

## DIGITAL VISIBILITY DEFICITS AMONG FACULTY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES REPUTATION

**Mercy Ogorchukwu AGAPIA**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

**Akpila Asuoreo IKALAMA**

Department of Educational Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

[asuoreoakpila@gmail.com](mailto:asuoreoakpila@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** In today's digital age, a university's online presence is crucial to its reputation and success. However, a significant obstacle lies in the digital visibility deficits among faculties, which can substantially impact a university's reputation. This paper explores the relationship between faculty digital visibility and university reputation, highlighting factors such as inadequate digital literacy, insufficient institutional support, and varying digital adoption levels. The consequences of this gap are far-reaching, leading to perceptions of a lack of expertise, outdated research, and reputational damage. Conclusively, the digital visibility deficits affects university reputation, leading to a perceived lack of expertise and outdated research. It impacts rankings, accreditation, and funding. To bridge these deficits, universities must adopt strategic approaches, including enhancing digital literacy, promoting platform engagement, and creating supportive institutional ecosystems. Empowering faculty members and investing in digital infrastructure are crucial to showcasing research expertise and innovation. Ultimately, addressing the digital visibility deficits is essential for universities to remain competitive and maintain a strong reputation.

**Keywords:** Digital Visibility Gap, Faculties, University's Reputation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Universities stand as pillars of knowledge creation, dissemination, and application within society. Their reputation, carefully built over years through academic achievements, research outputs, and societal contributions, has become increasingly valuable in the competitive landscape of higher education (Ogbari et al., 2019). In the contemporary academic ecosystem, a university's reputation serves as both a measure of its past accomplishments and a predictor of its future success, influencing student enrollment, faculty recruitment, research funding, and global recognition. At the intersection of this reputational landscape and the digital revolution lies a critical yet often overlooked phenomenon: the digital visibility gap among university faculties. This gap refers to the disparity in the online presence, discoverability, and accessibility of faculty research, expertise, and academic contributions across digital platforms. As scholarship increasingly migrates to digital spaces, faculty members with limited digital visibility risk having their valuable contributions remain unrecognized in academic conversations, institutional evaluations, and public perception (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

The concept of digital visibility encompasses more than mere online presence; it represents the extent to which faculty research, expertise, and academic contributions are discoverable, accessible, and engaged with by relevant stakeholders across digital platforms (Odigie et al., 2024). This includes visibility through institutional repositories, academic social networks, research databases, citation indexes, and various digital scholarly communication channels. The digital visibility gap emerges when these dimensions of online academic presence vary significantly among faculty members within an institution. The digital visibility gap manifests in multiple forms: between senior and junior faculty, between technological early adopters and late adopters, between disciplines with different digital engagement traditions, and between institutions with varying resources for digital infrastructure (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023). This uneven digital landscape creates a fractured representation of a university's collective intellectual contribution to society, potentially undermining institutional reputation despite the existence of quality research and teaching excellence.

This paper argued that the digital visibility gap among faculties can significantly impact a university's reputation in today's digitally mediated academic environment. When certain faculties or departments remain underrepresented in digital scholarly communication channels, the institution's overall research profile, expertise diversity, and global impact may appear diminished to external stakeholders, including prospective students, potential collaborators, funding agencies, and ranking organizations (Dominic et al., 2021). The emergence of digital repositories and academic networking platforms has fundamentally altered how scholarly work circulates and gains recognition. Institutional repositories serve as critical infrastructure for enhancing faculty visibility by providing centralized, accessible platforms for research outputs (Chukwueke et al., 2020). However, disparities in faculty engagement with these repositories create visibility imbalances that can distort perceptions of institutional research strength.

Digital visibility has become increasingly integral to university reputation management strategies. Universities must recognize that stakeholder perceptions are increasingly formed through digital interactions rather than traditional communication channels. When faculty research remains difficult to discover through digital means, the institution's perceived research productivity may appear diminished regardless of actual output volume (Ogbari et al., 2019). This creates a disconnect between institutional accomplishments and external recognition that can undermine reputation-building efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends by forcing academic activities into digital spaces and increasing stakeholder reliance on online information for decision-making. Universities that had previously neglected digital visibility infrastructure found themselves particularly vulnerable to reputation challenges during this transition (Dominic et al., 2021). The pandemic highlighted how digital visibility gaps could exacerbate existing reputation disparities between institutions with different levels of digital readiness.

The digital visibility gap presents particular challenges for universities in developing contexts like Nigeria, where infrastructure limitations and resource constraints may hinder comprehensive digital presence development. Despite producing valuable research, faculty members at these institutions may find their work systematically underrepresented in global academic conversations due to visibility barriers (Odigie et al., 2024). This creates a cyclical challenge where limited visibility leads to fewer citations, reduced recognition, and consequently fewer resources for enhancing visibility. Addressing the digital visibility gap requires multifaceted approaches combining technological infrastructure development, faculty capacity building, and institutional policy reforms. Universities must invest in robust institutional

repositories while simultaneously developing support systems to help faculty navigate the evolving landscape of digital scholarly communication (Chukwueke et al., 2020). Without coordinated strategies addressing infrastructure and human factors, piecemeal interventions may fail to close persistent visibility gaps.

