RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES AND ACADEMIC STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

Ako Sunday Ochege, PhD

Department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi

akoochege@gmail.com

07036017908

Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between school support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was adopted for the study and the area of the study was Benue State. The population consisted 2,734 academic staff from 4 public universities in Benue State Nigeria while a sample of 137 academic staff representing 5% of the population from 4 public universities in Benue State Nigeria was used for the study. Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. The instruments used for data collection were two sets of questionnaires titled "School Support Services Questionnaire (SSSQ)" and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ). A trial-test was conducted and the reliability of the instruments were ascertained using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.84 and 0.82 respectively. A total number of 137 copies of the questionnaire were taken to the field and administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 3 research assistants. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to answer the research questions and also to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that school support services have significant strong positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. It was recommended among others that university management should provide adequate ICT facilities by upgrading internet bandwidth, supplying modern computers and training staff on digital tools. This should be implemented through sustained funding and periodic ICT capacity-building workshops.

Keywords: Relationship, School Support Services, ICT, Research Support, Academic Staff Job Performance

Introduction

Academic staff job performance is considered the ability of university lecturers to effectively teach, conduct research and engage in community service to promote institutional

growth and societal development. However, poor or weak staff performance is often observed in areas such as low research productivity, inadequate instructional delivery, poor student supervision and limited community engagement, largely linked to weak school support services such as inadequate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, insufficient research funding and poor administrative support. In some advanced countries, there have been observed cases of reduced research output and poor student mentoring due to limited institutional support (UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, in Nigeria and particularly in Benue State, challenges such as inability of academic staff to conduct research as well as prepare lecture materials for students are observed by the researcher. These shortcomings highlight that strengthening school support services could enhance academic staff job performance in public universities.

A university is a higher-education institution committed to teaching, research and community service, with the goal of developing skilled human resources and supporting societal progress (Yawe & Ivagher, 2019). It functions as a center for generating and sharing knowledge through academic programmes that nurture critical thinking, creativity and intellectual development (Okebukola, 2020). Today, universities significantly contribute to national growth by

promoting technological innovation and shaping public policies (Olatunji & Yusuf, 2021). They also strengthen civic participation, global partnerships and positive social change (Adeoye, 2019). The effectiveness of these roles depends largely on sound management and governance systems that guide institutional operations (Akpan, 2023). Therefore, for universities to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world, they must provide support for effective academic staff job performance.

Academic staff job performance refers to the extent to which lecturers effectively carry out their core responsibilities of teaching, research and community service in accordance with institutional standards and expectations (Okebukola, 2020). It involves instructional delivery, curriculum development, assessment of students' learning, publication of scholarly works and engagement in professional activities that enhance institutional growth (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021). Effective academic performance is measured by indicators such as teaching quality, research output, innovation, mentorship, punctuality and contribution to administrative duties (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2019). In public universities, high job performance is essential for producing competent graduates, promoting knowledge creation and sustaining global competitiveness (Akpan, 2023). However, challenges such as inadequate facilities, poor motivation and

limited professional development opportunities often hinder performance (Olatunji & Yusuf, 2021). Understanding the dynamics of academic staff job performance provides a foundation for assessing how institutional conditions, particularly school support services, shape academic staff job performance.

School support services refer to the complementary administrative, instructional and welfare resources provided by educational institutions to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness (Eze & Okonkwo, 2020). These services include access to libraries, ICT facilities, professional development programmes, counselling services, accommodation and transport support, which contribute to improved staff welfare and productivity (Aina & Olayinka, 2020). For example, functional ICT centres and research grants boost academic staff research output, while effective counselling and health services enhance staff well-being, job satisfaction and institutional commitment (Ogunlade & Akintunde, 2021). School support services also facilitate smooth administrative processes, reduce workload stress and create an enabling environment for effective service delivery (Bua, 2020). Inadequate provision of such services may result in poor motivation, low productivity and declining academic standards (Abubakar & Musa, 2019). Therefore, examining school support services

