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The Influence of Knowledge Acquisition on Research Productivity of Bottom-Level Academics.

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to examine the influence of knowledge acquisition on research productivity of bottom-level academics. A total of 179 bottom-level academics from three universities located in Ogun State were surveyed using a questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The findings suggest that the surveyed academics predominantly acquire knowledge through journals, books, databases and online webpages, and they do so to a high extent. They published most of their publications in learned journals, while their publications in conference papers and chapters in books were low. However, they faced challenges such as time constraints, knowledge hoarding by colleagues, and difficulties in organising knowledge from various sources when acquiring knowledge. When embarking on research publishing activities, they encountered challenges like insufficient research facilities, time constraints and manuscript rejection. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) evaluation of the model indicated that knowledge acquisition significantly affects research productivity. These insights could help policymakers and university management understand the factors affecting the research productivity of bottom-level academics.

Keywords: Knowledge acquisition, research productivity, bottom-level academics, universities, Nigeria

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Introduction

Due to the changes in academic curricula in universities over the years, teaching once the primary focus of academics, has now shifted. In addition to teaching, there is a growing trend in the demand for research work and its corresponding output among academics. Universities give prominence to quality research output produced by academic staff due to its impact on university rankings and visibility. Quality research output is a proof of excellence for universities and serves as a yardstick for the institution's impact on society (Fuentes, 2021). Universities are regarded as hub from where new knowledge and innovation are created through research (Nemati-Anaraki, Hassanzadeh, Panahi, & Malgard, 2023), with most publication outputs emanating from there (Okonedo, 2015). In the Nigerian university context, research and it corresponding output are essential requirements for career progression and job security of academics. Conceptually, research productivity is perceived as the measure of academic's achievement gauged by the quantity or quality of publications over a specified timeframe (Ladipo, Alegbeleye, Soyemi, & Ikonne, 2022). Oyeyemi, Ejakpovi, Oyeyemi, and Adeniji (2019) stated that it is through research productivity that the status of an academic staff is often determined among peers. Pointing out the importance of research productivity to academics, Simisaye (2019) and Okonedo (2015) emphasised that the prestige of programmes and institutions is based on the scholarly accomplishments of their academic staff.

To this end, understanding factors that promotes research productivity of academics is germane. Previous studies have attempted to examine several factors that could affect the research productivity of academics, unfortunately no known study has investigated research productivity from the perspective of knowledge acquisition of bottom-level academics.

Knowledge is seen as an adequate understanding of facts, ideas, concepts and their interrelationships, as well as the information foundation required for performing specific tasks (Banerjee & Kumar, 2018). Bello and Oyekunle (2014) described knowledge management as the overall process of activities affecting knowledge: creating, capturing, identifying, organising, storing, representing, transferring, and reusing knowledge. It relies on a series of complex processes, such as knowledge acquisition, creation, sharing, and use. Knowledge acquisition involves the process of acquiring new ideas, skills, and knowledge necessary for teaching, research and publication. It is a vital component of research and publication, and it is essential for the intellectual and professional growth of and innovations by academics. The process of acquiring knowledge is an ongoing endeavour, it persists as an unwavering pursuit throughout one's lifetime. In the university setting, acquiring knowledge can happen by learning from experts or senior colleagues either through formal or informal interaction, gaining experience, and trying new things through research. Similarly, reading knowledge sources, such as books, journals, conference proceedings, magazines, newspapers, databases etc., contain the knowledge needed by knowledge seekers. Thus, utising these knowledge sources and tools is essential enhancing the research productivity of bottom-level academics.

