



Academics' Enthusiasm For Scholarly Research Engagement: A Conceptual Study On Selected Educational Institutions In Kalahandi

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ABSTRACT

Academics today face an array of challenges to their enthusiasm, including teaching students from diverse backgrounds with wavering levels of engagement with their studies. Furthermore, reform to their research tertiary education sector has seen increasingly measuring academic outcomes in respect of both teaching and research. Sometimes academics are feeling that a substantial part of their work is not recognized in a meaningful way, which may impact morale, intellectual time and autonomy. This limited recognition can result in academics' enthusiasm, especially towards teaching, waning. This could result in unfavorable outcomes, as an academic's lack of enthusiasm may have an adverse impact on student learning, may also affect their own wellbeing and, ultimately, be detrimental to the institution they work for.

This paper focused on various factors such as; Social, Individual, Institutional and National factors that influenced academics' enthusiasm to engage in research and scholarly endeavors. In-depth interviews, observation and document analysis were done. Factors responsible for academics' research enthusiasm, included are social, national, institutional and individual factors. In order to enhance every academic's research enthusiasm, institutions should establish mentorship programs in research and scholarly writing, set up rotational leadership rules in research clusters to give each member a chance to be the "first author," and launch more series of journals as viable avenues for academics to publish. Encourages and aware of the global, national and local contexts of education and technology to researchers. The researcher also suggests some way towards supporting 'better' research in various areas.

KEYWORDS

Academics' Enthusiasm, Academic Publishing, Attribution, Scholarly Research Engagement, Higher Education Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Globally, academicians face an array of challenges, in teaching, research, graduate supervision, leadership and service. While these tasks can be measured, academics also engage in multiple academic intricacies, including; students' counseling and guidance, continuous assessment, internship and job referrals. Faculty members are required to demonstrate their productivity in research as a way of accounting for their existence in these institutions. Since "research is presumed to rule the world", therefore, the expression "publish or perish", justifies research uptake, with its influence and tension that should be tattooed on every academic's mind. Despite the enormous plans institutions have developed to increase research uptake, some academics have managed to handle the pressure while others have not. These plans include favorable research policies, research funding, research teams that support diversity, periodic research workshops, and conference funds. Additionally, practically all teaching staff members have taken part in doctorate and masters student supervision, which ought to be a venue for academics to collaborate on publications as well as institutional journals that could serve as starting points for publishing. Other integral opportunities for academics to write publishable papers may include; materials from exciting lecture notes, module development and controversial debates in the literature. Paradoxically, although "research and publication" determine all critical personnel decisions in academia, the majority of academics' have not yearned for such opportunities through the demonstration of their research enthusiasm. Yet others have continued to engage in research and publication. Due to such imbalances, educational institutions will continue to face quality and productivity challenges resulting from academics' diminished motivation, lost loyalty, non-collegial relationship and lost institutional fabric, to the detriment of institutional "good standing".

OBJECTIVES

- To determine the factors contributing to a lack of enthusiasm about research activities among academic's.
- To suggest ways to help them, develop an interest in research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature in this paper took cognizance of the fact that various factors can potentially influence academics' enthusiasm in their pursuits. Therefore, the discussion embraced both aspects regarding academics' scholarly research engagements that have for long attracted the attention of the educators and researchers alike. Academics' enthusiasm and the lack of it to engage in research are explained by (*Boyer's; 1996*). Academic enthusiasm refers to behaviors that are related to learning and academic achievement (*Ibrahim et al., 2022*). According to Boyd, being a researcher demands a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar and be able to recognize that knowledge is acquired 1) through research 2) through synthesis 3) through practice and 4) through teaching (*Boyd, 2013*). The model acknowledges. (*Niles et al; 2020*) claim that "research rules the world" and that it is necessary for research to maintain its superior bearing. Nonetheless, the model explains the linkage between research, analyses of effective teaching and the need for prioritization among the many competing demands in academia. However, it did not address factors that influence academics' enthusiasm, prompting the adoption of the theory of "Self-determination" by (*Deci and Ryan; 1980*) in this study. Irrespective of pressure exerted on these academics

