Challenges Encountered By Scholars in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case of Kenyan Universities

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Abstract- Some universities in Africa are almost non-existent in the international ratings in terms of research. Why? This paper attempted to investigate some of the challenges encountered by scholars in some selected Kenyan Universities as a representative of other universities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study used a descriptive survey design. Structured and unstructured questionnaires were used to collect data from university academic staff drawn from 3 public universities and 2 private universities. A combination of stratified and purposive sampling methods were used to select respondents. Respondents were categorized in terms of their academic ranks and sex. Random sampling was used to select the respondents proportionately from each category. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics followed by discussions. It was found that financial constraints, poor university management and ethnicity are among the challenges that hinder research in Kenyan universities. The study gave various recommendations including the allocation of sufficient funds to research related activities.

Index Terms- Challenges, Universities, Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya, Research

I. INTRODUCTION

World over, the core functions of universities centre around four areas; teaching, research, publishing and community outreach. The academic staffs are expected to be scholars who produce knowledge mainly through research. (NCHE, 2011). Research comprises of creative work undertaken in a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge; including knowledge of people, cultures and societies, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Academic research is a pathway to socio-economic, cultural and political transformations in the African Continent. Research is therefore a prerequisite for the success and credibility of any academic institution around the world, Africa not being an exception. The major centres of research, knowledge creation and scholarly communication in Africa are universities (Teferra, 2004). However, most universities in Sub-Saharan Africa have many problems that constrain their research output.

There is evidence that universities in Africa contribute less than 1 percent in international referred Journals. The contribution of African universities to World's scientific publications is only 1.4 percent with more than half of these coming from Egypt and

South Africa' (Hassan 2008). Yet, for a university to be relevant, its academic intellectuals must engage in quality teaching and researches that reflect the scientific and technological needs of society. This is an obvious threat to the growth of Africa's economies. It is paramount that the university academic staff should be constantly engaged in research-related activities apart from teaching. Currently however, this does not always happen. Some universities in Africa are almost non-existent in the national and international ratings in terms of research.

Kenya in particular has 33 chartered public universities and almost 20 chartered private universities and 13 other universities with Letter of Interim Authority (LIA). These universities are established through institutional Acts of Parliament under the Universities Act, 2012 which provides for the development of university education, the establishment, accreditation and governance of universities. Recent university rankings generally show that Kenyan universities are performing poorly. Other than other factors like teacher-student ratio, ranking takes into account the universities' research outputs and general contribution to new knowledge; levels of training and application of science and technology; presence on the internet and use of Information and Communication Technologies; volume of published material on the web; visibility and impact of the universities' web pages as measured by the citations (site visits) or links they receive (in links). The above issues present a worrying situation for Kenyan universities considering that Kenya is still a developing African country. The UN Development Index ranks Kenya as the second most 'unequal' country in East Africa, after Rwanda (Hassan, 2001). Ostensibly, there are fears that this inequality is as a result of lack of research to help alleviate problems. How has the government responded to this dilemma in the wake of decreasing financing in public Universities? What should be done to recreate a research University in Africa with academic staff capable of carrying out productive research? Using open questionnaires and documentary evidence from published works, we conducted a study on the challenges university scholars in Kenyan Universities are facing in conducting research-related activities and the necessary interventions that would recreate the research University for better academic service delivery and development.

II. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The study was guided by Vroom's Expectancy Motivation Theory (Vroom, 1999). The theory separates effort (which arises from motivation), performance, and outcomes. The theory

assumes that behavior results from conscious choices among alternatives whose purpose is to maximize pleasure and to minimize pain. Vroom realized that an employee's performance is based on individual factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience and abilities. He stated that effort, performance and motivation are linked in a person's motivation.

Expectancy is the belief that increased effort will lead to increased performance. This means that if university scholars work harder, then the returns from research activities both at individual, university and country will be better. This is affected by such things as:

 i. Having the right resources available such as time and resources
 ii. Having the right skills to do the job
 iii. Having the necessary support to get the job done such as supervisor support, or correct information on the job)

The element of expectancy is important behind the motivation behind research activities at the University and the possible obstacles towards achieving the same. Thus, Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation is not about self-interest in rewards but about the associations people make towards expected outcomes and the contribution they feel they can make towards those outcomes.
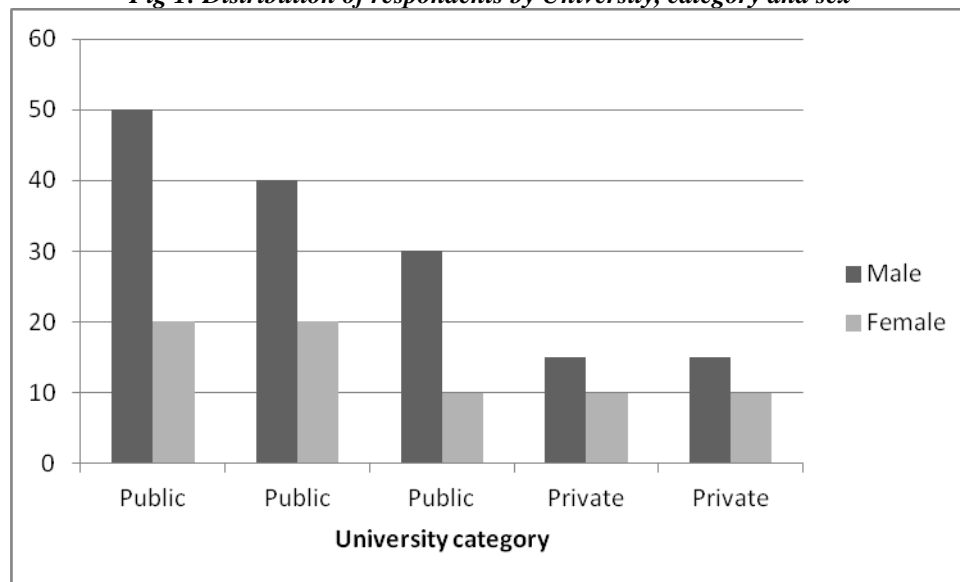
III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive and an explanatory research design. This involved the use of open ended and closed ended questionnaires to collect, analyse, and interpret data. The study was conducted in three public universities and two private universities in Kenya among the academic staff. Academic staff comprised of the ranks of full professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, lecturer and tutorial fellow (both men and women). The public universities included; Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Kibabii University (KIBU) and Maseno University (MU). Private universities on the other hand comprised of Mt. Kenya University (MKU) and Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)-Nairobi. The selection of the mentioned universities was based on the convenience to the researcher and the possibility to access relevant data in the institutions. Data was collected between March and June 2017.

