Knowledge Management and Performance of Academic Staff of Selected High Educational Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria. The Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm (KBTF) underpinned the study. Cross sectional survey design was used for the study. The total of eighty two six (82) academic staff drawn from the Department of Business Administration and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, the Department of Management, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus and the Department of Management Abia State University, Uturu. Due to the size of the population, the entire number of eighty two (82) academic staff was used as the sample size for this this study. In this study, the census sampling technique was employed. The researcher collected data on a micro level unit of analysis using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The research instrument was validated through exert vetting and approval while Cronchbach Alpha Coefficient was used to test reality of the instrument. Data collected was analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The hypothesis was tested using Spearman Rank Order Correlation. The findings revealed that, knowledge management had significant relationship with the performance of academic staff in the selected high educational institutions. Thus, the study recommends that Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria should establish robust knowledge management frameworks by investing in digital platforms, fostering a culture of knowledge sharing, and providing regular training for academic staff to enhance their teaching, research, and administrative capabilities.*

Keywords: *Academic Staff, Employee Performance, High Educational Institutions and Knowledge Management*

Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) has emerged as a vital strategy for enhancing organizational performance, particularly in academia, where the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge are core activities. Academic institutions rely heavily on their human capital, with the performance of academic staff directly influencing the quality of education and research outputs (Sebola, 2023). According to UNESCO, higher education enrollment worldwide grew by 50% between 2000 and 2020, reflecting an increasing

demand for quality education and the need for effective academic staff performance management (do Nascimento *et al.,* 2022). This surge in enrollment has placed immense pressure on academic staff to deliver, making knowledge management a crucial tool for sustaining institutional excellence.

In Nigerian high educational institutions, HEIs, the role of academic staff is multifaceted, encompassing teaching, research, community service, and administrative responsibilities (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2024). Despite these demands, studies reveal that many institutions struggle with low research productivity and ineffective knowledge-sharing practices. For example, data from the National Universities Commission (NUC) indicate that less than 40% of Nigerian academic staff actively publish in peer-reviewed journals annually (Iwu-James *et al.,* 2023). This statistic highlights a gap in leveraging institutional knowledge to improve performance. Moreover, challenges such as outdated technology, limited collaboration, and resistance to change often hinder effective knowledge management in these settings (Acharya *et al.,* 2022).

Globally, organizations that prioritize knowledge management have demonstrated significant improvements in employee performance (Sun *et al.,* 2022). A 2021 report by the International Journal of Knowledge Management found that organizations implementing structured KM practices reported a 20-25% increase in employee productivity. In academia, KM systems can facilitate access to research resources, encourage collaboration among faculty, and support continuous professional development (Gómez-Marín *et al.,* 2022). Despite these benefits, Zickafoose *et al.,* (2024) identified barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of institutional policies as major obstacles to KM adoption.

In the context of the study areas, academic institutions face unique challenges, including limited access to digital tools and resources, which affect the effective application of knowledge management systems. Addressing these issues is critical for enhancing the performance of academic staff, thereby improving the overall quality of education and research outputs (Anthony, 2022). This study aims to investigate the relationship between knowledge management practices and the performance of academic staff, offering insights into how institutions can optimize their knowledge assets to meet the demands of a competitive and knowledge-driven world.

The study provided answer to the basic research question:

   i.   What is the relationship between Knowledge Management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria?

Literature Review
Theoretical Framework
Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm (KBTF)