Bottom-level academics are teaching staff that are in the early stages of their academic careers. Bottom-level academics as used in this study include assistant lecturer, lecturer II and lecturer 1. They are considered assets to any university, most especially those who are passionate about building their careers in their respective disciplines. Bottom-level academics in Nigerian universities are required to show evidence of publication output for their career (Scheme of Service for Academic Staff, 2017 revised). It is important to

recognise how knowledge acquisition impacts the productivity and output of bottom-level academics allowing them to unlocking their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their fields.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role of research productivity in the advancement of knowledge, academic careers, and university rankings, previous studies have consistently revealed that academics exhibit a low level of research output (Lawal and Olawale, 2020; Haruna, Momoh, & Ismail, 2023; Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2023). There is a noticeable gap in the research output of bottom-level academics in Nigerian universities. The acquisition and effectiveness of information resources and sources in enhancing research productivity remains unclear, particularly for bottom-level academics. This lack of exploration leaves a significant gap in our understanding of how to enhance research productivity among this group of academics. Based above phenomenon, the present study aimed to investigate the influence of knowledge acquisition on research productivity of bottom-level academics in universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Find out how bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities.
2. Examine the extent to which bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities.
3. Assess the research productivity of the bottom-level academics.
4. Find out the challenges faced by the bottom-level academics in acquiring and publishing their research.
5. Determine whether knowledge acquisition influence research productivity of the bottom-level academics.

Research Questions

1. How do bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities?
2. To what extent do bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities?
3. What is the research productivity level of bottom-level academics?
4. What are the challenges faced by bottom-level academics in acquiring and publishing their research?

Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of knowledge acquisition on research productivity of bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State

Literature Review

Research productivity

Research productivity is percieved as a measure of academic achievement gauged by quantity or quality of publications over a specified time frame Ladipo, Alegbeleye, Soyemi, and Ikonne (2022).. Pointing out the importance research, Oyeyemi et al. (2019) noted that the number of research publications in peer-reviewed journals and scholastic presentations at conferences and other gatherings of peers are important criteria for assessing productivity and prestige in academia. Apparently, the debate over the most suitable measure of academic publication productivity is hinged on two crucial elements: quantity and quality (Jalal, 2020).

Knowledge management

Knowledge management is crucial for enhancing research activities of academics (Nemati-Anaraki, Hassanzadeh, Panahi, & Malgard, 2023). According to scholars, knowledge management is the process of identifying, capturing, storing, leveraging, sharing, and effectively utilisation an organisations intellectual assets to enhance its performance and competitiveness (Ogunbanwo, Okesola, & Buckley, 2019). The components of knowledge management encompasses knowledge creation, acquisition, capture, storage, sharing, use and application (Alam, Zhang, & Shehzad, 2023). Mohammad and Majied Al Saiy (2012) recognised that knowledge acquisition is one of the main important issues in knowledge management. While numerous studies have explored various aspects of knowledge management, knowledge acquisition remains relatively understudied. Given its significance, authors have recently turned their attention to this critical area.

Knowledge Acquisition

Knowledge acquisition, as part of knowledge management, is a process through which an individual or organisation obtains knowledge (Kaba & Ramaiah, 2020). Liao, Wu, Hu, and Tsui (2009) mentioned that knowledge acquisition is regarded as the first step in the process of developing knowledge and also the gatekeeper of any knowledge management system. This makes it very important as one need to first acquire knowledge before sharing it. Knowledge acquisition is the process of acquiring and learning appropriate knowledge from various internal and external resources, such as expert mentoring, relevant documents, experience, dialogue, education, and training, which are the most familiar techniques for knowledge acquisition (Gholami, Asli, Salman, & Noruzy, 2013). Some of the activities related to knowledge acquisition include: identification of knowledge, obtaining the identified knowledge, and transferring the knowledge for immediately using or internalisation (Yazdani, Bayazidi, & Mafi, 2020). Knowledge can either acquire knowledge from tacit or explicit sources (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Tacit knowledge and research productivity

Tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific, and often difficult to articulate (Kaba & Ramaiah, 2018). It is acquired through practical, hands-on experience, and observation.
Tacit knowledge could be the insights, experiences, skills, observation, intuitive feeling, mental modes, beliefs, and values intuitions (Ehijiagbone & Olatokun, 2020). In academic environments, there are several sources from which academics can acquire tacit knowledge

for research activities. Mentoring, community of practice, experience, informal discussion, seminars, conferences, focus group discussions, symposiums and colloquium plays a crucial role in predicting research output of academics (Okon, Owan, & Owan, 2022; Asiedu, Abah, & Dei, 2022; Wiebe, Pratt, & Noël, 2023). Previous researchers stress that mentorship can be considered as a possible vehicle for promoting research capacity among academics and that it is a widely favoured capacity building strategy by academics (Nundullal & Dorasamy, 2012). Experienced academics can provide guidance and support to new academics, sharing insights into the academic environment and offering advice on career development and research strategies (Merga & Mason, 2021). Engaging in a community of practice in an academic setting foster knowledge acquisition process, collaboration, knowledge exchange, and problem-solving (Asiedu, Abah, & Dei, 2022).