such as ICT support and research support services is essential in sustaining academic staff job performance.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support refers to the provision of digital tools, infrastructure and technical assistance that enable effective teaching, research and administrative functions within universities (Ogunlade & Akintunde, 2021). ICT support services include access to computers, internet connectivity, virtual learning platforms, software applications, cybersecurity and technical personnel who manage digital operations (Aina & Olayinka, 2020). In public universities in Benue State, effective ICT support enhances academic productivity by facilitating online teaching, digital record-keeping, data storage and scholarly collaboration (Musa & Abubakar, 2019). However, weak ICT infrastructure, poor bandwidth and inadequate technical expertise often hinder service delivery, resulting in inefficient communication and limited digital engagement (Edeh & Okonkwo, 2023). The quality of ICT support largely determined by university investment, policy implementation and staff training ultimately influences institutional efficiency and staff job performance. Thus, assessing ICT support provides a foundation for examining related university support systems such as research support services.

Research support services refer to the structures, resources and incentives provided by universities to facilitate scholarly inquiry and publication among academic staff (Okebukola, 2020). These services include access to well-equipped libraries, research grants, laboratories, mentorship programmes, journal subscriptions and opportunities for conference participation (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021). For universities in Benue State, the adequacy of research support determines staff capacity to conduct quality research, generate knowledge and publish in reputable journals (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2019). Where such services are poorly funded or inaccessible, academic staff experience reduced research output, low motivation and limited innovation (Akpan, 2023). Conversely, effective support enhances productivity, collaboration and institutional visibility. The effectiveness of research services depends on management priorities, funding availability and policy frameworks that encourage research culture. This emphasis on research support aligns with other forms of university assistance showing how different support services collectively shape academic staff job performance. Despite the recognized importance of ICT and research support, many academic staff in public universities within Benue State still struggle to prepare quality teaching materials, publish in reputable journals and engage effectively in community service due to poor access to digital tools and limited research funding. If these gaps persist, the universities risk declining academic standards and reduced global relevance. This troubling situation underscores the urgent need to investigate the relationship between support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Academic staff job performance, globally, is considered central to university excellence as it drives quality teaching, research productivity and community engagement. However, incidences of ineffective academic staff job performance in terms of low research output, poor instructional delivery, weak student supervision, limited publication in high-impact journals and inadequate community engagement have been observed. Educational stakeholders including the National Universities Commission (NUC), university governing councils, students and employers of labour have continued to express concerns over declining job performance among academic staff in public universities in Benue State (Okebukola, 2020).

The researcher further observes that in many public universities in Benue State, lecturers struggle to prepare quality lecture materials, produce cutting-edge research and provide effective mentorship to students. These concerns appear strongly associated

with weak school support services such as inadequate ICT support in form of poor internet connectivity, inadequate computer laboratories, limited technical support) and poor research support in areas of poor funding, lack of grants, and weak library support. It is speculated that, although efforts have been made by government, university management and development partners to improve academic staff performance through ICT capacity-building workshops and periodic provision of research grants (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021), challenges still persist. Limited ICT infrastructure, bureaucratic delays in accessing grants, poorly equipped libraries and inadequate professional development opportunities continue to hinder optimal academic staff job performance. It is assumed that these persistent issues raise serious concern about the ability of universities in Benue State to remain globally competitive and fulfill their mandates. Therefore, it becomes imperative to investigate the relationship between school support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between school support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

2. Ascertain the relationship between research support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

2. What is the relationship between research support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support has no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

2. Research support services have no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria.

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted for the study, and the study area was Benue State. The population consisted 2,734 academic staff from 4 public universities in Benue State Nigeria while a sample of 137 academic staff representing 5% of the population from 4 public universities in Benue State Nigeria was used for the study. Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection comprises two sets of questionnaires titled "School Support Services Questionnaire (SSSQ)" and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ). A trial-test was conducted and the reliability of the instrument were ascertained using Cronbach Alpha which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.84 and 0.82 respectively. A total of 137 copies of the questionnaire were taken to the field and administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 3 research assistants. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to answer the research questions and also to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical tool was used because it enabled the researcher to determine the correlation between the independent variable (school support services) and dependent variable (academic staff job performance).

