IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ON RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated the impact of knowledge management on research productivity in federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. Structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 400 lecturers randomly selected University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka from a population of 3,109 lecturers while adopting cross-sectional survey design for the study. Frequencies, percentage, mean, standard deviation, analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the quantitative data. Knowledge creation, storage, sharing and application were the knowledge management practices in the universities. Publishing in peer-reviewed journals and high impact journals, active participation in conferences and high citation of research work by other researchers were the research productivity indicators. Knowledge management practices had no significant effect ($p > 0.05$) on research productivity indicators while mean responses to knowledge management infrastructure did not differ significantly based on lecturers' ranks. Lack of incentives from the university has marred research productivity while grappling with weak knowledge management infrastructure, and challenges of funding, poor ICT, poor staff collaboration and heavy workload. Research incentives, strengthening ICT and knowledge management infrastructure will enhance knowledge management and research productivity in the universities.

Keywords: ICT, infrastructure, knowledge application, knowledge creation, research productivity indicators

Introduction

Universities are knowledge-driven institutions, whose core mandates include teaching, research, and community service, depend on the effective creation, storage, sharing, and application of knowledge (Singh et al., 2023). Knowledge management (KM) has therefore emerged as a strategic priority in higher education, particularly in developing countries where institutional research output significantly influences global ranking, funding opportunities, and academic reputation (Shujahat et al., 2021). Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that structured KM practices enhance organizational effectiveness by facilitating collaboration, innovation, and measurable performance outcomes (Shujahat et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2023). Within universities, these practices directly affect research productivity.

Research productivity is commonly assessed through peer-reviewed publications, citation impact, research grants, patents, and conference presentations. In the Nigerian higher education system, federal universities play a central role in national research development (Yusuf, 2022). However, empirical studies reveal persistent constraints such as inadequate funding, limited access to digital research databases, weak institutional repositories, and heavy teaching workloads that collectively hinder research productivity (Okonedo and Popoola, 2020). These structural challenges are closely connected to deficiencies in knowledge management systems.

Institutional repositories and research management systems represent critical components of KM infrastructure. Where repositories are well-managed and policy-supported, they increase the visibility, accessibility, and citation potential of scholarly outputs. However, studies indicate uneven development and operational challenges of institutional repositories across Nigerian universities, including technical limitations, insufficient training, and policy gaps (Ezema, 2024). Such deficiencies weaken knowledge storage and retrieval mechanisms, thereby constraining research dissemination and impact.

Despite growing interest in KM in higher education, limited multi-institutional studies have quantitatively assessed its direct impact on research productivity in federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. There is therefore a need for comprehensive empirical investigation integrating KM practices, infrastructural capacity, leadership support, and objective research output indicators. This study seeks to address this gap by assessing the impact of knowledge management on research productivity in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria. The findings are expected to inform university administrators, policymakers, and funding agencies seeking strategic investments that yield sustainable improvements in research productivity.

Research Objectives

The aim of the study is, through empirical data, evaluate the impact of knowledge management on research productivity in federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. determine the knowledge management practices (knowledge creation, storage, sharing, and application) in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria.
2. determine the research productivity indicators (publications, citations, grants, patents, and conference outputs) among academic staff in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria.
3. assess the influence of institutional knowledge management infrastructure (digital repositories, research databases, collaborative platforms, and ICT facilities) on research productivity in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria.
4. identify the challenges hindering effective knowledge management implementation and research productivity in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study:

1. What are the knowledge management practices (knowledge creation, storage, sharing, and application) in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria?
2. What are the research productivity indicators among academic staff in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria?
3. What are the institutional knowledge management infrastructures in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges hindering effective knowledge management implementation and research productivity in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for the study include:

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference between the mean effects of knowledge management practices and research productivity indicators among the lecturers.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturers of different ranks and the research productive indicators in the university.

$H0_3$: There is no significant difference between the ranks of lecturers and the challenges to knowledge management and research productivity in the university.

