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# Nigerian LIS Academic and Scholarly Publishing Experience: Challenges and the Way Forward

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined Nigerian Library and Information Science, LIS academics and scholarly publishing experience: challenges and the way forward. A purely qualitative method was adopted using interview as a data collection instrument. The population of study comprised LIS academics from two LIS departments in two universities at the South-south region of Nigeria. Four objectives were developed to guide the study. The results reveal that LIS academics publish mostly for promotion, to improve the knowledge in their chosen discipline, keep themselves abreast of the development in LIS discipline, LIS academics scholarly publication experience range from beginners up to twelve years with publications in various reputable LIS outlets. LIS academics face the challenges of heavy workload, inadequate experience, and lack of knowledge of relevant scholarly publishing outlets, and increasing rate of electronic journals due to advancement in ICT among others. To overcome the challenges, incentives should be provided to motivate LIS academics to engage in scholarly publishing, sponsorship of LIS academics to attend international conference to gain confidence, knowledge and experience on scholarly publishing, allocate money for staff to support their scholarly publishing, a compilation of a unified standard list of journals that should be a guide on where to get published.

## KEYWORDS

Scholarly publishing, Scholarly communication, Scholarly publishing experience, Scholarly publishing challenges, LIS academics, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

The academic story of publish or perish is no longer news. It is a global issue that many higher educational institutions, notably universities, are treating seriously. Academics who understand what it takes have properly prepared, but others are still struggling and finding it difficult. To be honest, getting published is not straightforward, but if facilities and information resources are available in libraries at the institutional, faculty, and departmental levels, it may be simple. It's one thing to have access to information resources and facilities; it's another to have the skills and knowledge to turn those resources into publishable papers.

According to Matyo-Cepero and Varvisotis (2016), preparing for a career in academia may not be as straightforward as one may think. The dissertation writing and research process might be a frustrating experience for Nigerian LIS academics who want to work at the university level. The fact that scholarly writing/publishing can be frustrating often comes as a surprise, or rather a shock, to some. Even more aggravating is the academic writing process and the steps that must be followed in order to get your work published in a recognised academic publication. The impact of fragmented teaching and research activity on academic achievement was investigated by MacLeod et al. (2012). When the writer/researcher is faced with the reality of the old adage "publish or perish," the confidence earned following the dissertation defence swiftly evaporates. The dissertation committee, which led the candidate through the dissertation process with assistance and mentoring, has now moved on to help new academics.

In Nigeria, LIS academics have a variety of obligations, some of which are new and sometimes inexplicable. They must carry a teaching load, with a set amount of credits/courses that must be completed each semester. They can also provide guidance to graduate and undergraduate students. As members of the faculty, they are expected to be able to meet the standards. They must also be aware of some publication obligations as they continue with their research, service, teaching, and advising. "The inability to set aside enough time and space for writing can lead to emotions of guilt and dread about unfinished writing tasks, as well as a loss of opportunities for promotion and advancement to the next level" (Tella & Onyancha, 2021; MacLeod et al. 2012, p. 644).

Without a doubt, Nigerian LIS scholars face a number of obstacles, as outlined above, which are affecting their scholarly publication performance. Unfortunately, despite these obstacles, there appears to be little or no research on the difficulties that Nigerian LIS professors encounter in getting published. Related studies in Nigeria on academic publishing and communication have primarily focused on research students' experiences, their awareness and perceptions of scholarly publishing, and the like. Other notable studies on scholarly publication have been undertaken outside of Nigeria, mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States. Similarly, LIS academics have not been formally studied in relation to scholarly publishing, but research in other disciplines, such as engineering, sciences, and clinical sciences, have been conducted. In light of these considerations, this study looked at the Nigerian LIS academic and scholarly publishing experience: difficulties and prospects

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study was to examine Nigerian LIS academic and scholarly publishing experience: challenges and the way forward. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine what LIS academics consider as the rationale for scholarly publishing.
2. Examine LIS academic publishing experience.
3. Identify the challenges encounter by LIS academics in their engagement in scholarly publishing.
4. Determine the way forward LIS academics engagement in challenges free scholarly publishing experience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Scholarly Publishing