to engage in research and scholarly activities, therefore, the uptake of research can only be at will so long as they possess sufficient support, enjoy reasonable affiliation and gain sufficient competence, a sense of belonging and autonomy to decide whether or not they wish to engage in research and progress in their career. By implication, the only thing these academics need is an environment in which they can actively engage and shine in their research function (Cohan, 2019). The theory further explains that it's only when the urge to do research is from within (intrinsic) that these individuals can move out of their comfort zones to exploit their potential. Literature on factors that stimulate academics' enthusiasm to engage in research has remained controversial, and continues to cause tension, due to its momentous role in society. (Civera's, et al. 2020) research focused on the impact of academics' motivation and institutional quality, with no specific focus on the importance of research or how individuals are stimulated to do research. Yet, (Haven, et al.; 2019), found a whole range of factors such as; environment, leadership, facilities, funding and supportive research teams to be responsible for academic motivation for research uptake. Contrarily, though, (Heckman & Moktan.; 2020), found an interplay of factors, including the need for affiliation, institutional support, mentorship, clear job description and shared strategic direction. Whereas the paper's focus did not consider strategic direction as a precursor for increased research enthusiasm, (Demirbatur & Engur.; 2018), confirmed how lack of strategic objectives and awareness of institutional vision had in fact, affected academicians' abilities to prioritize research. Similarly, the findings by (Rice, et. Al., 2015; Siegel et. al. 2018 & Stoeber & Janssen, 2011), revealed that personal factors, such as perfectionism, self-inflation, self-pity, excessive competition and imposed vulnerability, had blocked academics' research uptake. Although this argument makes sense, one may never be able to publish with such rigidity. This finding is consistent with (Alperin et al., 2019), study which found that faculty's research output in public Universities were mostly affected by individual rigidity. Contributing to the same debate, (Haven, et al.; 2019), assert that, whereas the majority had the enthusiasm of research uptake, the obsession to publish perfect papers affected their research output. This therefore limited their opportunity to network with illustrious colleagues in the national and international space. Yet, although, research by (Sullivan, 2012; Kyvik & Aksnes, 2015), uphold that institutional factors had the most impact on academics' research output, (Moosa, 2018), found little proof of how, institutions affected individual enthusiasm for research uptake. More recently, research by (Demirbatur & Engur.; 2018), found that majority of academics resigned emotionally due to "tough to handle" superfluous barriers that often get in their way. Consequently, in order to avoid plunge and perish for lack of research output, (Osterloh & Frey, 2020), recommend multi-tasking as the way to go in order to cope up in such unprecedented academic environment. Although work overload is common place, research and publication are a "must do or die" if you are to survive and grow in academia.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach together with integrative synthesis and review summaries, were adopted to extricate academics' enthusiasm among a sample of 100 academic staffs of 5 institutions. Review summaries were useful in analyzing past empirical and theoretical literature which provided greater comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon of critical concern. In-depth interviews and observation became useful in gathering critical

information for this paper. Documents consulted included; research policies, internal and external research policy and evidence of grants disbursed from 5 institutions.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- **Social Factors:**

Different social factors significantly influence the academic enthusiasm. Researchers spend time identifying the social factors affecting academic performance. These social influences have much impact on the academic achievement of the academics. But the precise nature of this influence varies from body to body and their experiences. Different aspects of an academic's social life affect academic enthusiasm towards research. These include communication, family stress and status, self-esteem, and social support. These aspects of social life, as well as the emotional condition that they may induce, have an impact on academic success. This is consistent with the results of (Eslami et al. 2016), who found that academic enthusiasm is influenced by social factors. Social factors, includes family, classmate, relatives and friends. Attracting the participation of supportive families and volunteers can be effective in solving the problems. The role of family support is present in the form of advice or guidance, motivation, high education-related values, or expectations of students' academic success and persistence (Boveda, 2017; Gofen, 2009; Guillory and Wolverson, 2008; O'Shea, 2016; Roksa and Kinsley, 2018; Storlie et al., 2014; Strom and Savage, 2014). Social support from family and friends has a substantial impact on the emotional, social and academic performance of academic's. A lack of social support can lead to mental health problems, including depressive symptoms among them. The impact of academic stress, defined as frustrations, conflicts, pressures, changes and self-imposition on psychological well-being, can be influenced by the level of perceived social support from friends (Glozah, 2013). Social support factors also have a major impact on access and equity in HE, as we reviewed previously (Wanti et al., 2022), including factors such as teachers (or lecturers), mentoring programmes, family support (including extended family) and peers.

- **Individual Factors:**

Numerous individual characteristics of academics are found to have considerable effects on academics' research engagement and productivity (Bland et al., 2005; Kwiek, 2016; Teodorescu, 2000). Such factors are related to demographic, professional, psychological, and attitudinal characteristics. It includes age, gender, academic rank, degree, discipline, time spent on research, collaboration, English proficiency, research orientation, motivation, and self-efficacy. Moreover, only key factors which are commonly discussed in the literature are considered in this review.

