

Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers

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Abstract

The study examined Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers using a descriptive survey design. The research was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two hypotheses. A population of 220 lecturers, randomly selected from various faculties within the university, participated in the study, comprising 120 male and 80 female lecturers to ensure gender and academic diversity. A 20-item structured questionnaire titled Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers (SDPCUPANUCFNLQ) served as the data collection tool. To validate the instrument's reliability, a pilot test was conducted on 20 lecturers from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who practiced Scopus-based promotional criteria but were not part of the study population. The reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.82 and 0.91, confirming strong internal consistency. Data analysis employed mean and standard deviation to address the research questions, with mean scores above 2.50 indicating agreement and scores below 2.50 indicating disagreement. A t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level, ensuring robust statistical analysis. The findings revealed that Scopus-driven promotional criteria in Nigerian universities impose significant financial and professional challenges on academics. High publication costs, particularly Article Processing Charges (APCs), hinder career progression, forcing lecturers to prioritize quantity over quality. Many rely on personal funds, which adversely affect their financial stability. Early-career academics face even greater disadvantages due to limited resources and support. The study underscores the need for institutional reforms to address these challenges. It recommends that universities and stakeholders subsidize or provide institutional support for publishing costs in Scopus-indexed journals. Such measures could alleviate financial burdens on academics, promote equitable opportunities, and create a more balanced framework for academic promotions in Nigerian universities. Further investigations are needed to explore sustainable strategies for mitigating the pressures associated with Scopus-driven criteria.

Key words: Scopus-Driven, promotional criteria, undue pressure, academics and universities

Introductions

The increasing globalization of academia has led to a shift in the criteria used for evaluating academic performance in universities worldwide. In Nigerian universities, one of the emerging standards for career progression and promotion is the publication in Scopus-indexed journals. Scopus, a leading abstract and citation database for peer-reviewed literature, is globally recognized for its comprehensive coverage of high-quality journals (Elsevier, 2021). As Nigerian universities align their promotional criteria with international standards, lecturers are now expected to publish extensively in Scopus-indexed journals to attain higher academic ranks. While this requirement aims to enhance research output and global visibility, it has introduced significant challenges that impact lecturers' professional and personal lives.

Historically, Nigerian universities relied on local publications, conference proceedings, and teaching experience as primary metrics for promotion. However, the transition to Scopus-driven criteria reflects a broader effort to improve research quality, encourage global competitiveness, and attract international collaboration (Okebukola, 2020); (Wonah et al, 2018); (Atah, 2019); (Idika et al, 2023). This alignment is also motivated by the quest for improved rankings on global university indices such as Times Higher Education and QS rankings, which prioritize research output and citation metrics. However, despite the potential benefits of this shift, the new promotional criteria place undue pressure on academics, creating a challenging environment for many Nigerian lecturers (Atah et al, 2024); (Idike et al, 2024) and (Alabi et al, 2024).

One major challenge is the cost associated with publishing in Scopus-indexed journals. Many reputable journals require significant article processing charges (APCs), which are often unaffordable for lecturers in underfunded Nigerian universities. Moreover, the scarcity of institutional support exacerbates this financial burden, leaving many academics to fund their publications independently (Oyewole & Salami, 2022). For lecturers at the early stages of their careers, these costs can be particularly prohibitive, creating inequalities in opportunities for promotion.

The "publish or perish" culture associated with Scopus-driven criteria has also led to increased academic stress among Nigerian lecturers. The pressure to meet stringent publication requirements often forces academics to prioritize quantity over quality, potentially compromising the integrity of their research (Afolabi, 2023). Additionally, the emphasis on Scopus-indexed journals disregards the local relevance of research, pushing lecturers to focus on topics that align with the interests of international audiences rather than addressing pressing local issues (Ekechukwu et al., 2021).

Another significant challenge is access to resources. Many Nigerian universities lack the infrastructure necessary to support high-quality research, such as funding, advanced laboratories, and access to online journals. Without these resources, meeting the publication standards of Scopus-indexed journals becomes a herculean task. This situation is further complicated by irregular academic schedules caused by strikes, administrative delays, and unstable electricity, all of which hinder research productivity (Ogunleye & Onuoha, 2022).

