



Influence of Work Environment on Research Productivity of Librarians in Public University Libraries, South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of work environment on the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria. Guided by three research questions and one hypothesis, the study adopted a survey research design. Data were collected from librarians using a structured questionnaire and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that research productivity among librarians was generally low across quantity, visibility, and quality, with limited publications in reputable journals and low presence in recognised indexing platforms. The work environment was also found to be largely unsupportive, with gaps in psychological, physical, and social conditions such as inadequate resources, lack of recognition, and weak collaborative culture. The regression analysis showed that the work environment significantly influenced research productivity, highlighting the critical role of institutional support. The study concludes that improving librarians' work environment is essential to enhance scholarly output and thus recommends better infrastructural facilities, recognition and incentives, research training, mentorship, and improved access to global indexing platforms to strengthen research contributions.

Keywords: Librarians, Public university libraries Research productivity, South-West Nigeria, Work environment

Introduction

Research is a systematic and structured process of inquiry that generates new knowledge, understanding, and insights to address societal challenges (Hiebert et al., 2022). In universities, research serves not only as a pathway to advancing knowledge but also as a basis for innovation, evidence-based policy, and institutional competitiveness. The ability of scholars to engage in research is often assessed through research productivity, which reflects the quantity and quality of scholarly outputs such as publications, conference presentations, grants, and collaborative projects (Adetayo, 2023). In Nigerian higher education system, research productivity has become a key benchmark for academic advancement and institutional reputation, influencing promotions, tenure decisions, and national rankings. Academic librarians, as integral members of the university community, are increasingly expected to contribute to scholarly knowledge through research and publications alongside their traditional service roles (Ifijeh et al., 2021). Librarians' research enhances evidence-based library practices, supports information literacy, and contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship. However, in Nigeria, librarians often face numerous challenges in sustaining research productivity, including inadequate funding, limited access to databases, lack of mentorship, and heavy service workloads (Iwu-James et al., 2021). These constraints limit the visibility of librarians in high-impact international journals and ultimately their contributions to the global knowledge economy (Okeji, 2018).

Among the factors influencing librarians' research output, work environment has emerged as a critical determinant. According to Anasi (2020), work environment encompasses the physical, psychological, and social conditions that shape employees' motivation, well-being, and performance. Hence, a conducive work environment, characterised by well-equipped offices, reliable internet connectivity, comfortable workspaces, supportive leadership, and collaborative networks can enable librarians to dedicate time and energy to meaningful research. Conversely, poor infrastructure, limited professional support, high workload pressures, and unsupportive organisational cultures can demotivate librarians and hinder sustained research engagement (Pimpong, 2023). Studies have shown that favourable physical work conditions, such as quiet and ergonomic workspaces, adequate research tools, and access to up-to-date databases, enhance concentration and scholarly output (Widyaningrum & Rachman, 2019). Psychological factors such as job autonomy, access to professional development, and a climate of trust further influence motivation and persistence in research activities (D'Lima et al., 2020). In addition, supportive social environments which is marked by collegial relationships, mentorship, collaboration, and transparent communication have been linked to higher research productivity among academic staff, including librarians (Grailey et al., 2021).

In the context of Nigeria, public university libraries in the South-West face unique challenges in providing an enabling work environment for librarians. Many institutions contend with inadequate

infrastructure, limited funding for research, bureaucratic constraints, competing and expanding service demands that reduce the time available for research. These conditions may explain persistent gaps in librarians' research performance compared to their counterparts in better-resourced institutions. Understanding how libraries' work environment influence research productivity of librarians is therefore essential for identifying actionable strategies that can strengthen research capacity, enhance institutional performance, and improve the overall quality of library and information services. This study is significant because it highlights the often-overlooked influence of workplace conditions on the research productivity of librarians in South-West Nigeria. The findings will provide evidence to guide university administrators and policymakers in creating enabling environments comprising improved infrastructure, mentorship, and supportive policies that enhance librarians' contributions to scholarship. By addressing these factors, the study will strengthen library services delivery, improve institutional research capacity, and advance the overall quality and competitiveness of Nigerian higher education.