Age is one of the noteworthy individual-level factors which has received considerable attention in the literature on factors influencing research engagement and productivity. Many studies have found a curvilinear (i.e. inverted U-shaped) relationship between age and research productivity (Gingras et al., 2008; Kyvik & Olsen, 2008). Some studies found a significant relationship between middle age (approximately 35-55 years) and higher research engagement and productivity (Baldwin et al., 2005; Jung, 2014); while others revealed that older age is correlated with more research output (Kwiek, 2018; Vuong et al., 2017).

Gender is another variable commonly included in studies of academics' research engagement and productivity. Although findings from previous research are sometimes contradictory, most seem to suggest that male academics are more research-productive than their female counterparts (Jung, 2012; Kwiek, 2018; Stack, 2004). Despite this, there are also studies which have reported little or no relationship between gender and research productivity (Chen et al., 2006; Ramsden, 1994; Teodorescu, 2000).

Academic rank is also an important factor in research engagement and productivity. Many research studies have found a positive correlation between research productivity and academic rank. That is, academics with higher positions such as full professors are found to be more research-productive than their lower-ranked colleagues (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Majdob, 2017; Hassan et al., 2008).

Academic degrees have also been found to have effects on academics' research productivity and engagement. Faculty members with advanced academic degrees, particularly a PhD degree, are more research productive than those without a PhD (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Majdob, 2017; Smeby & Try, 2005).

Academic discipline is another factor which has also received considerable attention in research in this area. Findings from previous studies tend to suggest that academics in 'hard' disciplines (e.g. natural sciences, engineering, and medical science) publish more than their peers in 'soft' disciplines (e.g., humanities, social sciences, and business) (Jung, 2012; Kyvik, 2003; Shin & Cummings, 2010).

Time spent on research is another significant factor predicting research productivity of academics. (Shin and Cummings', 2010) study of academic publishing across several disciplines in higher education institutions in South Korea showed that time spent on research is positively correlated with research productivity.

Related to international research collaboration, the issue of proficiency in a foreign language, particularly the *English language*, cannot be overlooked, given that English has gained its high status as a language of science (Ammon, 2001; Kaplan, 2001) and a language for research and publications (Flowerdew, 2012, 2015; Lillis & Curry, 2010). High proficiency in English is a major contributing factor to research productivity and research involvement of academics from non-English-speaking countries.

Motivation, together with desire for recognition, is another crucial factor that has frequently been shown to influence academics' research engagement and productivity. Older studies like (Bland et al.; 2005) and (Chen et al.; 2006) confirmed the impact of motivation on research productivity.

Another individual psychological characteristic which has received great attention in the literature is research *self-efficacy*. Research self-efficacy refers to "one's confidence in being able to successfully complete various aspects of the research process" (Kahn & Scott 1997, p. 41).

In summary, academics' research engagement and their research productivity are influenced by a number of individual characteristics, including age, gender, academic rank, degree, discipline, time spent on research, collaboration, English proficiency, research orientation, motivation, and self-efficacy.

- **Institutional factors:**

Institutional characteristics also play a critical role in influencing academics' research performance. Key institutional factors which are commonly investigated in previous research include, among others, availability of resources and funds, institutional orientation, institutional research policies, institutional culture, reward and incentive systems, leadership styles, and availability of leading researchers (*Bland et al., 2005, 2006; Dundar & Lewis, 1998; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014; Tien, 2016*). The researchers identified several institutional characteristics associated with enhanced research productivity, including larger department or faculty size, more full professors and 'star' (i.e. highly productive) faculty members, more resources and infrastructure support, larger numbers of graduate students, and privately controlled institutions.

In the context of (Vietnam, *Nguyen's; 2015*) mixed-methods study that examined factors influencing research productivity of Vietnamese academics found that research productivity was influenced by many key institutional factors. These included institutional research policies, teaching loads, availability of research infrastructure and funding, access to scholarly resources and collaborative research groups, involvement in postgraduate teaching and supervision, and availability of professional meetings such as research seminars and workshops. Similar findings were also reported in a study by (*Tien; 2016*) who explored factors that impacted Vietnamese academics' research capacity.

Other studies of this nature have also highlighted the relationship between institutional characteristics and academics' research performance. (*Shin and Cummings'; 2010*) study of the determinants of academic publishing in South Korea indicated that faculty publications were influenced by three key institutional factors: supportive attitude of administrative staff, institutional goal orientation and institutional mission. (*Borg and Alshumaimeri; 2012*), in their study of university educators' research engagement in Saudi Arabia, also found that the participants' level of research engagement was considerably determined by the actual institutional support they received for research activities. The impact of various institutional factors on academics' research engagement and productivity was also reported in studies in many other higher education contexts.