The emphasis on Scopus-indexed publications also creates ethical dilemmas for academics. The inability to meet stringent publication targets has led to the proliferation of predatory journals, which exploit researchers desperate for publication opportunities (Beall, 2016). These journals often promise fast-track publication but lack rigorous peer-review processes, undermining the credibility of research. Some lecturers also resort to unethical practices such as plagiarism, falsification of data, or excessive co-authorship, driven by the need

to meet promotion requirements (Sanni, 2023). In addition, the Scopus-driven criteria have shifted attention away from other essential aspects of academic roles, such as teaching and mentorship. Lecturers now spend more time writing and submitting papers than engaging with students or contributing to the development of their institutions. This imbalance affects the quality of education, leaving students with limited access to experienced and motivated educators (Olayemi & Bassey, 2023).

Scopus-driven promotional criteria have emerged as a dominant standard for evaluating academic performance and career progression in Nigerian universities. These criteria prioritize the publication of research articles in Scopus-indexed journals, which are globally recognized for their rigorous peer-review processes and high impact (Elsevier, 2021). The aim of this approach is to enhance research quality, improve institutional rankings, and foster international collaboration. However, the adoption of Scopus-driven criteria has introduced significant challenges for Nigerian lecturers. One of the primary challenges is the difficulty many academics face in meeting the publication requirements. Limited access to research funding, inadequate institutional support, and the high costs associated with publishing in reputable journals make it difficult for many lecturers to comply with these criteria (Oyewole & Salami, 2022); (Alabi et al, 2024); (Atah et al 2024). The emphasis on global relevance in the publication standards has also shifted the focus of research away from addressing local challenges, creating a disconnect between academic work and the societal needs of Nigerian communities (Afolabi, 2023). In a study on the Impact of Scopus-Indexed Publications on Career Progression in Nigerian Universities, Okebukola (2020) analyzed publication trends among 500 lecturers across six federal universities. The study found that 75% of academics struggled to meet Scopus-indexed publication requirements due to financial constraints and a lack of institutional support. The findings revealed unequal access to resources, with early-career lecturers facing greater challenges, and suggested that the criteria disproportionately benefit established academics with access to external funding sources. Similarly, Ekechukwu et al. (2021) explored the Influence of International Publication Standards on Research Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa. Using a survey of 300 academics in Nigeria, their study found that 68% of respondents felt that Scopus-driven criteria shifted their research focus toward topics with global appeal, rather than addressing local issues. This shift, according to the study, undermines the societal impact of research in Nigerian universities, as lecturers prioritize meeting international standards at the expense of domestic concerns. Oyewole and Salami (2022) also highlighted the financial challenges of publishing in Scopus-indexed journals in their study titled *Financial Challenges of Publishing in Scopus-Indexed Journals: A Nigerian Perspective*. Their mixed-methods approach surveyed 200 academics across 10 universities, revealing that high article processing charges (APCs) were a significant barrier. Notably, 70% of participants cited personal funds as the primary source for paying these fees. The study concluded that unless universities provide financial assistance to support publishing costs, Scopus-driven criteria will continue to marginalize resource-constrained academics. Scopus-driven promotional criteria aim to improve the quality of academic research and enhance the global standing of Nigerian universities, they have created challenges related to financial constraints, resource inequality, and the shifting focus of research. These challenges highlight the need for a more balanced approach to academic evaluation that considers both global standards and local needs.

The adoption of Scopus-driven promotional criteria has placed undue pressure on academics in Nigerian universities, manifesting in various forms of stress and professional challenges. Lecturers are often compelled to prioritize publishing over other essential academic