The open access movement offers promising pathways for enhancing faculty visibility by removing cost barriers to research dissemination. Through open access publishing and repository submission, universities can significantly expand the potential audience for faculty research, increasing citation potential and recognition (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024). However, realizing these benefits requires institutional leadership that prioritizes visibility as a strategic goal rather than a secondary concern. Metadata practices play a crucial yet often overlooked role in determining faculty visibility. Even when research is technically available online, poor metadata management can render it effectively invisible to search engines and academic databases (Odigie et al., 2024). Universities must develop comprehensive metadata strategies ensuring that faculty contributions remain discoverable through various search pathways used by different stakeholder groups.

Faculty members themselves face various challenges in enhancing their digital visibility, including time constraints, technical knowledge gaps, and concerns about intellectual property management in digital spaces (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023). Addressing these concerns requires universities to develop supportive environments where digital engagement becomes integrated into academic workflows rather than presenting as additional burdens on already time-constrained faculty. The relationship between faculty digital visibility and university reputation extends beyond marketing concerns to fundamental questions of knowledge accessibility and scholarly communication evolution. Universities that successfully bridge digital visibility gaps not only enhance their reputational standing but also fulfill their mission of knowledge dissemination more effectively (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024). This alignment between visibility enhancement and core institutional mission provides a compelling rationale for prioritizing this work.

As digital transformation continues reshaping higher education landscapes globally, universities must recognize that digital visibility represents not an optional enhancement but an essential component of effective reputation management. Institutions that develop comprehensive approaches addressing visibility disparities position themselves to receive recognition commensurate with their actual accomplishments, while those neglecting these issues risk having their contributions systematically undervalued in increasingly digital academic ecosystems (Dominic et al., 2021). This paper examines how the digital visibility gap among faculty members impacts various dimensions of university reputation, explores institutional strategies for addressing visibility disparities, and proposes an integrated framework for enhancing faculty digital presence as a component of strategic reputation management.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **Faculties Digital Visibility**

Faculties' digital visibility refers to the extent to which university academic staff and their scholarly outputs are discoverable, accessible, and impactful in the digital information ecosystem. This concept encompasses the online presence, discoverability, and accessibility of faculty research, expertise, scholarly communications, and academic contributions across digital

platforms and networks. In the contemporary academic landscape characterized by digital transformation, faculty digital visibility has emerged as a critical factor influencing both individual scholarly recognition and institutional reputation (Chukwueke et al., 2020).

The concept of faculty digital visibility extends beyond mere online presence to encompass multiple dimensions of scholarly representation in digital spaces. At its foundational level, it involves the basic digital availability of faculty research outputs, including journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, datasets, and other scholarly materials. This dimension focuses on whether faculty work exists in digital formats accessible beyond physical library walls. However, true digital visibility transcends basic availability to include enhanced discoverability through proper indexing, metadata management, and integration with search engines and academic databases (Odigie et al., 2024).

Faculty digital visibility also encompasses the development and maintenance of comprehensive digital scholarly identities. This includes establishing consistent researcher profiles across academic networking platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and institutional repositories. A crucial component of this identity management involves the utilization of persistent digital identifiers like ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) that uniquely distinguish researchers and correctly attribute their work across the fragmented scholarly communication landscape. These identifiers help resolve name ambiguity issues that historically have complicated accurate attribution and citation tracking (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023).

The concept further extends to active participation in the open science movement through open access publishing and data sharing practices. Faculty digital visibility is significantly enhanced when research outputs are freely accessible rather than locked behind paywalls, allowing broader dissemination and potential impact. Open access publishing removes financial barriers to accessing scholarly content, thereby expanding the potential readership and citation opportunities for faculty research. This dimension of digital visibility aligns scholarly communication practices with the growing global emphasis on democratizing knowledge access (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

Alternative metrics (altmetrics) represent another important dimension of faculty digital visibility, capturing research impact beyond traditional citation counts. These metrics track mentions in social media, policy documents, news outlets, and other non-traditional sources, providing a more comprehensive picture of research influence and societal impact. Faculty members with strong altmetric profiles demonstrate engagement with broader audiences beyond academic circles, potentially enhancing both individual recognition and institutional reputation (Adeyemo & Jamogha, 2021). The evolution of faculty digital visibility as a concept reflects broader transformations in scholarly communication practices. Historically, academic visibility was primarily mediated through print publications, conference presentations, and citation in disciplinary literature. Digital technologies have fundamentally altered this landscape by creating new pathways for disseminating research, building professional networks, and measuring scholarly impact. The concept of faculty digital visibility has emerged in response to these technological shifts, recognizing that academic recognition increasingly depends on effective navigation of digital scholarly ecosystems (Chukwueke et al., 2020).

In the Nigerian academic context, several factors shape faculty digital visibility patterns. Infrastructure challenges, including unreliable internet connectivity and limited access to digital technologies, create significant barriers to establishing robust online scholarly presences. These technical constraints are often compounded by institutional factors such as limited digital

repository development, insufficient training programs on digital scholarship, and promotion systems that may not adequately recognize digital engagement metrics (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023). Disciplinary cultures also influence faculty digital visibility patterns, with STEM fields typically demonstrating greater engagement with digital scholarly practices compared to certain humanities disciplines. These variations reflect differences in research methodologies, publication traditions, and resource allocation across disciplines. Additionally, generational factors influence digital visibility, with younger faculty members often demonstrating greater comfort with digital scholarly tools compared to senior academics who established their careers in pre-digital contexts (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

Institutional repositories play a critical role in enhancing faculty digital visibility by providing centralized platforms for preserving, managing, and disseminating scholarly outputs. These repositories serve multiple functions: they increase the discoverability of faculty research through standardized metadata practices; they ensure long-term preservation of digital scholarly materials; they facilitate compliance with open access mandates from funding agencies; and they showcase institutional research strengths to external stakeholders. When effectively implemented and utilized, institutional repositories significantly enhance the visibility of faculty research beyond what individual researchers might achieve through personal websites or academic social networks (Chukwueke et al., 2020).