Scholarly publishing, according to Anderson et al. (2021), is the process of developing and evaluating scholarly information, disseminating it to the scholarly community and the general public, and archiving it for future use. It makes it easier to do research, collaborate, and generate new information. Despite this, most academics do research and share the results with little or no prospect of direct monetary compensation. Scholarly publishing, according to the New World Encyclopedia (2022), is a subfield of publishing that disseminates academic research and knowledge. The majority of academic work is published as a journal article, a book, or a thesis. Peer review or editorial refereeing is used in much, but not all, academic publishing to qualify texts for publication. Although many academic publications are somewhat multidisciplinary and publish work from multiple unique fields or subfields, most established academic disciplines have their own journals and other outlets for publishing. The types of publications that are recognized as additions to knowledge or study, as well as the review and publication processes, differ substantially between fields. Scholarly publication, according to George Washington University (2022), is the product of research that leads to scholarly literature. Scholarly publishing is to describe the research, assess its trustworthiness and repeatability, disseminate it through numerous media, and archive the results for future use.

This system generates more inquiry and subsequent knowledge, which leads to increased communication among researchers. Scholarly publication, according to Jonkoping University (2022), is the published results of researchers who have achieved new information in their field through scientific ideas and methodologies. Journal articles, research reports, conference papers, and books are the most common sorts of publications, according to the institution, and past research is used as a starting point but is critically evaluated and expanded further. Another key feature is that the authors of these articles always cite the sources from which their own arguments are based, so that potential readers can check to see if they are right.

Tella and Onyancha (2021) emphasized the importance of becoming published in the information life cycle. Scholars enable and empower readers to eyeshot, discuss, and promote their work via publishing, all of which are revolutionary advances in the advancement of knowledge. Publishing elevates or elevates a scholar's status or rank in his or her field, which is important for financing and employment (Tella & Onyancha, 2021). Since publication is the most visible and popular approach to demonstrate active engagement, several accreditation agencies or organizations require teachers to remain active in their profession (Northcentral University, 2020).

### Challenges Faced by Academic in Scholarly Publishing

Academics benefit from scholarly publishing, but there are several obstacles to overcome in the process of becoming published. Unavailability of Internet facilities, download delay, limited access to computer terminals, lack of knowledge, improper archiving, power outage, improper archiving of some open access journals, lack of knowledge of relevant scholarly publishing outlets, and inadequate internet search skills were among the issues identified by Ivwighrehweta et al. (2012). Economic challenges, a lack of incentives for academics, academic non-participation in scholarly conferences, brain drain, inadequate mentorship practices, language challenges, technological challenges, the rise of predatory electronic journals, and environmental challenges were all identified by Ondar-Okemwa (2007). Scholarly papers originating in Sub-Saharan Africa are virtually invisible. The print-based business has been compelled to undergo a paradigm shift as information providers due to technological advancements (Turner, 2014). Business models, as well as the concept of a product or service, and copyrights, have all changed as a result of this (Brown and Boulderstone, 2008). The advancement of communication technologies has changed the way people communicate in terms of place and time, as well as providing new opportunities to integrate material, share expertise, and disseminate information (Mrva-Montoya, 2015). One of academics' significant problems, along with the challenge of transforming their research into 'research output,' is the 'time delay' between submitting scholarly work (particularly journal articles) and publishing it (Ductor, 2015).

In the academic sphere, Bourdieu (1988) recognizes the 'time' aspect as a challenge. This is a critical issue for academics who are juggling many activities (not just inside their subject) in various fields outside of their specialty. According to Björk (2017), when compared to other communication sectors, the impact of digital technology or the

Internet on academics in publishing their scholarly works has been small, because academic publishers are expected to follow all of the processes of print publication. Despite the fact that individuals of inter-related disciplines are aware of the changes and issues that occur within the dependent field, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) claim that they are unconcerned about the changes and challenges. As a result, the impact, or challenge, posed by anticipated technical developments in the business looks to be very minor.

### **Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, journal publication has a lengthy history. The West African Medical Journal was founded in Nigeria in the 1920s during the colonial era (Ajao & Ugwu, 2011). Nigerian Field, the journal of the Nigerian Field Society, was first published in 1931 and is still being published now (Nigerian Field Society, 2015). The founding of University College, Ibadan in 1948 is credited with igniting a wave of academic publishing in Nigeria: from then until the late 1970s, Ibadan was the epicenter of academic research, notably in the humanities (Ola, 2015). According to information from African Journal Online (AJOL), the largest collection of African publications, there are 209 Nigerian journals on the site as of 2015 (African Journal Online, 2015). The publishing cycle was strictly followed in the early days of scholarly publishing in Nigeria, with authors responsible for writing intellectual thoughts, publishers for organizing the logistics and financial components of the peer-review process, publication, and marketing, and libraries providing subscription access (The STM Report, 2012). The establishment of LIS school at the University College Ibadan in 1957 laid the foundation for library development through research and publication of intellectual thought by library professionals.

