

## CHAPTER 12

*Non Research Visibility of Academic Staff In Institutions of Higher Learning*

### **NON RESEARCH VISIBILITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, CHALLENGES, BENEFITS AND SOLUTIONS)**

**BY**

**MBAGWU F.N.**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANT SCIENCE & BIOTECHNOLOGY,**  
**FACULTY OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES,**  
**IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI.**  
e-mail: mbagwu101@yahoo.com.uk.

**&**

**MBAGWU I.F.**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE,**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION,**  
**IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI.**  
e-mail: ijeomambagwu101@gmail.com.

### **ABSTRACT**

Non-research visibility of academic staff in institutions of higher learning were investigated with a view to ascertaining the causes, consequences, challenges, benefits and solutions. Various literature materials were consulted and information therein were used for most of the studies. The paper defined research visibility as the ability and capability of a researcher to make high quality, influential and substantive contributions to the researcher's discipline which makes a great impact to the larger community especially for solving global problems. The outcome of the findings showed that most academic staff are not aware of academic social networking platforms such as research gate, linkedin, Blog, Googles scholar etc for dissemination of their research outcomes and as a result their works are not consulted, no feedback and collaboration, there is lack of online identity and impact metrics, with no academic reputation as some of the consequences. From the findings, some of the challenges include among others:- lack of computer literacy, high cost of publishing in high impact journals, no institutional e-mails, inability to track their impact metrics are factors responsible for non visibility. The outcome of the research indicated good opportunity for feedback, good collaboration among colleagues, increased research reputation, new job opportunities and job promotion as well as good career advancement as benefits of research visibility. Moreso, solutions to non research visibility include the use of social networking platforms, publishing on high impact journals, effective collaboration among

colleagues, engaging with public lectures, publishing on widely read journals as well as maintaining a steady online identify and scholarly impact metrics as solutions. The paper therefore concluded that academic staff should strive to use the academic social networking platforms for knowledge dissemination and recommended the need to reduce the cost implications of publishing in high impact journals and public awareness on the use of social networking platforms for sharing research finding among academic staff in institutions of higher learning.

**Keynote:** Academic staff, research, visibility, institutions, networking, platforms

## **INTRODUCTION**

Research is the systematic investigation of an issue with a view to establishing facts and reach a new conclusion, it is also a way of finding answers to unknown problems emerging from natural and artificial phenomena (Ochalla *et al* 2012). It also involves the collection, organization and analysis of information to broadly expand the knowledge and understanding on a particular issue (Keser 2013).

The main reason for research is to find solution to challenges or problems affecting humanity that stem from natural and artificial phenomena, confirm or contest or refute theories or hypotheses, develop scientific and professional practices, and develop creative, analytical and rational thinking for informed decision making (Ocholla *et al* 2012). Research is done to fulfil learning, domestic and career needs, to satisfy curiosity, for egoistic reasons such as recognition and visibility for career related rewards such as promotion, securing tenure or permanent appointment and for self development or growth among others.

Aceto (2005) opines that carer benefits of research include increased ability to attract highly qualified and motivated members of staff, having a greater advantage over competitions in gaining and maintaining research funds, better chances of rubbing shoulders with the very best as well as the opportunity to create a more stimulating working environment for all involved.

Dest-Herde (2008) defined research publications as books, book chapters, journal articles and/or conference publications that meet the definition of research and are characterised by substantial scholarly activities as

evidenced by the discussion of relevant literature, an awareness of the history and antecedents of the work described, a format that allows a reader to trace the sources of the work through citations and footnotes, originality, portrayed by not being a compilation of existing works, content that increases the stock of knowledge; a form that enables the dissemination of knowledge; and attempts to improve the quality of publications.

Research visibility is the ability and capability of a researcher to make high quality, influential and substantive contributions to the researcher's discipline which makes a great impact to the larger scholarly community especially for solving global problems.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

It is therefore a well known fact that today many research works are published by academics on daily basis but unfortunately many of these works have remained invisible due to some factors. Despite all the efforts by academics, many researchers do not have access to these research findings and again majority of the important research findings from academics are not reflected in the global scholarly articles due to one problem or the other.

