

Overcoming Challenges in Scholarly Communication Platform utilization: A study of Librarians in Military Institutions in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly communication platforms have become essential tools for enhancing research visibility, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination in higher education institutions. Despite these benefits, their effective utilization remains constrained by several organizational, technological, and human-related factors, particularly within military institutions where information management is influenced by security protocols and hierarchical administrative structures. This study investigated the challenges affecting the utilization of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing among librarians in military institutions in Northern Nigeria and assessed the impact of these challenges on platform utilization. A quantitative survey research design was adopted, involving a census of 130 librarians from the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna, the Nigerian Army University Bui, and the Air Force Institute of Technology Kaduna. Ninety-eight valid questionnaires were returned, representing a 75% response rate. The findings revealed that limited time to engage with scholarly communication platforms, resistance to organizational change, inadequate leadership support, poor digital skills, and poor Internet connectivity were the major challenges experienced by respondents. The study further found that these challenges exerted predominantly high impacts on the effective utilization of scholarly communication platforms. The study concludes that organizational barriers are more prominent than technological constraints in shaping platform utilization within military libraries. It recommends stronger institutional leadership support, context-specific capacity-building programmes, improved digital infrastructure, and policies that promote the secure and effective use of scholarly communication platforms within military institutions.

Keywords: Communication Platform utilization; Librarians; Military Institutions; Northern Nigeria

1. Introduction

The digital transformation of research and scholarship has positioned scholarly communication platforms, such as institutional repositories, open access journals, and academic social networks, as indispensable tools for the dissemination of knowledge. Borgman (2007) traces this shift as part of a broader move toward digital infrastructure that reshapes how scholars create, share, and preserve knowledge, while Shulenburger (2009) frames it as a continuing journey from print-based to digital modes of scholarly exchange. These platforms are widely credited with accelerating innovation, enhancing research visibility, and fostering global collaboration among scholars (Harley et al., 2010). For libraries, particularly those operating in research-intensive environments, facilitating access to and effective use of these platforms has become a core function, with academic libraries increasingly expected to play an active role in scholarly communication rather than a purely custodial one (Lewis & Sale, 2018).

However, the integration of these technologies into library practice does not happen automatically. Experience from other national contexts shows that building effective scholarly communication platforms depends on deliberate institutional investment and coordination; Kim and Mackey (2016), reflecting on Korea's experience, note that such platforms succeed only where infrastructure, policy, and sustained institutional support are aligned. Where these conditions are absent or uneven, adoption tends to lag behind the technology's potential.

In Nigeria, the academic and research community has shown growing interest in leveraging these platforms to increase the visibility of local scholarship. When effectively utilized, such tools can significantly expand the global reach of research outputs from Nigerian institutions (Musa et al., 2025). Yet the same body of work points to a persistent gap between the potential of these platforms and their actual, sustained use. Ukachi et al. (2024) found that digitization has had a measurable but uneven impact on the research productivity of Nigerian librarians, suggesting that access to digital tools alone does not guarantee effective use. Similarly, Abdullahi and Lawan (2025) identified a range of factors, from infrastructural limitations to inadequate staff capacity, that continue to affect service delivery in Nigerian e-libraries. At a broader level, Subaveerapandiyani et al. (2024) documented how researchers in resource-constrained Nigerian university communities struggle to make full use of online collaboration tools, largely because of infrastructural and contextual barriers rather than a lack of awareness or interest. Together, these studies suggest that the challenges limiting the use of scholarly communication platforms in Nigeria are structural and contextual, not simply a matter of exposure or willingness to adopt new tools.

This gap is likely more pronounced in specialized settings such as military institutions. In Northern Nigeria, military libraries operate at the intersection of academia and national security. They serve a distinct user community made up of officers, cadets, students, researchers, and defense analysts, whose information needs are often tied directly to strategic and operational decision-making. The potential benefits of scholarly communication platforms for these institutions are clear: preserving institutional memory, sharing unclassified research, and supporting professional military education. At the same time, the environment in which military librarians work is shaped by realities not typically found in conventional university libraries, including heightened security concerns, strict information classification protocols, infrastructural deficits common to the region, and a hierarchical administrative structure. Librarians in these settings must navigate all of these factors at once, and the challenges they face in using modern scholarly communication tools are likely to differ in kind and degree from those reported in mainstream academic libraries.