Metadata quality emerges as a crucial determinant of faculty digital visibility. Even when research is technically available online, poor metadata management can render it effectively invisible to search engines and academic databases. Comprehensive metadata practices ensure that faculty scholarly outputs remain discoverable through various search pathways used by different stakeholder groups. This includes basic bibliographic information, disciplinary classifications, keywords, abstracts, and increasingly, standardized subject headings that facilitate cross-disciplinary discovery. The transformation of scholarly visibility through enhanced metadata practices represents a significant opportunity for increasing the impact of faculty research, particularly in developing contexts like Nigeria (Odigie et al., 2024).

The open access movement offers promising pathways for enhancing faculty digital visibility by removing cost barriers to research dissemination. Faculty members can significantly expand the potential audience for their research, increasing citation potential and recognition through open access publishing models and repository submission practices. However, persistent misconceptions about open access quality, concerns about predatory publishing, and limited awareness of legitimate open access pathways create barriers to adoption among some faculty members (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

Faculty digital visibility directly influences university reputation through several mechanisms. When faculty research achieves high visibility in digital spaces, it increases potential citation rates, enhances institutional recognition in university rankings that incorporate web visibility metrics, and facilitates stakeholder awareness of institutional research strengths. Visibility metrics increasingly influence institutional evaluations, with university ranking systems incorporating indicators such as web presence, repository usage statistics, and open access publication rates. Universities with pronounced faculty digital visibility gaps risk underperforming in these metrics despite potentially strong research quality (Adeyemo & Jamogha, 2021).

Enhancing faculty digital visibility requires multi-faceted approaches addressing both infrastructure development and human factors. Technical interventions include developing robust institutional repositories, implementing standardized metadata frameworks, establishing

researcher identifier systems, and integrating with global academic indexes. However, these technical solutions must be accompanied by capacity-building initiatives that address knowledge gaps among faculty regarding digital scholarly communication practices. This includes training on copyright management in digital environments, proper attribution practices, effective profile management across platforms, and strategic choices regarding publication venues (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023).

Institutional policies can significantly influence faculty digital visibility by establishing clear expectations and incentives for digital engagement. Universities that incorporate digital visibility metrics into promotion and tenure considerations provide structural motivation for faculty to maintain robust online academic profiles. Similarly, institutional open access mandates requiring repository submission of research outputs ensure that faculty work achieves basic digital visibility regardless of individual digital engagement levels (Chukwueke et al., 2020). The concept of faculty digital visibility continues evolving as new digital scholarly communication tools emerge. Emerging trends include enhanced integration between different scholarly platforms through standardized APIs and protocols, increasing emphasis on research data management and sharing practices, growing recognition of open educational resources as components of faculty digital footprints, and exploration of blockchain technologies for secure digital attribution. These developments suggest that faculty digital visibility will likely become increasingly multidimensional and technologically sophisticated (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

In other words, faculty digital visibility represents a complex, multifaceted concept encompassing various dimensions of scholarly representation in digital environments. It extends beyond basic online presence to include considerations of discoverability, accessibility, identity management, impact measurement, and engagement with open science principles. As digital technologies continue transforming scholarly communication practices, faculty digital visibility will remain a critical factor influencing both individual academic recognition and broader institutional reputation management strategies in higher education.

## **FORMS OF FACULTY'S DIGITAL VISIBILITY**

In today's digital age, having a strong online presence is crucial for faculty to showcase their expertise, research, and achievements. Digital visibility enables faculties to connect with a wider audience, collaborate with peers, and enhance their reputation. Here are a few forms of faculty's digital visibility:

### **Academic Social Media Presence**

Academic social media presence represents a strategic dimension of faculty digital visibility, enabling scholars to disseminate research findings, engage with peers, and build professional networks within digital spaces designed for scholarly communication. Platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and specialized academic networks provide unique channels through which faculty members can increase their visibility beyond traditional publication venues. Through these platforms, faculty can share publication announcements, conference presentations, and research updates with diverse audiences, including fellow researchers, students, journalists, policy makers, and industry professionals (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023).

The microblogging platform Twitter (now X) has emerged as particularly valuable for academic visibility, allowing faculty to participate in disciplinary conversations through

hashtags, share research snippets, and engage with conference discussions remotely. LinkedIn offers complementary benefits through its professional networking focus, enabling faculty to showcase credentials, institutional affiliations, and publication histories in structured formats accessible to non-academic stakeholders (Odigie et al., 2024). While these platforms offer significant visibility advantages, their effective utilization requires understanding platform-specific communication norms and developing appropriate content strategies that balance professional authority with accessibility.

Research in Nigerian university contexts has demonstrated that faculty members who maintain active, strategic social media presences typically achieve greater citation rates and collaboration opportunities compared to those relying solely on traditional visibility mechanisms. However, significant challenges remain in promoting widespread adoption, including concerns about time investment, misconceptions regarding academic legitimacy, and variable institutional recognition of these activities (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

### **Personal Websites or Blogs**

Personal websites and blogs serve as faculty-controlled digital platforms for comprehensive scholarly identity management, allowing academics to create coherent narratives around their research trajectories and professional accomplishments. Unlike third-party platforms with standardized templates, personal websites enable faculty to customize presentations according to disciplinary conventions, highlight specific projects, and integrate diverse content types, including publications, teaching materials, media appearances, and software developments (Chukwueke et al., 2020). These self-managed digital spaces offer particular advantages for highlighting work that may not fit traditional publication categories, including community engagement activities, pedagogical innovations, creative outputs, and works in progress. Faculty blogs further extend visibility opportunities by facilitating regular communication about research developments, disciplinary perspectives on current events, and reflections on teaching practices, potentially reaching audiences beyond those accessing formal academic publications (Odigie et al., 2024).