According to Kucharska and Erickson (2023), academics can enrich their knowledge and learn from shared experiences through peer collaboration, discussions, and debates, irrespective of whether these interactions are structured or unstructured. This process aids in fostering a more profound understanding of their respective fields. Academics do acquire new skills, new knowledge, career ideas, and innovative opportunities by engaging in different academic activities such as research, teaching, and administrative duties (Rafindadi et al., 2023). Several studies have established that academics acquire knowledge from conferences, seminars, training and symposiums attendance (Omah & Urhiewhu, 2019, Becerra, Sellers, & Contreras, 2020). Becerra, Sellers, and Contreras (2020) found that by attending and presenting at conferences, seminars, training and symposiums, academics are given platform to acquire knowledge that is useful to them in their various disciplines. Also, Rafindadi et al. (2023) found that conferences, workshop, lectures, presentations and networking are also effective ways through which lecturers acquire/share their tacit knowledge as a group. These events provide opportunities to interact with experts in the field, learn about new research findings, methodologies, gain insights into the latest trends and developments, and best practices in their field. This in turn can contribute to enhancing research output by equipping researchers with the necessary tools, resources, and support to conduct high-quality research endeavours.

Explicit knowledge and research productivity

Explicit knowledge is codified and easy-to-transfer knowledge, usually embedded in physical formats such as books, memos, databases, and electronic media, among others, which can easily be acquired, captured, communicated, shared, leveraged, or stored (Azam, Khilji, & Khan, 2016). Explicit knowledge sources are what Kaba and Ramaiah (2018) referred to as reading knowledge sources. Academics in academic environments typically acquire explicit knowledge from a range of sources, including books, online databases, journals, online webpages, etc. They acquire explicit knowledge through reading and reviewing existing research publications in their field. This helps to keep them up to date with current trends and advances in their area of specialisation. A study by Shuva and Taisir (2016) at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, reported that most academics employed journals in their research and teaching practices. Kaba and Ramaiah (2018) in their study of knowledge acquisition among faculty members found that faculty members in the UAE acquire knowledge by reading journals, newspapers, books, magazines, and conference papers. Ogunmodede and Oniovosa (2019) reported that academics three universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria acquire knowledge from Internet, e-resources (e-books/e-journals/online databases), and print resources (textbooks/journals/reference books). Okonoko, Odiachi, and Marcus (2021) found that academics demand the information they require by consulting books, journals, internet/online webpages, electronic resources,

interacting with colleagues and friends, and using less associational meetings, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, and government documents and websites.

Challenges of research productivity and knowledge acquisition

According to Lessick, Perryman, Billman, Alpi, De Groote, and Babin (2016), a lack of time allotted to research at work, a lack of employer support, a lack of time to acquire research skills, a lack of training in research design and methods, a lack of funding for research training, a lack of statistical support, and a lack of funding for research projects as barriers to their research participation. Mentoring is also part of the problem facing academic staff in improving research productivity, as rightly observed by Bentley (2012). This is a great problem, as the younger academic staff in the research institutes needed to be mentored by more experienced senior colleagues in research activities to increase their research productivity. According to Pyrko, Eden, and Howick (2019), the acquisition of knowledge posed a number of important epistemological challenges, which were reported in their study. The challenges follow from the need to manage the complexity of expert knowledge, acknowledge the time demands on experts, manage and merge multiple perspectives, and acknowledge the subjectivity of knowledge in a domain.