Despite the clear potential of scholarly communication platforms, the studies reviewed above (Abdullahi & Lawan, 2025; Subaveerapandiyani et al., 2024; Ukachi, Adedokun, & Nongo, 2024) point to a range of structural and infrastructural challenges affecting their use in Nigerian academic institutions generally. What remains largely absent from this literature, however, is empirical research that examines these challenges specifically within the security-conscious environment of military institutions in Northern Nigeria. Existing studies tend to focus on

conventional academic and research libraries, leaving the experiences of librarians working under military administrative and security constraints largely unexamined. This is a significant gap, given that the barriers librarians face in such settings may be structurally different from those documented elsewhere, and solutions developed for conventional academic libraries may not transfer directly to a military context.

This study is therefore necessary to systematically identify, examine, and document the specific challenges, technological, infrastructural, administrative, security-related, and human, that impede the utilization of scholarly communication platforms by librarians in military institutions in Northern Nigeria. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights to inform strategic planning, policy formulation, and resource allocation, with the ultimate goal of fostering a more effective information-sharing environment within Nigeria's military research and education sector. To this end, the study is guided by the following objectives: (i) to examine the challenges associated with the utilization of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing among librarians in military institutions in Northern Nigeria; and (ii) to assess the impact of these challenges on the use of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing.

2. Literature Review

Scholarly communication refers to the processes through which research findings are created, evaluated, disseminated, preserved, and reused within the academic community. Traditionally, this process relied on printed books, journals, conference proceedings, and institutional reports. The rapid advancement of digital technologies has since transformed these processes, giving rise to scholarly communication platforms that support faster, broader, and more collaborative dissemination of research outputs.

The Concept of Scholarly Communication

Borgman (2007) conceptualized scholarly communication as an integrated ecosystem made up of researchers, publishers, libraries, funding agencies, and information technologies, all working together to produce, evaluate, preserve, and disseminate scholarly knowledge. This view suggests that scholarly communication extends well beyond publication to include research data management, open access, digital preservation, peer review, and broader knowledge exchange. Shulenburg (2009) similarly described the shift as part of a longer historical trajectory, in which scholarly communication has moved from a print-based system toward a digital one, and in some respects is beginning to fold back on some of the values, such as peer validation and formal archiving, that characterized the print era. Harley, Acord, Earl-Novell, Lawrence, and King (2010) extended this view, arguing that digital technologies have reshaped scholarly practices by expanding opportunities for collaboration, increasing the visibility of research outputs, and improving access to scholarly information across geographical boundaries that once limited the reach of academic work.

Scholarly Communication Platforms and the Role of Libraries

Within this evolving ecosystem, libraries have taken on an increasingly active role. Lewis and Sale (2018) observed that libraries have become strategic partners in scholarly communication by providing the infrastructure and expertise researchers need to maximize the visibility and accessibility of their scholarly outputs. This marks a departure from the traditional view of the library as a passive repository of knowledge toward one in which librarians actively shape how research is shared and discovered.

Evidence from outside Nigeria illustrates both the promise and the difficulty of this shift. Kim and Mackey (2016), in their study of Korean academic libraries, found that the successful implementation of scholarly communication platforms depended largely on institutional commitment, staff capacity building, and collaboration among librarians, researchers, and university management. Technological infrastructure created the enabling environment, but organizational support and continuous professional development were identified as the principal drivers of long-term

sustainability. This finding is significant because it suggests that the barriers to platform adoption are frequently organizational rather than purely technical.

Lewis and Sale (2018), through a broader review of scholarly communication initiatives in academic libraries, reached a similar conclusion. They found that many libraries continue to struggle with inadequate organizational support, changing professional responsibilities, copyright complexities, and gaps in digital competency among staff. Rather than treating these as isolated technological problems, they argued that such difficulties are better understood as symptoms of broader organizational transformation, requiring changes in structure, culture, and professional roles rather than technology procurement alone.

Scholarly Communication Platforms in the Nigerian Context

Within Nigeria specifically, a growing body of work has examined how well academic institutions are able to translate the promise of scholarly communication platforms into actual practice. Musa, Garba, and Jibrin (2025), in a study of a Nigerian university library, found that open access platforms could meaningfully enhance the research visibility of an institution when librarians actively supported their use, though the extent of this benefit depended heavily on the level of institutional investment behind the platform.

Other studies point to a persistent gap between the availability of these platforms and their consistent use. Ukachi, Adedokun, and Nongo (2024) examined the perceived impact of digitization on the research productivity of Nigerian librarians and found that while digitization had contributed positively to productivity in some respects, its effects were uneven across institutions, suggesting that access to digital tools does not by itself guarantee effective use. Abdullahi and Lawan (2025), focusing on e-libraries in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria, identified a range of factors constraining service delivery, including infrastructural limitations, inconsistent power supply, and inadequate staff capacity for managing digital services. At a broader level, Subaveerapandiyani, Subramani, Yadav, Mushanga, and Amees (2024) studied the use of online collaboration tools among researchers in resource-constrained Nigerian university communities and found that infrastructural and contextual barriers, rather than a lack of awareness or willingness, were the primary factors limiting effective use.