Knowledge-based Theory of the Firm (KBTF) Proposed by Robert Grant in the 1990s, the KBTF holds knowledge as the most strategically relevant tool available in companies (Keshavarz, 2020). This theory essentially expands on the earlier one known as RBV but emphasizes especially knowledge as the primary driver of the competitive advantage of a company. Grant 1996 states that firms exist because they are more efficient than markets in producing, sharing, and using knowledge (Erena *et al.,* 2023). According to this view, the main responsibility of the company is to combine specialized expertise

inside it thus produce value. Consequently, improving the performance, creativity, and competitiveness of the company depends critically on knowledge management techniques including acquisition, sharing, and application (Trivedi & Srivastava, 2022). Given an academic institution is essentially a knowledge-intensive entity KBTF is rather relevant with respect to the present study. The academic staff embodies the fundamental ideas of KBTF as they are always engaged in producing, spreading, and using knowledge (Akter, 2024). This is so because effective knowledge management systems-which involve cooperation, access to resources and sharing of knowledge-directly have an impact on staff output, research output, as well as institutional performance. Critics of KBTF also claim that the KBTF reduces the firm to other dimensions that impact sharing like power relations and cultural aspects (Ehlert, 2022; Stephen Ubi, 2024). Despite these criticisms, however, KBTF remains the most appropriate theory to underpin this study. It puts into focus how managing such a critical resource may lead to better performance and success within an organization; it portrays academic staff as knowledge workers.
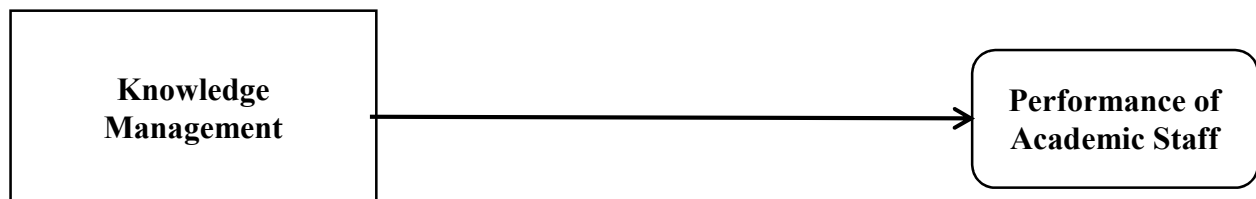
Research Framework

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┌──────────────────────┐                        ┌────────────────────┐
│                      │                        │                    │
│     Knowledge        │───────────────────────▶│   Performance of   │
│     Management       │                        │   Academic Staff   │
│                      │                        │                    │
└──────────────────────┘                        └────────────────────┘
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Figure 1:   **Research Framework Showing Relationship of the Study.**
Source: **Authors' Desk Research, 2024**

Employee Performance

HEIs, performance describes the degree of efficiency and effectiveness with which both academic and non-academic staff members are doing their responsibilities (Adubasim *et al.,* 2018). Regarding academic personnel, measures of performance could include administrative tasks, research production, instructional quality, and community involvement. Indicators used in measuring these areas include student happiness, publishing in peer-reviewed publications, grant acquisition, and academic committee engagement (Ahmadi *et al.,* 2023). Effective performance by staff members at HEIs is a critical problem as this influences institutional reputations, student results, and general academic quality. While aiming for operational efficiency, student support services, and administrative efficacy for a final suitable environment to study and develop, the same importance of non-academic staff performance—though less discussed—should be given (Wambui, 2022).

Examining HEIs, several elements influence employee performance including institutional policies, professional development chances, access to resources, and quality of leadership. Knowledge management will so help academic staff members to consult one another, share different resources, and thus access a spectrum of research instruments that increase output (Quarchioni *et al.,* 2022). Furthermore lowering excessive burden

include imbalanced work, inadequate budget, and inadequate professional development. Different studies indicate that creating a supportive atmosphere and giving access to a current tool and technology greatly enhance employee performance in HEIs (Bucea-Manea-Țoniş *et al.,* 2022). Thus, the main objectives of performance improvement plan concentrate on the fundamental ones of raising quality in institutional education and research (Tamunomiebi *et al.,* (2018)

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management, KM has been described as the systematic processes of creating, sharing, utilizing, and preserving knowledge in HEIs to realize their academic, administrative, and research functions (Alghail *et al.,* 2023). KM involves explicit, which is documented information, and tacit, that is, skills and experience-based knowledge for efficiency and innovativeness. KM in HEIs covers a broad range of activities relating to academic staff collaboration, access to research repositories, and engagement with digital tools for knowledge sharing (Quarchioni *et al.,* 2022). Appropriate KM practices let the institutions develop optimized outputs of teaching and research to maintain their competitive edge in the rapidly changing global education environment. Shared knowledge repositories and e-learning platforms are examples where the faculty can better collaborate and allow inter-disciplinary research (Fasola & Abimbola, 2023).