The development of personal academic websites has been identified as particularly important in developing academic contexts like Nigeria, where institutional websites may provide limited space for faculty profile development. Research indicates that Nigerian academics with well-maintained personal websites typically achieve greater international recognition and collaboration opportunities. However, significant barriers to adoption include technical skill limitations, hosting costs, time constraints, and variable institutional validation of these visibility efforts (Adeyemo & Jamogha, 2021). Despite these challenges, personal websites and blogs remain valuable components of comprehensive faculty digital visibility strategies, especially when integrated with other visibility mechanisms.

### **Online Research Profiles**

Online research profiles constitute structured digital representations of faculty scholarly identities within specialized academic platforms designed to enhance research discoverability and facilitate academic networking. Platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and institutional repositories enable faculty to consolidate publication histories, track citation metrics, share full-text publications, and connect with researchers sharing similar

interests (Elisha, 2019). These profiles serve as centralized access points for faculty research, increasing the likelihood that their work will be discovered by relevant audiences, including potential collaborators, students, funding bodies, and media organizations.

Google Scholar profiles have emerged as particularly crucial visibility tools, providing automated citation tracking, calculation of h-index metrics, and integration with Google's dominant search infrastructure. Elisha (2019) emphasized that Google Scholar profiles have become essential for Nigerian academics seeking international visibility, noting that "in today's academic environment, not having a Google Scholar profile significantly limits a researcher's digital footprint and citation potential." Similarly, persistent digital identifiers like ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) address the critical challenge of name ambiguity by providing unique identifiers that consistently link researchers with their outputs across the fragmented scholarly communication landscape (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023).

While these platforms offer significant visibility benefits, effective utilization requires maintaining comprehensive, updated profiles and understanding platform-specific features. Research suggests that incomplete profiles with outdated information may diminish rather than enhance perceived scholarly credibility. Additionally, ethical considerations regarding copyright compliance when sharing full-text publications through academic networking sites require careful navigation (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

### **Digital Scholarship and Open Access Publishing**

Digital scholarship and open access publishing represent transformative approaches to knowledge production and dissemination that significantly enhance faculty digital visibility by removing access barriers to research outputs. By publishing in open-access journals, depositing work in open repositories, or utilizing publisher-allowed self-archiving options, faculty members make their research freely available to global audiences, dramatically expanding potential readership beyond institutions with subscription access to paywalled content (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024).

Open access publications typically achieve higher citation rates compared to paywalled equivalents, directly enhancing scholarly impact metrics used in performance evaluations and university rankings. Beyond citation advantages, open access practices align with evolving funder mandates requiring publicly accessible research outputs, positioning compliant faculty advantageously for grant opportunities. Additionally, digital scholarship extends beyond traditional publication formats to encompass innovative research products including interactive datasets, digital humanities projects, software tools, and multimedia resources that demonstrate expertise in formats accessible to diverse stakeholders (Chukwueke et al., 2020).

In the Nigerian academic context, open access publishing offers particular visibility benefits by addressing the "global information flow imbalance" that has historically limited international recognition of research conducted in African institutions. However, significant challenges remain, including predatory publishing concerns, article processing charge barriers, and institutional reward systems that may not fully recognize digital scholarship innovations. Despite these challenges, research indicates those Nigerian faculties who embrace open access practices achieve measurably greater international visibility and citation impact (Odigie et al., 2024).



## **Online Engagement and Collaborations**

Online engagement and collaborations encompass faculty participation in digital scholarly communication channels beyond formal publication platforms, including webinars, virtual conferences, online forums, collaborative annotation projects, and remote research partnerships. These activities extend faculty digital visibility by demonstrating expertise through dynamic interactions rather than static publications alone, showcasing interpersonal skills, thought leadership, and collaborative capacities that may not be evident from traditional research outputs (Mbagwu & Oduagwu, 2023).

Virtual academic events gained particular prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, creating new visibility pathways for faculty previously limited by travel funding constraints. For Nigerian academics in particular, online conferences have democratized international visibility opportunities by removing visa barriers and travel costs that historically restricted global engagement. Beyond formal academic events, participation in public-facing platforms such as The Conversation, Medium, or discipline-specific forums enables faculty to translate research insights for broader audiences, potentially attracting media attention and public engagement opportunities (Adeyemo & Jamogha, 2021).

Digital research collaborations further enhance visibility through network effects, with faculty gaining exposure to collaborators' professional networks. Online collaborative tools enable faculty to participate in international research teams without geographical constraints, facilitating coauthorship opportunities that increase publication output and cross-institutional visibility. However, successful engagement in these spaces requires developing digital collaboration skills, understanding online academic communication norms, and strategically selecting engagement opportunities aligned with professional goals (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024). Despite these challenges, research indicates that faculty who actively participate in online scholarly communities typically develop more extensive international networks and greater research impact compared to those limiting their visibility efforts to traditional publication channels.

