

INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS OF RESEARCH QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY AND IMPACT IN AFRICA

Rachael Oduyemi^{1,2}, Eman Sobh^{3,4,5}, Ajibola Oladejo³, Eunice Fonyuy Fondze-Fombele⁶, Limkile Mpofo^{7,8},
Jerita Mwambi⁹, Bright Nwaru^{3,10}

¹Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

²University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

³African Science Frontiers Initiatives (ASFI)

⁴Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

⁵Taibah University, Medina, Saudi Arabia

⁶University of Buea, Cameroon

⁷University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa

⁸University of South Africa, Department of Health Studies, Pretoria, South

⁹Pwani University, Kilifi, Kenya

¹⁰University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

Corresponding Author's Email: olufunmioduyemi4@gmail.com

Background: Africa contributes about 1% of global research outputs. Little is known about research quality, productivity, & impact (QPI) in Africa. This study investigated the institutional determinants of research QPI in Africa.

Methods: This study is part of African Science Frontiers Initiatives (ASFI) research QPI survey sent out to African scholars in May 2023. The questionnaire was developed, tested, & validated by ASFI research QPI workgroup.

Results: We received 257 responses (52% were males, 66% ≥40 years, 48% had a Ph.D. degree, Most people had their workplace at the University/research institutes (61%), with the majority (82.5%) being in full-time employment & 75% had experience ≤10 years. 64.6% were from West-Central Africa, 29.5% from North-East Africa, while 5.8% from Southern Africa). A low percentage of respondents rated the research quality (36%) & productivity (25%) of their country, their own research productivity (32%) as above average. 54% think their own research is of high quality. Regarding the impact of research, the majority agreed that their research had impact on development of their academic career (92%), visibility, ranking, & research outputs of institutions (80%), solving society problems (82%), & progress of their research field (90%). However, they reported that their research has never been used to formulate policy/guidelines (70%). Factors contributing to low QP of research included administrative barriers, poor infrastructure, poor research skills, excess workload, & lack of funds.

Conclusions: The perception of African researchers regarding research quality & productivity in their countries & own research is low. The impact of their research in influencing the development of policies/guidelines was poor. Several multi-sectoral barriers to doing quality research exist, which need to be removed for any tangible quality improvement.

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