Methods

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. This approach is appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of data at a single point in time to examine relationships between knowledge management (KM) practices and research productivity. The target population comprised all the academic staff of the five federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. Two stage cluster sampling was adopted in sample selection. University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Federal University of Technology, Owerri were selected at the first stage while 5 faculties (3 from UNN and 2 from FUTO) were selected at the second stage. All the lecturers in the 5 selected faculties were included in the sample to obtain a sample size of 400 participants. The sample was post-stratified by academic ranks, namely, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor/Reader and Professor.

The instrument for data collection is a well-structured Knowledge Management and Research Productivity Survey Questionnaire (KMRPSQ) developed for the study. The questionnaire is divided into sections on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, Knowledge Management Practices (Creation, Storage, Sharing, Application), Research Productivity Indicators, KM Infrastructure, Organizational Culture and Leadership and Challenges to KM. Apart from the socio-demographic section, the other sections of the questionnaire were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree ("1") to strongly agree ("5"). The research instrument was subjected to face validity using three expects in the faculty of education while the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument was ascertained using 15 respondents from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, which implied the instrument was reliable for the study. The research questionnaires were distributed to the participants using face-to-face approach.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The research questions were analyzed using means and standard deviations while the hypotheses were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance. All the statistical tests of significance were conducted at 0.05 level of significance such that a p-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was adjudged significant while a p-value greater than 0.05 implied not significant, upholding the null hypothesis.

Results

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Distribution of the Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-Demographic Factors		Frequency	Percent
Age of respondents	Less than 30 years	21	5.3
	30-40 years	107	26.8
	41-50 years	119	29.7
	51-60 years	89	22.2
	More than 60 years	64	16.0
	Mean age (Std Dev.)	47.9years (13.1years)	
Gender	Male	293	73.2
	Female	107	26.8
Marital status	Single	87	21.7
	Married	254	63.5

	Divorced/Widowed	59	14.8
Faculty	Education	43	12.9
	Agriculture	35	10.5
	Social Sciences	71	21.3
	Arts	83	24.9
	Physical Sciences	68	20.4
	Engineering	33	10.0
Academic rank	Assistant lecturer	39	9.7
	Lecturer II	65	16.3
	Lecturer I	109	27.2
	Senior lecturer	98	24.5
	Reader/Associate Prof.	78	19.5
	Professor	11	2.8

The results of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented in Table 1. The table revealed that 61.8% of the participants were at most 50 years in age while 38.2% were more than 50 years, where the mean age of the respondents 47.9 years with standard deviation of 13.1 years. Majority of the respondents (73.2%) were male lecturers while only 26.8% were female lecturers. Similarly, most of the respondents (63.5%) were married while the remaining 36.5% were either single, divorced or widowed. Faculty of Arts had the highest representation (24.9%) in the sample, followed by the Faculty of Social Sciences (21.3%) while most of the participants belonged to the rank of Lecturer I, followed by the rank of Senior Lecturer.

Knowledge Management Practices

Table 2: Mean Responses to Knowledge Management Practices Among the Lecturers

Knowledge management practices	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Knowledge Creation			
My university encourages collaborative research among staff	3.07	0.52	Agree
There are regular seminars/workshops that promote knowledge generation	3.55	0.94	Agree
Interdisciplinary research is actively supported in my institution	2.74	0.47	Disagree
Knowledge Storage			
My university maintains a functional institutional repository	3.04	0.11	Agree
Research outputs are systematically archived for future access	2.59	1.03	Disagree
Digital databases are easily accessible to academic staff	3.11	0.21	Agree
Knowledge Sharing			
Academic staff frequently share research findings with colleagues	2.37	1.01	Disagree
There are formal platforms for sharing research knowledge (e.g., colloquia, conferences)	3.64	0.54	Agree
ICT tools (email, shared drives, portals) facilitate knowledge sharing	3.75	1.12	Agree
Knowledge Application			

Research findings are applied to improve teaching and community service	3.01	0.91	Agree
Knowledge generated in my department influences policy or practice	3.45	0.66	Agree
Staff are encouraged to utilize existing research in new projects	3.87	0.43	Agree
Overall mean	3.18	0.66	Agree

Table 2 presented the mean knowledge management practices in the universities. The respondents agreed that the knowledge creation practices included the university encouraging collaborative research among staff (mean = 3.07, SD = 0.52), and there are regular seminars/workshops that promote knowledge generation (mean = 3.55, SD = 0.94). However, the respondents disagreed that interdisciplinary research is actively supported in my institution (mean = 2.74, SD = 0.47). The knowledge storage practices included the university maintaining a functional institutional repository (mean = 3.04, SD = 0.11) and easily accessible digital database for the lecturers (mean = 3.11, SD = 0.21).

