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Economic Crisis and the Challenges of Knowledge Sharing and Collaborations Among Academics in Nigerian Higher Education

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Abstract

The global economic crisis has had a significant impact on the education sector with many higher institutions facing serious challenges, thus; reduced access to education which made students or learners to be unable to afford the rising costs of education. Economic crisis has further led to low enrollment rates in the Nigerian higher education system as well as reduced quality of education. On the government side, cutting of funds meant for education became rampant which threw the system into an unimaginable crisis. Additionally, the chance for serious interactions among the academics in these institutions reduced to zero as the harsher economic realities bit on. Therefore, serious interactions led to collaborative and knowledge-sharing among people of a common environment which is the academia. These collaborationists most especially those established for the development of human knowledge would be an important effort. Looking at the fact that teachers within and outside the higher education system in Nigeria need to come up together, based on various common fields of knowledge to create a robust relationship that will benefit the society. The paper, "Economic Crisis and the Challenges of Knowledge Sharing and Collaborations Among Academics in Nigerian Higher Education", therefore aimed to draw the attention of higher education teachers to share knowledge and findings and collaborate appropriately with other experts mindfully over the economic and constraints facing higher education in the country. Matching together towards addressing the identified issue could save the country its educational, research and other institutional challenges.

Keywords: Anxiety, depression, academic performance, counselling and psychology

Introduction

It is vital to appreciate the fact that *Knowledge shared is knowledge squared*. "You can't manage knowledge — nobody can. What you can do is to manage the environment in which knowledge can be created, discovered, captured, shared, distilled, validated, transferred, adopted, adapted, and applied (Collison & Parcell, 2005). In Goodreads (2021), "We know more than we can tell." To Garfield (2018), "Knowledge management doesn't happen until somebody reuses something." He added that "In the context of real need few people will withhold their knowledge." Finally, "Put knowledge where people trip over it." These are some of the reported views on the need to acquire and share new knowledge among individuals as it could be a catalyst in creating awareness and facilitate in solving global issues which have multi-dimensional points of educational, social, economic, political, and medical viewpoints.

The global economic crisis has had a profound impact on the education sector, particularly in higher institutions, leading to significant challenges. One of the most pressing consequences has been the reduced access to education, as students and learners struggle to afford the rising costs associated with pursuing higher education. In Nigeria, the economic crisis has further exacerbated the situation, resulting in low enrollment rates in the country's higher education system and a decline in the overall quality of education provided. Compounding these issues, the Nigerian government has been forced to cut funding allocated to the education sector, plunging the system into an unprecedented crisis. This financial strain has also limited opportunities for meaningful interactions and collaborations among academics within these institutions, hampering the exchange of knowledge and ideas that are crucial for academic progress and development.

In light of these challenges, it has become increasingly important for teachers and academics within and beyond the Nigerian higher education system to come together and collaborate based on their respective fields of expertise. Such collaborations can foster a robust relationship that benefits society by addressing the pressing issues faced by the education sector and promoting the sharing of knowledge and findings. The paper titled "Economic Crisis and the Challenges of Knowledge Sharing and Collaborations Among Academics in Nigerian Higher Education" aims to draw attention to the critical need for knowledge sharing and appropriate collaborations among academics in Nigerian higher education institutions. By working together and pooling their collective expertise, academics can address the identified issues and contribute to mitigating the educational, research, and institutional challenges faced by the country.

In today's digital age, advancements in technology have revolutionized the way academic collaboration takes place due to wide spread of internet and other related technologies thereby facilitated seamless collaboration among researchers across institutions and borders. Nigerian academics are no exception to this trend, with numerous opportunities for cross-institutional and international collaborations. However, it was suggested by [Asiyai \(2015\)](#), that Collaboration will help to trigger improvement in university education system.

One of the key advantages of collaborative research is the synergy it creates by bringing together diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources. As the adage goes, "two heads are better than one." This sentiment is echoed by [Akinyemi and Bassey \(2012\)](#), who highlight the importance of collaborative networks in addressing complex research challenges and driving innovation.

