

RESEARCH TRENDS OF BACHELORS OF LAW STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF BAZE UNIVERSITY ABUJA 2017 TO 2022

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Abstract

This study examines the research trends among Bachelor of Law (LL.B) students at Baze University, Abuja, from 2017 to 2022, using a quantitative approach. It addresses such variables as volume, theme preferences, and distribution over time regarding research output during the specified period. Data were obtained from 182 submitted research projects categorized according to subject areas using the Moys classification system and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Results showed that 47.8% of the student's projects are constitutional law, followed by Islamic law (10.4%) and criminal law (9.3%). In contrast, areas such as technological law, evidence, and legal profession are under-explored. 2022 is marked by very at high 0.09 research output and accounts for 41.8% of all output during the period, increasing research engagement within the final year of the study. Notably, the study points out the narrowness in the choice of research topics, and hereby makes recommendations for motivating students' investigations into those areas that currently remain under-researched. Also, to make way for holistic legal scholarship. It further underscores the importance of access to improve technological tools and resources for innovatively supportive research. Finally, it recommends mixed-methods fieldwork whose foci would include focus group discussions for better understanding of student choice and faculty influences. Such offers insights into the trends shaping legal research at Baze University and could provide an important basis on which academic programs may be aligned with broader disciplinary and societal needs. The findings thus contribute to discourse on how to improve legal education in Nigeria, as well as towards the effective integration of research trends into curricula.

Keywords: Constitutional law, Legal education, LL.B research, and Research trends

Background to the Study

The legal education is considered a pivotal part of societal advancement and facilitates an individual in the art of a gentleman's behavior and conduct in the labyrinths of law and justice. The Bachelor of Law (LL.B) program is one of the avenues for the aspiring legal practitioner designed to endow a practitioner with a robust development of the foundations of theoretical principles, ethics, and research methodologies. Also, much attention is paid to research trends among law programs in recent years as universities align with global assessment standards and local socio-legal issues (Ojukwu & Atim, 2020). This study will examine the trends on the Bachelor of Law research at Baze University Abuja, providing critical analysis to its trajectory, innovations, and alignment with contemporary legal education.

To encourage students to develop analytical and problem-solving skills while adding to the pool of knowledge in law, research is a far more significant part of legal education (Eze, 2019). As such, law faculties have designed research-focused curricula to reflect students' capacities to address legal issues around the globe (Bello et al., 2021). At Baze University ~~itself~~, a young, rapidly growing institution, the LL.B program is strong in academics and professionalism as intended for the students. This study investigates how these have been translated into the research outputs of Bachelor of Law students in the university.

One prominent trend in legal research is the increasing use of interdisciplinary approaches. Researchers in law now look towards other fields like sociology, economics, and technology to widen their perspective of understanding legal principles and practices implications (Ajayi & Eme, 2020). Baze University is located in the cosmopolitan environment of Abuja, Baze University provides the opportunity for such investigation in interdisciplinary research trends with its access to various resources and perspectives.

Interdisciplinary Approaches-this is one of the most important trends in legal research. There is still a clear tendency to integrate law into such fields as sociology, economics, and technology in

order to have a fuller picture of the implications of legal principles and practices (Ajayi & Eme, 2020). Baze University, can thus offer a different context of this kind of interdisciplinary research as it has access to diverse sources and viewpoints.

Another emerging trend is the integration of technology in legal research. Digital tools and platforms are transforming the way students access legal databases, analyze case law, and conduct research (Ogunde & Olumide, 2021). This development has enhanced the efficiency and depth of legal research, allowing students to explore complex legal issues with greater precision. The extent to which these technological advancements are leveraged in Baze University's LL.B program is a key focus of this study.

Practical relevance is becoming even more important in modern-day legal research. Students are made to do projects on topics that concern the local and national levels, such as human rights, environment, and even cyber law (Adebayo & Akande, 2022). Baze University being strategically positioned in Nigeria's capital city makes its location ideal for addressing almost any major legal conundrum and presenting students with an opportunity to carry out research with direct societal impact. Yet, all advancement notwithstanding, there are still bottlenecks. Limited access to resources, inadequate mentoring, and insufficient advanced research training have a demising effect on student research quality in most Nigerian universities (Okeke & Nwafor, 2018). The study is aimed at understanding how these challenges exist at Baze University and the approaches to circumventing them. Moreover, the global trend toward open access publishing and collaborative research is reshaping academic outputs. Law students are increasingly encouraged to publish their work and collaborate with peers and faculty to contribute to a broader academic dialogue (Smith & Brown, 2020). Investigating how Baze University aligns with these trends is essential to understanding its contribution to legal scholarship. The study also examines the impact of policy and institutional frameworks on legal research. Policies on academic integrity, funding for research, and partnerships with external organizations significantly influence the scope and

quality of student research (Chukwu & Ibe, 2021). Baze University's policies and practices in this regard are analyzed to assess their effectiveness in fostering high-quality legal research.