The universities were selected using stratified random sampling procedure. They were stratified into public and private. From each stratum, three public universities and two private universities were selected purposively. Stratified random sampling was used because the population studied was heterogeneous in terms of gender, rank and category of the university. A total of 300 questionnaires were administered in the ratio of 80 to 20 for male and female academic staff respectively. Out of the 300 questionnaires, only 220 were returned for analysis as shown in figure 1 and 2 respectively.
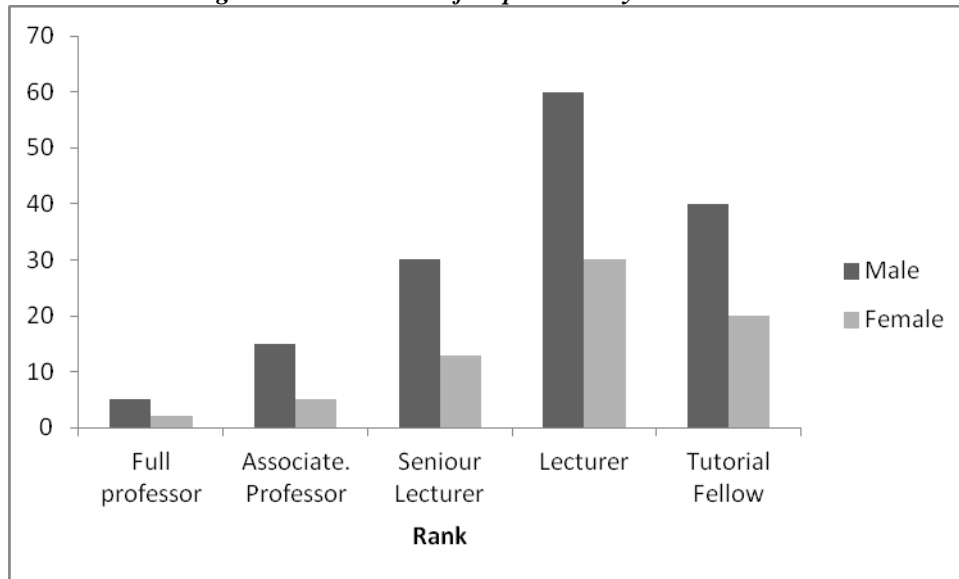
Fig 1: Distribution of respondents by University, category and sex

Source: Author 2017

Figure 1 shows that data was collected from three public and two private universities. The respondents included 150 male respondents and 70 female respondents. Figure 2 represents the distribution of the respondents in terms of rank and sex.

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by rank and sex

Source: Author 2017

Figure 2 indicates that data was collected from five positions of the university teaching staff (male and female) namely; Full professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, lecturer and tutorial fellow.
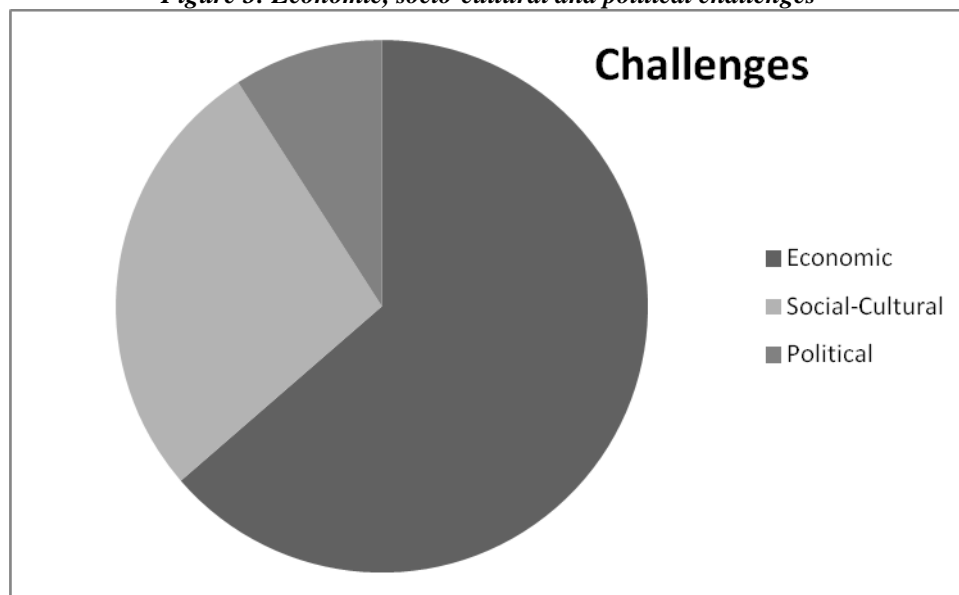
The information obtained from questionnaires was analyzed through content analysis and categorized into themes: economic challenges, socio-cultural challenges and political challenges. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables and percentages were used to show the status of the challenges. Documentary data from available researches was also utilized to cross check, supplement and confirm information obtained from questionnaires

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 3 displays the total frequency distribution of the economic, socio-cultural and political challenges in relation to research-related activities in Kenyan universities.

