (5) academic librarians from each of two universities in six states, in the North Central (Kogi State, Kwara State, Benue State, Niger State, Nasarawa State, and Plateau State) making a total of sixty (60) librarians. A questionnaire was used to gather data from respondents. Sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire were administered, and 50 were retrieved, giving a response rate of 91.7%. The study focused on collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine collaboration among academic librarians in Nigerian public universities. To achieve the objective, the following are developed to

1. Determine whether or not academic librarians in the public universities in North- Central, Nigeria engaged in collaborative research
2. Identify tools that make collaborative research among academic librarians possible in public universities in North- Central, Nigeria.
3. Find out the benefits accrue to collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in North- Central, Nigeria.
4. Identify obstacles to collaboration among academic librarians in public universities in North- Central, Nigeria.

V. Research questions

The following research questions will be drawn to guide the study

1. Do academic librarians in the public universities in North- Central, Nigeria engaged in collaborative research
2. What are tools that make collaborative research among academic librarians possible in public universities in North- Central, Nigeria?
3. What are the benefits accruing to collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in North- Central, Nigeria?
4. What are the obstacles to collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in

North- Central Nigeria?

TABLE I
GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

| S/N | Gender | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------|--------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Male | 35 | 70% |
| 2 | Female | 15 | 30% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

Table 1 above shows that 35 (70%) respondents are male while 15 (30%) respondents are female. This implies that there were more male respondents than female.

TABLE II
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

| S/N | Item | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | PhD | 3 | 6% |
| 2 | Masters | 33 | 66% |
| 3 | First Degree | 14 | 28% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents has Masters' degree certificate with 33(66%), followed by First degree with 14 (28%), while the least respondents were those with Ph.D constituting 3 (6%).

TABLE III
RESPONDENTS YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

| S/N | Item | Percentage | Frequency% |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 1-5 years | 5 | 10% |
| 2 | 6-10 years | 10 | 20% |
| 3 | 11-15years | 23 | 46% |
| 4 | 16-20 years | 9 | 18% |
| 5 | 20 and above | 3 | 6% |
| Total | | 50 | 100 |

Table 3 shows the working years of librarians 11-15 years with 23 (46%), followed by 6-10 years respondents with 10 (20%), 16-20 years with 9 (18%), 1-5 years with 5 (10%) while the least respondents were those with more than 20 years with 3(6%) respectively.

TABLE IV
STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

| S/N | Status | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Principal Librarian | 8 | 16% |
| 2 | Senior Librarian | 15 | 30% |
| 3 | Librarian 1 | 10 | 20% |
| 4 | Librarian 11 | 12 | 24% |
| 5 | Assistant Librarian | 5 | 10% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents were Senior Librarian with 15 (30%) while the least respondents were Assistant librarian with 5(10%)

Research Question 1: Do academic librarians in the North- Central, Nigeria public universities engaged in collaborative research.

TABLE V
RESPONSE ON ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN ENGAGEMENT IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

| Item | Frequency | Percentage% |
|------|-----------|-------------|
|------|-----------|-------------|

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|-------------|
| As an academic librarian, I engage in research | | | |
| 1. | collaboration with colleagues within and outside the university | 31 | 62% |
| 2 | I collaborate with colleagues in the last two years | 15 | 30% |
| I did not engaged in | | | |
| 3 | collaborative research in the last two years | 4 | 8% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

As shown in Table 5, most academic librarians were involved in collaborative research. It is evident from the result that 31 (62%) have been engaging in collaborative research, while 10 (30%) have collaborated with colleagues in the last two years. This implies that academic librarians in public universities, North- Central, Nigeria, engage in research collaboration with colleagues within and outside the university.

Research Question Two: What are tools that make collaborative research among academic librarians possible in public universities in the North- Central, Nigeria?

TABLE VI
RESPONSE ON TOOLS THAT MAKE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS POSSIBLE THE NORTH- CENTRAL, NIGERIA?

| S/N | Collaboration Tools | Frequency | Percentage% |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Whatsap | 4 | 8% |
| 2 | Facebook | 6 | 12% |
| 3 | Youtube | 7 | 14% |
| 4 | Instagram | 5 | 10% |
| 5 | Google + | 28 | 56% |
| Total | | 50 | 100% |

The results in table 2 above revealed the tools useful to facilitate collaborative research. The results revealed google+ as the major tool for research with 28 (56%) responses, this is followed by YouTube with 7 (14%). Next to this is Facebook with 6 (12%), Whatsap with 4 (8%) and instagram 5(10%).