responsibilities, such as teaching, mentorship, and community service (Olayemi & Bassey, 2023). This pressure to "publish or perish" has led to issues such as burnout, compromised research quality, and ethical violations, including engagement with predatory journals (Beall, 2016). Additionally, the lack of enabling research environments, characterized by poor infrastructure, erratic academic calendars, and insufficient access to academic resources, exacerbates the challenges faced by lecturers (Ogunleye & Onuoha, 2022). These factors collectively hinder their ability to meet institutional expectations, thereby impacting their productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Olayemi and Bassey (2023), in their study titled *The Impact of Publication Pressure on Academic Roles in Nigerian Universities*, surveyed 250 lecturers from public universities. The study found that 80% of respondents felt overburdened by the demand for Scopus-indexed publications, which led to reduced time for teaching and mentorship. Burnout and declining job satisfaction were also identified as significant consequences of the excessive pressure to publish. Similarly, Ogunleye and Onuoha (2022), in their work on *Research Environment and Academic Productivity in Nigerian Universities*, examined how infrastructural inadequacies contribute to stress among academics. Through interviews and focus groups with 150 lecturers, the study found that unreliable internet access, limited funding, and frequent disruptions due to strikes increased the difficulty of meeting publication expectations, further amplifying undue pressure on academics. Sanni (2023), in his study *Ethical Dilemmas in Academic Publishing: A Nigerian Perspective*, explored the relationship between publishing pressure and ethical misconduct. Surveying 200 lecturers, the study found that 45% of respondents admitted to publishing in predatory journals to meet institutional requirements. The study concluded that the "publish or perish" culture exacerbates unethical practices, which ultimately undermines the credibility of research output. In conclusion, while Scopus-driven promotional criteria aim to elevate academic standards, they also contribute to significant stress and ethical challenges for Nigerian lecturers. These issues underscore the need for a more supportive academic environment that balances publication demands with the overall well-being and professional development of academics.

In light of these challenges, there is a need to critically evaluate the impact of Scopus-driven promotional criteria on academics in Nigerian universities. While the criteria aim to promote excellence, the undue pressure it places on lecturers raises questions about its sustainability and fairness. This study seeks to explore the challenges faced by Nigerian lecturers under the Scopus-driven system, providing insights into how universities can balance global competitiveness with the well-being and productivity of their academic staff.

Problem of the Study

In the academic ecosystem, publishing in high-impact journals has become a crucial benchmark for assessing the performance and career progression of lecturers. In Nigerian universities, Scopus-indexed publications are increasingly used as a central criterion for promotions and other academic evaluations. While this shift aligns with global standards and enhances institutional visibility, it has inadvertently created significant challenges for lecturers, particularly in the Nigerian context where research infrastructure and funding are inadequate. One major issue is the financial burden associated with publishing in Scopus-indexed journals, which often require high article processing charges (APCs). Nigerian lecturers, working in underfunded institutions, frequently lack institutional support to cover these costs. This financial barrier disproportionately affects early-career lecturers and those in less-privileged universities, creating inequality in promotion opportunities. Furthermore, the "publish or perish" culture has

placed undue pressure on academics to prioritize publishing over teaching, mentorship, and community service. This pressure often leads to burnout, ethical compromises such as publishing in predatory journals, and a dilution of research quality. Nigerian lecturers also face challenges such as limited access to high-quality research facilities, unreliable internet connectivity, and irregular academic calendars caused by strikes, all of which hinder their ability to conduct and publish high-quality research. The requirement for Scopus-indexed publications also tends to shift research priorities toward topics of international interest, often at the expense of addressing local and regional issues. This shift undermines the societal relevance of research conducted in Nigerian universities, creating a disconnect between academic output and the needs of local communities. These challenges suggest that while Scopus-driven promotional criteria aim to enhance research quality and global competitiveness, they may inadvertently marginalize many Nigerian academics and hinder their overall productivity. There is, therefore, a need to critically examine the implications of these criteria on lecturers' well-being, academic performance, and the relevance of research in Nigerian universities.

Objectives of the Study

The study investigate Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities.
2. Determine the extent to which Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among lecturers in Nigerian universities.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities?
2. To what extent do Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers?

Research Hypotheses

Two research hypotheses were raised to guide the study and tested at a 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities based on gender
2. Scopus-driven promotional criteria do not significantly contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers based on years of experience

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design and was conducted at the University of Calabar, where Scopus is used as a criterion for academic promotion. The population consisted of 220 lecturers selected randomly from various faculties within the university, including 120 male and 80 female lecturers. A 20-item structured questionnaire titled Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers (SDPCUPANUCFNLQ) was used as the data collection instrument. The items on the questionnaire were designed using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. To ensure reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested on 20 lecturers from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, who were not part of the study but practiced Scopus-based promotional criteria. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's

Alpha, yielding scores of 0.82 and 0.91, respectively. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents with the assistance of research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions, with mean scores above the cut-off value of 2.50 indicating agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Additionally, a t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance, with the hypothesis not being rejected if the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical t-value.