Taken together, these studies suggest that the challenges limiting the use of scholarly communication platforms in Nigeria are structural and contextual rather than a simple matter of exposure to new technology. They also show a consistent pattern across the literature: most available studies have concentrated on conventional university settings, with comparatively little attention paid to specialized institutional contexts, including military academies, where the operating conditions for librarians differ considerably from those of a typical university library.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Lewin's (1947) Three-Stage Change Model of Organizational Change Theory, which explains institutional transformation through three sequential stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. Applied to academic libraries, this framework suggests that the adoption of scholarly communication technology is best understood as an institutional and behavioural shift rather than a simple infrastructure upgrade. In this view, unfreezing involves recognizing the need for change and loosening existing routines; changing involves the actual adoption and adjustment to new tools and workflows; and refreezing involves embedding the new practices into the institution's normal way of operating. Success at each stage depends heavily on leadership commitment, staff training, and the ability to overcome resistance to change.

This theoretical lens is particularly well suited to military academic institutions, where rigid hierarchies and top-down administrative directives make leadership support a decisive factor in whether new technology is adopted and sustained. Within such structures, decisions about resource allocation, security clearance for digital tools, and staff training are

unlikely to succeed without deliberate direction from institutional leadership. Framed this way, staff resistance and limited professional development in military libraries are better understood as reflections of organizational readiness, shaped by leadership, culture, and structure, rather than as simple technological deficiencies.

Summary and Identified Gap

The literature reviewed shows consistent agreement that scholarly communication platforms hold considerable potential for improving research visibility and collaboration, and that libraries are central to realizing this potential (Borgman, 2007; Harley et al., 2010; Lewis & Sale, 2018). At the same time, the literature shows that successful adoption depends less on the availability of technology and more on organizational factors such as leadership support, staff capacity, and institutional culture (Kim & Mackey, 2016; Lewis & Sale, 2018). Within Nigeria, studies confirm that these organizational and infrastructural barriers are widespread across conventional academic settings (Abdullahi & Lawan, 2025; Musa, Garba, & Jibrin, 2025; Subaveerapandiyani et al., 2024; Ukachi, Adedokun, & Nongo, 2024).

However, existing research on scholarly communication platforms in academic libraries has three notable limitations. First, it lacks focus on military institutions, with most studies concentrating on conventional universities. Second, it tends to overemphasize technological factors over organizational and leadership-related ones, despite evidence from studies such as Kim and Mackey (2016) that organizational readiness is often the more decisive factor. Third, much of the existing Nigerian literature relies on descriptive methods and has not examined scholarly communication challenges specifically within Nigerian military contexts. This study addresses these gaps by drawing on Organizational Change Theory to examine how leadership, culture, and structural factors influence the utilization of scholarly communication platforms among librarians in military institutions in Northern Nigeria.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative approach, using a descriptive survey design to collect structured data on existing conditions, opinions, and practices in library science. Descriptive survey designs are well suited to this kind of research because they allow a researcher to describe a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The target population comprised 130 professional librarians drawn from three military higher education institutions in Northern Nigeria: the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna; the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Kaduna; and the Nigerian Army University Bui (NAUB). Given the relatively small and accessible size of this population, the study adopted a census approach rather than sampling. Israel (1992) notes that when a population is small enough to be studied in its entirety, a census is preferable to sampling because it removes sampling error and captures the full range of views within the group. All 130 librarians were therefore considered eligible participants.

Data were collected using a self-developed, structured questionnaire made up of closed-ended items, chosen to produce responses that were objective and straightforward to code and analyze. To establish face and content validity, the draft instrument was reviewed by three experts in Library and Information Science, whose comments informed revisions to item wording, clarity, and sequencing. Expert review of this kind is a standard step in establishing that an instrument measures what it is intended to measure before it is administered in the field (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Following expert validation, the instrument was piloted with 20 librarians at the Nigeria Police Academy Library, a group with characteristics similar to the target population but excluded from the main study. The pilot yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above across the constructs measured, meeting the generally accepted minimum threshold for internal consistency in social science research (Nunnally, 1978; Taber, 2018). On this basis, the instrument was considered reliable and ready for full deployment.

The questionnaire was personally administered to all 130 members of the target population. Ninety-eight valid copies were retrieved, yielding a response rate of 75 percent, which exceeds commonly cited thresholds for an adequate survey response rate in social science research (Babbie, 2020). Data from the retrieved copies were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, were used to address the study's research objectives.