Our preliminary observations attributed this situation to so many factors such as cost of article subscription fees, low quality of research works, lack of awareness of academic social network platforms as well as lack of access to other researcher's works.

This study therefore sought to investigate the causes, consequences, challenges, benefits and solutions of non research visibility among academics with a view to proffer solutions that will help academics to be more visible in-relation to the researches they do in their respective disciplines.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mbagwu and Oduagwu (2022) opined that good research leads to increase in reputation and success in academic work. According to them, good research can bring promotion, connection to other researchers, as well as scholarly discourse. Many best practices are central to one's career development. As opined by Dang (2017) presenting one's academic work at conferences and workshops thus making the research findings go a long way to be noticed, attending society meetings for exchange of ideas, publishing

one's work in widely read journals as well as engaging with the public via lectures and interactions are well known traditional methods of sharing research works and networking within a researcher's field of study. There is need to focus primarily on more recent activities in scholarly communications that expose scholars to take advantage of digital platforms and services to be recognized in their areas of specialization and actively monitor the impact of their research. According to Konzialis (2012), every researcher should build and maintain an online identity, make scholarly work accessible and track scholarly impact metrics so as to position and build a narrative of the researchers career and research progress.

Increased visibility through open-access journals facilitates international recognition which play active role for increased collaboration and incessant citations (Mbagwu and Oduagwn 2022).

An important way to disseminate research outcomes and gain reputation and visibility is through active engagement in research networking communities. These services enable one to create profiles, showcase one's research outputs, identify communities of interest as well as take active participation in discussions (Verzosa, 2007). This work therefore centre on causes, consequences, challenges, benefits and solutions to non-research visibility of academic staff in institutions of higher learning.

### **CAUSES OF NON RESEARCH VISIBILITY**

Some studies showed that many academic staff are not aware of the existing social networking platforms used to share their publications which in-turn facilitate consultations to their research findings. To disseminate your research outcomes and gain reputation and visibility, one have to be actively engaged in popular research networking communities. According to Verzosa (2007) these services enable one to create profiles, showcase one's research outputs, identify communities of interest as well as take active participation in discussions by posting and answering questions in one's network. It will also help to know the impact of one's activities in these networks such as downloads of publications, the view of one's profile and his level of activities when compared to others in the network.

Some examples of such social networking platforms as opined by Pittsburgh library system (2021) include:-

- (1) Goggle Scholar: This provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. With it, one can set up a profile page that list the person's publications and citation metrics. It calculates some basic bibliometric indications of impact such as h-index. It automatically updates citation metrics and list of publications (Pittsburgh, 2012).
- (2) Twitter: This is a popular tool for researchers to popularize their research outputs and build academic reputation. As opined by Ahmed (2019) it provides a decent profile picture and text, make use of a twitter search or goggle search to get topics on your field, set up search alerts to keep abreast of activities of interest. You have to tweet when your community is most active and use the tweet list to organize people you follow into groups.
- (3) Blog: This is another tool for making research contents more visible, with a blog post, you are creating contents that can be freely shared via social media. With a blog, you can become part of a network with whom you can share ideas and engage in discourse in your area of interest. This can therefore enhance your reputation and help gain valuable feedback on ideas and broaden your professional network.
- (4) Mendeley: This is an academic social network that enables one to share his/her research with others online. It provides the number of followers each member has, number of people followed by the member, number of readers for each publication as well as their geographical locations and status, ranking of publication outlets by readership (Helter *et al* 2015).
- (5) Linkedin: This is another social network for professionals where people can create a profile, connect with peers and network. Though not really designed for academics or researchers but it can list your publications and other research outputs, experiences, skills and current and past positions (Morcom, 2020). When used successfully, it has the potential to communicate your research to a corporate audience that is less likely to be active on other social media platforms.
- (6) Academia: This is a multidisciplinary academic networking site used for showcasing publications and provides basic statistics relating to their downloads. It bears a strong profile and curriculum vitae of researchers indicating their achievements and expertise. It shows a measure of impact such as profile views, document views and downloads unique visitors, external link to documents, geographic distribution of visitors and referrals.