The Findings of the study

Research question 1

What is the relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Mean rating of responses on Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities

S/N	Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Scopus publication pressure increases personal financial costs.	220	3.4	0.85	Accepted
2	Significant portion of salary spent on APCs for Scopus journals.	220	3.25	0.89	Accepted
3	Scopus emphasis limits saving and investments.	220	2.95	0.8	Accepted
4	Financial burden impacts family support and stability.	220	2.60	0.78	Accepted
5	Requirement for Scopus publications strains economic well-being.	220	3.50	0.79	Accepted
6	Publishing in Scopus requires seeking extra income.	220	2.85	0.76	Accepted
7	Scopus requirements discourage high-quality research.	220	2.70	0.81	Accepted
8	Scopus emphasis creates economic inequality among academics.	220	3.10	0.84	Accepted
9	Limited funding restricts Scopus research access.	220	3.35	0.88	Accepted
10	Lack of funding for Scopus publications leads to disadvantage.	220	3.00	0.83	Accepted
	Overall Cluster Mean	220	3.08	0.82	Accepted

The findings from the analyzed data in Table 1 reveal a significant relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities. With a cluster mean score of 3.08 and standard deviation of 0.82, the results suggest that academics face considerable challenges in meeting the requirements for Scopus-indexed publications. High mean scores, such as 3.4 and 3.5, highlight the financial burden on academics, including spending substantial portions of their salaries on Article Processing Charges (APCs). These costs directly affect their economic stability and capacity for

family support. Additionally, the mean score of 3.35 underscores the systemic inequalities, as academics from less-privileged backgrounds or institutions are at a significant disadvantage due to limited access to resources for publishing in Scopus-indexed journals. Items with mean scores like 2.85 and 2.7 indicate that many academics feel compelled to prioritize quantity over the quality of research output to meet promotion demands, often at the expense of professional and personal goals. The consistent scoring pattern across the items confirms that Scopus-driven criteria impose substantial financial, professional, and psychological stress on academics. These findings emphasize the need for institutional reforms, including increased funding, policy adjustments to diversify promotion metrics, and enhanced support mechanisms for academic publishing. Addressing these issues is crucial to fostering a more equitable and supportive academic environment in Nigerian universities.

Research Question 2

To what extent do Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers?

Table 2: Mean rating of responses on Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers

S/N	Item on Undue Pressure on Academics	N	Mean	SD	Decision
11	High costs of Scopus publications hinder promotions.	220	3.40	0.78	Accepted
12	Financial limitations reduce ability to meet promotion criteria.	220	3.25	0.85	Accepted
13	Publishing costs delay career progression.	220	3.15	0.8	Accepted
14	Career advancement affected by Scopus publication costs.	220	3.05	0.82	Accepted
15	High costs lead to prioritization of other career aspects.	220	2.75	0.76	Accepted
16	Personal/professional goals sacrificed for Scopus fees.	220	2.65	0.78	Accepted
17	Limited institutional support hinders meeting promotion needs.	220	2.85	0.80	Accepted
18	Financial burden shifts focus to quantity over quality.	220	3.20	0.77	Accepted
19	Extra work required to afford Scopus publication fees.	220	2.95	0.79	Accepted
20	Inability to afford fees causes feelings of inadequacy.	220	2.70	0.81	Accepted
Overall Cluster Mean		220	3.00	0.8	Accepted

The data from Table 2 provides valuable insights into how Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress among Nigerian university lecturers. A sample of 546 respondents reflects a broad range of academic experiences. The highest mean score of 3.4 (SD = 0.78) indicates strong agreement that certain aspects of Scopus-driven criteria significantly contribute to stress, with low variability in responses, suggesting broad consensus. A slightly

lower mean of 3.25 (SD = 0.85) also shows high agreement, but with more variability, indicating some differences in perceptions. Moderate agreement is observed for mean scores between 3.05 and 2.85, suggesting that these aspects of the criteria are still seen as impactful, though to a lesser extent. The standard deviations here reflect moderate variability in how lecturers experience these challenges. Conversely, the lowest mean scores (2.65 and 2.7) suggest that certain elements are seen as less stressful, with higher variability in responses, reflecting diverse individual experiences. Overall, the mean score of 3.0 (SD = 0.8) suggests general agreement that Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress, but the varying levels of intensity across individuals point to differing personal and professional impacts. The findings highlight the significant role of Scopus-driven criteria in shaping academic stress, with some aspects causing considerable challenges, while others are perceived less negatively. The variability in the responses calls for further investigation into how these criteria affect lecturers and potential reforms to ease the burdens they cause.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities based on gender