4. Results and Discussion

A total number of one hundred and thirty copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents across the three military institutions in northern Nigeria and summary of the responses is presented in Table 1.1.

Response Rate

A total number of one hundred and thirty copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents across the three military institutions in northern Nigeria and summary of the responses is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Summary of Response Rate According to each University

S/n	University	Administered Frequency	Administered %	Returned Frequency	Returned %
1.	AFIT	49	38%	34	26%
2.	NDA	48	37%	37	28%
3.	NAUB	33	25%	27	21%
Total		130	100%	98	75%

Source: findings from the instrument

Table 1.1 shows that a total of 130 questionnaires were distributed to librarians across the three selected military higher education institutions in Northern Nigeria. Of these, 98 completed questionnaires were returned and found suitable for analysis, representing a response rate of 75%. This response rate is considered adequate for survey research and provides a reliable basis for analyzing the challenges associated with the utilization of scholarly communication platforms among librarians in the study area.

Challenges Associated with the Utilization of Scholarly Communication Platforms

Respondents were asked to indicate the challenges that hinder the use of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing activities and the respondents' responses are presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Challenges associated with Utilization of Scholarly Communication Platforms

S/N	Challenges	Yes Frequency (%)	No Frequency (%)
A	Poor skills in the use of scholarly communication platforms	66 (67.3%)	32 (32.6%)
B	Resistance to change among library staff	81 (83.0%)	17 (17.3%)
C	Information privacy and security concerns	49 (50.0%)	49 (50.0%)
D	Lack of awareness on their benefits	31 (31.6%)	67 (68.4%)
E	Lack of support/interest of leadership	77 (78.6%)	21 (21.4%)
F	Inadequate infrastructure	39 (39.8%)	59 (60.2%)
G	Poor internet connectivity	57 (58.2%)	41 (41.8%)
H	Limited time to engage on these platforms	84 (85.7%)	14 (14.3%)

Table 1.2 shows the results of the challenges associated with the utilization of scholarly communication platforms in the military institutions in Northern Nigeria. The majority of respondents — 84 (85.7%) — indicated limited time to engage on these platforms, followed by 81 (83.0%) reporting resistance to change among library staff, 77 (78.6%) indicating lack of support/interest of leadership, 66 (67.3%) reporting poor skills in the use of scholarly communication platforms, and 57 (58.2%) citing poor internet connectivity as major challenges faced.

A significant number of respondents also identified: 49 (50.0%) information privacy and security concerns; 39 (39.8%) inadequate infrastructure; and 31 (31.6%) lack of awareness on their benefits as major challenges.

Respondents were further asked to rate the impact of these challenges on the use of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing. Their responses are presented in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Impact of Challenges

Rate the impact of challenges on the use of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing	Frequency	Percent (%)
VERY HIGH	26	(26.5%)
HIGH	43	(43.9%)
MODERATE	16	(16.3%)
LOW	13	(13.3%)
Total	98	100.0

Data in Table 1.3 indicates that a significant majority (70.4%) of respondents perceive the challenges impacting their use of scholarly communication platforms for information sharing as high or very high, representing a major barrier to efficient operation. Conversely, only 13.3% of participants reported a low impact, highlighting that the identified constraints constitute a significant hindrance to digital information-sharing activities within the studied institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that organisational challenges, rather than technological ones, constitute the primary barriers to the effective utilisation of scholarly communication platforms among librarians in military institutions in Northern Nigeria. Limited time for engagement, resistance to organisational change, inadequate leadership support, and insufficient digital competencies emerged as the most frequently reported constraints, with unstable internet connectivity also featuring prominently among the difficulties raised by respondents.

These results align closely with Lewin's (1947) Three-Stage Model of Organisational Change, which frames technology adoption as a process of unfreezing existing practices, implementing new behaviours, and refreezing them within institutional routines. In the hierarchical environment of military academia, the unfreezing stage depends heavily on clear leadership signals and deliberate efforts to address staff resistance before any lasting behavioural change can take hold. The prominence of limited time and resistance in the present data suggests that this unfreezing has not yet occurred in a sustained way across the three institutions studied, leaving many librarians without the motivational and structural conditions required for meaningful change in how they engage with scholarly communication platforms.

This organisational emphasis is consistent with earlier international research. Kim and Mackey (2016) found that the successful implementation of scholarly communication platforms in Korean academic libraries rested primarily on institutional commitment, continuous staff capacity building, and collaboration among librarians, researchers, and management, rather than on technological infrastructure alone. Lewis and Sale (2018) similarly argued that many of the difficulties faced by academic libraries stem from inadequate organisational support, shifting professional roles, and gaps in digital competency, and that these are better understood as issues of organisational transformation than as isolated technical problems. The present study extends these insights by showing that the same organisational dynamics operate with even greater intensity in military settings, where rigid command structures and security protocols appear to amplify the effects of weak leadership endorsement and staff resistance.