Overall, research seems to suggest that faculty research productivity and their research engagement are influenced, in one way or another, by various institutional factors. Such factors may include institutional orientation and research policies, research infrastructure and funding, research rewards and incentives, research culture, opportunities for collaboration and professional development, and effective leadership, among others.

- **National factors:**

Besides the individual, institutional characteristics discussed above, other factors such as national policies, politics, culture, academic freedom, government investment, and support from industries, development partners and international donor agencies also play fundamental roles in influencing research performance of academics and institutions. Although the literature on faculty research engagement and productivity tends to focus more on individual and institutional factors (*Bland et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2006; Quimbo & Salabu, 2014*), national-level characteristics can in fact have powerful effects on academics and institutions' research productivity, particularly

in the context of developing and emerging economies (*Negash et al., 2019; Pornsalnuwat, 2014; Sam & Dahles, 2017; Tien, 2016*).

In (Vietnam, *Tien; 2016*), employing an interpretive case study approach, examined research engagement of academics in three Vietnamese higher education institutions (HEIs). He found that, in addition to factors at individual and institutional levels, factors at a societal or national level also exerted considerable influence on Vietnamese HEIs' research capacity and academics' research engagement. Three national-level factors that were identified in the study included socioeconomic, socio-cultural and political factors. The author explained that Vietnam's socioeconomic growth and socio-cultural factors including cultures of respect and recognition of academics, culture of achievement, and academic freedom all have considerably impacted the research capacity and productivity of Vietnamese HEIs and their academics.

Overall, this review has demonstrated that academics' research engagement and productivity are influenced by a number of factors which can be classified into four levels: individual, institutional, national and social as represented in Figure 1.