Table 3: T-test on Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities based on gender

Variables	N	Mean (M)	SD	Variance (SD)	t-Test	p-value
Male Academics	120	3.20	0.80	0.64	t = 3.11	p = 0.0019
Female Academics	80	3.00	0.70	0.49		

The results of the independent t-test reveal a significant gender-based difference in the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities concerning Scopus-driven promotional criteria. The analysis yielded a t-value of 3.11 and a p-value of 0.0019, which is below the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between male and female academics. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that gender influences how academics perceive the pressure of meeting Scopus-driven promotion requirements. Male academics reported a slightly higher mean score (3.2) than female academics (3.0), suggesting they experience greater pressure related to Scopus-driven criteria. This difference in mean scores highlights a possible gender-based disparity in the perceived weight of academic publishing requirements. Additionally, the standard deviation was higher for males (0.8) than for females (0.7), indicating more variability in male responses. This implies that while some male academics experience significant pressure, others may not feel as strongly about it. Female academics, in contrast, exhibited a more consistent experience of pressure.

These findings point to broader gendered experiences in academia. Male academics may face greater pressure due to career advancement expectations or departmental demands for

publishing in high-impact journals, leading to higher stress levels. Female academics, on the other hand, might contend with different pressures, such as balancing work and family responsibilities or coping with gender biases, which could explain their slightly lower perceived levels of pressure. The significant gender differences in pressure reveal underlying disparities in academic institutions, likely influenced by sociocultural factors, including academic performance expectations and available mentorship opportunities. These disparities suggest the need for gender-sensitive policies and initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by male and female academics. To mitigate undue pressure, universities could reassess their emphasis on Scopus-driven publications in promotion processes, ensuring that both genders are equally supported. Tailored mentorship programs and institutional support systems could help reduce stress, particularly for those overwhelmed by the demands of publishing. This would foster a healthier and more inclusive academic environment. In conclusion, while both genders face pressure from Scopus-driven promotion criteria, male academics report slightly higher stress, emphasizing the need for further research into gendered academic stress and the development of more equitable career advancement systems in Nigerian universities.

Hypothesis two

Scopus-driven promotional criteria do not significantly contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers based on years of experience

Table 4: T-test on Scopus-driven promotional criteria do not significantly contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers based on years of experience

Variables	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Variance (SD ²)	t-value	p-value
Lecturers with < 10 years	120	3.1	0.8	0.64	t = 1.56	p = 0.1201
Lecturers with ≥ 10 years	80	3	0.7	0.49		

The findings from the independent t-test in Table 4 analysis revealed that years of experience do not significantly contribute to the academic stress and professional challenges faced by Nigerian university lecturers regarding Scopus-driven promotional criteria. The study compared lecturers with fewer than 10 years of experience and those with 10 or more years of experience. Both groups reported similar levels of stress, with a mean score of 3.1 for less experienced lecturers and 3.0 for more experienced lecturers. The difference in means was minimal, and the standard deviations for both groups were comparable, suggesting similar levels of stress within each group. The calculated t-value of 1.56 and p-value of 0.1201 indicated that the difference between the two groups could have occurred by chance, and the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that experience does not significantly affect the stress or professional challenges associated with Scopus-driven promotional criteria.

The findings suggest that the pressure to meet Scopus-driven promotional criteria is consistent across all career stages, affecting both early-career and experienced lecturers. Given this, the study recommends that universities implement institution-wide strategies to reduce the

pressure, such as providing research funding, mentorship, and additional resources. In conclusion, the study highlights that the stress experienced due to Scopus-driven criteria is not influenced by years of experience, and universities should revise their promotion policies and offer better support for lecturers at all career stages.

Discussion of the findings

Examine the relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities.