The respondents disagreed that research outputs are systematically archived for future access (mean = 2.59, SD = 1.03). On knowledge sharing, the respondents agreed that there are formal platforms for sharing research knowledge (mean = 3.64, SD = 0.54) and that ICT tools (like email, shared drives, portals) facilitate knowledge sharing (mean = 3.75, SD = 1.12). However, the respondents disagreed that academic staff frequently share research findings with colleagues (mean = 2.37, SD = 1.01). Concerning knowledge application, the respondents agreed that research findings are applied to improve teaching and community service (mean = 3.01, SD = 0.91), knowledge generated in their departments influence policy or practice (mean = 3.45, 0.66) and that staff are encouraged to utilize existing research in new projects (mean = 3.87, SD = 0.43). The overall mean of 3.18 with SD of 0.66 implied that the respondents agreed that knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge storage and knowledge application were the knowledge management practices in the university of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Research Productivity Indicators

Table 3: Mean Responses to Research Productivity Indicators Among Academic Staff

Research Productivity Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I publish regularly in peer-reviewed journals	3.31	0.45	Agree
I have published in high-impact journals in the last three years	3.16	0.88	Agree
I actively participate in academic conferences	3.91	0.99	Agree
I have secured research grants in the past five years	2.88	1.14	Disagree
My research work has received citations from other scholars	3.68	0.79	Agree
My university provides incentives for high research output	2.27	0.61	Disagree
Overall mean	3.20	0.81	Agree

The mean responses to research productivity indicators by the lecturers were summarized in Table 3. The table revealed that the respondents agreed that publishing regularly in peer-reviewed journals (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.45), have published in high-impact journals in the last three years (mean = 3.16, SD = 0.88), active participation in academic conferences (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.99), and research work receiving citations from other scholars (mean = 3.68, SD = 0.79) were the research productivity indicators.

Conversely, the respondents disagreed that securing research grants in the past five years (mean = 2.88, SD = 0.79) and university providing incentives for high research output (mean = 2.27, SD = 0.61) were not research output indicators in the university. The overall mean of 3.20 with SD of 0.81 implied that respondents agreed that publication, conferences, and citations were the research output indicators in the university while research grants and patents were not.

Institutional Knowledge Management Infrastructure

Table 4: Mean Responses to Institutional Knowledge Management Infrastructure for Academic Staff

Research Productivity Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
My university provides adequate internet facilities for research	2.91	1.01	Disagree
Access to online journals and databases is sufficient	2.87	0.92	Disagree
The institutional repository is user-friendly	2.89	1.12	Disagree
There are functional research management systems in place	2.71	0.82	Disagree
The university library provides adequate research support services	2.90	1.21	Disagree
ICT infrastructure positively influences my research productivity	2.97	1.00	Disagree
Overall mean	2.89	1.01	Disagree

Responses to institutional knowledge management infrastructure like digital repositories, research databases, collaborative platforms, and ICT facilities were summarized in table 4. The results showed that the respondents disagreed that the university provides adequate internet facilities for research (mean = 2.91, SD = 1.01), access to online journals and databases is sufficient (mean = 2.87, SD = 0.92), and university institutional repository is user-friendly (mean = 2.89, SD = 1.12). Also, the respondents disagreed that there are functional research management systems in place (mean = 2.71, SD = 0.82), university library provides adequate research support services (mean = 2.90, SD = 1.21), and the ICT infrastructure positively influences my research productivity (mean = 2.97, SD = 1.00). The overall mean of 2.89 and SD of 1.01 implied that the respondents disagreed that there is effective institutional knowledge management infrastructure.

