



## Challenges in Academic Writing and Research Among Lecturers in Osun State University, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Despite the benefits and emphasis on academic writing and research, academics still encounter many challenges. The purpose of this study was to investigate the persistent difficulties encountered by lecturers in writing and publishing and to suggest strategies for improvement.

**Methodology:** A questionnaire-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among members of academic staff of Osun State University across the campuses. Information was sought to ascertain if the respondents experienced difficulty with academic research and publishing, the nature of the difficulties and possible strategies to mitigate them.

**Results:** The study investigated 125 respondents aged 20 years and above, with the majority, 89 (71.2%), falling within the 40-59-year age range. The male-to-female ratio was 1:1.02. Senior lecturers were the highest in number, 33 (26.4%). One hundred and eight (86.4%) respondents reported having some challenges with writing, and in order of frequency, the most common difficulties experienced were poor staffing (87, 80.6%), internet instability (84, 77.8%), and cost of research and publishing (82, 75.9%). The least common reasons were lack of interest (52, 48.1%) and inability to generate research topics (50, 46.3%). The commonest reasons given for lack of time were teaching and family responsibilities in 48 (68.6%) and 46 (65.7%), respectively. Social engagement and many concurrent research projects were the least responsible in 22 (31.4%) and 8 (11.4%), respectively.

**Conclusion:** This study revealed that most lecturers in the reference university experienced difficulties in research/publishing. Reduction of administrative workload, provision of funding for research and employment of adequate staff members are some of the suggestions to mitigate this challenge.

**Keywords:** Lecturer, Academic Writing, Nigeria, Publishing challenges

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research can be referred to as systematic search for knowledge or use of existing knowledge in a new way to generate new methods and concepts of knowledge<sup>1</sup>. It finds answers to things unknown, fills gaps or adds to our knowledge, bringing a change of attitude<sup>1</sup>. The finding is usually communicated to fellow academics. Scientific research generates growth and progress to the society. Most research are conducted in research institutes and Universities by postgraduate students and members of faculties<sup>2</sup>. Academic writing is a means of communicating research findings and ideas in an academic context. It is a mental and cognitive activity and follows specific standards<sup>3</sup>. Academic writing and research are important obligations of academics. The 'publish or perish' aphorism is well known in the four walls of higher institutions. Publishing brings scholars and their institutions to limelight. It may also attract grants to both the individuals and the institutions. According to this view, publications are the most important factor that determine if an individual in academics will get employed, promoted or retained<sup>4,5</sup>.

Despite the benefits and emphasis placed on academic writing and research, there are still many factors impeding this activity among academics, causing low rate of research. Among these factors are problems of spoken and written English, where language is a challenge<sup>3</sup>. Also lack of time which have been implicated in many studies in higher institutions in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and United

States of America<sup>2,6,7</sup>. Lack of time is mostly as a result of heavy teaching and administrative workloads<sup>7,8</sup>.

Lack of funds was another factor highlighted by many authors, especially for low income African countries<sup>2,4,8</sup>. Fund is needed in many steps of research work such as ethical approval, analysis of specimen or data, conference fees and processing fees especially for open access high impact journals. Poor or absent mentoring was also implicated as one of the challenges among academics in King Khadi University, in Saudi Arabia<sup>2</sup>. Other reasons given for poor academic writing and research were lack of research networking among colleagues, waiting time for manuscript production, inadequate research training workshops, expectations of editors, lack of motivation by employer institutions, family issues, research effort, poor intrinsic motivation such as self-efficacy and effort<sup>2,6-9</sup>.

Several factors have been identified in previous studies conducted in Nigeria which includes insufficient funding, inadequate research infrastructure, time constraints, limited access to professional mentorship, bureaucratic procedures such as ethical approval, poor academic writing experience, prolonged peer review timelines, time constraints and poor writing experience<sup>10-12</sup>.