The decline of the Nigerian economy and education sector, on the other hand, resulted in the "brain drain" syndrome (National University Commission, 2014), low quality and irregularity of journal articles, the inability of Nigerian university libraries to afford journal subscriptions, and a general dissatisfaction among Nigerian academics, which has led to endless strike actions by academic staff unions (Akinnsaso, 2013). All of these circumstances resulted in scholarly publication in Nigeria gradually deteriorating and then collapsing (Nigeria Structural Adjustment Program, 1994). The collapse of the business was further evidenced by the closure of respected publications and academic publishers, such as the Journal of the Historical Organisation of Nigeria, published by Nigeria's oldest professional society. Since the beginning of the crisis, scholarly publishing in Nigeria has been a survival of the fittest. Nigerian scholars must continue to publish because of the "publish or perish" ethos (Plume & Van-Weijen, 2014). Quality, on the other hand, has been compromised in the pursuit of publishing at any costs. Many academics in Nigeria and most of Africa handle the entire publication process themselves, from start to end, and publications are occasionally made without any type of peer review (Ola, 2015). As a result, it should come as no surprise that the journals' outputs are suspect. This is bolstered by the fact that the majority of Nigerian authors do not have access to research resources because university libraries cannot afford the high journal subscription costs requested by major international journal publishers (Utulu & Bolarinwa, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design**

The research used a completely qualitative approach. The qualitative method relies on an open-ended questionnaire to collect data. A qualitative method was used because it is thought to help uncover LIS academics' perceptions and awareness of scholarly publishing, as well as the obstacles they face. More importantly, the design was chosen because the results are typically more descriptive, allowing the researcher to draw inferences from the data collected from the respondents. Furthermore, the qualitative method is cost-effective, especially when self-administered (Tella et al., 2022). The researcher was able to collect relevant data about Nigerian LIS academic scholarly publication experience by using an open-ended questionnaire in this study. Though many types of qualitative methods are available (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the open-ended questionnaire was chosen because it is one of the most common qualitative research methods in LIS research, and because it is considered the most practical method during this pandemic period of social distancing (Tella, 2020).

### **Population and Sample**

The study's participants were LIS academics from two libraries and information science departments at two universities in Nigeria's South-South area. These are the Ambrose Ali University Library and Information Science Department in Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria, and the Delta State University Library and Information Science Department in Abraka, Nigeria. The study's expansion to other LIS departments in other colleges and states in Nigeria was limited due to the lockdown and coronavirus concern. The study focused on LIS professors at all levels, from Lecturer 1 to Professor. Eight LIS academics were chosen at random from each LIS department, for a total of 16 LIS academics (lecturers) that took part in the study. The study's sample is made up of 16 academics.

## Instrument

An open-ended survey with pre-made questions relevant to the study's four objectives was created. Instructions on how to answer to the survey were included throughout the survey. The open-ended survey items are those that are relevant in obtaining data on the four variables that are focused on the study's objectives.

## The Procedure of Administration

Because of the COVID-19 and to closely comply to the social distancing protocol, interviews that were to be done by the researcher were transformed to an open-ended questionnaire. Respondents were instructed to complete the survey and return it to the researcher as soon as feasible. Twelve of the sixteen copies of the survey that were mailed to the respondents were returned filled and ready for analysis.

## Ethical Considerations

The respondents were asked for their informed consent, and each one enthusiastically expressed their desire to participate in the study. Similarly, they were free to abandon their participation if they believed it would be counterproductive.