Figure 3: Economic, socio-cultural and political challenges

Source: Author 2017

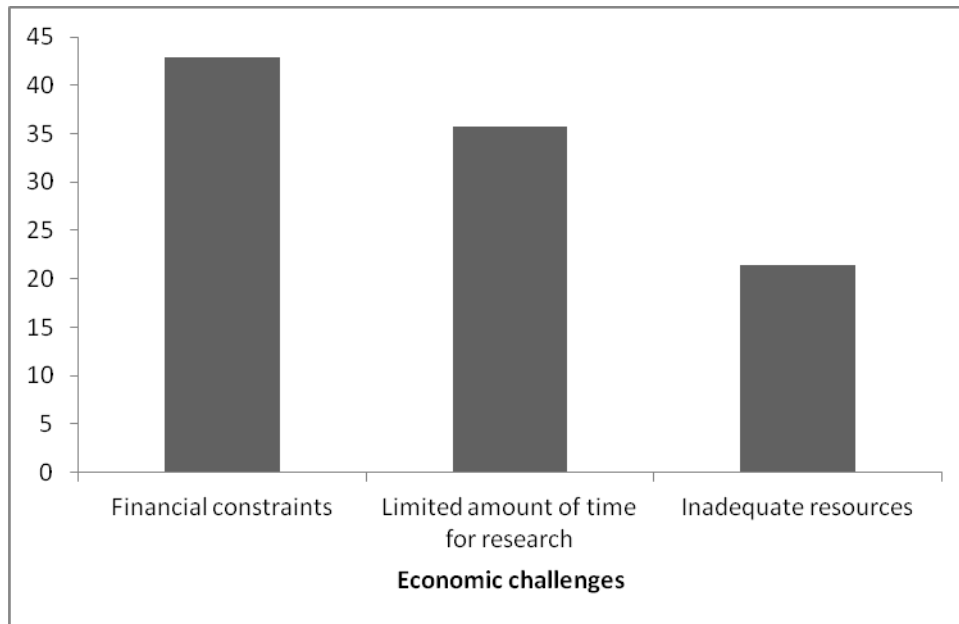The study findings reveal that 140 (63.63%), 60 (27.27%) and 20 (9.09%) respectively of the respondents reported that there were economic challenges, socio-cultural challenges and political challenges facing researchers in Kenyan universities.

4.1 Economic related challenges

From the questionnaire responses, the majority of the challenges (63.63%) facing university scholars in Kenyan Universities emanate from economic factors summarized in table 5 below:

Figure 4: *Economic challenges*

Source: Author 2017

From figure 4, above, financial constraints 60 (42.85%), limited amount of time for research 50 (35.71%) and inadequate resources to conduct research 30 (21.42%) are some of the economic challenges that respondents mentioned.

4.1.1 Financial constraints

According to the respondents, financial constraint was a major challenge (42.85%) among university scholars. Most projects in public universities rely on donor funding since most universities are financially constrained in their budgetary allocations to carry out research activities. Although Kenyan universities make yearly budgetary allocations for research, it was evident that these allocations are inadequate to carry out all important research-related activities.

It is therefore, evident that many scholars in Kenyan Universities work in institutions which are not well financially endowed due to insufficient funding that lead to lack of incentives, non-attendance of academic conferences and limited salaries and remunerations. In such institutions, research facilities are inadequate and outdated by international standards. The main causes for this include pressures of massification that require expansion of universities to cater for the large increase in student numbers; economic problems faced by the country arising out of insecurity, elections, foreign debts and the decline of some sectors in the economy; inability of students to afford the tuition required for financial stability and misallocation and poor use of available financial resources by some of the universities.

4.1.1.1 Inadequate funding

Government funding to public universities in Kenya has been dwindling gradually over the years, hence forcing the universities to reduce funding for some of the projects including research (Hassan, 2001). Research funding is almost non-existent in private universities in Kenya. Enrolments grew much faster than state funding to universities, upon which they greatly depend. The Economic Survey, *2014* showed that subsidies to public universities grew by 6% during the period to reach US$ 624 million, from US$588 millionin2012.This means that enrolments in public universities rose seven times faster than funding, pushing universities into income generating activities to meet the costs of extra students at the expense of funding research activities. Mamdani (2007: 17) notes that:

Funding higher education has emerged as one of the biggest concerns in Kenya, with the surge in student numbers. Government subsidies are no longer enough and universities are going into commercial activities.