Moreover, international collaborations not only facilitate knowledge exchange but also enhance the visibility and impact of Nigerian research on a global scale. By partnering with renowned institutions and researchers from around the world, Nigerian academics can gain access to cutting-edge resources, funding opportunities, and broader dissemination channels.

It is evident that collaborative efforts in academia and research hold immense potential for advancing knowledge, driving innovation, and contributing to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. With the continued commitment of stakeholders and the leveraging of technological advancements, Nigerian academics can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of research and education, both nationally and globally.

What is Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration?

The term Knowledge-sharing is the process of being aware of knowledge needs and making knowledge available to others by constructing and providing technical and systematic infrastructure, ([Kim & Ju, 2008](#)). And "collaboration" in academic research is usually believed

to describe an equal partnership, joining of hands between two academic members (residing in the same domain or elsewhere) and are pursuing mutually interesting and beneficial research or study. The rationale is that two or more people can do better work than if they work independently of each other, (Kyvik & Reymert, 2017). According to Shaikh (2019), within academia, various terms are used to refer to research collaboration, including co-authorship, research networking, joint research and research partnership. It is widely accepted that collaboration in research across disciplines, between young and more senior researchers and with practitioners is critical to the career of novice researchers. Scholars can now communicate their research ideas and findings through blogs, microblogs, social networking sites and countless other social web platforms.

Today, partnership among academics promotes individual's thinking horizon, embolden his/her confidence, develop wider perceptions on what is obtained in other countries, regions, areas and places. Therefore Bansal (2019) affirmed that critically important scientific issues or innovative technologies can often be tackled by working hand in hand as a team of researchers from different backgrounds. The merging of different fields can make possible achieving of acceptable goals. But in Nigeria, restrictions due to poor salaries and remunerations, hostile academic environments, government policies, government unresponsiveness on research findings and implementations, poor internet facilities and connectivities, absence of data allowances and so on, could prove doom to the academia and the country's need for overall growth and development.

Types of Academic Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration Efforts

Knowledge sharing contributes to the success of an organization in various ways, Ahmad and Karim (2019), and these depends on the field of interest which the country envisaged for growth and development. In academic set up, certain forms of collaborations exist which were identified by Murali, Dan & Jason (2005), which include: **a.** Within academic institutions (university researchers) (among faculty, staff, and administrators; within/between departments; faculty and students; among students). **b.** Between academic institutions. **c.** Between academic institutions and government agencies/departments. **d.** Between academic institutions and private industry. **e.** Domestic and international.

A. Within academic institutions - The class of university researchers can refer to a host of individuals, including teaching and non-teaching, staff, administrative members, and students who can be in varied levels of undergraduate, graduate, or post-doctoral.

Among faculty, staff and administrators - Faculty conducting research may decide to extend invitation to colleagues who share similar interests, possesses relevant expertise, and who have an established research records to initiate new projects together, or to participate in an on-going research effort.

Within/between departments - It is assumed that colleagues within the same department or discipline are familiar with the pending issues of the field. However, collaboration can also be designed between departments and across disciplines. Projects likely to benefit are those with a multidisciplinary theme, utilizing complementary disciplines to develop innovative approaches to unsolved problems.

Faculty and students - Research could be conducted between faculty and students in a variety of settings, such as in form of assignments for research methodology courses, or, faculty instructing students on principles of action research, or as a component of a mentoring relationship, or as part of a collaborative endeavor with academic institutions etc. Here, students not only gain a greater understanding on how research is conducted in a real rather

than simulated setting, but can observe both how research is applied to real world problems as well as the results from either successful or unsuccessful investigations. Research collaboration can also take place among students with an incredible outcome.

B. Betwixt academic institutions - Collaboration between institutions proffers benefits including opportunities to 1) interact with researchers with the needed area of the proposed investigation, 2) gain access to desired resources like databases, equipment, staff, and study populations, etc 3) gain credibility through the name recognition from prominent researchers, departments, or institutions.