## RESULTS

### LIS academics and the rationale for scholarly publishing

The objective was to determine what LIS academics consider as the rationale for scholarly publishing. To achieve the objective, LIS academics were asked to indicate their rationale for engaging in scholarly publishing. A respondent pointed out that:

*“Haa, I need to publish because I don't want to remain on the spot. My take home in terms of salary cannot take me home anymore.....but I know, If I work more harder and I am able to at least two papers published, I know that will earn me my next promotion, and consequently my salary will be jacked up a bit”.*

Relative to the response above, another respondent added that:

*“If not for the publish or perish issue that is now making everyone of us to run around, I wouldn't have bother myself in anyway because this scholarly publishing thing is not easy.....in fact, as a person, I am not finding it easy, I won't deceive myself”.*

Another prominent opinion expressed by another respondent is that:

*“Scholarly publishing is not for promotion alone as some colleagues have mentioned. It goes beyond. Scholarly publishing will enable me as a LIS academic to be known by my colleagues that I am working in the particular area of my discipline as my research area or area of specialization. Not only that, it will also increase my feasibility; expand my research network, grant me invitation to participate in collaboration by colleagues who are working in my area of specialization, and increase my opportunity of mobility”.*

In general, the findings suggest that LIS academics publish primarily for professional advancement, to expand their expertise in their chosen field, and to stay up with changes in the field. This finding supports Tella and Onyancha's research (2021), which said that becoming published is a crucial phase in the information life cycle. Scholars enable and empower readers to eyespot, discuss, and promote their work via publishing, all of which are revolutionary advances in the advancement of knowledge. Similarly, the findings support the report's assertion that publishing elevates or elevates a scholar's status or rank in his or her profession, which is critical for financing and employment (Tella & Onyancha, 2021).

### LIS academic publishing experience

The objective was to examine LIS academic publishing experience. To achieve the objective, LIS academics were asked to explain what their experience like in scholarly publishing. When responding, four respondents gave a similar opinion indicating that...

*We have been publishing for some years now (the publications range from 4 -12years)...One of the pointed out that “I can boldly say I have published several papers. In other words, on average, let me say I have up to 12 years of scholarly publishing experience”.*

Another respondent explained that:

*“I have not gone far .....I can refer to myself as just a beginner....I just academic but since scholarly publishing is what it takes to grow in the career, I have no choice.....I have to keep struggling, however, it is not easy combining the thing with academic workload, teaching supervising, advising and the likes”.*

Another respondent also expressed his opinion saying that, since I have started, I can say I have making progress, it is not easy at the beginning, but by now, I can boast of 12 papers published in reputable outlets. I will keep pushing to add more to what I currently have, though time is tough but I don't have option.

The result here implies that in terms of experience, LIS academics scholarly publication experience range from beginners to up twelve years with publications in various reputable LIS outlets.

### **LIS Academic and Challenges of scholarly publishing**

The objective was to identify the challenges encounter by LIS academics in their engagement in scholarly publishing. To achieve the objective, LIS academic were asked to explain the challenges they have been encountering in their scholarly publishing endeavour. The results reveal that there have been various challenges LIS academics have been grappling with in their bid to get published. Some of the responses expressed by the respondents during the interview sessions reveal these:

*“I will not deceive anyone since I cannot deceive myself.....the truth is that it has not been so easy combining academic load with scholarly researches and getting the report published. It is killing, it stressful, I am not finding it easy at all”.*

*“We all know that globally things are not easy economically, the price of essentially commodities have grown up...this has also affect the conduct of research and getting the outcomes published and our universities are not helping matters. Incentives are not provided, therefore, it is difficult dipping hands into our little stipend called salary to publish papers. The issue about workload is there which is not allowing many of us to have time for personal research”.*

*“Mentorship had died completely. In fact no one is ready to provide that mentorship again because everybody is struggling. Who is it that want to mentor another colleagues, is it those that are also struggling to make ends meet? There is inadequate knowledge of scholarly publishing that is just the truth. Since colleagues are not mobilized, motivated and encouraged to attend international conference, hence, they have little or no knowledge of scholarly publishing”.*

*“There is no doubt most some of us are language deficient. English is not our mother tongue but we have to write in English before our papers can be considered for publication. We have to compete with others whose mother tongue is English language. That makes the situation to be so tight and dizzy for us. Let me add the revolution of ICT and increase in the application of advanced technologies has also worsened the matter. There are no so many journals and it has become so difficult to differentiate between the reputable and obnoxious journals, this enables the predatory publishers to be preying on most of colleagues. The lack of knowledge what constitute predatory journal and publishers give opportunity to those blacklisted journals and publishers to be exploiting our colleagues”.*