The lack of fund has necessitated universities to employ under qualified staff who cannot undertake the mandate of research adequately. The Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) data indicates that there are 8,000 lecturers - up from 7,000 four years ago. However, during the same period, student enrolment has grown from 91,541 to 140,000. Education experts and university administrators have argued that rising enrolment can only be handled if the government pumps in more funds to hire extra tutors and improve pay for the teaching force, to boost their morale. The issue of funding has been at the centre of a series of other problems like lecturer's strikes, inadequate remuneration in form of salaries and incentives and workload

among the universities. This has resulted into several unfortunate consequences particularly low morale and self-esteem, resignation to join better paying institutions, low productivity and poor outputs especially in research and innovations. Limited university funding is a mother of almost all the other challenges that affect research in Kenyan universities.

4.1.1.2 Lack of Incentives

Scholars publish for several reasons among them, good incentives which can persuade them to conduct research-related activities. Institutions of higher learning in Kenya, which are the major employers of scholars in the region, hardly ever give any incentives to scholars who publish their findings in scholarly journals. Some respondents admitted that the policy for incentives was in place but due to financial constraints, the policy has not been implemented. Apart from some subsidy for publishing, there are other incentives which can create an enabling environment for scholarly publishing. For example, maintaining the best infrastructure that institutions of higher learning should have and maintaining the prestige and comfort associated with higher education. It was reported among some respondents that some of them operate from their houses or cars due to lack of working space at their respective universities.

4.1.1.3 Non-attendance of Academic Conferences

Numerous academic conferences are organized around the globe every year. Attending such conferences is crucial for scholars working for institutions of higher learning and other research institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the conferences are organized locally or within the region, but many scholars from Kenyan universities cannot attend because their employers cannot afford to sponsor them. In conferences, scholars have an opportunity to present their research findings for peer critique, especially by counterparts from other regions of the world. Such research findings may finally be published either as conference proceedings or as articles in scholarly journals. Scholars in Kenyan universities find it too costly to sponsor themselves. Even conferences organized locally are out of reach for most of them. This is another demotivating factor among scholars to research and publish.

4.1.1.4 Salaries and Remuneration

Academic intellectuals are the most highly trained human resource in society and yet they are poorly paid or rewarded both in monetary and non-monetary terms. The poor salary and remuneration has a negative impact on the lecturer's role as a researcher either directly or indirectly (Hassan, 2001). This is one of the main reasons why there is a high turnover of academic staff and part-time teaching in African institutions of higher learning. In the last three decades, African universities have been characterized by high tensions between academic staff and the administration and/or government. In several instances, academic staff has withdrawn their labour due to inadequate remuneration and lack of scholarly materials and other resources that can enable them to teach, conduct research and perform community work.

Kenyan lecturers are the lowest paid compared to other political positions like being a Member of the County Assembly (MCA). For this reason, Individuals who could have filled the existing gaps in personnel in Kenyan universities are going into better paying jobs in the corporate world or crossing over into politics where they are sure of better salary and remuneration. The commission in charge of salary regulation and remuneration, commonly referred to as the Sara Serem Commission has been taken to court by UASU. The main grievance is the adjustment of the low salaries that the Commission has stipulated in its structure for the University dons compared to other professionals in other sectors. The Commission is blind to the existing challenges faced by a university don in Kenya. Low pay is being blamed for brain drain of lecturers from Kenyan universities, not only to Europe and North America but also to other African countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, where tutors are paid better and handle lower numbers of students per class. In Tanzania, the average monthly salary of a lecturer is around US$3,000.

Kenya is facing fresh threats of a lecturers' strike over delayed implementation of new salaries and allowances for the 2013-2017 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) which could jeopardise research activities in public universities from October 2017. Close to 9,000 lecturers from Kenya's 33 public universities and colleges have said that they would down tools if the government fails to implement the 2013-17 CBA fully. The situation was reported to be worse among lecturers from private universities who don't have a union to represent their grievances to management or the government.

4.1.2 Amount of Time Required for Research

The second major economic challenge that was reported by 50 (35.71%) of the respondents was the limited time that lecturers have to conduct research. According to some respondents, research takes a longer time and it requires a lot of commitment. It was reported that most teaching staff are busy with routine teaching tasks, marking and part-time teaching hence they do not have adequate time for research. The work overload is due to the shortage of staff and the enormous student enrolment.

4.1.2.1 Workload

Parallel programmes, commonly referred to as module 11 have been a boom for universities in Kenya by increasing funding and access to university education. However, this has happened at the expense of the time a lecturer requires for research and professional development. The situation has deteriorated to a point where the balance between productivity gains and the quality of teaching is under threat. The student-to-lecturer ratio in the universities has deteriorated from 25:1 in 1986 to 52:1 in 2013. Currently, the average lecturer to student ratio stands at 1:500. In some instances, the ratio can go up to 1:1000 students. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural agency (UNESCO) recommends a ratio of 1:45.

The latest government data shows that public and private universities in the country combined enrolled 506,083 students in 2015. This compares to 2014's 443,783 students and the enrolment was more than double the enrolment in 2013. A 2010 survey by Kenya's Commission for Higher Education showed the country's 30 universities were being crippled by an acute shortage of professors, with institutions increasingly turning to part-time lecturers to address the shortfall. The higher education

commission said there were only 352 professors in Kenya's universities, (CUE, 2016).

University Academic Staff Union (UASU) national officials have repeatedly warned that the student expansion plan would only be possible if more staff is hired and physical infrastructure are expanded. Otherwise, it would only mean more work for lecturers at the expense of research (Daily Nation News, 2016).