Statement of the problem

Academic librarians in South-West Nigerian public universities are expected to contribute meaningfully to research. However, they continue to show low productivity. This problem stems not only from individual effort but also from systemic barriers within libraries' work environment. Many libraries lack adequate infrastructure, reliable internet, research tools, and supportive leadership. Institutional cultures often prioritize routine service delivery over scholarly contributions and provide little mentorship or incentives for research. As universities intensify demands for research output, librarians face increasing pressure without the necessary support, time, or professional development opportunities available to other academic staff. This situation leads to frustration, career stagnation, and reduced motivation, which in turn weakens both their professional standing and institutional research performance. Understanding how work environment factors shape librarians' research productivity is therefore critical to devising strategies that can strengthen scholarly engagement and enhance the overall quality of higher education in the region.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study is to:

- i. find out the level of research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria in the last three years;
- ii. examine the work environment of public university libraries in South-West Nigeria;
- iii. establish the relationship between work environment and research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the under listed questions:

- i. What is the level of research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria in the last three years?
- ii. How is the work environment of public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria like?

Research Hypothesis

The under listed null hypothesis was tested at 0.5 significant level:

H₀₁: Work environment has no significant influence on research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptually, research productivity refers to the capacity of scholars to generate verifiable knowledge that advances their discipline and contributes to societal development. Traditionally assessed by the volume of publications, research productivity has evolved to include the quality, impact, and relevance of research outputs, as well as engagement in collaboration, mentorship, and grant acquisition (Alamna & Sam, 2022). This broader understanding highlights that impactful scholarship extends beyond counting publications to influencing institutional growth and policy advancement. For academic librarians, research productivity is increasingly viewed as a core requirement for professional advancement alongside traditional roles in supporting teaching and learning (Iwu-James et al., 2021). The growing emphasis on “publish or perish” in higher education links research performance to career progression and institutional credibility (Amutuhaire, 2022). This expectation underscores the need for enabling conditions that allow librarians to balance service responsibilities with sustained scholarly engagement.

Enabling conditions in particular, the work environment which encompasses the physical, psychological, and social conditions under which library professionals render services and perform routine tasks and duties. This includes infrastructure such as internet access, reliable power supply, and research facilities, as well as leadership practices, institutional culture, and collegial support that shape motivation and productivity (Pimpong, 2023). A supportive work environment fosters creativity, persistence, and scholarly focus, while poor conditions often hinder research efforts. In the context of academic librarianship, the work environment plays a pivotal role in shaping research productivity. Access to adequate facilities, research databases, and conducive spaces enhances scholarly engagement, while supportive leadership, mentorship, and recognition encourage commitment to research (Adetayo., et al., 2024). Conversely, environments characterised by infrastructural deficits, heavy workloads, and limited institutional support restrict librarians’ ability to engage in meaningful research, thereby undermining their

contribution to institutional development. Understanding this dynamic is essential for designing policies and strategies that enable librarians to thrive as both service providers and knowledge creators.

Empirically, studies have shown that research productivity among academic librarians in Nigeria remains modest despite their critical role in knowledge creation. For instance, Iwu-James et al. (2023) found that most publications by Nigerian academic librarians are concentrated in local journals with limited global visibility, reflecting both infrastructural and institutional constraints. Similarly, access to research funding, supportive policies, and technological resources has been shown to improve productivity, as reported by Iwu-James et al. (2021). In addition, collaboration also plays a significant role as Iwu-James & Haliso (2023) as suggested. According to Babalola and Allahmagani (2024), collaborative research initiatives significantly enhance scholarly output. Nonetheless, these efforts are frequently constrained by weak institutional support structures and the absence of enabling research policies. Workload pressures further constrain librarians' ability to publish, as highlighted by Adegbaye et al. (2019), who linked heavy service demands with reduced research engagement. International evidence reinforces these findings. Hoffman et al. (2023) observed that structured mentoring, peer support, and research-friendly environments are key drivers of productivity in academic libraries.