This study aims to identify the challenges of research faced by academics at Osun State University, and by so doing contribute to the existing body of literature on research challenges among university scholars

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among the lecturers in Osun State University between August and December 2023. The questionnaire was derived from review of relevant literature<sup>11,12</sup>. Face validity of the questionnaire were undertaken by the authors to ensure that the questions asked answered the set objective. The questionnaire was then piloted among lecturers with ambiguous questions rephrased or removed. These lecturers were not included in the study.

The required sample size was calculated using the Leslie Kish formula for estimating single proportions<sup>13</sup>. Using a reported prevalence of 95% for lecturers' interest in research<sup>12</sup>, a standard relative deviate of 1.96 and a precision of 5% were used. A 10% non-response rate was envisaged among study participants and correction for this was made. This gave a sample size of approximately 73. A final sample size of 81 was estimated for the study after correcting for possible non-responders.

A multistage sampling method was used to recruit consenting lecturers. In the first stage, three of the university's six colleges were selected by simple random sampling using the balloting method. The number of lecturers recruited from each selected college was then determined through proportionate allocation based on the size of its academic staff. Lecturers from the selected colleges were approached after registering for the university's compulsory biannual seminar for academic staff, held at the main campus in Osogbo. Each lecturer that consented to participate was given the self-administered questionnaire to complete and was included in the study. Those who submitted incomplete questionnaires were excluded. The questionnaire sought information on socio-demographic data, if they experienced difficulties with writing and publishing, and the kinds of difficulties experienced.. Suggestions of solutions to these difficulties were also sought from them. Likert-scale was applied in some instances with op-

tions of agree, not sure and disagree. Yes or no options were applied to presented reasons for lack of time.

Data obtained was entered, cleaned and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23. Independent variables were displayed in simple proportions using frequencies and percentages. Chi square test was used to establish statistical significance between dependent and independent variables. Level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

Ethical consideration included getting a written informed consent from each respondent prior to recruitment into the study. Confidentiality of all participants' information was maintained through anonymity on the questionnaires and ensuring that only the authors had access to the respondents' information.

## 3. RESULT

One hundred and twenty five lecturers submitted completely filled questionnaires.

### 3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Academic Profile

This included age, sex, status, number of years the respondents had been in the university since last promotion, and number of papers published within the last 3 years are shown in table 1.

Male to female ratio (M:F) was almost equal, 1:1.02. A larger percentage of the respondents were between 40 and 59 years of age, while only 1.6% were below 30 years. Forty respondents (32%) had been in academics for 16-20yrs. Senior Lecturers were the highest in number 33 (26.4%), with Lecturer II and I representing almost the same proportion, respectively 29 (23.2%) and 28 (22.4%). The professorial cadre (Reader and Professor) were the least in terms of population of lecturers that filled the questionnaires, 11 (8.8%) each. More than half of the respondents were promoted in less

**Table 1: Respondents' Socio-Demographics Characteristics and Academic Profile**

| Socio-Demographics Characteristics (n =125)               | Freq. (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Age (Years)</b>                                        |           |
| 20 -29                                                    | 2 (1.6)   |
| 30-39                                                     | 23 (18.4) |
| 40-49                                                     | 43 (34.4) |
| 50-59                                                     | 46 (36.8) |
| 60 and Above                                              | 11 (8.8)  |
| <b>Sex</b>                                                |           |
| Male                                                      | 62 (49.6) |
| Female                                                    | 63 (50.4) |
| <b>Number of Years in Academia</b>                        |           |
| Less than 5                                               | 24 (19.2) |
| 6 -10                                                     | 37 (29.6) |
| 11 – 15                                                   | 24 (19.2) |
| 16-20                                                     | 40 (32.0) |
| <b>Academic Rank</b>                                      |           |
| Assistant Lecturer                                        | 13 (10.4) |
| Lecturer II                                               | 29 (23.2) |
| Lecturer I                                                | 28 (22.4) |
| Senior Lecturer                                           | 33 (26.4) |
| Associate Professor                                       | 11 (8.8)  |
| Professor                                                 | 11 (8.8)  |
| <b>Number of Years Since Last Promotion</b>               |           |
| No Promotion Yet                                          | 41 (32.9) |
| Less than a Year                                          | 68 (54.4) |
| 1 -2                                                      | 13 (10.4) |
| 3 -4                                                      | 2 (1.6)   |
| 4 -5                                                      | 1 (0.8)   |
| <b>Number of Papers Published Within the Last 3 Years</b> |           |
| 1 - 5                                                     | 30 (24.0) |
| 6 - 10                                                    | 56 (44.8) |
| 11 – 15                                                   | 39 (31.2) |