4.1.2.2 Part-time Teaching

The number of universities has increased after the government upgrading many university colleges into full-fledged institutions. Contrary to this upgrading, the requisite infrastructure and human resource has never been provided, resulting in undue pressure on the existing facilities and personnel. According to a recent study carried out by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Research (Kippra), up to 50% staff at public universities do part-time jobs, mostly teaching in other universities and spending their days criss-crossing from one university hall to another, oblivious of the effect such moves have on their time for research. The lecturers shuttling from one campus to another are simply filling a gap in service provision and supplementing their meager income.

With these pressures, the lecturer's output in research is obviously affected. The lecturer gets home tired and has to mark exams or set new ones or prepare for the numerous lectures. All major Kenyan universities have also satellite campuses throughout the country that continue to get fresh enrolments on a daily basis, further tipping the already over loaded lecturer.

4.1.3 Inadequate Resources

From table 4.0, it was revealed that 30 (21.42%) of the respondents are unable to conduct research due to insufficient resources at their disposal. It is quite clear that resources play a key role in conducting research-related activities at any institution of higher learning. The respondents cited resources like computers, network and internet connectivity, science laboratories, and libraries as inadequate in most universities. These facilities are meant to support lecturers who want to access materials for research. These facilities are very crucial for any successful scholarly research in the 21st Century. The lack of these facilities has also contributed to the lack of empirical rigour due to lack of resources; limited collaborations between practitioners and academics; limited linkage between research and the national development agenda.

4.1.3.1 Library

A well-stocked modern library is an important tool for scholarly research and publishing. In the industrialized nations, a network of libraries account for up to 80% of the total purchases of scholarly books (Altbach, 1978). In sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya in particular, there are no well-organized networks of libraries which may jointly purchase scholarly books. Altch (1978) notes that even academics, which feature near the top of the income ladder, have difficulty in purchasing scholarly books and journals. Due to poor funding and continuous budget cuts, the libraries in Kenyan universities cannot afford to subscribe to journals. New book titles are published every year. However, such books are too costly for libraries. Book shelves of most

academic libraries in sub-Saharan Africa are dotted with very old and insufficient copies of books which cannot help scholars from such universities to make any meaningful scientific and scholarly progress. Inadequately equipped libraries exacerbate the limited research activities among scholars with limited access to modern journals and the internet. University presses are under-funded or non-existent, and university journals are either few or unavailable.

The training of library personnel to gain knowledge of the new technologies used in modern libraries has been another casualty in the process. A recent World Bank report makes this point strongly by admitting that: "Sub-Saharan Africa is at the bottom of almost every knowledge economy indicator". For instance, it contributes 0.07 per cent of global patents applications, an indication of the continent's technological leadership. The region has the lowest researcher-to-population ratio in the world with less than 100 researchers per million inhabitants compared to about 700 in North Africa. This observation signals a long way to go to create the foundation for high-quality research, graduate education, and knowledge creation in our universities.

4.1.3.2 Laboratories

Scientists depend on laboratories to conduct experiments from which they get results which they publish as findings in scholarly journals. However, laboratories in institutions of higher education and other research institutions in Kenyan universities lack up-to-date facilities for conducting such research. Laboratories are also subjected to budget cuts every year. Lack of well-equipped laboratories can contribute to regression of scholarly research and publishing in science disciplines. In a study conducted by Waast (2002), it is reported that some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Nigeria, have regressed in many fields of science. In other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, whole areas of expertise have virtually disappeared, such as agricultural sciences in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. Scholars from two Kenyan universities indicated that there were completely no Science laboratories in their institutions.

Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)

Universities in Kenya lack affordable and adequate Internet bandwidth that hinders lecturers from conducting research. Some of the respondents indicated that there was limited internet connectivity in their respective universities. Either the Internet connectivity is too costly for the institutions to maintain, or electric power supply is poor and unreliable. Very few institutions of higher learning in the sub-Saharan region enable scholars to have free and unlimited access to the Internet (Hassan, 2001).

The cost of bandwidth in most universities is high despite the introduction of bandwidth subsidy by the government through the Kenya Education Network (KENET) and the arrival and operationalization of the undersea backbone fibre optic cables in Kenya in the year 2012. For this reason, currently universities cannot afford to procure adequate internet bandwidths. According to the E-Readiness Survey of Kenyan Universities (2013) report, the current price of $160 per Mb/s