## **DIGITAL VISIBILITY GAP IN ACADEMIA**

The concept of digital visibility in academia has gained significant attention as scholars worldwide recognize its impact on research dissemination and career advancement. Elisha (2019) defined digital visibility as the online discoverability of academic work through platforms like Google Scholar, emphasizing that it is "essential for contemporary academic staff to establish and maintain digital profiles that showcase their scholarly contributions." The author argues that digital visibility directly correlates with citation metrics and professional recognition in higher education. Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) defined digital visibility as the extent to which scholarly communications are discoverable, accessible, and recognized globally through digital platforms." They emphasize that visibility encompasses not just presence but meaningful engagement with academic content across geographical boundaries.

Abba and Anene (2023) approached digital visibility through the lens of online platforms, defining it as "the strategic utilization of digital tools and networks to enhance the discoverability and impact of research outputs. Chukwueke et al. (2020) described digital visibility as the systematic documentation and digital preservation of academic contributions that increase

accessibility and citation potential. They particularly emphasize institutional repositories as critical infrastructure for enhancing visibility. Eze et al. (2024) provided a comprehensive definition that incorporates global dimensions, characterizing digital visibility as "the international discoverability and recognition of research outputs facilitated through technological platforms and strategic dissemination practices.

Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) framed digital visibility through an open access perspective, defining it as the unrestricted accessibility and discoverability of research that transcends traditional publication barriers. They argued that true visibility requires removing paywall restrictions that limit global engagement with academic content. Oladokun et al. (2024) noted that is the ability of academic content to be discovered, accessed, and utilized through digital means despite infrastructural challenges. They further acknowledge the contextual barriers within Nigerian universities while emphasizing the transformative potential of technological solutions. Across these definitions, consistent themes emerge: digital visibility encompasses discoverability, accessibility, global reach, strategic utilization of platforms, and institutional support. The literature collectively frames digital visibility not merely as online presence but as an essential aspect of contemporary academic engagement that requires deliberate cultivation at both individual and institutional levels.

## CAUSES OF DIGITAL VISIBILITY GAP IN ACADEMIA

The digital visibility gap in academia refers to the disparity in online presence and visibility among researchers, institutions, and countries. This gap is characterized by unequal access to digital platforms, tools, and resources, resulting in limited online visibility and dissemination of research outputs. Several factors contribute to this gap, they include:

**Limited Digital Literacy:** stands as a fundamental barrier to academic visibility as documented across multiple studies. Elisha (2019) noted that many faculty members, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, lack the technical knowledge to establish and maintain digital profiles on platforms like Google Scholar. This deficiency extends beyond basic computer skills to include understanding citation metrics and academic social networking. Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) further elaborated that digital literacy encompasses not just technical abilities but also knowledge of strategic visibility practices. Their research reveals that many Nigerian academics possess rudimentary digital skills but lack advanced competencies in research visibility optimization.

Chukwueke et al. (2020) observed that faculty often demonstrate reluctance toward digital platforms due to unfamiliarity, creating a self-perpetuating cycle where limited engagement leads to decreased motivation to develop necessary skills. Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) highlighted the generational aspect of this challenge, noting that senior academics who hold influential positions often display greater resistance to digital literacy acquisition. This resistance consequently shapes departmental and institutional culture regarding digital visibility priorities. As Abba and Anene (2023) concluded, the digital literacy gap manifests not merely as technological unfamiliarity but as a deeper skepticism about the value of online scholarly communication, requiring both technical training and attitudinal shifts to address effectively.

**Inadequate Government and Institutional Support:** represent a critical systemic barrier to digital visibility for academics. Eze et al. (2024) asserted that Nigerian universities frequently

lack coherent policies for promoting faculty research visibility, with institutional efforts being fragmented and inconsistently implemented. Their study reveals that while university leadership may verbally endorse digital visibility initiatives, concrete resource allocation remains insufficient. Chukwueke et al. (2020) specifically examined institutional repositories, finding that many Nigerian universities have established such platforms but fail to provide adequate staffing, technical maintenance, or faculty incentives to ensure their effective utilization. The researchers note that repositories often become "digital graveyards" rather than vibrant showcases of institutional research output due to this neglect.

Oladokun et al. (2024) further added that academic libraries, despite their potential as digital visibility champions, frequently operate with outdated technical infrastructure and insufficient training resources. Their analysis demonstrates that library professionals often recognize their critical role in faculty visibility enhancement but lack institutional backing to fulfill this mission effectively. Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) connected institutional support deficiencies to broader governance challenges, observing that frequent leadership changes and administrative instability undermine sustained digital visibility initiatives. Additionally, government bodies like TETFUND have fallen short in providing adequate support for digital visibility initiatives, failing to prioritize this critical aspect of academic advancement in their funding allocations and policy frameworks. The combined research suggests that institutional and governmental support failures exist along multiple dimensions such as policy, resources, infrastructure, and organizational culture creating a complex barrier that requires comprehensive reform approaches at both institutional and national levels.

**Economic Instability:** emerges as a profound impediment to digital visibility among Nigerian academics. Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) noted that inflation and economic downturns directly impact faculty members' capacity to engage with international publishing platforms. Their research reveals that as economic pressures intensify, academics must prioritize immediate survival needs over career visibility investments, resulting in decreased research output and online presence. Oladokun et al. (2024) observe that economic volatility creates ripple effects throughout the academic ecosystem, with institutions reducing library budgets and technology investments precisely when digital visibility becomes most crucial for international competitiveness. The authors note that economic constraints force difficult tradeoffs between basic operational needs and forward-looking digital initiatives.