Challenges to Effective Knowledge Management Practices and Research Productivity

Table 5: Mean Responses to Challenges to Effective Knowledge Management Practices and Research Productivity

Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Inadequate funding limits effective knowledge management	4.53	0.15	Agree
Poor ICT infrastructure hinders research productivity	3.99	0.32	Agree

Lack of collaboration among staff affects knowledge sharing	4.01	0.53	Agree
Bureaucratic processes delay research activities	3.77	0.67	Agree
Limited access to international research networks affects productivity	3.90	0.59	Agree
Heavy teaching workload reduces time for research	4.34	0.44	Agree
Overall mean	4.09	0.45	Agree

The summary of the challenges to effective knowledge management practices and research productivity in the university was presented in Table 5. The respondents agreed that the challenges included inadequate funding limits effective knowledge management (mean = 4.53, SD = 0.15), poor ICT infrastructure hindering research productivity (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.32), and lack of collaboration among staff (mean = 4.01, SD = 0.53). Other challenges included bureaucratic processes delay research activities (mean = 3.77, SD = 0.67), limited access to international research networks (mean = 3.90, SD = 0.59), and heavy teaching workload (mean = 4.34, SD = 0.44). The overall mean score of 4.09 with Sd of 0.45 implied that the respondents agreed to the challenges to effective knowledge management practices and research productivity in University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

$H0_1$: Knowledge management practices have no significant positive effect on research productivity among academic staff in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA for Research Productivity Indicators by Knowledge Management Practices Among the Lecturers

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	49.854	3	16.618	2.326	0.07	Not significant
Within Groups	2828.798	396	7.144			
Total	2878.652	399				

Table 6 presented the results of the ANOVA test of the effect of the different knowledge management practices on research productivity indicators among the lecturers in the university. The results showed that there is no significant difference ($F(3, 396) = 2.326$, $p = 0.07$) between the mean effects of knowledge management practices on research productivity indicators among the lecturers at the university. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

H_2: There is no significant difference between research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in Southeast Nigeria by rank.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA for Research Productivity of Universities Lecturers by Rank

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	79.337	5	15.867	2.022	0.075	Not significant
Within Groups	3091.811	394	7.847			

Total	3171.148	399

The results of the one-way ANOVA for the significant difference between the mean responses on the research productivity of the university lecturers based on their ranks were summarized in Table 7. The results showed that there is no significant difference ($F(5, 394) = 2.022$, $p = 0.075$) between the mean responses of lecturers of different ranks on the research productive indicators in the university. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

$H0_3$: There is no significant difference between challenges hindering effective knowledge management implementation and research productivity of lecturers by rank

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA for Challenges to Knowledge Management and Research Productivity by Rank of Lecturers

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	101.525	5	20.305	1.933	0.09	Not significant
Within Groups	4138.044	394	10.503			
Total	3171.148	399				

ANOVA results on the challenges to knowledge management and research productivity of the lecturers by rank, presented in Table 8, showed that there is no significant difference ($F(5, 394) = 1.933$, $p = 0.09$) between the mean responses of lecturers based on their ranks on the challenges to knowledge management and research productivity in the university. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

The study revealed that the respondents agreed that, as part of knowledge creation, the universities encourage collaborative research among staff and that there are regular seminars/workshops that promote knowledge generation. However, the respondents disagreed that interdisciplinary research was actively supported by institution. These implied that seminars and workshops were organized regularly by the university, which introduces innovative concepts, methods and ideas, fostering knowledge creation and enhancing research collaboration in the academic system. This is collaborated by Igbudu and Dede (2025) who asserted that knowledge creation brings about innovation, new concepts, approaches, methods, techniques, products, services and ideas that could be used for the benefit of the people and organizations. The relation between knowledge creation and creating new concepts by academics was supported by Madbouly et al. (2021) who pointed out in their study that knowledge creation in the university is a continuous search and generation of new knowledge through university workshops and seminars. Furthermore, universities in the Southeast not supporting interdisciplinary research could be due to severe funding shortages; rigid, discipline-centric, and siloed academic structures; and lack of collaborative incentives. Okafor et al. (2025) obtained similar results which pointed out that rigid academic frameworks, and limited funding impede collaboration while inadequate research infrastructure, fragmented data-sharing mechanisms, and policy inconsistencies further stifle interdisciplinary engagement in the Nigerian university system.