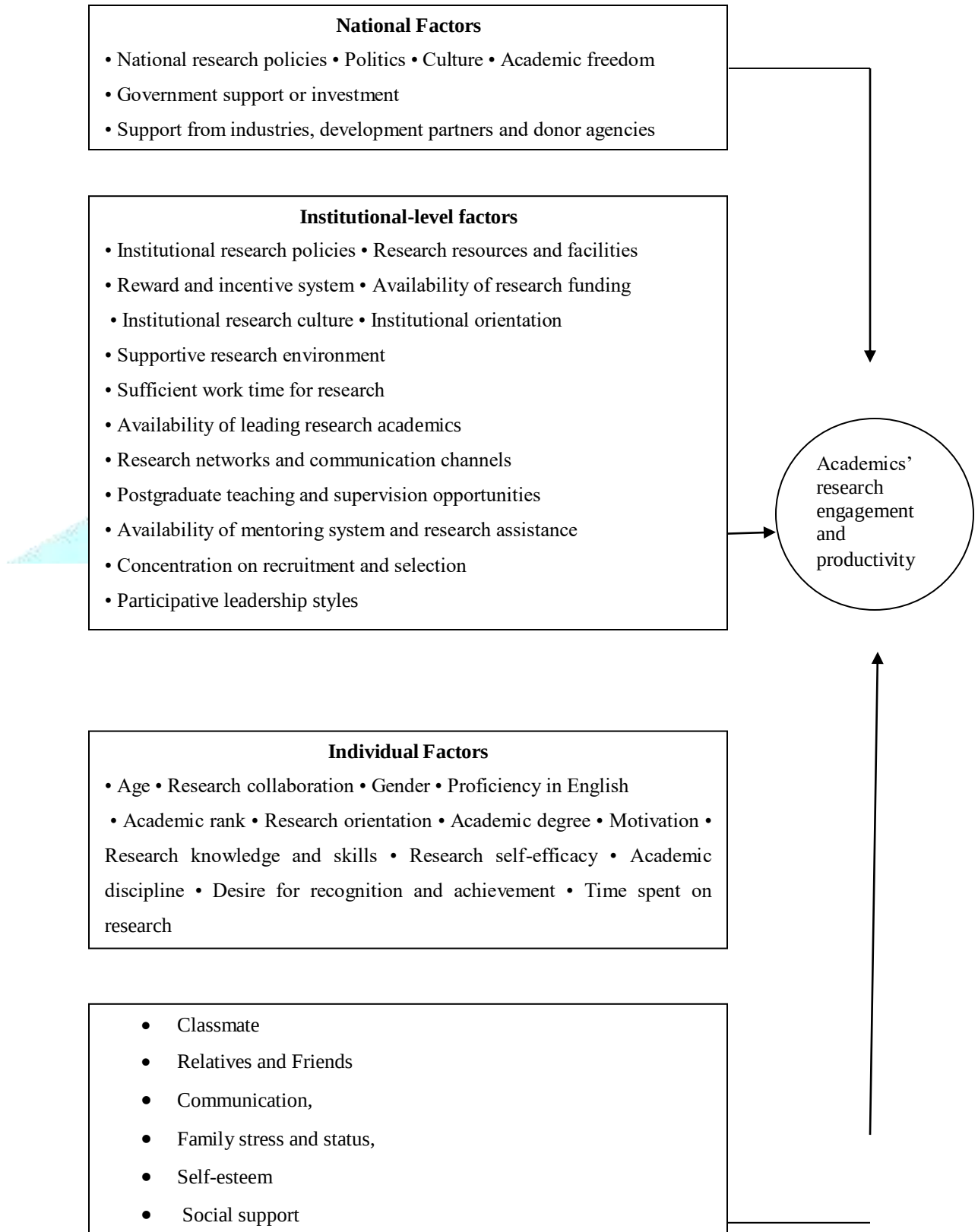


Figure 1: Framework of factors influencing academics' research engagement and productivity.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

First and foremost, academics in the 5 institutions (Kalahandi university, OUAT, Government Engineering College, Government Medical College and Government Polytechnic) had encountered similar challenges regarding research and publication, such as; limited research funding, limited time for research, multiple mandates of teaching, supervision, and service, etc. OUAT staff stood higher chances of undertaking graduate supervision, due to its differentiated compartment of being a purely graduate higher education institution, which inevitably increased both teaching and supervision workload, graduate students supervised far exceeds, the number required for promotional procedures for all the institutions. Kalahandi University on the other hand, being the oldest University after conversion from government autonomous college had excelled in research and publication, especially in the science, arts and commerce related courses, and a lot of on-going research endeavors, and also the recent Government “Research and Innovations’ Fund”. Government polytechnic faced lesser challenges because of the traditional system of operation with multiple study arrangements; e.g. day, evening, weekend and distance learning, as well as regional study centre. Government Medical College still suffered the spill-over and merger effects that combined Technical, Special Needs. Although research is an important aspect of medical training and plays a vital role in the advancement of evidence-based medicine. However, little is known about medical staffs’ attitudes towards research. The researcher here found that, majority of staff remained in their “comfort zones” where research and publication never used to be mandatory.

Our first and most important research question related to the factors that influenced academics enthusiasm for scholarly research engagement. Responses, collected from the above said institutions themes were organized into four categories: social, individual, institutional and national factors. It was revealed that majority got held back due to too much politicization, commercialization and bias in the review and publication processes. Excessive teaching load or work-load had become mayhem in all the five institutions, and had not only affected academics’ research enthusiasm but their personal health as well. In fact, there was an overwhelming consensus, even amongst those that had managed to pull through in research and publication. Good research administrative practices and work environment were found to stimulant research uptake. Therefore, academics that enjoyed good leadership, leaders of integrity and humanity that provided good research environment published more because they were encouraged.

Further studies should be conducted to find out the reasons why some academics consider research useless, and steps should be taken to change these attitudes. Factors associated with decreased participation in research by those academic who demonstrate a positive level of interest should also be explored.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of higher educational institutions worldwide stems from societal expectations for knowledge creation, distillation, management and dissemination, so as to provide answers to the multitude of unanswered questions, because they are the main drivers of research, and if research fades away, knowledge production will be seriously affected. Because of this, academics’ research vigor and enthusiasm must be heightened, so as to ignite the motivation for research rendezvous. Notably, research ambitions are dependent on a lot of support to move forward such as; a conducive work environment and research administration. Holidays are some of the avenues for

academics to concentrate on writing and publishing. Whereas, with increasing job demands, Sabbatical leaves, in higher education of odisha has diminished. So educational institutions should reinvigorate and harness sabbatical programs in order to preclude academics from perishing, also create awareness among academics to view research as a need and not a duty. There is often a misconception that all academicians are capable of conducting research, writing, and publishing, yet the process has continued to frustrate many. Therefore, these workshops should take into consideration the different categories of staff and the levels of their research acumen, so as differentiated interaction approaches to research are done. This is because writing for publication is an intricate process that requires several ingredients, but also the numerous complex factors that affect academics' ability, including, social, environmental, institutional, and personal factors. Although research by its nature, is a challenging task that requires in depth knowledge of the subject matter, planning, creativity, criticality, perseverance, and motivation still institutions should create their own ways to recognize staff members' contributions which undermines academics' honesty and enthusiasm. Finally, despite multiple challenges encountered by individuals at various levels, society expects from educational institutions to be the reservoirs of knowledge in order to produce solutions for recurrent and emergent problems.

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