Elisha (2019) further asserted that economic instability affects individual researchers' publication strategies, with many faculty members unable to afford publication fees for high-visibility international journals. This financial barrier results in publication in lower-visibility local journals, perpetuating visibility disparities. Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) further connected economic challenges to broader institutional sustainability concerns, noting that universities struggle to maintain existing digital infrastructure amid fluctuating funding. Their analysis demonstrates that economic instability creates not just immediate financial barriers but also planning uncertainties that undermine long-term visibility strategies. Across these studies, economic factors emerge not merely as resource constraints but as fundamental shapers of academic priorities and possibilities.

**Geographic Disparities:** fundamentally shape digital visibility patterns among academic communities. Abba and Anene (2023) documented significant infrastructure gaps between urban and rural Nigerian universities, with institutions outside major cities experiencing persistent

connectivity challenges that undermine digital presence efforts. Their research reveals that geographic location determines not just technical capabilities but also exposure to digital visibility concepts and practices. Eze et al. (2024) explored how geographic positioning within global academic networks influences visibility outcomes, with universities in Nigeria's southeastern region demonstrating particular challenges in establishing international research connections despite substantial scholarly output.

Oladokun et al. (2024) opined that infrastructure disparities manifest in daily academic practices, documenting how unreliable electricity and internet connectivity create disruptions that discourage consistent digital platform engagement. Their work highlights that geographic challenges operate not just at institutional scales but in moment-to-moment academic experiences. Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) further asserted that geographic disparities intersect with international academic gatekeeping, observing that Western-centric academic platforms often design features assuming constant connectivity and fail to accommodate the intermittent access realities of many regions. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that geographic disparities represent not isolated technical challenges but interconnected sociotechnical conditions that systematically disadvantage certain academic communities in the digital visibility landscape.

**Disciplinary Differences:** create significant but often overlooked patterns in digital visibility disparities. Elisha (2019) noted that citation practices and publication cultures vary dramatically across academic fields, with humanities scholars particularly disadvantaged by metrics-driven visibility platforms that favor the natural sciences' publication patterns. This disciplinary bias extends beyond mere preference to structural exclusion of certain knowledge forms from dominant visibility systems. Chukwueke et al. (2020) asserted that institutional repositories often replicate rather than remedy these disciplinary disparities, with technical and medical disciplines receiving prioritized support while humanities collections remain underdeveloped. Their investigation reveals that disciplinary differences in digital visibility reflect not just varied adoption rates but institutionalized value hierarchies.

Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) further added that open access movements, despite promising greater equity, have primarily benefited disciplines with established funding mechanisms for article processing charges, creating new visibility barriers for less-resourced fields. Their analysis demonstrates that seemingly neutral digital transformations often carry embedded disciplinary biases. Abba and Anene (2023) further opined that disciplinary communication practices shape platform engagement, noting that fields relying heavily on monographs rather than journal articles experience particular disadvantages in current visibility systems. These studies collectively illustrate that disciplinary differences in digital visibility emerge not from simple preference variations but from complex interactions between knowledge traditions, resource distributions, and technological design decisions that systematically privilege certain academic domains while marginalizing others.

## **NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY REPUTATION**

University reputation has emerged as a critical factor in the Nigerian higher education landscape, influencing student enrollment, institutional sustainability, and stakeholder perception. Dominic et al. (2021) saw reputation as a collective evaluation of a university's past actions and ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. They further added that reputation is a fragile

yet essential institutional asset that requires deliberate management strategies, particularly during periods of disruption. Their study of Nigerian universities reveals that institutional reputation is significantly influenced by crisis response effectiveness, with timely communication, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive educational delivery serving as key reputation determinants during the pandemic. The researchers argue that reputation sustainability requires proactive rather than reactive approaches, with universities needing to establish robust crisis management frameworks before emergencies occur.

Ogbari et al. (2019) asserted that university reputation is the aggregate perception of stakeholders regarding an institution's capacity to meet expectations and deliver distinctive value. They also position entrepreneurship development studies as a critical driver of university reputation in Nigeria's contemporary educational environment. Their findings suggest that institutions with robust entrepreneurial programs enjoy enhanced reputational capital, manifested through improved graduate employability, industry partnerships, and community perception. The researchers emphasize that reputation building through entrepreneurship education requires authentic institutional commitment rather than superficial curriculum additions, with faculty expertise and practical learning opportunities serving as reputation authenticators.

Tosin et al. (2024) approached university reputation as a multidimensional corporate asset within the higher education sector. Their study of universities in Lagos State conceptualizes reputation as "the cumulative judgment of an institution based on its perceived quality, performance, and societal contribution over time." The researchers identify several reputation dimensions, including academic excellence, research output, graduate outcomes, community engagement, and infrastructure quality. Their findings reveal that stakeholder experiences significantly influence reputation formation, with firsthand interactions often carrying greater weight than formal communications or marketing efforts. The authors argue that reputation management requires consistent delivery across all institutional touchpoints, with perceived authenticity serving as a fundamental reputation driver.

Ademola et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between founder reputation and student enrollment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. They then defined institutional reputation as a composite evaluation influenced by the founder's credibility, institutional history, and perceived educational quality. The study reveals that founder reputation serves as a significant enrollment influencer, particularly for private institutions where prospective students and parents often associate institutional quality with the founder's personal and professional standing. The researchers identify several founder-related factors that enhance institutional reputation, including professional accomplishments, moral standing, educational background, and public service record. Their findings suggest that founder reputation functions as both an enrollment catalyst and a potential vulnerability, with negative founder associations potentially undermining broader institutional reputation. In essence, as Nigerian universities navigate an increasingly competitive educational system, reputation management has evolved from a peripheral concern to a central strategic imperative with significant implications for institutional sustainability and success.