Relationship between knowledge acquisition and research productivity

Empirically, literature has shown a dearth of studies on the relationship between knowledge acquisition and research productivity as compared to other knowledge management activities, such as sharing and utilisation. However, few studies have addressed the relationship between knowledge acquisition and other work/performance outcomes indicators such as organisational performance and innovation. It is therefore assumed that knowledge acquisition can foster academic research productivity. Some studies have pointed out the contribution of knowledge acquisition to the innovation and performance of both individuals and organisation (Chen & Huang, 2009; Andreeva & Kianto, 2011). Studies have revealed that knowledge acquired through mentorship practices has an impact on the research productivity of early-career academics. For instance, in an ex-post facto research study, Okon, Owan, & Owan (2022) found that mentorship practices significantly contribute to the research productivity of early-career educational psychologists in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Conceptual model

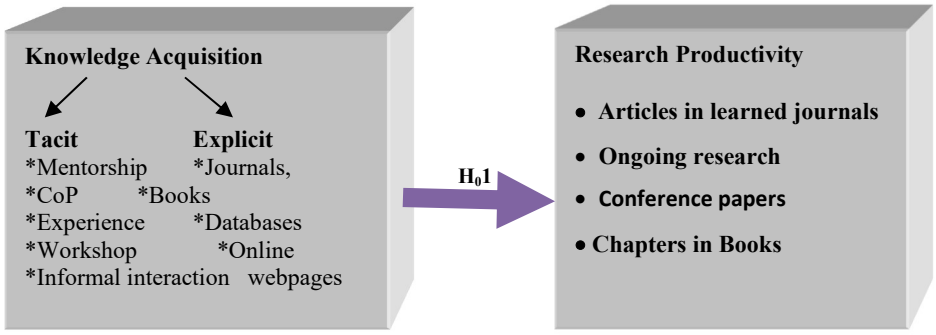

Fig 1: Conceptual model

The conceptual model proposes that knowledge acquired from tacit sources - such as mentorship, communities of practice, experience, workshops, and training - and explicit sources - such as journals, books, academic databases, and online webpages - can bolster the research productivity of bottom-level academics. Indicators of research productivity variable include, articles in learned journals, ongoing research, conference papers, and chapters in books.

Methods

The study adopted a survey research design. Bottom-level academic of three reputable universities in Ogun State were included in the study, with a total population of 645 and a sample size of 215. The sampling technique adopted was multistage, with the first stage involving the selection of common faculties in FUNAAB, OOU, and CU. The second stage involved choosing common departments, and finally, a census was conducted to include all the bottom-level academics in these departments. Data collection was done using a questionnaire, which was pre-tested among bottom-level academics at the Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED). This group was not part of the study population. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient values. 215 copies of the questionnaire was administered among the responpents, however, only 179 was properly filled, returned and used for the study. The response rate was 83.25%. The Research Productivity Scale and Knowledge Acquisition scales had 0.775 and 0.916 coefficient values respectivly. These values indicate a high level of internal consistency, as they are above the threshold value of 0.70 proposed by Obeka (2011). Thus, the questionnaire is a reliable tool for this study. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. Decision rule for the result was: $\leq$ 1.79 corresponds to a very low extent; 1.80-2.59 to a low extent; 2.60-3.39 to undecided; 3.40-4.19 to a high extent; and 4.25-5.00 to a very high extent. Linear regression analysis of ordinary least squares was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The data was analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS).

Results

How bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities

Table 2: How bottom-level academics acquire knowledge for research activities

	Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
1.	I acquire knowledge from journals, books, databases to improve my research skills.	98 54.7%	58 32.4%	9 5.0%	6 3.4%	8 4.5%	4.30	1.026
2.	I acquire knowledge from internet/online webpages.	91 50.8%	66 36.9%	8 4.5%	4 2.2%	10 5.6%	4.25	1.043
3.	I acquire knowledge from colleagues in workshop/conferences/training/ symposium.	49 27.4%	94 52.5%	22 12.3%	7 3.9%	7 3.9%	3.96	0.953
4.	I acquire knowledge through mentorship.	40 22.3%	86 48.0%	32 17.9%	17 9.5%	4 2.2%	3.79	0.971
5.	I acquire knowledge through informal academic interaction with colleagues.	53 29.6%	73 40.8%	26 14.5%	16 8.9%	11 6.1%	3.79	1.146
6.	I acquire knowledge through community of practice.	27 15.1%	70 39.1%	45 25.1%	21 11.7%	16 8.9%	3.40	1.149
7.	I acquire knowledge through focus group discussions.	30 16.8%	65 36.3%	45 25.1%	17 9.5%	22 12.3%	3.36	1.225
				Weighted Mean =3.83				