The research, therefore research investigates trends in Bachelor of Law research at Baze University. The methodologies considered by the study are likely to reveal important insight into the institution's contribution toward and distance from global trends in legal education.

Objectives of the Study

- a. To know the total number of law undergraduate research projects within 2017-2022
- b. To know the research project trends in Baze University LLB research projects within 2017-2022
- c. To know the annual research output of LLB students within 2017-2022

Research Questions

- a. what is the total number of LLB research project from 2017-2022?
- b. what is the research focus area of LLB from 2017-2022?
- c. what is the annual research output of LLB from 2017-2022?

Literature Review

Legal education is very significant in producing future legal practitioners with up-to-date knowledge base and skills. It includes law theory, principles and applications, critical thinking and problem solving. Studies indicate that curriculum development must be dynamic and geared towards changes in society by integrating issues such as human rights and digital governance into their contemporary legal curricula (Adebayo & Akande, 2022). Nigerian universities have continually developed and advanced their legal education in harmonization over international

standards, just as many other universities in the world, to ensure that graduates are qualified in handling complex legal issues (Ojukwu & Atim, 2020).

The Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) program is the essential course for any would-be lawyer, giving explanation of legal principles in conjunction with research methodology and ethics. It is an area of study critical to the curriculum where students learn to analyze critically the legal problems that they encounter and to contribute to the legal scholarship, researching it. Research studies have established that students' research does not cover a variety of areas, but rather focuses much attention on specific areas of law (Chukwu & Ibe, 2021). This shows that universities ought to stimulate broader participation of students in research across different areas of jurisprudence, of which constitutional law is a cardinal portion. Constitutional law is one of the core aspects of legal education and gets a substantial amount of attention in LL.B research. It covers the fundamental principles by which those states carry out their organization and functioning while ensuring the protection of individual rights and freedoms. According to a bibliometric analysis done by Bello, Ibrahim, and Musa (2021 shows), that constitutional law forms the predominant research output in many Nigerian universities, which is only reflective of the importance of such law to national and global socio-political contexts. Nevertheless, some other areas of concern such as environmental and technology law remain largely unexplored.

Research trends in law education have phenomenally changed since then because of these interdisciplinary approaches and digital technologies. Law scholars are becoming increasingly dependent on sociology, economics, and technology for a more thorough consideration of legal principles (Ajayi & Eme, 2020). This interdisciplinary nature increases the relevance and affects the benefits of legal research, especially when bearing in mind the difficult issues within society. And it is the use of digital tools such as legal databases and data analytics that has opened a new frontier in LL.B research, as it allows for analytical sophistication and effective management of data (Ogunde & Olumide, 2021).

Some of the essential actions to take towards a solution would include making the resources available and providing training in the advanced methods of research. It should emphasize global trends in legal research that run through open access publication and cooperation as a means to make an environment more inclusive and accessible to students. Smith and Brown (2020) argue that such techniques democratize knowledge in addition to student participation in academic conversations. By such trends, the students of Nigerian universities would be able to realize the visibility and impact of their research outputs at the same level with global best practices.

By using shodhganga data, Kamble and Bankapur analysed doctoral research of library and information science of Karnataka University Dharwad. Findings of the study revealed that year 2010-2019 recorded the highest publication off theses, students of LIS were gearing toward more of scientometric and ICT courses. Ouchi, Lofti and Panahi (2022) used Scopus database to retrieve Library and information science research from 2011-2020 and the findings of their study revealed that systematic review, diffusion pattern and bibliometrics were the three hot topics in Library and information science under the period of study. Khatibi, Badeleh, & Khodabandelou (2021) conducted a bibliometric analysis on the research trends of Gamification in higher education. The time frame for the study was between 2010-2020. The data for the study was collected from web of science database.