**Table 2:** Experiences of Difficulty with Writing and Factors Responsible

|                                                                                                     | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Experience of Difficulty with Writing and Publishing Research Articles (n=125)</b>               |               |
| Yes                                                                                                 | 108 (86.4)    |
| No                                                                                                  | 17 (13.6)     |
| <b>Different Types of Difficulty Experienced in Writing and Publishing Research Article (n=108)</b> |               |
| <b>Internet Related Problems</b>                                                                    |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 84 (77.8)     |
| Not sure                                                                                            | 21 (19.4)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 3 (2.8)       |
| <b>Inability to Generate Good Research Topics</b>                                                   |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 50 (46.3)     |
| Not sure                                                                                            | 41 (38.0)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 17 (15.7)     |
| <b>Difficulty with Literature Search</b>                                                            |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 64 (59.3)     |
| Not sure                                                                                            | 30 (27.8)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 14 (13.0)     |
| <b>Difficulty with Data Collection</b>                                                              |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 67 (62.0)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 31 (28.7)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 10 (9.3)      |
| <b>Poor Research Skills</b>                                                                         |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 63 (58.3)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 34 (31.5)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 11 (10.2)     |
| <b>Article Rejection by Journal</b>                                                                 |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 66 (61.1)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 33 (30.6)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 9 (8.3)       |
| <b>Lack of Time</b>                                                                                 |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 70 (64.8)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 26 (24.1)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 12 (11.1)     |
| <b>Stringent Institutional Guidelines</b>                                                           |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 73 (67.6)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 30 (27.8)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 5 (4.6)       |
| <b>Lack of Interest</b>                                                                             |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 52 (48.1)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 35 (32.4)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 21 (19.4)     |
| <b>Cost of Research and Publishing</b>                                                              |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 82 (75.9)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 25 (23.1)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 1 (0.9)       |
| <b>Poor Staffing</b>                                                                                |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 87 (80.6)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 15 (13.9)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 6 (5.6)       |
| <b>Age Factor</b>                                                                                   |               |
| Agree                                                                                               | 64 (59.3)     |
| Not Sure                                                                                            | 31 (28.7)     |
| Disagree                                                                                            | 13 (12.0)     |

than a year as at the time of the study.

One hundred and eight respondents (86.4%) agreed to having some challenges with writing (Table 2). In order of frequency, the most common difficulties experienced in academic research were poor staffing 87 (80.6%), internet instability 84 (77.8%) and cost of research and publishing 82 (75.9%) while the least included lack of interest 52 (48.1%) and inability to generate research topic 50 (46.3%). Lack of time was responsible for difficulty in writing in 70 (64.8%) of the respondents (Table 2).

Table 3 below shows the relationship between publishing and socio-demographic characteristics.