## **FACULTIES DIGITAL VISIBILITY GAP AND NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY REPUTATION**

The relationship between faculty digital visibility and university reputation represents a critical yet underexplored dimension of institutional success in contemporary higher education. This

relationship has particular significance within the Nigerian academic context, where universities increasingly compete for international recognition despite resource constraints and structural challenges. As digital platforms increasingly mediate academic engagement and institutional evaluation, the visibility gap among faculty members emerges as a significant factor influencing broader university reputation metrics and perceptions.

Digital visibility among faculty members serves as a microcosm of institutional digital presence, with individual scholarly profiles collectively shaping external perceptions of university research productivity and relevance. Mbagwu and Oduagwu (2023) examined this relationship specifically within the context of academic librarians in Imo State, observing that librarians, who often serve as digital visibility champions for other faculty, frequently struggle with their online scholarly presence. Their research reveals that low visibility among library professionals correlates with diminished institutional reputation in information science disciplines, suggesting that profession-specific visibility gaps can undermine targeted aspects of university standing. The researchers conclude that "the visibility of key professional groups within universities creates ripple effects throughout institutional reputation ecosystems," highlighting the interconnected nature of individual and organizational digital presence.

This interconnection between faculty visibility and institutional reputation receives further elaboration in Adeyemo and Jamogha's (2021) case study of Obafemi Awolowo University. The researchers demonstrate how institutional repositories function as critical infrastructure for enhancing both faculty visibility and university reputation simultaneously. Their analysis reveals that repository content richness, particularly faculty research contributions, directly influences institutional webometric rankings and citation metrics—quantifiable dimensions of university reputation. The researchers characterize institutional repositories as "unified visibility platforms that transform individual scholarly contributions into collective reputational assets," emphasizing that faculty participation in digital visibility initiatives generates institutional benefits beyond personal career advancement.

Elisha (2019) specifically examined Google Scholar as a visibility platform with dual implications for faculty careers and institutional standing. Elisha revealed that faculty Google Scholar profiles serve not just as individual academic showcases but as discoverable institutional affiliations that enhance university findability in scholarly searches. The research demonstrates that universities with higher percentages of faculty maintaining active Google Scholar profiles enjoy improved presence in discipline-specific search results, enhancing institutional reputation among targeted academic communities. Elisha further argued that individual digital presence decisions function as distributed institutional branding choices, highlighting how seemingly personal visibility practices contribute to collective reputation construction.

More so, Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) asserted that there are disparities between national and international visibility metrics among faculty, with many scholars achieving recognition within Nigerian academic circles while remaining virtually invisible in global scholarly conversations. This visibility disparity translates directly to institutional reputation challenges, as universities with internationally visible faculty enjoy disproportionate advantages in global university rankings and international partnership opportunities. The researchers conclude that faculty global visibility functions as both a predictor and a product of institutional international standing," emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between individual presence and organizational reputation.

The technological infrastructure supporting faculty visibility receives detailed examination in Abba and Anene's (2023) study of online platform utilization among Nigerian

librarians. Their research identifies significant platform access and utilization gaps that undermine both individual visibility and institutional reputation potential. The study reveals that platform-specific visibility strategies such as maintaining consistent researcher identifiers across multiple systems significantly influence institutional discoverability in specialized academic databases. The researchers argue that fragmented digital presence at individual levels creates systemic discovery challenges at institutional scales, highlighting how visibility gaps originate in specific technical practices before manifesting as broader reputational challenges.

Chukwueke et al. (2020) disclosed that the percentage of institutional research output captured in digital collections directly correlates with university webometric rankings. However, the study also identifies significant implementation challenges, with many repositories failing to achieve critical mass due to faculty participation barriers and technical limitations. The researchers characterize effective repositories as "visibility equalizers that democratize digital presence across disciplines and career stages," suggesting that well-implemented repositories can address visibility disparities while enhancing institutional reputation. Academic libraries play a central role in bridging faculty visibility gaps and enhancing university reputation (Eze et al., 2024). Their study of southeastern Nigerian universities identifies libraries as institutional visibility hubs that provide both technical infrastructure and specialized knowledge for enhancing faculty digital presence. The research reveals that libraries with dedicated scholarly communications units demonstrate greater success in improving both faculty visibility metrics and institutional reputation indicators. The researchers argue that "strategic visibility initiatives require dedicated organizational champions with both technical expertise and faculty trust," highlighting the structural requirements for effective visibility-reputation management.

The open access paradigm offers particular promise for simultaneously addressing visibility gaps and enhancing reputation (Onyebinama & Ngozi, 2024). Their research demonstrates that open access publishing increases citation rates for individual faculty while improving institutional impact metrics and public engagement measures. The study identifies economic barriers to gold open access adoption while highlighting green open access repository strategies as cost-effective alternatives for enhancing both faculty visibility and university reputation. The researchers characterize open access as "a visibility multiplier that transforms access into discovery and engagement," emphasizing its dual benefits for individual researchers and their institutions.