Research question 3: What are the benefits accrue to collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in the North- Central, Nigeria?

TABLE VII
RESPONSE ON THE BENEFITS ACCRUES TO COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTH- CENTRAL, NIGERIA.

| S/N | Benefits | Frequency | Percentage% |
|-----|---|-----------|-------------|
| | Collaborative research has | | |
| 1 | helped to increase the number of publications | 17 | 34% |
| | As a result of collaboration | | |
| 2 | research can be carried out more effectively | 11 | 22% |
| | It allows brain storming and | | |
| 3 | team work among the participants | 9 | 18% |
| | It encourages all the | | |
| 4 | participants to make their contributions | 7 | 14% |
| | It provides intellectual | | |
| 5 | companionship and relationship | 6 | 12% |
| | Total | 50 | 100% |

As shown in Table 7, the highest number of respondents revealed that collaborative research has helped increase the number of publications, with 17 (34%). This was followed by respondents who revealed that, as a result of collaboration, research can be carried out more effectively with 11 (22%). Next to this are respondents who said collaborative research allows brain-storming and teamwork among the participants, with 9 (18%). Other respondents stated that it encourages all participants to contribute (7%) and provides intellectual companionship and relationship (6%).

Research question 4: What are the obstacles to collaborative research among academic librarians in public universities in north-central Nigeria?

TABLE VIII
RESPONSE TO OBSTACLES TO COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH- CENTRAL NIGERIA?

| S/N | Challenges | Frequency | Percentage% |
|-----|--|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Lack of collaborative research funding | 15 | 30% |
| | Lack of awareness on the | | |
| 2 | benefits of collaborative research | 2 | 4% |
| | Difference of opinion is almost | | |
| 3 | inevitable and will take time to resolve this amicably | 4 | 8% |
| | Issue of access to connectivity | | |
| 4 | and internet access | 23 | 46% |
| | Fear of non-contributions by | | |
| 5 | others | 6 | 12% |
| | Total | 50 | 100% |

Several challenges were revealed in this study as regards collaborative research among academic librarians. Table 4 shows that the most prevalent challenge was access to connectivity and internet access, with 23 (46%). This is followed by a 15% lack of collaborative research funding. Next to this is the fear of non-contributions by others, with 6 (12%). A difference of opinion is almost inevitable and will take

time to resolve this amicably with 4 (8%); the least of these is a lack of awareness of the benefits of collaborative research with 2 (4%).

VI. Summary of Major Findings

The following major findings were established after the analysis of data retrieved from the respondents in the study:

1. The study revealed that the majority of the academic librarians engage in research collaboration with colleagues within and outside the university and have collaborated with colleagues in the last two years.
2. Furthermore, the study revealed Google+ and WhatsApp as the major tools for collaborative research.
3. The study also revealed that collaborative research has helped to increase the number of publications and the rate of research.
4. Problems of access to connectivity and internet access and a lack of collaborative research funding were the major challenges facing academic librarians in collaborative research.

VII. Conclusion

This section presents the conclusions of the study, which are based on the findings of each research objective of the study, as follows: The majority of academic librarians engage in research collaboration with colleagues within and outside the university and have collaborated with colleagues in the last two years. Google+ and WhatsApp were the major tools for collaborative research; collaborative research has helped to increase the number of publications and the rate of research; the problem of access to connectivity and internet access and the lack of collaborative research funding were the major challenges facing academic librarians in collaborative research.

VIII. Recommendations

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

1. Academic librarians should double their efforts and engage in collaborative research both within and outside the country.
2. The government should provide reliable Internet facilities with fast bandwidth.
3. Training and re-training of academic librarians on different tools that can aid them in collaborative research
4. In universities, an enabling environment for more research-oriented activities should be provided for library professionals.
5. Funding should be provided at all levels of government to improve research collaboration and train library professionals to conduct efficient and effective research.

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