Within the Nigerian context specifically, earlier studies have tended to attribute low platform utilisation mainly to technological and infrastructural deficiencies (Musa et al., 2025; Ukachi et al., 2024). The present findings partially confirm this pattern, in that poor internet connectivity remains a genuine and frequently cited obstacle. However, the data also show that organisational and human factors exert a stronger overall influence on utilisation than infrastructure alone. This shift in emphasis carries practical significance: it suggests that investments in connectivity and hardware, while necessary, are unlikely to produce lasting improvements in platform use unless they are accompanied by deliberate change management efforts that address leadership behaviour, staff attitudes, and workload allocation.

A further contribution of this study lies in its treatment of information privacy and security as a distinct dimension of the utilisation challenge. Respondents were evenly divided on the importance of these concerns, reflecting the dual pressures under which military librarians operate: the academic expectation of open dissemination on one hand, and the institutional requirement for confidentiality on the other. Conventional university libraries rarely face tensions of this kind, and this may explain why existing literature on scholarly communication in Nigeria has largely overlooked it. Addressing this tension will likely require more than technical safeguards such as access controls or encryption. It calls for institutional policies that clearly define the boundaries of open dissemination while preserving operational security, creating the conditions under which both the unfreezing and eventual refreezing of new professional practices can occur.

Over all, these findings indicate that platform utilisation in military libraries is, at its core, an organisational readiness issue rather than a purely technical one. This reading is consistent with the study's first objective, which set out to examine the challenges associated with platform utilisation, and its second, which assessed the relative impact of these challenges. The results suggest that sustainable progress in this area depends on coordinated action across several fronts: visible leadership endorsement, protected time for professional engagement, targeted capacity development, and security-conscious policy frameworks that reconcile openness with confidentiality. Without these elements in place, technological upgrades on their own are likely to continue falling short of their intended impact.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The effective use of scholarly communication platforms in military higher education institutions in Northern Nigeria depends more on organisational factors than on technological infrastructure alone. Although problems such as unreliable internet connectivity persist, the greater obstacles arise from structural rigidities within these institutions, particularly resistance to change among staff and insufficient active support from leadership. Viewed through the lens of Organisational Change Theory, the findings show that introducing modern research-sharing platforms is not simply a matter of installing new technology. It requires a deeper process of institutional adjustment and cultural readiness.

The military academic setting adds further complexity. Librarians must balance the need for greater research visibility with strict requirements to protect sensitive information. This tension produces divided opinions on data privacy and security. Lasting improvement will therefore depend on a coordinated approach rather than isolated investments in information technology. Progress is most likely when institutional leaders provide clear direction, staff receive continuous capacity development, and operational policies are designed to uphold both scholarly openness and military information security.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

- i. Institutional management in military higher education institutions should formally designate scholarly communication as a strategic priority. This can be achieved by issuing clear policy statements, incorporating platform use into departmental performance targets, and assigning specific responsibility for oversight to senior library or academic officers.
- ii. Regular, context-specific training programmes should be introduced for librarians. These programmes ought to focus on practical skills in managing institutional repositories, open-access publishing, and academic social networks, while also addressing the particular security protocols that apply in military settings. Training schedules should be protected within staff workloads so that limited time does not continue to act as a barrier.
- iii. Leadership at both institutional and library levels should actively model and promote the use of scholarly communication platforms. Visible endorsement through internal communications, recognition of staff who engage effectively, and inclusion of related activities in promotion criteria will help reduce resistance to organisational change.
- iv. Government agencies and institutional authorities responsible for military education should prioritise improvements in internet connectivity and basic ICT infrastructure within the libraries of the Nigerian Defence Academy, the Air Force Institute of Technology, and the Nigerian Army University Biu. Dedicated funding lines for digital library services would address the connectivity and infrastructure constraints identified in the study.
- v. Each institution should develop and implement a comprehensive institutional repository policy. The policy must outline procedures for depositing unclassified research outputs, define access levels consistent with military information security regulations, and establish clear guidelines that allow librarians to support open scholarship without compromising institutional security requirements.
- vi. A structured change-management process should be adopted, drawing on the principles of organisational readiness. This process should include diagnostic assessments of staff attitudes, targeted communication strategies to address resistance, and phased implementation plans that allow librarians to adapt gradually while maintaining operational security standards.

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