A greater proportion of females, 59 (93.7%) experienced difficul-

**Table 4:** Reasons for Insufficient Time for Research

| n=70                                  | Frequency (%) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Family Responsibilities</b>        |               |
| Yes                                   | 46 (65.7)     |
| No                                    | 24 (34.3)     |
| <b>Administrative Workload</b>        |               |
| Yes                                   | 36 (51.4)     |
| No                                    | 34 (48.6)     |
| <b>Social Engagement</b>              |               |
| Yes                                   | 22 (31.4)     |
| No                                    | 48 (68.6)     |
| <b>Teaching Responsibility</b>        |               |
| Yes                                   | 48 (68.6)     |
| No                                    | 22 (31.4)     |
| <b>Clinical / Laboratory Workload</b> |               |
| Yes                                   | 37 (52.9)     |
| No                                    | 33 (47.1)     |
| <b>Many Concurrent Research Work</b>  |               |
| Yes                                   | 8 (11.4)      |
| No                                    | 62 (88.6)     |

ties compared to their male counterpart and this was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 5.683$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.017$ . The relationship of difficulty with writing and publishing with the number of years in academics was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 8.229$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.042$ . All the respondents who were less than 5 years and many of those who had been 16-20 years in academics admitted experiencing difficulties. Writing difficulty across all cadres, and age of the respondents was not statistically significant,  $p = 0.302$  and  $p = 0.674$  respectively.

Limited time was responsible for difficulty in 70 (64.8%) respondents. The reasons are displayed in Table 4, the most common being teaching and family responsibilities in 48 (68.6%) and 46 (65.7%) respectively. Social engagement and many concurrent research were the least responsible in 22 (31.4%) and 8 (11.4%) respectively.

As shown in Table 5, lecturers at ranks ranging from Lecturer II to senior lecturer and those aged 30–59 years had a higher number of publications. Senior lecturers had the highest number of publications among the academic ranks examined ( $\chi^2 = 28.571$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). The number of papers published within 3 years increased with the age of the lecturers and was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 25.661$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . Gender was not statistically significant.

Table 6 below shows suggested solutions to problems of writing and publishing by those who had difficulties. Reduction of administrative workload (97 respondents, 89.8%), employment of additional staff (94 respondents, 87%), and the provision of research funds (96 respondents, 88.9%) were the most frequently suggested solutions to tackle challenges in research. On the contrary, organizing workshops and seminars was the least suggested strategy, with 82 respondents (75.9%) in agreement. Overall, 82 or more respondents supported all the proposed strategies aimed at addressing the challenges of research in the University.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify challenges of academic writing and research among scholars in a tertiary institution. It showed that difficulty in writing academic papers was a very common experience as over eighty percent (80%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative. This is consistent with the view of previous authors<sup>3,7,9-12</sup>.

Academic writing is a daunting task which requires intellectual presentation of ideas with the aim of impacting the society with

**Table 3: Association Between Difficulty with Writing/Publishing a Research Article, Socio-Demographic Characteristics, and Academic Profile**