Table 2 presents the respondents' preferred avenues for acquiring knowledge to enhance their research activities. The highest mean rating score of ($\bar{x}$ = 4.30) was attributed to the acquisition of knowledge from journals, books, and databases. This was closely followed by the use of internet or online webpages, which had a mean rating score of ($\bar{x}$ =4.25). Further, the respondents indicated that they gain knowledge from colleagues during workshops, conferences, training sessions, and symposiums, with a mean rating score of ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96). Informal academic interactions with colleagues and mentorship both received a mean rating score of ($\bar{x}$ =3.79). The respondents also reported acquiring knowledge through participation in communities of practice and focus group discussions, which received mean rating scores of ($\bar{x}$ =3.40) and ($\bar{x}$ =3.36), respectively. It can be inferred that the respondents predominantly rely on journals, books, databases, and online resources for their research activities, supplemented by interactions with colleagues and participation in communities of practice and focus discussions.

Extent to which bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State acquire knowledge for research activities.

Table 3: Extent of knowledge acquisition for research activities by bottom-level academics

	Statements	VHE	HE	UD	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1.	I acquire knowledge from journals, books, databases to improve my research skills.	90 50.3%	68 38.0%	12 6.7%	3 1.7%	6 3.4%	4.30	0.923
2.	I acquire knowledge from internet/online webpages.	82 45.8%	69 38.5%	16 8.9%	6 3.4%	6 3.4%	4.20	0.974
3.	I acquire knowledge through informal academic interaction with colleagues.	62 34.6%	73 40.8%	26 14.5%	12 6.7%	6 3.4%	3.97	1.033
4.	I acquire knowledge from colleagues in workshop/conferences/training/ symposium.	53 29.6%	85 47.5%	26 14.5%	9 5.0%	6 3.4%	3.95	0.973
5.	I acquire knowledge through mentorship.	42 23.5%	89 49.7%	30 16.8%	13 7.3%	5 2.8%	3.84	0.961
6.	I acquire knowledge through community of practice.	42 23.5%	71 39.7%	42 23.5%	10 5.6%	14 7.8%	3.65	1.133
7.	I acquire knowledge through focus group discussions.	35 19.6%	75 41.9%	44 24.6%	14 7.8%	11 6.1%	3.61	1.077
				Weighted Mean =3.93				

Table 3 presents responses regarding the degree to which the surveyed bottom-level academics acquire knowledge for research activities. They claimed that they acquire knowledge from journals, books, databases to improve their research skills, this received the highest mean rating score of ($\bar{x}$ = 4.30). This was followed by those who acquire knowledge from internet/online webpages ($\bar{x}$ =4.20). The respondents also reported that they acquire knowledge through informal academic interaction with colleagues ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97), they acquire knowledge from colleagues during workshop, conferences, training sessions and symposium ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95), they acquire knowledge through mentorship ($\bar{x}$ = 3.84), they acquire knowledge through community of practice ($\bar{x}$ =3.65) and lastly, they acquire knowledge through focus group discussions ($\bar{x}$ =3.61). Based on the established decision rule for this scale, it can be inferred that the respondents acquire knowledge to a high extent through these various means.

Research productivity of bottom-level academics

Table 4: Research productivity of bottom-level academics within the period of 5 years.

s/n	Research productivity	10 above	7-9	4-6	1-3	None	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
1	Articles in learned journals	85 47.5%	36 20.1%	31 17.3%	22 12.3%	5 2.8%	3.97	1.182
2	Ongoing research	10 5.6%	6 3.4%	49 27.4%	89 49.7%	25 14.0%	2.37	0.959
3	Conferences papers	9 5.0%	4 2.2%	39 21.8%	88 49.2%	39 21.8%	2.20	0.972
4	Chapters in books	1 0.6%	-	4 2.2%	41 22.9%	133 74.3%	1.30	0.567

Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the research output of the surveyed academics. The data reveals that 47.5% (85) of the academics have published more than 10 articles in learned journals. This is followed by 20.1% (36) who have published between 7-9 articles, 17.3% (31) who have published between 4-6 articles, and 12.3% (22) who have published between 1-3 articles in learned journals. In terms of conference papers, the majority of academics 88 (48.2%) have only published between 1 and 3 papers. Additionally, 49.1% (89) of the academics have between 1 and 3 ongoing research projects. Their publication in chapters in books, received the lowest mean score ($\bar{x}$ =1.30). Thus, it can be inferred that the surveyed academics are highly active in publishing articles in learned journals.