The impact of work environment in shaping the research productivity of librarians cannot be overrated. In this regard, Adetayo et al. (2023) found that physical factors such as adequate lighting, ergonomic furniture, and quiet workspaces significantly enhance librarians' capacity to engage in research. In a related study, Adetayo et al. (2022) showed that a supportive psychosocial environment positively influences research productivity, although librarians' visibility in indexed databases such as Scopus and Web of Science remained low. Likewise, Aboagye et al. (2021) demonstrated that organisational and psychosocial characteristics of the work environment, including effective leadership and supportive management practices, strongly influence both the quality and quantity of academic publications. Equally, Onyeka-Udeh (2024) highlighted that poor infrastructure and unsatisfactory leadership in South-East Nigerian universities hinder academic staff performance, while improved facilities and supportive management enhance productivity. Reinforcing these findings, Kasimu et al. (2024) concluded that a conducive and supportive work environment is critical for boosting academic staff performance across Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Theoretically, the Person Environment Fit Theory (PEFT) provides a useful lens for understanding how the work environment influences the research productivity of librarians. The theory maintains that productivity is most likely to improve when there is harmony between the individual's skills and motivation and the supportive characteristics of the work environment in which they operate. In contrast, a mismatch such as high workloads, inadequate infrastructure, or lack of institutional support can create strain, reduce motivation, and hinder scholarly output (Caplan, 1987; Edwards & Cooper, 1990). The theory explains that

supportive physical and psychosocial environments, including adequate facilities, constructive leadership, and access to resources, encourage greater research engagement. It also emphasizes the importance of communication and social support in reducing stress and helping librarians align their efforts with institutional expectations. Therefore, the theory provides a strong foundation for this study by linking work environment conditions to variations in research productivity among academic librarians.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design to examine the influence of work environment on the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria. The choice of a survey was appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a relatively large and geographically dispersed population. The study population consisted of 319 librarians drawn from public universities across the six states in the South-West, Nigeria, using total enumeration techniques to include all the selected librarians in the study, thereby ensuring complete representation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic information, aspects of the work environment such as physical, psychological, and social factors, as well as indicators of research productivity including the quantity, quality, and visibility of publications. The questionnaire also included items that reflected relevant work conditions adapted from previous studies to ensure clarity and relevance.

The validity of the instrument was established through expert review and statistical tests. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and Average Variance Extracted confirmed good construct validity, while discriminant validity was also supported. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability, with all constructs exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Interestingly, the reliability index for the two scales, Work Environment and Research Productivity were 0.86 and 0.97 respectively. For this study, primary data collected over an eight-week period was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies summarised the respondents' profiles and key variables. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which work environment factors predicted the research productivity of the librarians. Ethical procedures, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed. The results are presented in the subsequent sub-section.