According to the explanation above, LIS academics face a variety of challenges in scholarly publishing, including a heavy workload combined with scholarly publication, a lack of experience and knowledge of relevant publishing outlets, a lack of mentorship, economic reasons, poor incentives, language deficiency, and an increasing rate of electronic journals due to advances in ICT, among others. The temptation to combine teaching, service, advising, and academic research and publishing, according to (Ondari-Okenwa, 2007; Matyo-capelo & Varvisotis, 2016), is one of the most significant issues affecting young faculty members at colleges and universities across the country. The author's explanation that beginning academics face a delicate balancing act that requires them to not only teach and serve the community, but also to complete and publish a certain amount of research each year in order to keep their jobs and/or seek promotion and tenure at their institution lends credence to the current finding in this study.

### **The way forward to LIS academics scholarly publishing experience**

The objective was to determine the way forward LIS academics engagement in challenges free scholarly publishing experience. To achieve the objective, LIS academics were asked to indicate the way forward towards overcoming the identified challenges. Some of the responses from the respondents are as follows:

*“To me, it is very simple. We can go back to status-quo. Let our various institutions provide support for research. Let them make provision of incentives and see if the situation will not improve. Our salary is extremely small for us to be publishing out of it. In each academic session let certain amount of money be allocated for each staff to conduct research and let them retire the money at the end of the session giving account of what they achieve with the money in terms of the number of paper they publish for the session and how much left to be carry over to the next academic session”.*

*“On my own, I am of the opinion that funding should also be made available for conference attendance. This should be on a first come, first serve basis without subjectivity and sentiment and should be devoid of favouritism”.*

*“Permit me to start by pointing out that there should be standard in where to publish. I am saying this because there is lack of standard and uniformity in the criteria for promotion in all our universities. While some universities promote their staff using all manner of publication outlets including predatory journals, others are not, but yet the same promotion. Some countries have generated a standard list of journals which guide their academics on where*

to publish. We can only get it right when we borrow leave from that idea; anything sort of that, we continue to be where we are”.

“It is important that the work load should be reduced. To do this, our universities should consider employing more hands. If this is done, there will be extra time for us to do our research and get published”.

Arising from the above, it implies incentives should be provided to motivate LIS academics to engage in scholarly publishing, sponsoring colleagues to attend international conferences to gain knowledge and experience on scholarly publishing, allocate money for each staff to support their scholarly publishing, come up with a unified standard list of journals that should be guiding LIS scholars on where to publish their scholarly papers.

## CONCLUSION

In terms of experience, LIS academics' scholarly publication experience ranges from beginners to up to twelve years with publications in various reputable LIS outlets; LIS academics' scholarly publication experience ranges from beginners to up to twelve years with publications in various reputable LIS outlets; LIS academics' scholarly publication experience ranges from beginners to up to twelve years with publications in various reputable LIS outlets; LIS academics' scholarly publication experience ranges from beginners to up to twelve years with publications in various reputable Academics in the field of LIS face a variety of challenges, including a heavy workload combined with scholarly publication, a lack of experience and knowledge of relevant scholarly publishing outlets, a lack of mentorship, poor economics, poor incentives, language barriers, and an increase in the number of electronic journals as technology advances. To address the challenges, the findings suggest that incentives be provided to encourage LIS academics to engage in scholarly publishing, that colleagues be sponsored to attend international conferences to gain confidence, knowledge, and experience in scholarly publishing, that money be allocated to staff to support their scholarly publishing, and that a unified standard list of journals be compiled to guide LIS scholars on where to get their scholarly works published.

## IMPLICATIONS

The significance of this study for LIS research is that it is one of the first in Nigeria to focus primarily on LIS researchers, and the scholarly publishing experience thus provides as a foundation for future related research.

Future related studies will benefit from the concepts offered in this research in terms of how to approach their investigations, what they need to add or improve upon when focused on studies linked to academic publishing in LIS.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited because data was collected from only two LIS departments in two institutions, out of a total of roughly 45 LIS departments in Nigerian universities. Only one data collection instrument, the interview, was used in this investigation. Researchers should think about expanding the study to include more LIS departments and universities in the future. Combining data gathering instruments should also be considered in order to allow for triangulation of results and ultimate generalization to the total population of LIS academics in Nigerian universities.

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