Challenges faced by bottom-level academics in acquiring knowledge and publishing their research

Table 4: Factors challenging knowledge acquisition and research productivity

s/n	Challenges	SD	D	U	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
	Research productivity challenges (Weighted mean=3.45)							
1.	Insufficient research facilities	23 12.8%	24 13.4%	14 7.8%	47 26.3%	71 39.7%	3.66	1.44
2.	Time constraints	15 8.4%	17 9.5%	38 21.2%	57 31.8%	52 29.1%	3.64	1.23
3	Rejection of manuscripts by journals	16 8.9%	36 20.1%	34 19.0%	59 33.0%	34 19.0%	3.33	1.24
4.	Problem in locating the most appropriate information resources	20 11.2%	39 21.8%	36 20.1%	56 31.3%	28 15.6%	3.18	1.26
	Knowledge acquisition challenges (Weighted mean=3.26)							
1.	Time constraints	13 7.3%	23 12.8%	31 17.3%	65 36.3%	47 26.3%	3.61	1.21
2.	Knowledge hoarding by colleagues	23 12.8%	32 17.9%	46 25.7%	50 27.9%	28 15.6%	3.16	1.26
3.	Inability to organise knowledge from different several sources	30 16.8%	38 21.2%	38 21.2%	45 25.1%	28 15.6%	3.02	1.33

Table 4 provides an overview of the challenges encountered by the respondents in acquiring knowledge and conducting research publishing activities. The respondents reported facing significant challenges in these areas, as indicated by mean scores of $\bar{x}$ =3.26 and $\bar{x}$ =3.45, respectively. When examining the specific challenges related to research productivity, the respondents identified insufficient research facilities as the most significant obstacle, with a mean score of $\bar{x}$ =3.66. This was closely followed by time constraints, which received a mean score of $\bar{x}$ =3.64. The result suggests that the majority of respondents face more challenges in the area of research productivity, as indicated by the higher mean score of $\bar{x}$ =3.45

Testing of Research Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant influence of knowledge acquisition on research productivity of bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State

Table 5: Summary of Regression analysis showing the effect of knowledge acquisition on research productivity of bottom-level academics

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig. p
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	4.248	.892		4.761	.000
Knowledge acquisition	0.162	.033	.351	4.993	.000

a. Dependent variable: Research productivity

R^2 = .123, Adjusted R^2 =119, $F_{(1, 179)}$ =24.933, P < .05

Table 5 reveals that knowledge acquisition (β =.162 P < .05) significantly influenced research productivity of bottom-level academic. The table also shows a coefficient of correlation R = .351 and a R^2 of .123. This means that 12.3% of the variance in the dependent variable (research productivity) was accounted for by the predictor variable (knowledge acquisition). Although the model failed to explain 87.7% of the variation, meaning that there are other variables associated with research productivity that were not included in the model. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant effect of knowledge acquisition on the research productivity of bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State, is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

This study was carried out to investigate knowledge acquisition in relation to the research productivity of bottom-level academics in selected universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. This study reveals that majority of the respondents predominantly acquire knowledge for their research endeavours from journals, books, and databases, corroborating the findings of Kaba and Ramaiah (2018), and Okonoko, Odiachi, and Marcus (2021). They also utilise internet/online webpages, aligning with the findings of Ogunmodede and Oniovosa (2019) and Omah and Urhiewhu (2019). Findings further indicates that bottom-level academics acquire knowledge from colleagues in workshops, conferences, webinar, training, and symposiums, a finding that aligns with the study by Ogunmodede and Oniovosa (2019). Additionally, informal academic interactions with colleagues serve as another significant avenue for knowledge acquisition, providing opportunities for sharing and exchanging research ideas. This is supported by the findings of Okonoko, Odiachi, and Marcus (2021), who also found that academics acquire knowledge through interactions with colleagues and friends. The study further reveals that mentorship and communities of practice are significant avenues of knowledge acquisition for bottom-level academics, which is consistent with the findings of Merga & Mason (2021), and Asiedu, Abah, & Dei (2022).