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Relationship Between ICT and Academic Staff Job Performance in Public Universities in Benue State*

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	Decision
ICT Support	137	2.61	0.69		
				0.84	Strong Positive Relationship
Academic Staff Job Performance	137	2.72	0.71		

* Correlation coefficient is strong at 0.5 to 1.0 (or -0.5 to -1.0)

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey Results* 2025

The result in Table 1 revealed that the correlation coefficient of 0.84 falls within 0.5 to 1.0, which indicates a strong relationship. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. ICT support helps in boosting academic job performance in the study area.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between research support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Relationship Between Research Support Services and Academic Staff Job Performance in Public Universities in Benue State*

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	Decision
Research Support Services	137	2.73	0.58		
				0.86	Strong Positive Relationship
Academic Staff Job Performance	137	2.72	0.71		

* Correlation coefficient is strong at 0.5 to 1.0 (or -0.5 to -1.0)

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey Results* 2025

The result in Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient of 0.86 falls within 0.5 to 1.0 which indicate a strong relationship. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between research support services and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. This shows that research support services tremendously facilitate staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Hypothesis 1: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support has no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Table 3: *Relationship between ICT and Academic Staff Job Performance in Public Universities in Benue State*

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	P	Decision
ICT Support	137	2.61	0.69			
				0.84	0.000	Significant Strong Positive Relationship
Academic Staff Job Performance	137	2.72	0.58			

* Correlation coefficient is significant at $p < 0.05$; level (2-tailed).

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey Results* 2025

The result in Table 3 shows significant relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State. The result revealed that r = 0.84; p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. Since P-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support has no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State was therefore rejected. This

implies that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support has significant strong positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Hypothesis 2: Research support services have no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Table 4: *Relationship between Research Support Services and Academic Staff Job Performancein Public Universities in Benue State*

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	R	P	Decision
Research Support Services	137	2.73	0.58			Significant Strong Positive Relationship
				0.86	0.000	
Academic Staff Job Performance	137	2.72	0.71			

* Correlation coefficient is significant at p < 0.05; level (2-tailed).

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey Results* 2025

The result in Table 4 reveals that r = 0.86; p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. Since P-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that research support services have no significant relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State was rejected. This implies that research support services have significant strong positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings of the study reveal that **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support has a significant positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.** This implies that the availability of ICT infrastructure such as internet connectivity, computer systems, learning management platforms and technical personnel enhances lecturers' effectiveness in teaching, research and academic mentoring. This finding corroborates the finding of **Edeh and Okonkwo (2023)** who reported that adequate ICT tools and training significantly improve lecturers' instructional delivery and research productivity in Nigerian universities. Similarly, **Musa and Abubakar (2019)** found that ICT investment enhances communication, promotes innovation, and

improves academic collaboration among university staff. The agreement between the present study and previous findings may be attributed to the fact that ICT tools facilitate access to up-to-date information, enable virtual engagement, and reduce administrative workload, thereby strengthening academic service delivery. These studies align with the present research because they all emphasize ICT support as a driver of improved teaching effectiveness, research output, and institutional competitiveness as core components of academic staff job performance.

The second finding revealed that **research support services have a significant positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.** This suggests that when universities provide functional libraries, access to grants, mentorship programmes, journal subscriptions, and conference sponsorship, lecturers are encouraged to conduct research, publish widely, and engage in community service. This finding aligns with the findings of **Adebayo and Ojo (2021),** who affirmed that adequate research funding and library support strengthen research capacity and scholarly productivity. Likewise, the findings agree with **Ibrahim and Mohammed**

(2019), who found that research incentives and professional support improve publication rates and enhance institutional visibility. The consistency between the findings of the present study and previous findings may be due to the crucial role that research resources play in motivating staff and reducing challenges associated with knowledge generation. These previous studies relate to the present investigation because they collectively highlight how research support mechanisms enhance academic productivity, thereby reinforcing the positive association between research support services and academic staff job performance in Nigerian universities, including those in Benue State.

Conclusion

This study establishes that school support services have significant strong positive relationship with academic staff job performance in public universities in Benue State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University management should provide adequate ICT facilities by upgrading internet bandwidth, supplying modern computers and training staff on digital

150

tools. This should be implemented through sustained funding and periodic ICT capacity-building workshops. The outcome will be improved instructional delivery, enhanced research productivity and more efficient academic service.

2. Libraries should enhance access to scholarly materials by subscribing to reputable journals and databases. This should be executed through partnerships with global research repositories. The outcome will be improved literature access, better research quality and increased academic visibility.

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