Knowledge storage and sharing are implicit components of knowledge management mechanism of the university system. Maintaining a functional institutional repository, having easily accessible digital databases for academic staff, formal platforms (like conferences) for sharing research knowledge, and ICT tools (like emails) are the knowledge storage and sharing mechanisms by the universities to enhance knowledge management. Similar results were obtained by Chibueze and Chukwu (2021) and Altowairqi and Alqahtani (2023), which revealed that knowledge repositories by the university system enhance knowledge storage and access such that academic staff could access them whenever and wherever they need to. However, the study revealed that the respondents disagreed that research outputs are systematically archived for future access in the universities and that academic staff frequently share research findings with colleagues. This points to the intention not to share or hoarding of knowledge which affects knowledge management and research productivity in the university system. This was emphasized in the studies by Bilginoğlu (2019), Mutage and Dewah (2021) and Ibrahim and Al-Shammari (2025).

Applying research findings to improve teaching and community service, using knowledge to influence policy or practice, and encouraging staff to utilize existing research in new projects were revealed to foster knowledge application in the university system in the Southeast. This important component of knowledge management implies leveraging intellectual assets of the academic staff from their research outputs to enhance community service, educational quality, decision-making, and administrative efficiency. This aligned with the findings of Abiodun and Osogwu (2025) on knowledge applications in federal universities in Nigeria's North Central region. Similar findings by Udo et al. (2024) highlighted the roles of university knowledge applications in community development and institutional effectiveness.

Research productivity indicators highlighted by the respondents involved publishing regularly in per-reviewed journals and journals with high impact, participating actively in academic conferences, and research works with citations from other scholars. However, the respondents argued that the university system does not provide incentives to encourage high research output and the challenges of insufficient grant access for research outputs, which limits research productivity and knowledge management in the system. The study further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean effects of knowledge management practices on research productivity indicators in the universities in the study area. This implied that with the right knowledge management practices, the lecturers in the universities will seamlessly publish in peer-review journals, high-impact journals, actively participate in academic conferences and be able to attract research grants. The study by Alzghoul and Aboalganam (2025) corroborates these findings. However, these depend on the strength of knowledge management infrastructure available in the universities. The respondents revealed that internet facilities are not adequate for research, there is insufficient access to online journals and databases, the institutional repository is not user-friendly, the research management system is not functional, inadequate research support services from the university library and weak ICT infrastructure. This was substantiated by the hypothesis outcome which showed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the different ranks of lectures on the weak knowledge management infrastructure in the universities. Hammad et al. (2022) obtained a mean score of 3.789 on the negative impacts of weak knowledge management infrastructure, corroborating the findings of the study.

The challenges to effective knowledge management practices and research productivity in the universities were identified to include poor research funding, inadequate ICT infrastructure, lack of collaboration among academic staff, institutional bureaucratic processes, limited of international research networks and heavy academic workloads. These challenges have direct negative impact on knowledge management and research productivity in the university system. The challenges of poor funding and poor ICT infrastructure were also pointed out in the study by Ike et al. (2019).

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is easy to conclude that knowledge creation, storage, sharing and application were important knowledge management practices in the universities in Southeast Nigeria. The prevalent research productivity indicators included publishing regularly in peer-reviewed and high impact journals, active participation in academic conferences and highly cited research works. The universities have no incentives to encourage high research productivity. There are weak institutional knowledge management infrastructures for academic staff, and inadequate funding, poor ICT infrastructure, lack of staff collaboration, bureaucracy, limited international research networks and high academic workloads were some of the challenges. Providing research incentives, strengthening ICT knowledge management infrastructure, as well as supporting collaborating among staff will enhance knowledge management and research productivity in the universities in Southeast Nigeria.

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