| Socio-Demographic Characteristics   | Experiencing Difficulty with Writing and Publishing Research Article Frequency (%) |           | Total (%)  | Statistics                                       |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | Yes                                                                                | No        |            |                                                  |
| <b>Sex</b>                          |                                                                                    |           |            | $\chi^2 = 5.683$<br>df = 1<br><b>p = 0.017</b>   |
| Male                                | 49 (79.0)                                                                          | 13 (21.0) | 62 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Female                              | 59 (93.7)                                                                          | 4 (6.3)   | 63 (100.0) |                                                  |
| <b>Number of Years in Academics</b> |                                                                                    |           |            | $\chi^2 = 8.229^*$<br>df = 3<br><b>p = 0.042</b> |
| Less than 5                         |                                                                                    |           |            |                                                  |
| 6 - 10                              | 24 (100.0)                                                                         | 0 (0.0)   | 24 (100.0) |                                                  |
| 11 – 15                             | 31 (83.8)                                                                          | 6 (16.2)  | 37 (100.0) |                                                  |
| 16-20                               | 19 (79.2)                                                                          | 5 (20.8)  | 24 (100.0) |                                                  |
|                                     | 34 (85.0)                                                                          | 6 (15.0)  | 40 (100.0) |                                                  |
| <b>Academic Rank</b>                |                                                                                    |           |            | $\chi^2 = 6.047^*$<br>df = 5<br>p = 0.302        |
| Assistant Lecturer                  | 9 (69.2)                                                                           | 4 (30.8)  | 13 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Lecturer II                         | 25 (86.2)                                                                          | 4 (13.8)  | 29 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Lecturer I                          | 24 (85.7)                                                                          | 4 (14.3)  | 28 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Senior Lecturer                     | 29 (87.9)                                                                          | 4 (12.1)  | 33 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Associate Professors                | 10 (90.9)                                                                          | 1 (9.1)   | 11 (100.0) |                                                  |
| Professor                           | 11 (100.0)                                                                         | 0 (0.0)   | 11 (100.0) |                                                  |
| <b>Age (Years)</b>                  |                                                                                    |           |            | $\chi^2 = 2.337^*$<br>df = 4<br>p = 0.674        |
| 20 -29                              | 2 (100.0)                                                                          | 0 (0.0)   | 2 (100.0)  |                                                  |
| 30-39                               | 19 (82.6)                                                                          | 4 (17.4)  | 23 (100.0) |                                                  |
| 40-49                               | 36 (83.7)                                                                          | 7 (16.3)  | 43 (100.0) |                                                  |
| 50-59                               | 42 (91.3)                                                                          | 4 (8.7)   | 46 (100.0) |                                                  |
| 60 and above                        | 9 (81.9)                                                                           | 2 (18.2)  | 11 (100.0) |                                                  |

\* Likelihood ratio

the knowledge being passed across.

This study also observed that, apart from individuals with less than 5 years teaching experience, those who had been in the system for 16 to 20 years also reported difficulties in research and this may translate to few number of publications. It may be attributed to a shift in conventional writing styles, which requires adaptation. Other possible factors include rustiness due to long periods of focusing on other career responsibilities with limited writing activity, as well as heavy teaching and administrative workloads. However, in a study from Afghanistan, those who had 16-20 years of teaching experience had higher number of national publications, followed by those with 11-15 years of experience<sup>14</sup>.

Various challenges encountered in order of descending frequency ranged from internet instability, cost of research and publishing, poor staffing, stringent institutional guidelines, insufficient time, difficulty with data collection, article rejection by journals, literature search, poor research skills, advancing age, lack of interest, inability to generate good research topics.

These reasons can be grouped under intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic (or individual) factors are taken as factors associated with individuals such as lack of interest, advancing age, poor research skills, inability to generate good topics, insufficient time. Extrinsic (institutional or national) factors would include factors such as internet instability, cost of research and publishing, poor staffing, stringent institutional guidelines, article rejection by journals.

Poor staffing appeared to be the highest challenge encountered in academic writing among the respondents of the institution of study, followed closely by internet instability and cost of research. Excessive workload resulting from inadequate staffing leaves a few academics burdened with extensive teaching responsibilities and additional administrative duties. This finding aligns with the result of previous studies<sup>6,7,10</sup>.

Internet instability was another major challenge. This can be related to a study in Nigeria that found that internet services was problematic<sup>15</sup>.