The implementation of KM in HEIs draws its rationale from challenges such as staff turnover, research redundancy, and continuous learning (Wilkenson, 2023). HEIs act as nuclei for knowledge creation and dissemination and, therefore, KM would be vital in maintaining the institutional memory and ensuring a culture of innovation. However, effective KM practices necessitate competent leadership, supportive culture, and technological infrastructure for the flawless flow of knowledge (Mohanty *et al.,* 2024). Despite all this potential, there are also specific barriers to the implementation of KM in HEIs, which can include issues like resistance to change, limited funding, and technological obstacles. The capability of overcoming such challenges is critical in developing a sustainable environment in which academic staff and administrators prosper and contribute towards institutional aims (Aithal & Maiya, 2023).

Empirical Review

Yumhi *et al.,* (2024) study aimed to learn how to create and implement a web-based knowledge management system to enhance worker productivity. This study uses literature reviews, interviews, and observation to collect data. The system development methodology used in the research was called Rapid Application Development (RAD). The study's findings suggest that knowledge management and documentation have significantly benefited from this research. The employee knowledge documentation process can be centrally and methodically recorded thanks to implementing the knowledge management system (KMS) used in this study. This improves the efficiency of the time spent conducting knowledge searches. The findings of this study allow staff members to log into the system directly. This technology will enable employees to organize, store, and transfer knowledge effectively. In line with the established key performance indicators (KPIs), having a knowledge management system improves employee performance overall.

Mansoor and Hussain (2024) investigated the connection between knowledge management processes and organizational sustainability in higher education institutions.

It also examines the moderating effect of online training on the relationship between knowledge management and college sustainability. Data for the study was gathered from several private and public universities in the Kurdistan Region using a survey questionnaire and a random sample technique. The proposed model has been evaluated using 165 appropriate responses. The demographics of the sample are covered by methodology, along with confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling, mediation, and moderation analysis. The findings confirm that knowledge codification/storage and knowledge generation have relatively stronger effects on the sustainable development of the higher education institutions in the Region.

Adhikari and Shrestha (2023) explored knowledge management (KM) initiatives for achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) 4.7 and to investigate enablers and barriers to insert KM to prepare higher education institutions (HEIs) ready to contribute to SDGs' performance. At the end, this paper provides a practical perspective of KM initiatives for higher education for sustainable development (HESD). This is an exploratory study. It applies a descriptive-interpretative-qualitative approach. The analysis is based on the opinions collected from 170 HEIs' stakeholders. Discussions among participants have been organized through zoom meetings, telephone interviews and focus group discussions in three phases. In the first phase, a total of 113 informants took part in the discussion on various dates. In the second phase, 10 interviews were conducted with university officials using three open-ended questions; and in the third phase, three focus group discussions were organized to interact about the effectiveness of the Masters in Business Administration in Global Leadership and Management programme and curriculum with teachers, students and the programme initiators. From the analysis of stakeholders' views, it appears that Nepalese HEIs have yet to move forward with integrating KM activities into their aims, structure and functions to address the government's policy guidelines applicable to maximizing SDG' performance. A KM cultural framework that values intellectual capital is urgently needed to fill the knowledge-doing gap for the benefit of society. HEIs appear to require multidisciplinary teaching, learning and research methods to play a civic role in society. They have to improve their rules and regulation, develop a boundary-spanning structure from a conventional structure and apply KM initiatives to support achieving SDGs' performance. Understanding and inculcating these initiatives in the academic programmes could provide a value-adding higher education in the country.