Technological advancements in academic libraries offer additional pathways for addressing visibility gaps and enhancing reputation (Oladokun et al., 2024). Their research identifies specific technical interventions including automated faculty profile systems, integrated researcher identifier management, and enhanced repository analytics that simultaneously increase faculty visibility and provide quantifiable metrics for university reputation management. The study emphasizes that technical solutions require corresponding cultural and policy changes to achieve maximum impact on both individual and institutional visibility. The researchers conclude that "technology deployment without corresponding academic culture evolution creates digital infrastructures without sustainable visibility practices, highlighting the sociotechnical nature of the visibility-reputation relationship. This implies that as digital presence increasingly mediates academic engagement and evaluation, the relationship between faculty visibility and university reputation represents a critical strategic consideration for institutions seeking to enhance their standing in increasingly competitive higher education environments.

In addition, the digital visibility gap significantly impacts Nigerian university's reputation, have led to a perceived lack of expertise and outdated research. When researchers

have poor online presence, they may be overlooked by potential collaborators, media outlets, and funding agencies, perpetuating the notion that the university lacks expertise in certain areas. Furthermore, limited online visibility can make it challenging for universities to showcase their latest research achievements, creating an impression that their research is outdated or stagnant. This can lead to a perception of irrelevance, where universities with a weak online presence are seen as disconnected from contemporary issues and debates, undermining their reputation as relevant and innovative institutions (Elisha, 2019). The digital visibility gap can also have implications for university rankings and accreditation, as many ranking methodologies rely on online metrics such as citation counts and research output. A perceived lack of expertise and outdated research can ultimately deter top talent from joining the university and make it harder to secure funding for research projects.

## **CONCLUSION**

The digital visibility gap can significantly impact a university's reputation, leading to a perceived lack of expertise and outdated research. Researchers without a strong online presence may be overlooked by potential collaborators, media outlets, and funding agencies. This perpetuates the notion that the university lacks expertise in certain areas, ultimately affecting its reputation. Limited online visibility also makes it challenging for universities to showcase their latest research achievements. As a result, their research may be perceived as outdated or stagnant. This can lead to a perception of irrelevance, undermining the university's reputation as a relevant and innovative institution. The implications of the digital visibility gap extend to university rankings and accreditation. Many ranking methodologies rely on online metrics, such as citation counts and research output. A perceived lack of expertise and outdated research can deter top talent and make securing funding harder. Universities need to address the digital visibility gap to maintain a strong reputation and remain competitive. Effective online strategies can help showcase research expertise and innovation.

## **Suggestions**

Bridging the digital visibility gap in Nigerian academia requires deliberate strategies at both individual and institutional levels. As research by Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) demonstrated that digital visibility directly impacts institutional reputation, scholarly influence, and global academic standing. Elisha (2019) emphasized that enhanced digital visibility generates benefits beyond individual career advancement, contributing significantly to institutional reputation metrics and international recognition. The following suggestions, drawn from recent scholarship, offers actionable pathways for Nigerian universities and their faculty members to enhance digital visibility and, consequently, institutional reputation in an increasingly competitive global academic landscape.

- Individual faculty members can significantly enhance their digital visibility through strategic platform engagement and content dissemination approaches. Mbagwu and Oduagwu (2023) recommended that academics establish comprehensive digital profiles across multiple platforms, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and ORCID, to maximize discoverability across diverse search environments. The importance of consistent profile maintenance suggests regular updates to ensure publication lists



remain current and complete. Beyond profile creation, Abba and Anene (2023) advocated for strategic content sharing through academic social networks, suggesting that researchers actively participate in discipline-specific online communities rather than passively maintaining profiles. Additionally, Eze et al. (2024) highlighted the potential of alternative content formats, including academic blogging, podcasting, and research visualizations, to reach broader audiences beyond traditional academic circles. These varied approaches collectively create a robust digital presence that enhances individual visibility while contributing to institutional reputation indicators.

- Effective institutional support mechanisms create enabling environments for faculty digital visibility enhancement. Chukwueke et al. (2020) advocated for comprehensive training programs that address both technical skills and visibility strategy development, suggesting workshops targeting specific platforms and disciplinary visibility practices. Oladokun et al. (2024) emphasized infrastructure development, recommending that institutions invest in robust repository systems, reliable internet connectivity, and specialized digital visibility tools to support faculty online presence. Beyond technical support, Adeyemo and Jamogha (2021) highlighted the importance of recognition systems that reward digital visibility achievements, suggesting that promotion criteria incorporate visibility metrics to incentivize faculty engagement. Onyebinama and Ngozi (2024) further recommended institutional publication funds to support open access publishing, addressing economic barriers that limit global content accessibility. These institutional mechanisms create sustainable environments where faculty digital visibility becomes embedded in academic culture rather than remaining an additional burden on already-stretched academic workloads.
- Measuring digital visibility and its reputational impact requires comprehensive metrics that capture multiple dimensions of online presence and engagement. Elisha (2019) suggested tracking citation-based metrics, including h-index, i10-index, and total citations across platforms, to assess scholarly influence resulting from enhanced visibility. Beyond citations, Awoyemi and Agbetuyi (2024) recommend monitoring alternative metrics such as downloads, views, shares, and media mentions to capture broader societal engagement with academic content. For institutional-level assessment, Adeyemo and Jamogha (2021) advocated tracking webometric rankings, repository usage statistics, and collaborative network analysis to evaluate how individual visibility collectively enhances institutional reputation. Oladokun et al. (2024) additionally suggested periodic visibility audits that assess both quantitative metrics and qualitative aspects of faculty online presence, including profile completeness, content accessibility, and platform diversification. These multifaceted measurement approaches provide evidence for strategic decision-making while demonstrating the return on investment from digital visibility initiatives.

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