Results Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Librarians' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	155	55.6
	Female	124	44.4
Academic Qualification	PhD	54	19.4
	M.Phil	15	5.4
	Masters	131	47.0
	BSc	37	13.3
	HND	42	15.1
Age	20 to 29	28	10.0
	30 to 39	40	14.3
	40 to 49	128	45.9
	50 to 59	70	25.1
	60 to 69	13	4.7
Marital Status	Married	199	71.3
	Divorced	34	12.2
	Single	10	3.6
	Widowed	32	11.5
	Separated	4	1.4
Work Experience	1 to 10 years	89	31.9
	11 to 20 years	112	40.1
	21 to 30 years	57	20.4
	31 to 40 years	21	7.5
Religion	Christianity	195	69.9
	Islam	84	30.1
Rank	University Librarian	29	10.4
	Deputy University Librarian	35	12.5
	Principal Librarian	106	38.0
	Senior Librarian	76	27.2
	Librarian I	22	7.9
	Librarian II	11	3.9
Total		279	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows that most of the librarians in the study were male, making up 55.6 percent, while females accounted for 44.4 percent. A large proportion held MSc degrees at 47 percent, followed by 19.4 percent with PhDs. Most respondents were between 40 and 49 years old at 45.9 percent, while 25.1 percent were aged 50 to 59, and only 4.7 percent were 60 years and above. The majority were married at 71.3 percent, while only 3.6 percent were single. In terms of work experience, 40.1 percent had worked for 11 to 20 years, followed by 31.9 percent with 1 to 10 years of service, and just 7.5 percent had 31 to 40 years of experience. Many were in senior positions, with 38 percent as Principal Librarians and 27.2 percent as Senior Librarians, while 10.4 percent were University Librarians and 3.9 percent were Librarian II.

Research Question One: What is the level of research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria in the last three years?

Table 2: Level of Research Productivity of Librarians in the last 3 Years

S/N	Research publications (2021-2024)	≥7 VH (%)	5-6 H (%)	3-4 L (%)	1-2 VL (%)	\bar{x}	SD
Quantity (Mean = 1.91, SD= 0.89)							
1.	Total number of my peer review chapter in book you published in the last three years.	15 (5.4)	95 (34.1)	92 (33)	77 (27.6)	2.17	0.90
2.	Total number of my peer review journal article you published in the last three years.	23 (8.2)	62 (22.2)	119 (42.7)	75 (26.9)	2.12	0.90
3.	Total number of all types of peer reviewed publications (Conference papers, Book Chapters) you produced in the last three years).	31 (11.1)	45 (16.1)	89 (31.9)	114 (40.9)	1.97	1.01
4.	Total number of peer reviewed textbooks you published in the last three years.	10 (3.6)	33 (11.8)	92 (33)	144 (51.6)	1.67	0.82
5.	Total number of peer reviewed co-author textbooks you published in the last three years.	14 (5)	22 (7.9)	85 (30.5)	158 (56.6)	1.61	0.84
Visibility (Mean = 1.91, SD= 0.94)							
6.	How many of your journal articles published in the past three years is accessible on-line?	37 (13.3)	60 (21.5)	97 (34.8)	85 (30.5)	2.18	1.01
7.	How many of your publications in the last three years are on-line.	30 (10.8)	57 (20.4)	105 (37.6)	87 (31.2)	2.11	0.97
8.	How many of your co-authored textbook published in the past three years is accessible on-line?	13 (4.7)	51 (18.3)	89 (31.9)	126 (45.2)	1.82	0.89
9.	How many of your textbooks published in the past three years is accessible on-line?	26 (9.3)	32 (11.5)	70 (25.1)	151 (54.1)	1.76	0.99
10.	How many of your book chapters published in the past three years is accessible on-line?	8 (2.9)	40 (14.3)	87 (31.2)	144 (51.6)	1.68	0.82
Quality (Mean = 1.79, SD= 0.88)							
11.	Google Scholar	17 (6.1)	44 (15.8)	114 (40.9)	104 (37.3)	1.91	0.88
12.	SCOPUS	14 (5)	36 (12.9)	106 (38)	123 (44.1)	1.79	0.85
13.	Web of Science (WoS). Thomson Reuters.	9 (3.2)	42 (15.1)	93 (33.3)	135 (48.4)	1.73	0.83
14.	Others not listed	17 (6.1)	45 (16.1)	61 (21.9)	156 (55.9)	1.72	0.94
Average Overall Mean						1.87	0.90

Source: Field Survey, 2025 KEY: VH (≥7) =Very High, H (5-6) = High, L (3-4) =Low, VL (1-2) =Very Low ***Decision Rule if mean is 1 to 1.74=Very Low; 1.75 to 2.49 = Low; 2.50 to 3.24 =High; 3.25 to 4= Very High.