- (7) Research Gate: This is a popular academic social network. It is multidisciplinary in scope. It can be used for sharing publications, connecting with colleagues, collaborators as well as job searches. It assigns scores to members and allows members to create detailed profile, upload files and monitors impact of their outputs. According to Dar-odey (2020) metrics available in research gate are publication counts and views full-text and dataset uploads, response to full-text request, citations, goggle referrals and number of followers. Despite the fact that the above social networking platforms are not new, many academics both young and old are not aware of their existence and how they can use them to disseminate their research outcomes for easy visibility and as a result, they remain invisible even when their research outputs are relevant to humanities and the society.
- (8) Moreso, academics knowingly or unknowingly publish their research works in predatory journals. Predatory journals also known as fraudulent, deceptive or pseudo journals are publications that claim to be legitimate scholarly journals but misrepresent their publishing ethics and practices, they operate as an open-access journal publishers and conference organizers. They produce hundreds of low-quality online journals to benefit from authors fees. Papers published in predatory journals are unlikely to be cited which will affect the impact of your research and such will stop metrics such as your h-index growing as fast as it could. They generally lack peer review processes. People publish on predatory journals due to social identity threat, pressure to publish as well as lack of awareness and lack of research proficiency. These journals can be identified by the following:- (i) the journal's scope of interest include unrelated subjects alongside legitimate topics. (ii) website contains spelling and gramatic errors (iii) they usually have distorted logos. (iv) they target authors, not readers i.e. their emphasis is on money not contents: When papers are published in such predatory journals, the chances of research visibility is limited both to the author and the research outputs.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF NON RESEARCH VISIBILITY**

- (1) When there is poor or lack of research visibility, the researcher will not be able to make a case that he/she have made high quality, influential

and substantive contribution to his/her discipline and the larger scholarly community that he/she have contributed to knowledge.

- (2) As people did not read or cite your work, it does not provide you with opportunity for feedback that will enable you to correct your mistakes and put your work in a position that will meet up with the international standard for future reference.
- (3) There will be complete lack of research collaboration for cross-fertilization of academic ideologies among researchers as there is no interaction among colleagues.
- (4) It leads to gross decrease in research reputation within and outside your field which can place the researcher in a bad state that can lead to academic stagnancy.
- (5) The fact that demonstrating impact is frequently a necessary condition for getting hired, promoted, tenured or for achieving other forms of career advancement, the researcher may not enjoy most of the above opportunities due to lack of visibility and thus may be frustrated academically.
- (6) Absence of visibility leads to lack of managing ones on-line identity, lack of making ones scholarly work accessible, inability to track ones impact metrics and as such the person cannot build his/her narrative academically which may lead to dormancy and frustration especially for future projects.
- (7) It may lead to no promotion in ones place of work as most institutions today based their promotion on high impact journals and other international indices and best practices for promotion.

### **CHALLENGES OF NON RESEARCH VISIBILITY**

Academic staff are confronted with numerous problems and challenges that make their research outcomes not visible. These challenges include among others:- lack of computer literacy: Available statistics by Daves (2013) showed that more than 55% of academic staff are not computer literate and as such they do not know how to disseminate their research findings online for public consumption of knowledge. Most of them feel ashamed to the extent, they do not want people to know that they are not computer literate hence they keep on working locally without international recognition.

- (1) Cost implication: It is a known fact that the subscription fees of high



impact journals are very costly that most of the academic staff cannot be able to bear the cost considering other things that need financial considerations. Again the actual take home of academics especially in Nigeria is too small and in the actual sense, it does not take them home and in a bit to make ends meet, they choose to go where they can meet the financial carrying capacity leading them to concentrate on local journals or other predatory journals that have little or no visibility online.