C. Betwixt academic institutions and government agencies/departments/units - Collaboration between academic institutions and government is a long occurring event in the areas of socio-economic development, environmental issues, health concerns and educational challenges and many other fields. There are number of mechanisms that can initiate a collaborative endeavor, 1) government agencies (local, state, national, international) may seek technical assistance from appropriate university experts to address specific problems. 2) government agencies may offer competitive funding opportunities regarding a specific theme. 3) university researchers may approach government to request cooperation in a research effort.

As with most types of collaboration, academic and government partnerships is apt to be beneficial to both parties.

D. Betwixt academic institutions and private industry - There has been collaboration between universities and private industries for good over a wide time. Among the reasons could be: (1) an increased emphasis on university research sponsored by companies; (2) faculty consulting; (3) licensing of university-owned intellectual property to existing companies; (4) university support for start-up companies in the form of loans, grants, and equity ownership; (5) "mega agreements" between individual companies and universities that cover a range of interactions; (6) research centers and other government- supported efforts to encourage university-industry collaboration; and (7) industry consortia to support university research.

E. Across geographic lines - There are reasons for conducting research across geographic lines is that certain collaborations can only be conducted with specific international investigators, institutions, or organizations. Examples is in determining the breeding habits of rare species of animals, like face-face (2fs) interviews with patients.

Possible Challenges in Academic Collaboration

Even though international collaborators may face many of the same challenges as research conducted with domestic collaborators, there may be additional challenges that can further complicate the investigatory process away from the challenges obtained in Nigeria as mentioned above, this includes the followings:

- i. Conflicting research paradigms, conventions, and standards of practice can compromise research integrity.
- ii. Collaborators may not share the same professional jargon, speak the same language, or understand critical cultural variations.
- iii. There may also be a difference of opinion as to what the research mission is and how it should be best accomplished. These differences may be compounded when dealing with collaborators coming from disparate settings such as academic institutions, government departments (foreign and domestic), non-governmental organizations, and private industry. Other challenges as outlined by [Jacob, Jegede & Musa \(2022\)](#) include; poor motivation, teaching of large class, poor staff development programme, inadequate

infrastructural facilities, strike actions, insecurity, poor computer literacy and poor research funding.

Emergent and Modern Tools for Academic Knowledge Sharing and Collaborations

There are varied tools for collaborative research among academicians and other interested folks. They could be grouped into three (3) classes, Social Media Tools and Mobile Apps, Professional Networks, and Tools for Virtual Meetings, [Libguide \(2021\)](#).

Social Media Tools and Mobile Apps for Academics Use in Nigeria

- i. **iSSRN**. This Mobile App by Social Science Research Network (SSRN) is a trove of research papers in the social sciences and humanities from the open access repository of SSRN. SSRN is devoted to providing "tomorrow's research today" through specialized research networks in the social sciences and humanities. It facilitates the free posting and sharing of research material (e.g., conference papers, preprints, non-peer-reviewed papers) in our subject areas. Social science papers tend to have fewer co-authors, so networking and sharing ideas, hypotheses and drafts during the research process are critical; SSRN helps authors evolve their research and communicate their results worldwide, ([Gordon, 2016](#)).
- ii. **SpringerLink**. This App provides a valuable set of features to personalize searches, bookmark and save documents and share document summaries with colleagues. The SpringerLink App puts all SpringerLink peer-reviewed journals, articles and book chapters spanning every area of science, technology and medicine.
- iii. **figshare**. This online digital repository enables researchers to preserve and share their research outputs, including figures, datasets, images, and videos. It is free to upload content and free to access, in adherence to the principle of open data.
- iv. **Mind42**. This free online mind mapping software creates mind maps - a special form of a structured diagram to visually organize information.
- v. **Twitter for Academics**. This microblogging site allows users to send and receive short public messages called tweets in 140 characters. By following people, organizations and sources, users can interact with thousands of academics and researchers. Using hashtags, replies and retweets, trends and information can be easily retrieved.
- vi. **nVivo**. This software for qualitative and mixed methods research allows users to collect, organize and analyze content from interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, social media data, and related information from videos and webpages.
- vii. **WikiSpaces**. This web 2.0 tool is used by individuals, community groups, small teams, big businesses, government agencies. It provides an avenue for any collaborative works.