The analysis in Table 2 shows that research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria (2021–2024) was generally low across quantity, visibility, and quality. The overall mean score was 1.87, indicating low research productivity. For quantity, the mean score was 1.91. Most librarians published few journal articles or book chapters, and contributions to textbooks were particularly low, with mean scores of 1.67 and 1.61. Visibility was also low (mean = 1.91). While journal articles had

slightly better visibility (mean = 2.18), most works were not easily accessible online, especially book chapters and textbooks. Quality was the lowest (mean = 1.79), with limited presence in major indexing platforms. Google Scholar had the highest mean (1.91), while Science Direct and Web of Science had the lowest (1.72 and 1.73).

Research Question Two: How is the work environment of public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria like?

Table 3: Work Environment of Public Universities Libraries in South-West, Nigeria

S/N	Work environment	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean \bar{x}	SD
Psychological (Mean = 2.39, SD= 1.01)							
15.	I feel confident in my ability to perform my job effectively.	56 (20.1)	88 (31.5)	87 (31.2)	48 (17.2)	2.54	1.00
16.	I have opportunities to learn and grow professionally.	53 (19)	87 (31.2)	80 (28.7)	59 (21.1)	2.48	1.03
17.	I feel challenged and stimulated by my work.	50 (17.9)	60 (21.5)	131 (47)	38 (13.6)	2.44	0.94
18.	I feel recognized and appreciated for my contributions.	48 (17.2)	59 (21.1)	86 (30.8)	86 (30.8)	2.25	1.07
19.	I have a sense of control over my work and responsibilities.	46 (16.5)	51 (18.3)	106 (38)	76 (27.2)	2.24	1.03
Physical (Mean = 2.34, SD= 1.00)							
20.	The library is well-maintained and clean.	58 (20.8)	90 (32.3)	92 (33)	39 (14)	2.60	0.97
21.	The library provides a comfortable and safe working environment.	57 (20.4)	56 (20.1)	97 (34.8)	69 (24.7)	2.36	1.07
22.	I have access to adequate resources and equipment to perform my job effectively.	36 (12.9)	74 (26.5)	105 (37.6)	64 (22.9)	2.29	0.96
23.	The noise level in the library is appropriate for work.	43 (15.4)	61 (21.9)	96 (34.4)	79 (28.3)	2.24	1.03
24.	The library has a suitable temperature and lighting.	27 (9.7)	77 (27.6)	98 (35.1)	77 (27.6)	2.19	0.95
Social (Mean = 2.32, SD= 0.95)							
25.	I feel a sense of belonging and connection to my colleagues.	42 (15.1)	80 (28.7)	123 (44.1)	34 (12.2)	2.47	0.89
26.	I feel comfortable sharing my ideas and concerns with my colleagues.	36 (12.9)	66 (23.7)	130 (46.6)	47 (16.8)	2.33	0.90
27.	There is a supportive and collaborative atmosphere in the library.	36 (12.9)	70 (25.1)	112 (40.1)	61 (21.9)	2.29	0.95
28.	My colleagues are helpful and supportive of each other.	29 (10.4)	86 (30.8)	101 (36.2)	63 (22.6)	2.29	0.93
29.	There is a strong sense of teamwork and camaraderie in the library.	43 (15.4)	61 (21.9)	89 (31.9)	86 (30.8)	2.22	1.05
Average Overall Mean						2.35	0.99

Source: Field Survey 2025; Freq. = Frequency KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree ***Decision Rule if mean is 1 to 1.74 = Strongly Disagree; 1.75 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.50 to 3.24 =Agree; 3.25 to 4= Strongly Agree

The findings in Table 3 show that the work environment of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria is generally not supportive enough for optimal research productivity of librarians.