**Table 5: Association Between Number of Papers Published Since Past 3 Years and Academic Status, Sex and Age**

| Socio-Demographic Characteristics | Number of Papers Published Since ≤ 3Years ago Frequency (%) |           |           | Total (%)  | Statistics                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|                                   | 1 - 5                                                       | 6 - 10    | 11 – 15   |            |                                                    |
| <b>Academic Rank</b>              |                                                             |           |           |            | $\chi^2 = 28.571^*$<br>df = 10<br><b>p = 0.001</b> |
| Assistant Lecturer                | 7 (53.8)                                                    | 4 (30.8)  | 2 (15.4)  | 13 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Lecturer II                       | 12 (41.4)                                                   | 13 (44.8) | 4 (13.8)  | 29 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Lecturer I                        | 7 (25.0)                                                    | 14 (50.0) | 7 (25.0)  | 28 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Senior Lecturer                   | 3 (9.1)                                                     | 14 (42.4) | 16 (48.5) | 33 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Reader                            | 0 (0.0)                                                     | 7 (63.6)  | 4 (36.4)  | 11 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Professor                         | 1 (9.1)                                                     | 4 (36.4)  | 6 (54.5)  | 11 (100.0) |                                                    |
| <b>Sex</b>                        |                                                             |           |           |            | $\chi^2 = 3.582^*$<br>df = 2<br>p = 0.167          |
| Male                              | 12 (19.4)                                                   | 26 (41.9) | 24 (38.7) | 62 (100.0) |                                                    |
| Female                            | 18 (28.6)                                                   | 30 (47.6) | 15 (23.8) | 63 (100.0) |                                                    |
| <b>Age Group. (Years)</b>         |                                                             |           |           |            | $\chi^2 = 25.661^*$<br>df = 8<br><b>p = 0.001</b>  |
| 20 -29                            | 1 (50.0)                                                    | 1 (50.0)  | 0 (0.0)   | 2 (100.0)  |                                                    |
| 30-39                             | 12 (52.2)                                                   | 9 (39.1)  | 2 (8.7)   | 23 (100.0) |                                                    |
| 40-49                             | 12 (27.9)                                                   | 19 (44.2) | 12 (27.9) | 43 (100.0) |                                                    |
| 50-59                             | 5 (10.9)                                                    | 22 (47.8) | 19 (41.3) | 46 (100.0) |                                                    |
| 60 and Above                      | 0 (0.0)                                                     | 5 (45.5)  | 6 (54.5)  | 11 (100.0) |                                                    |



**Table 6: Respondents' Suggested Solution to Tackle the Difficulty with Writing and Publishing Research Article**

| n=108                                                  | Frequency (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Reduce Administrative Work</b>                      |               |
| Agree                                                  | 97 (89.8)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 9 (8.3)       |
| Disagree                                               | 2 (1.9)       |
| <b>Reduce Teaching Load</b>                            |               |
| Agree                                                  | 88 (81.5)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 19 (17.6)     |
| Disagree                                               | 1 (0.9)       |
| <b>Employ More Staff</b>                               |               |
| Agree                                                  | 94 (87.0)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 12 (11.1)     |
| Disagree                                               | 2 (1.9)       |
| <b>Organize Workshop and Seminar</b>                   |               |
| Agree                                                  | 82 (75.9)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 23 (21.3)     |
| Disagree                                               | 3 (2.8)       |
| <b>Having a Mentor</b>                                 |               |
| Agree                                                  | 87 (80.6)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 20 (18.5)     |
| Disagree                                               | 1 (0.9)       |
| <b>Provision of Research Funds</b>                     |               |
| Agree                                                  | 96 (88.9)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 10 (9.3)      |
| Disagree                                               | 2 (1.9)       |
| <b>Setting a Day Aside for Research work</b>           |               |
| Agree                                                  | 86 (79.6)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 17 (15.7)     |
| Disagree                                               | 5 (4.6)       |
| <b>Introduction to Research at Undergraduate Level</b> |               |
| Agree                                                  | 86 (79.6)     |
| Not Sure                                               | 19 (17.6)     |
| Disagree                                               | 3 (2.8)       |

Research funding is a major institutional factor that significantly contributes to the level of research productivity of academic staff in many institutions. This cuts across institutions within and outside Nigeria and has been reported by previous studies<sup>2,8,10,16,17</sup>. Fund is required at various stages in writing and publishing and includes: money spent on internet, ethical approval, funds that might be required for specimen transportation and analysis where applicable, transportation, incentives for the study participants, salary for research assistants, paying statisticians, and processing fee for publication especially for high impact open access journals. Other institutional factors include need for staff capacity building in form of development and training, promotion, awards, technical support and appropriate workload and so on, as reported previously by some studies<sup>2,6,7,10,11</sup>.