The adoption of Scopus-driven promotional criteria in Nigerian universities has introduced significant challenges for academics, placing undue financial pressure on them. One of the primary issues highlighted by various studies is the increased personal financial costs associated with Scopus publications. The findings are in consonance with Oyewole & Salami (2022) who asserted that the high Article Processing Charges (APCs) required for publication in Scopus-indexed journals create a considerable financial burden for lecturers, many of whom are forced to use their personal funds to cover these costs. This financial strain limits their ability to save or invest in other important areas of their lives, further exacerbating their economic instability. In agreement with Oyewole & Salami (2022) academics often experience a reduction in their overall financial well-being, which can extend to impacts on family support and stability. The requirement for Scopus publications places additional pressure on lecturers, forcing them to seek alternative sources of income. The findings are consistent with Olayemi & Bassey (2023) whose findings revealed that many lecturers find themselves taking on extra teaching roles, engaging in consultancy work, or looking for external funding to meet the publication demands. This search for additional income increases stress and reduces the time available for other academic responsibilities, such as teaching, mentorship, and community service. The intense focus on publishing for career progression ultimately leads to a significant imbalance between professional duties and personal well-being, causing many lecturers to experience burnout and declining job satisfaction.

Moreover, the emphasis on Scopus publications has also contributed to the creation of economic inequality among academics. Established lecturers with access to external funding or institutional support have an advantage in meeting the publication requirements, while early-career academics or those without sufficient resources are disadvantaged (Oyewole & Salami, 2022). This inequality fosters a competitive academic environment where only a select group of lecturers can thrive, leading to a widening gap in academic success and career progression. The lack of institutional support, limited funding, and inadequate research infrastructure further exacerbate this disparity, making it even more difficult for lecturers in resource-constrained situations to meet Scopus-driven publication expectations (Ogunleye & Onuoha, 2022). Additionally, the financial burden of Scopus publication requirements often leads to a prioritization of quantity over quality in academic research. In an effort to meet the promotion criteria, lecturers may focus on publishing multiple papers in accessible journals, rather than engaging in deep, high-quality research that addresses local or national issues (Afolabi, 2023). This shift in research focus compromises the societal relevance of academic work, as academics are more likely to pursue topics that appeal to international audiences rather than addressing pressing domestic challenges. This trend undermines the potential for Nigerian universities to contribute meaningfully to the country's development and societal needs.

The Scopus-driven promotional criteria, while intended to improve research quality and enhance institutional rankings, have created significant financial and professional challenges for academics in Nigerian universities. The financial costs associated with Scopus publications, combined with limited institutional support, have led to stress, burnout, and a growing inequality among academics. Furthermore, the focus on global relevance often detracts from research that could benefit local communities, reducing the overall impact of academic work in Nigeria. As such, these promotional criteria have resulted in a situation where only those with sufficient resources and institutional backing can meet the demands of Scopus publications, creating a cycle of disadvantage for many lecturers.

Determine the extent to which Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among lecturers in Nigerian universities

The findings of the study revealed that Scopus-driven promotional criteria significantly contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among lecturers in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study identified several key issues tied to the financial and professional demands imposed by these criteria. The high costs of publishing in Scopus-indexed journals emerged as a major obstacle for many lecturers, which aligns with Adi et al. (2023), who found that Article Processing Charges (APCs) place a considerable financial burden on academics. The study further highlighted that this financial strain forces lecturers to prioritize publication expenses over other professional goals, delaying career progression and creating inequality among academics, particularly for early-career lecturers and those in underfunded institutions. Additionally, the findings underscored that Scopus-driven criteria negatively impact other core academic responsibilities, such as teaching, mentorship, and community service. This aligns with Olayemi and Bassey's (2023) research, which found that 80% of surveyed lecturers felt overburdened by publication demands, resulting in reduced time for these essential activities. The pressure to meet publication requirements led to burnout, declining job satisfaction, and compromised professional fulfillment. The findings also agree with Ogunleye and Onuoha's (2022) study, which reported that unreliable infrastructure, limited access to academic resources, and insufficient funding increased the difficulty of meeting Scopus publication expectations. Frequent disruptions, such as strikes and inconsistent academic calendars, further compounded these challenges, making it increasingly difficult for lecturers to meet institutional demands. The study's findings are also consistent with Sanni's (2023) research, which revealed that 45% of surveyed lecturers admitted to publishing in predatory journals due to the immense pressure to fulfill Scopus requirements. Such practices undermine the credibility of academic outputs and diminish the overall quality of research. The study highlighted the psychological toll of Scopus-driven promotional criteria. Many lecturers reported feelings of inadequacy and frustration when unable to afford publication fees, which negatively affected their self-esteem and overall well-being. This aligns with the broader narrative that the "publish or perish" culture creates a stressful and unsustainable academic environment, as evidenced by the empirical studies.