Al Shraah *et al.,* (2022) investigated the impact of total quality practices on knowledge management (KM) processes across a Social Security Corporation (SSC) in Jordan and explore the best approach to improve KM processes using quality management. The study followed a quantitative methodology: a conceptual model was developed based on an extensive review of the related literature; an online survey was developed and distributed using the SSC's intranet; and 384 surveys were completed and used in the statistical analysis. The two-stage approach of structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze and interpret the data, and was used to validate the conceptual model of this research. Based on the statistical analysis it was found that six out of seven independent factors relating to quality management practices were confirmed to have a significant impact on the knowledge management processes (KMPs). Building upon the findings an agenda for improving KM processes using quality management is proposed.

Al-Husseini *et al.,* (2021) examined the linkages between transformational leadership, knowledge sharing and innovation in higher education. The study involved surveying 250 academic staff based in Iraqi public universities. A model was developed and tested using structural equation modelling. A positive direct impact was found amongst transformational leadership, knowledge sharing and innovation. Moreover, knowledge sharing was identified as a mediator between transformational leadership and innovation. The implications of the findings for higher education institutions are discussed.

The study adopted the following as hypothesis:

H0$_1$: **There is no significant relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria**

Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary source of data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was drawn from academic staff from selected higher educational institutions in Nigeria namely: Department of Business Administration and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi (25), Department of Management, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (45) and Department of Management Abia State University, Uturu (12) making a total of eighty two (82). Due to the size of the population, the entire population of 82 was used as the sample size. The census sampling techniques was employed. The research instrument was validated by my expert vetting and approval while the reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypothesis was tested using the spearman rank order correlation. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

Data Analysis and Results

A significance level of 0.05 was chosen as the threshold for determining the probability of accepting the null hypothesis when $p > 0.05$, or rejecting the null hypothesis when $p < 0.05$. This study aimed at examining the relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix for Knowledge Management and Performance of Academic Staff

			Performance of Academic Staff	Knowledge Management
Spearman's rho	Performance of Academic Staff	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.778**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	76	76
	Knowledge Management	Correlation Coefficient	.778**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	76	76

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

The table above illustrates the test for the previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff. The *rho* value 0.778 indicates there is a relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a positive correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between knowledge management and performance of academic staff of selected high educational institutions in Nigeria. Using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval, the findings revealed that a significant positive relationship existed between knowledge management and performance of academic staff in the selected high educational institutions: Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus and Abia State University, Uturu.

The finding corroborated that of Yumhi *et al.,* (2024) who submitted that this technology will enable employees to organize, store, and transfer knowledge effectively. In line with the established key performance indicators (KPIs), having a knowledge management system improves employee performance overall. Similarly, Mansoor and Hussain (2024) findings aligns with that if this study as it confirm that knowledge codification/storage and knowledge generation have relatively stronger effects on the sustainable development of the higher education institutions in the Region.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study on Knowledge Management (KM) and the Performance of Academic Staff in Selected Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria underscores the critical role that effective KM practices play in enhancing staff performance. The findings reveal that structured knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application significantly impact teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency within academic institutions. By fostering an environment that prioritizes collaboration, continuous learning, and the use of modern technological tools, higher education institutions can build a knowledge-rich culture that promotes innovation and excellence among academic staff.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for institutional policies that support KM practices, such as regular training programs, effective communication channels, and resource allocation for technology-driven knowledge systems. Addressing challenges such as resistance to knowledge sharing and limited technological infrastructure is essential for optimizing KM's potential to improve academic staff performance. Ultimately, prioritizing knowledge management is not only pivotal for individual staff growth but also for the overall advancement of higher education in Nigeria, ensuring these institutions remains competitive and responsive to global academic standards.

The study recommended that Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria should establish robust knowledge management frameworks by investing in digital platforms, fostering a culture of knowledge sharing, and providing regular training for academic staff to enhance their teaching, research, and administrative capabilities.

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