Professional Networks for Academics in Nigeria

- i. **ResearchGate**: Founded in 2008, this network enables members to share research works (published or unpublished) get stats and find out who's been reading and citing the work.
- ii. **Academia.edu**: Academia.edu is a platform for academics to share research papers. The company's mission is to accelerate the world's research. Academics use Academia.edu

to share their research, monitor deep analytics around the impact of their research, and track the research of academics they follow.

Tools for Virtual Meetings for Academics in Nigeria

- i. Adobe Connect:* This web conferencing software offers immersive online meeting experiences for collaboration, virtual classrooms and large scale webinars. Small group meeting up to 3 persons is free, webinars for up to 1500 participants can be accommodated for a fee.
- ii. Google Hangouts:* Hangouts bring conversations to life with photos, emoji, and group video calls for free. This is a good venue for virtual meetings of up to 10 people/ accounts.
- iii. GoToMeeting:* This video conferencing tool enables user to host or attend online meetings, talk and chat with attendees, and share slide presentations, design mockups, spreadsheets, and reports. It can accommodate up to 25 participants for free.
- iv. Skype:* Skype is one of the most popular online video conferencing tool which can connect up to 10 people/ accounts. Calls, video calls, and instant messages for individual or group communication are free.

Summary

The paper discusses the importance of knowledge sharing and collaboration among academics, particularly in the Nigerian higher education system, which has faced significant challenges due to the global economic crisis. The introduction highlights the need for academics to collaborate and share knowledge to address pressing issues in the education sector and contribute to societal development. The paper defines knowledge sharing as the process of making knowledge available to others, and collaboration as an equal partnership between academics pursuing mutually beneficial research or study. It emphasizes the advantages of collaboration, such as combining diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources, and facilitating innovation.

The paper identifies various types of academic knowledge sharing and collaboration efforts, including within academic institutions (among faculty, staff, administrators, and students), between academic institutions, between academic institutions and government agencies/departments, between academic institutions and private industry, and across geographic lines (domestic and international collaborations). The paper also discusses potential challenges in academic collaboration, such as conflicting research paradigms, language and cultural barriers, and differences in research missions and approaches.

The paper concludes by presenting emergent and modern tools for academic knowledge sharing and collaboration, categorized into social media tools and mobile apps (e.g., iSSRN, SpringerLink, figshare, Mind42, Twitter, nVivo, WikiSpaces), professional networks (e.g., ResearchGate, Academia.edu), and tools for virtual meetings (e.g., Adobe Connect, Google Hangouts, GoToMeeting, Skype).

Conclusion:

Knowledge sharing and collaboration among academics are crucial for addressing the challenges faced by the Nigerian higher education system and promoting overall societal development. The paper emphasizes the importance of fostering a collaborative environment that encourages the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and resources among academics within and beyond Nigeria. The various types of collaborations outlined in the paper, such as within

academic institutions, between institutions, with government agencies and private industries, and across geographic borders, highlight the diverse opportunities available for academics to engage in meaningful collaborations.

While acknowledging potential challenges, such as conflicting research paradigms and cultural barriers, the paper emphasizes the need for stakeholders, including individual researchers, academic institutions, government bodies, and NGOs, to create a conducive environment that facilitates effective research collaborations. The paper concludes by presenting modern tools and platforms that can enable and facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among academics, including social media tools, professional networks, and virtual meeting platforms. These tools can help overcome geographical barriers and foster global collaborations, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge and innovation in Nigeria and beyond.

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