The study reveals that the respondents acquire knowledge to a significant extent, as indicated by high mean scores. This is expected, as young academics need to continually acquire knowledge for their career growth and development. As suggested by Kaba and Ramaiah (2018), academic staff members, regardless of their institution, are consistently engaged in knowledge acquisition activities to conduct quality research.

Regarding research productivity, this study indicates that the respondents have a high publication rate in learned journals with the majority publishing more than 7 to 10 articles within the period of five years (2019-2023). This aligns with the findings of Bamigboye, Adenekan, and Olude (2018), as well as Simisaye (2018), who reported a high research output in terms of articles in learned journals. The respondents also claimed having ongoing research works that are nearing publication. However, their output in the form of conference papers and book chapters was found to be low.

Findings suggest that insufficient research facilities and time constraints are the major challenges to research productivity among majority of the respondents. The challenge of insufficient research facilities as identified in this study has been established by researchers (Aina, Abdulrahman, Olanipekun, & Olaoye, 2021; Igiri et al., 2021). The time constraints factor, as revealed in this study, is supported by several studies (Lessick, Perryman, Billman, Alpi, De Groote, & Babin, 2016). Time constraints and knowledge hoarding by colleagues are the major challenges faced by majority of the respondents in the process of acquiring knowledge. Time constraints could be occasioned by tight teaching schedules and other responsibilities. Knowledge hoarding practices can distort the process of knowledge acquisition as it prevents the free flow of information and insights that can lead to collective learning, innovation, and research productivity (Okonedo, Popoola, & Emmanuel, 2012; Silva de Garcia, Oliveira, & Brohman, 2022).

Lastly, knowledge acquisition was found to play a significant role in the research productivity of bottom-level academics in universities in Ogun State. This implies that acquiring knowledge (either through tacit or explicit knowledge sources) is an essential activity for the research productivity of bottom-level academics. This is in line with the research of Kaba and Ramaiah (2020) that acquiring knowledge is an essential activity for intellectual growth and innovation. This is to say acquiring knowledge useful for their research activities facilitates their productivity in terms of publications and other research outputs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the study recommends that:

1. The university management should ensure that the avenues for knowledge acquisition for research activities, as revealed in the study, are improved. This will further enhance the knowledge acquisition process among bottom-level academics.
2. The study revealed that bottom-level academics academics are performing well in terms of publishing articles in scholarly journals, unlike conference proceedings and book chapters, which were low. University management should encourage them to present papers at conferences. Of course, this would require the university management to provide financial support for junior academics to attend more conferences where their papers can be published.

3. Based on the research productivity challenges identified in this study, University management should: a) invest in enhancing the research facilities. b) offer time management workshops or training for bottom-level academics. These could provide strategies for effectively balancing research activities with other responsibilities. c) asign some of the burdensome administrative duties of academics to non- teaching staff to allow more time for academics to conduct research. d). providing grant writing assistance, offering statistical consulting, or establishing a mentorship program where less experienced academics can learn from more seasoned researchers.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that knowledge acquisition plays a pivotal role in shaping the research productivity of bottom-level academics. As individuals at the early stages of their academic careers, bottom-level academic acquire both explicit and tacit knowledge. They predominantly acquire knowledge from reading sources (explicit sources) such as journals, books, databases, and internet/ online webpages. Beside explicit sources, they acquire knowledge from mentors, communities of practice, workshops, conferences, seminars, symposium etc. They acquire knowledge to a high extent. They had published significantly in learned journals, while they had few publications in form of conference papers and chapters in books. Acquiring knowledge from both tacit and explicit sources by bottom-level academics was found to significantly impact on their research productivity which was evidently reflecting more on their articles in learned journal.

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