was still a high price in comparison to developed countries. Some scholars in Kenyan universities do not have access to personal computers, e-mail and the Internet, and may not be able to submit their manuscripts, nor read them or act as peer reviewers electronically. This may mean that scholars from sub-Saharan Africa who are highly qualified and capable of making contributions to knowledge production are excluded because of technology deprivation. Arunachalam (2003) thinks that the ICTs, rather than bridging the digital divide, will widen the knowledge divide or the disparities in people's capacities to do research and their ability to use the technologies to their advantage.
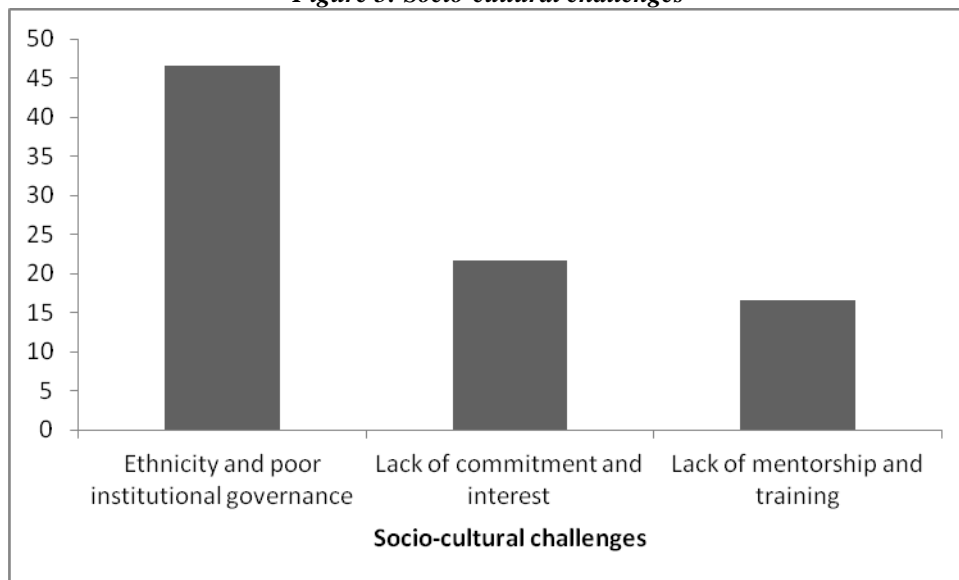
The study further revealed that lack of relevant training in ICT skills among teaching staff was a challenge hindering them from conducting research. Though some of the teaching staff have basic computer literacy skills, these skills may not be adequate for them to use ICT in research. Wanyembi (as cited by Tarus, 2011: 138) found out in a survey done in Kenya that most of the academics in universities have low ICT and e-learning skills because most of them were trained in the absence of ICT environment. Information, Communication and Technology skills for lecturers are critical components necessary for successful research. A number of journals are now electronically available. Such journals accept manuscripts electronically as well as get the manuscripts peer-reviewed electronically.

4.2 Social Cultural-Related Challenges

Socio-cultural challenges are the second prominent 60 (27.27%) challenges that are affecting university scholars as indicated in figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Socio-cultural challenges

Author 2017

4.2.1 Language Barrier

According to 2 (3.33%) of the respondents, language is a barrier to. Scholars are expected to communicate in foreign languages that most of them did not grow up speaking. Some scholars from learn to speak foreign languages at the university and therefore, they never get to master the languages in which they have to publish yet language is the vehicle for scholarly communication. (Jaygbay, 1998). In sub-Saharan Africa, the official languages for scholarly communication are English, French and Portuguese, all of which are foreign and therefore, not thoroughly mastered by majority of the scholars in the region. Language of scholarly communication may not look like a major problem, but Jaygbay thinks it excludes half of the African population from participating in most official public discussions. For example, English is generally considered to be the lingua franca of the scientific community. Roughly 80% of all the journals indexed in Scopus are published in English. The adoption of English as the universal language of science is due in part to historical political and economic factors which favored English over other potential languages such.

Considerations such as grammar may lead to the rejection of manuscripts from Sub-Saharan Africa (Pearce, 2003). The rejection of the manuscript is likely to demotivate the researcher in carrying out further researches. As long as scholarly communication will be in foreign languages, scholars from sub-Saharan Africa will be disadvantaged and majority of their works will not be published in prestigious scholarly journals. Kiswahili is a widely spoken language in East, Central and some parts of southern Africa. However, even scholarly works on Kiswahili are published in foreign languages. Afrikaans was widely spoken in South Africa, but from 1994 when the country held its first multi-party elections, the language has been fizzling out. Up to this day, some scholars in South Africa and Namibia publish in Afrikaans, but only in journals based in South Africa.

4.2.2 Lack of Mentorship and Training of Emerging Researchers

According to 10 (16.66%) of the respondents, it emerged that most senior scholars like full and associate professors are not available to mentor young scholars in matters of research and publications. It is assumed that due to the financial constraints and large classes, the senior members could be busy teaching in other universities or performing university administrative duties. It takes collaborative effort to produce knowledge (Jaybay 1998).

4.2.3 Gender Role Stereotypes

Some of the women researchers 7(11.66%) reported that gender related roles are usually a major obstacle for them to conduct research. They uncovered that women were subjected to pressures and experiences not met by men. These pressures included feelings of isolation, strain in coping up with stereotypical sex role and the whole experience of pressure from institutional and societal cultures that are not supportive of women. This could be attributed to the fact that in many Kenyan communities, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men continue to prevail as many people invoke the preservation of African culture to justify the subordination of women. In recent years, women's participation in research activities in the world of academia is being advocated for. There are some universities which have set aside a research fund for female scholars. However, the socio-cultural barriers preventing women from conducting research and the attitudes in the higher education system, especially of the academic community towards women's access to knowledge is questionable. These findings are in agreement with Kamau's (2001), study where she indicated that lack of policy and practice aimed to encourage women to research was the main hindrance to participate in research activities.

4.2.4 Lack of Commitment and Interest towards Research

It was reported by 13 (21.66%) of the respondents that there was lack of interest and commitment to research among dons. This was attributed to lack of motivation where they perceive research as extra work with no additional pay. Some scholars argued that the writing process was too cumbersome and time consuming. Fear of modern technology was also cited as a cause for lack of interest and commitment. According to Khan, Hasan & Clement (2012), if teachers want to successfully use technology, they need to possess a positive attitude to the use of technology. Sometimes, the lack of interest could be due to laziness, poor reading culture, or lack of mentorship. Such lecturers in Kenyan universities would like to be promoted on the basis of teaching and grading students alone especially those at the levels below the rank of a professor. Yet, this undermines the development of research and publication activities in the university.