Conclusion

This study has examined the impact of Scopus-driven promotional criteria on the academic stress and professional challenges faced by lecturers in Nigerian universities. The findings reveal that the emphasis on publishing in Scopus-indexed journals has placed significant financial and professional pressures on academics. High publication costs, limited institutional

support, and the shifting focus from quality to quantity of research have created a stressful environment for lecturers, hindering their career progression and diminishing their overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the financial burden of publishing has led many lecturers to prioritize meeting publication requirements over addressing local academic and societal needs, further contributing to a disconnect between the goals of higher education and the development needs of Nigerian communities. The study highlights the need for a more balanced approach to academic promotion, one that considers not only the quantity of publications but also the quality, relevance, and impact of research on both national and international levels. Additionally, it is crucial that Nigerian universities provide greater financial and institutional support to alleviate the burden on lecturers and help them meet the publication requirements without sacrificing their well-being or professional aspirations. By fostering an academic environment that supports research integrity, innovation, and the professional growth of lecturers, Nigerian universities can contribute to the overall improvement of higher education in the country while also addressing the broader societal challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the variables of the study, the following two recommendations are proposed:

1. Nigerian universities should establish robust financial support mechanisms to assist lecturers with the costs associated with publishing in Scopus-indexed journals. This could include providing research grants, subsidizing article processing charges (APCs), or creating institutional funds to cover publishing fees. Such support would alleviate the financial burden on lecturers, enabling them to focus more on producing high-quality research that meets academic standards without sacrificing their personal or professional well-being. Additionally, universities should invest in creating a more conducive research environment, with reliable internet access, infrastructure, and resources to facilitate research activities.
2. Universities and accreditation bodies should reconsider the overemphasis on Scopus-indexed publications as the primary criterion for academic promotions. Promotion criteria should be broadened to include other forms of scholarly contribution, such as local research addressing national issues, community engagement, and teaching excellence. By adopting a more comprehensive and inclusive approach, universities can reduce the pressure on lecturers to prioritize international publication over addressing pressing local concerns, thereby aligning academic work with the social and developmental needs of Nigerian communities. This would foster a healthier academic culture and reduce stress among lecturers.

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APPENDIX 1

Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria and Undue Pressure on Academics in Nigerian Universities: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Lecturers (SDPCUPANUCFNLQ)

SECTION A

Instruction: please kindly tick () the option which best describes you among the options below:

Gender: Male () Female ()
 Years of Experience: below 10 years () 10 years and above ()

SECTION B

Please kindly give your honest respond to the items presented below by ticking () the option that appeals to you most using the following keys:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)
- 2 = Disagree (D)
- 3 = Agree (A)
- 4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

What is the relationship between Scopus-driven promotional criteria and the undue pressure experienced by academics in Nigerian universities?

S/ N	Items on Undue Pressure on Academics	SA	A	S D	D
1	Scopus publication pressure increases personal financial costs				
2	Significant portion of salary spent on APCs for Scopus journals				
3	Scopus emphasis limits saving and investments				
4	Financial burden impacts family support and stability				
5	Requirement for Scopus publications strains economic well-being				
6	Publishing in Scopus requires seeking extra income				
7	Scopus requirements discourage high-quality research				
8	Scopus emphasis creates economic inequality among academics				
9	Limited funding restricts Scopus research access				
10	Lack of funding for Scopus publications leads to disadvantage				

To what extent do Scopus-driven promotional criteria contribute to academic stress and professional challenges among Nigerian university lecturers?

S/ N.	Items on Scopus-Driven Promotional Criteria	SA	A	S D	D
11	High costs of Scopus publications hinder promotions				
12	Financial limitations reduce ability to meet promotion criteria				
13	Publishing costs delay career progression				
14	Career advancement affected by Scopus publication costs				
15	High costs lead to prioritization of other career aspects				
16	Personal/professional goals sacrificed for Scopus fees				
17	Limited institutional support hinders meeting promotion needs				
18	Financial burden shifts focus to quantity over quality				
19	Extra work required to afford Scopus publication fees				
20	Inability to afford fees causes feelings of inadequacy				