Another study further corroborates the above findings by reporting that that Nigerian lecturers lagged behind in terms of research output in comparison with their counterparts in developed countries due to limited research funding, inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic processes, lack of mentor-ship, and insufficient recognition and reward<sup>11</sup>.

In our study, lack of time was another obstacle reported. Inadequate time for research has been attributed to increased consumption of time by teaching, family responsibility, and administrative workload. An earlier study also reported lack of time and procrastination for submission involving undergraduates in academic writing<sup>6,17</sup>.

Article rejection by journals was one of the challenges discourag-

ing academic writing. Editors are very selective in the type of paper they accept for publication. They look out for papers that will be cited frequently, and positively influence their journals. The articles are expected to supply readers with information on new approaches or development that will improve their activities such as new treatment or diagnosis for disease conditions. The authors emphasized that the most frequent reasons for article rejection included lack of new knowledge, errors in methodology and data analysis and language<sup>9</sup>.

Inability to generate good research topics, difficulty with literature search and data collection, and poor research skills among the respondents were other challenges observed. Similar observations such as cognitive burden, inexperience in academic writing and scholarly publication, lack of confidence in one's ability and fear of failure, inability to generate good topics, finding relevant topics and institutional expectation had been reported<sup>18,19</sup>.

Solutions suggested by respondents included development of research skills through seminars and workshop, provision of research funds, reduced administrative workload, having research day, introduction to research at undergraduate level, increased staffing, reduced teaching load, and mentoring. A previous report recommended increasing funding for research, establishing mentorship programs, enhancing infrastructure, streamlining bureaucratic processes, and promoting transparency and integrity by some authors<sup>11</sup>. Other authors suggested establishing research programs, financial assistance, collaborative research, mentorship and even improving internet services<sup>3,12</sup>. Some suggestions put forward to reduce paper rejection by previous authors included, revising texts many times, where cover letter is required, it should be an opportunity for authors to emphasize the originality of their write up and what it hopes to offer<sup>9</sup>.

The female gender seemed to experience significant difficulty in writing and publishing academic papers when compared to their male counterpart ( $p=0.017$ ). This may be explained by increased family/domestic responsibilities compared to men. A study observed that women require resilience hard work and competitive spirit to advance in their career and more importantly, they need the support and understanding of their husbands at home to achieve significant professional growth<sup>20</sup>. Another study found that women who had spousal and parental support had more confidence to perform leadership roles and advance better in their career than those who did not<sup>21</sup>. There was however no association between gender and number of publications in the current study. A previous publication highlighted women having less publications than men<sup>22</sup>. One possible explanation why there is no difference in publication rate between males and females is that, many female academics probably develop effective time management and multitasking skills to balance their domestic and professional responsibilities. In addition, driven by a desire to succeed and overcome societal barriers, they may demonstrate high level of motivation. In a paper published in Norway, females scientists also had less publications compared to their male counterparts except in Medicine where the females in professorial cadre had higher publications than their male counterparts<sup>23</sup>.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, academics still face diverse challenges while striving to fulfil their noble task of academic research and writing. The major constraints are poor staffing, internet related problems, funding difficulties, overwhelming time consuming schedules, lack

of adequate research skill and mentoring. Strategies need to be put in place by academic institutions to mitigate these bottle necks and encourage more publications. This in turn will increase the visibility of institutions and increase access to the other benefits of academic writing and publishing.

#### Declaration of Conflict:

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this paper.

#### Data Availability:

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Zenodo repository at <https://zenodo.org/records/15836580> DOI 10.5281/zenodo.15836579

#### Authors' Contribution:

**Folami Emmanuel:** Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

**Yusuff Adebimpe:** Funding acquisition, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

**Folami Rosaline:** Data curation, Funding acquisition, Resources, Writing – review & editing

**Ubah Josephine:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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