Another reason for lack of research commitment among academics is closely related to the high rejection rate of manuscripts, especially those by first attempt authors. Worsham (2008) confirms that the acceptance rate of any good scholarly journal is typically quite low, so the chance of rejection is always relatively high. Summers (2001), mentions that the rejection rate of leading international research journals currently averages around 90%. A study among editors of 73 accredited South African journals also confirmed an exceptionally high rejection rate.

Writing is considered by some academics as hard work and it requires adequate preparation. Sometimes, scholars expect that inspiration will just appear and make their writing magical overnight. It is important to recognize that scholarly writing is a gradual process that should be guided by personal commitment and stringent personal discipline. Peer reviewing for example can be a barrier to publishing particularly in reducing complete manuscripts for publication (Waddell, 2002). The long process that a scholar has to wait for before an article is finally ready for publication is discouraging to scholars.

4.2.5 Ethnicity and Poor Institutional Governance

According to 28 (46.66%) of the respondents, ethnicity and poor institutional governance has taken the role of racism in Kenyan universities in terms of discrimination. This has impacted negatively on research and publication among scholars. Ethnicity has been one of the social problems since independence in Kenya. However, universities are expected to become instruments of national integration but it is sad that over 50 years along the line, that dream has not been realized. Education Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i has cited ethnicity as a major challenge in hiring of staff in the institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

The nexus between ethnicity and university research has been compromised. Council members, vice-chancellors and other senior administrators are often selected from an institution's immediate surroundings. This means that appointments, promotions, research funds, conference facilitation including other resources that can facilitate research are given discriminatively along ethnic lines, sometimes with no consideration of merit. It is not surprising that in 2016 the political leaders in Uasin Gishu County were demonstrating against the newly appointed acting Vice Chancellor of Moi University whom they were accusing of not being from their tribe. The political leaders wanted the Cabinet Secretary to appoint a Vice Chancellor from among the top professors in the university from the local tribe. The University of Eldoret also erupted into open war fare in February 2015 because locals felt that members from other ethnic groups had been promoted at their expense.
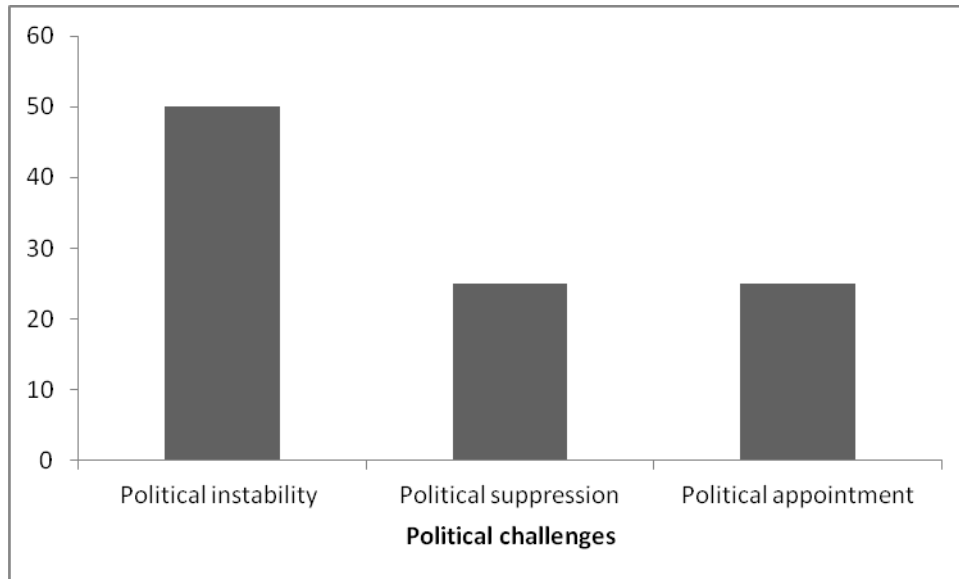
The university governance question is yet another social-cultural challenge that faces universities in Kenya. Ethnicity has resulted into poor institutional governance in Kenyan universities. Poorly managed universities have cases of corruption, ethnicity, embezzlement of funds, lack of clear structures among other vices. For example, through corruption and ethnicity, under qualified academic members of staff are appointed or promoted. Such under qualified members do not add any value in terms of research out -put to the institutions. Quality academic, highly trained and experienced staffs are central to building a strong and well-functioning university with regard to research. Furthermore, a poorly managed university does not create a conducive environment for research.These findings are in line with a study conducted in Nigeria by Oke.G.G et al (2010) that in Nigeria on leadership behavior of university Vice-chancellors and its implications to the work behavior of academic staff. The authors found out (among various hypotheses tested) that 'the lecturers' level of perception of their Vice-chancellors leadership behavior has a significant

relationship with their level of participation in university activities'. This implies that in order to enhance lecturers' participation in university activities such as research, a Vice-chancellor need to exhibit positive leadership behavior.

4.3 Political-Related Challenges

Apart from the economic and the socio-cultural challenges, 20 (9.09%) of the respondents reported political-related challenges to research as summarized in figure 6 below:

Fig. 6: Political challenges

Source: Author 2017

4.3.1 Political Suppression

According to 5 (25%) of the respondents, political suppression among researchers has led to the limited academic freedom. In Kenya's universities, intellectual freedom has always been under siege. The relationship between the state and higher education has been characterized by suppression, arrests, detention without trial, and even the deaths of antiestablishment academics and students. This has been done by use of government resources and the police system, in league with university administrations, to smother critical dialogue. Intriguingly, the kind of critical discourse and political activism that withstood these pressures in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s seems to have faded in the last two decades.