- (2) Lack of awareness of academic social networking platforms. Most of the academic staff are not conversant with the current social networking platforms such as ResearchGate, linkedin, Mendeley, Blog, Twitter, Academia, Google scholar etc. The fact that they are not aware of these social networking platforms, makes the outcome of their research findings invisible to the global society and this position them as if they are not academically viable and active in their respective disciplines.
- (3) Inability to access other people's work: Majority of the academic staff lack the ability to access other people's work due to many factors ranging from not being computer literate, not able to access information from social networking platforms, high cost of downloads, financial problems etc. as a result, they do not cross-fertilize academic ideologies necessary for interaction and consultations thus limiting their knowledge to contemplory issues especially research outcomes and findings both in their disciplines and outside their disciplines.
- (4) Inability to track their impact metrics: Due to their non-accessibility of other people's work, coupled with the fact that they do not publish their findings in a reputable journal with high impact factors, people do not consult their work online hence their works make no impact in a scholarly community and their impact metrics cannot be traced for consultancy.
- (5) In most cases, they cannot manage their online identity as most of them do not have registered institutional e-mails for easy communication and consultancy services that help to boast the image of an academic staff outside his/her place of work for global recognition.



### **BENEFITS OF RESEARCH VISIBILITY TO ACADEMIC STAFF**

1. Research visibility gives a good opportunity for feedback. As your work is published in a global journal with high impact factor, many people especially those in ones discipline consult and contact the author for both good and bad aspects of the work with a view to commending or condemning the work and by so doing the author use the assessment to improve himself/herself for better research.
2. Research visibility encourages good collaboration among colleagues but more importantly those on the same area of interest. They collaborate academically from time to time with a view to improving themselves through objective criticisms among them for superior academic arguments that give room for new knowledge.
3. Research visibility is a fertile ground for increased research reputation among colleagues. It creates a good opportunity to know who is who in his/her field of study. It strengthens ones impact metrics and online identity for more academic visibility in ones chosen career (Keser, 2013).
4. Research visibility creates new job opportunity to colleagues who are visibly recognized academically as people always look for the best globally. Most of them are hired for consultancy services, acquire tenure and grants that help to boost the image of the person as well as his place of work (Dang, 2015).
5. Research visibility leads to job promotion as most institutions base their promotion on papers published on high impact journals for their institutional visibility..
6. Research visibility leads to career advancement because as one is academically visible, he attracts grants, get tenured opportunity, and other consultancy services that can lead to his/her career advancement and recognition in his/her field (Konzialis, 2012).

### **SOLUTIONS TO NON-RESEARCH VISIBILITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF**

1. Ability of academic staff to recognise and use academic social networking platforms to share academic publications globally for dissemination of research findings, by so doing your research findings reach out for objective criticisms and feedback for corrections.

2. Publishing on high impact journals with high impact factors which will make the author to be recognized internationally.
3. Good collaboration with authors within and outside your area for objective criticisms for best international practices.
4. Engaging with public lectures for dissemination of knowledge both locally and internationally.
5. Publishing on widely read journals which people consult on daily basis in search of information and knowledge for career advancement (Heller, 2013).
6. Maintaining a steady online identity and scholarly impact metrics for proper and useful identification of a good scholar world-wide.
7. Avoid publishing in predatory journals that are not recognized internationally which their primarily objective is to make money to the disadvantage of the publishers.
8. Reducing publication/subscription fees so that academic staff can be able to pay and publish their research findings on high impact journals with affordable publication fees.

## **CONCLUSION**

Research visibility is an important tool for every academic staff in institutions of higher learning and as such every academic staff should strive to be visible so that the staff can get feedback, collaboration, research reputation, job opportunity, promotion and more importantly career advancement in his/her area of specialization

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

All academic staff should recognise and identify all academic social networking platforms with a view to sharing their publications in them, they should as well publish in widely read journals, and maintain online identity and track their scholarly impact metrics for increase visibility.

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