The three dimensions assessed: psychological, physical, and social recorded mean scores below the benchmark of 2.50, indicating dissatisfaction. However, psychologically, librarians reported moderate confidence in their job performance and some opportunities for growth, but felt less recognised and had limited autonomy in decision-making, pointing to gaps in motivation and professional support. The physical environment was also rated low, with cleanliness acknowledged but issues such as inadequate resources, noise, poor lighting, and uncomfortable temperatures affecting work efficiency. Similarly, the social environment showed weak teamwork, limited collegial support, and only moderate openness in idea-sharing, reflecting an unsatisfactory collaborative culture.

Hypothesis: Work Environment has no significant influence on research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West, Nigeria.

Table 4: Influence of Work environment on Research Productivity of Librarians

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F	ANOVA Sig
(Constant)	12.494	1.433		8.718	.000			
Physical	.337	.162	.161	2.082	.038	0.299	40.506 (3,275)	0.001
Psychological	.392	.167	.192	2.346	.020			
Social	.562	.170	.261	3.308	.001			

The result on the influence of work environment on the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria is presented in Table 4.7. The result revealed that work environment (*Adj. R*² = .299, *F*_(3,275) = 40.506, *p* < .05) had a significant joint influence on research productivity. This implies that work environment accounted for about 29.9% of the variation in the research productivity of librarians. The result further showed that physical work environment (β = .337, *t* (275) = 2.082, *p* < .05), psychological work environment (β = .392, *t* (275) = 2.346, *p* < .05), and social work environment (β = .562, *t* (275) = 3.308, *p* < .05) all had significant individual influences on research productivity. This indicates that the work environment, through its physical, psychological, and social components, significantly influenced the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and restated thus: Work environment significantly influenced the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries, South-West Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings based on research question one revealed that the research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria was generally low in terms of quantity, visibility, and quality. Most librarians published few journal articles, book chapters, and textbooks, and their works had

limited presence in reputable indexing databases. This finding is in line with the study of Iwu-James et al. (2023), which reported that most academic librarians in Nigeria publish mainly in local journals with limited global visibility. It also corroborates the observation of Adegbaye et al. (2019) that heavy workloads and limited institutional support reduce librarians' research engagement. In addition, the finding on the work environment showed that librarians were not satisfied with the psychological, physical, and social conditions of their workplaces. Although some felt moderately confident in their abilities and reported opportunities for growth, Librarians experienced low recognition, limited autonomy, poor infrastructural support, and weak collegial collaboration. These findings agree with the submission of Adetayo et al. (2023) and Aboagye et al. (2021) that supportive physical infrastructure and psychosocial conditions foster research productivity, while poor facilities and weak leadership hinder it.

Similarly, Onyeka-Udeh (2024) and Kasimu et al. (2024) emphasized that conducive work environments significantly enhance academic staff performance. In line with the hypothesis, the study confirmed that the work environment exerts a strong influence on librarians' research productivity. This outcome supports the assertion by Ogbomo and Otokakivie (2024) that access to resources, supportive leadership, and a collaborative culture are central to improving scholarly engagement among librarians. The findings also align with international evidence from Hoffman et al. (2023), which highlighted that mentorship, peer support, and research-friendly environments drive higher levels of productivity in academic libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that research productivity of librarians in public university libraries in South-West Nigeria is generally low, largely due to unsupportive work environments. Limited infrastructural resources, inadequate recognition, weak collaboration, and low visibility in reputable databases were also found to hinder scholarly contributions. Therefore, a more conducive physical, psychological, and social work environment is crucial for improving librarians' research output.

It is recommended that university management should improve library facilities by providing modern equipment, stable internet, and comfortable workspaces to support research. Policies that recognise and reward research efforts, such as incentives, grants, and reduced workload for active researchers, should be implemented. Training and mentorship programmes should be strengthened to build research capacity, while fostering teamwork and a collaborative culture among librarians. Finally, access to reputable indexing platforms and institutional support for publication fees should be enhanced to boost visibility and quality of research outputs.

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