Knowledge production requires an environment that favours free flow of information, limited censorship and free exchange of and sharing of ideas (Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Freedom of expression in most sub-Saharan countries is so much scuttled that one may as well say it is absent to a large extent. Scholars, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences restrain themselves from publishing what they think may not be viewed favourably by those in power. Publishing anything critical of those in authority may be a reason for denial of promotion or such individuals can be fired and/or be arraigned before the courts of law, convicted and sent to jail for being found guilty of crimes bordering on treason.

4.3.2 Political Appointments

Politicians in many cases have tried to influence appointments of the top leaderships of public universities. This is according to 5 (25%) of the respondents. Political appointments

have led to political interference when it comes to the smooth running of the university. Most scholars in sub-Saharan Africa are affiliated to or employed by universities. The universities in the region do not enjoy autonomy and freedom of existence. The country's politicians keep on meddling in university management affairs. Chief executive officers and other high ranking officers in the universities are government appointees who are mostly appointed based on political considerations. Because of the political environment in which universities in sub-Saharan Africa operate, scholarly publications which are critical of the government of the day are highly censored and discouraged. Chakava, a prominent publisher in Kenya summarizes the kind of environment in which a public university in Kenya and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa operates:

"The university as an institution has been largely politicized and a majority of university professors are absorbed into the state system. Creativity is stifled through the curtailment of literary seminars, journals, and writers' workshops, and a general lack of facilities or incentives to promote and reward academic excellence. There is lack of an intellectual culture and debate on important issues of the day." (Chakava, 1996).

4.3.3 Political Instability

According to 5 (25%) of the respondents, political instability in the country is another challenge to research. Every year when there is general election in Kenya tensions and sometimes fighting erupts between ethnic groups emanating from election disputes. This was witnessed in 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV) that left over 1300 people dead in various parts of the country and a majority displaced. In some instances, the

lecturers who were teaching in universities located in the opposition zones and vice versa feared for their lives. Some had their homes torched and others even lost their lives and property. In fear of their lives, many sought employment in universities which were in their locality where they felt safe. During such times, little is accomplished in terms of research-related activities.

In the 2017 elections, the same political tensions are exhibited. This time the contest is between Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta (Kikuyu) of Jubilee Party and the opposition leader Mr. Raila Odinga (Luo) of the National Super Alliance (NASA). Mr. Raila is being supported by Mr. Kalonzo Musyoka (Kamba) Mr. Uhuru has William Ruto (Kalenjin) as his supporter. This has caused a lot of tension in higher institutions of learning especially as Kenyans wait for the repeat polls slated for October 26 after the Supreme Court annulled Uhuru's win in the August 8 polls. In such unstable political environment, scholars are unable to conduct any meaningful research.

Due to such political instabilities, the office of the president has stopped hundreds of academics from leaving the country to attend conferences and research related work; a move that beats the essence of learning. The Director of immigration Mr. Kinyua has directed: *"no government official will be allowed to leave the country without clearance by the president."* It is well known that universities can barely fund international conferences. Most academics rely on International networks, self-funding and research projects to fund international travel. Such a ban by the government is therefore, attacking the cherished ideals of academic freedom. Knowledge is transnational, and the most impactful and successful academics make overseas trips to network, share knowledge and increase research visibility.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that:

1. Information, Communication and Technology infrastructure should be expanded to facilitate access to research materials by teaching staff and other stakeholders. Availability of computers, laptops, networks and other relevant infrastructure will improve research activities among scholars.

2. Universities should prioritize research-related activities in budgetary allocations and formulate appropriate and operational research policies to guide the universities towards successful research such as conference attendance and creation of a conducive research environment among others.

3. Universities should organize comprehensive training and mentorship programmes of lecturers on research skills and ICT skills which are among critical determinants of successful research.

4. There should be collaborations and partnerships with other successful researchers in other countries in a bid to acquire best practices to accelerate research work. Such collaborations would be but not limited to areas of research and publications (editing Journal articles, review of articles, joint writing of conference papers), sandwich doctoral training, Post-doctoral Research

Fellowships, library acquisitions, information sharing on scholarships and research grants' (Tettey 2006).

5. Some widely indigenous languages in sub-Saharan Africa should be considered for scholarly communication by sub-Saharan African scholars such as Kiswahili and Africaans.

6. Many sub-Saharan African countries are well endowed with natural resources, which if well managed can generate tremendous revenues, which can be used to improve remunerations of indigenous scholars and other highly qualified professionals. Such revenues should be used to equip libraries and laboratories, which scholars use for research and generation of new knowledge.

7. The Commission for University Education (CUE) is mandated by law to regulate higher education in Kenya and has outlined the criteria for qualification for each category of the faculty in both public and private universities. These criteria should be strictly adhered to. This will ensure that recruitment, appointments and promotion of potential candidates and existing ones is done professionally. 'African universities therefore should foster transparency, by ensuring that appointments are anchored in a representative committee system at every level' (Tettey 2006).

8. There should be leadership training programme for Vice-chancellors and other members of the university top management. This will help African University leaders to be better governors for better service delivery; which is very crucial in building a condusive research environment for members of staff.

9. Universities should formulate equal opportunity policies, changing the environment in which women work, and the attitudes towards educated women, flexibility in working hours, and reviewing of recruitment and promotion policies in higher education. (UNESCO 1994).

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