Valanciene & Valanciene (2023) conducted a study on the trends of legal ethics research. Data was collected from Scopus database. Findings of the study revealed articles as the major research output in the field of legal ethics. Monson, Demaine, Perryan, Felfeli (2024) conducted a bibliometric analysis on artificial intelligence in ophthalmology and vision sciences within a span of 3 years. Four databases were used to collect data for the study and findings of the study revealed diabetic retinopathy as the most frequently used keyword. Al-raggad & Al-raggad(2024) used 543 publications from web of science. The period of study was between 2010-2024. Findings of the

study revealed De Gragorio g as the author with the highest local impact and Computer law and security review as local publication title with the highest impact.

Jamshed, Naeem, Ahmed (2020) in their study on analysis of criminal law literature a bibliometric study from 2010-2019. Data was collected from web of science. Findings revealed 2017 as the year with the highest number of publication output and for countries covered under the study USA was the country with most publications as well.

The literatures recommend the importance of broadening the scope of research within LL.B, especially on the less popular aspects of law, such as technology and environmental law. In fact, with the increasing efforts of Nigerian universities to reform legal education towards better possibilities, blending digital tools, interdisciplinary approaches, and collaborative learning may prove quite beneficial. These would not only broaden horizons for better knowledge but can also feed into the greater purpose of furthering legal scholarship.

Methodology

The research design employed for this study is the quantitative research design. Data for this study was collected from list of projects submitted by the faculty to the law library. Each project topic was assigned a subject using the Moys classification as a guide. Data was analysed using percentages and frequencies.

Test and Findings

Table 1: Annual research output from 2017-2022

YEAR	NO. OF THESIS	PERCENTAGE
2017	3	1.65
2018	-	-
2019	42	23.1
2020	12	6.6
2021	49	26.9

2022	76	41.8
TOTAL	182	100

From the table above, it is clear that 2022 has the highest number of LLB project, next in line is 2021 with a total of 49, and third in place is 2019 with a total of 42.

Table 2: Subject Trends

SUBJECT	NO. OF THESIS	PERCENTAGE
Constitutional Law	87	47.8
Islamic Law	19	10.4
Environmental Law	5	2.7
Torts	10	5.5
Legal System	2	1.1
International Law	3	1.6
Tax Law	4	2.2
Criminal Law	17	9.3
Oil And Gas	7	3.8
Banking Law	2	1.1
Legal Profession	1	0.5
Family Law	6	3.3
Company Law	7	3.9
Property	1	0.5
Electricity Law	1	0.5
Evidence	1	0.5
Law In Practice	1	0.5
Technological Law	1	0.5
Land Law	3	1.6

Islamic Banking	2	1.1
Commercial	1	0.5
Contract	1	0.5
TOTAL	182	100

The table clearly indicates that majority of the students wrote their project on constitutional law, second in place is Islamic law, and third in place is criminal law. This analysis revolves around Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) research projects between 2017 and 2022 at Baze University and it notes extreme disparity in the areas of choice in topics by students. Constitutional law became the major area, coming to 47.8% of projects. Such prominence points to the fundamental significance of constitutional law in legal studies and national governance with particular reference to individual rights. Preference to this area may be in response to the widespread requisition for interpreting and applying constitutional principles in Nigeria's socio-political situation.

Islamic law held second place with 10.4% of the research projects. Perhaps this figure reflects the cultural and religious concerns of Islamic law in Nigeria regarding areas of personal law, finance, and societal order. At the same time, the gap between Islamic law and constitutional law manifests the uneven distribution of student interest, probably still driven by faculty expertise, resource availability, or social priorities. Criminal law, with 9.3%, also mirrors its importance in meeting the challenges of justice and law enforcement; thus, students' preference matches the fields that practice implications in society. While these traditional areas are the focus of concern, the data show their low participation of emerging fields like the modern law of technology, environmental law, and evidence law, each ranging from 0.5% to 2.7%. This assures that these subjects will be given more emphasis in the future because they are intended to address contemporary world problems such as climate change, digital governance, and forensic advancement. So insufficient attention to such areas, which are very important, showed gaps in curriculum design and resource

allocation. Family law, company law, and oil and gas law attracted moderate levels of interest, forming 3.3% to 3.9% of the projects. Such areas likely attract students because of the applicability of learning to private practice, corporate law, and Nigeria's resource-dependent economy. Nonetheless, the relatively small percentage indicates the need for greater advocacy and mobilization among students in those critical areas.

In general, the findings reveal a leaning towards quintessential jurisdictions and, at best, marginal visits to interdisciplinary and emerging domains. To achieve an overall balanced approach, introducing Baze University at this point would include proper diversification in the curriculum, capacity building for resources, and enhanced mentorship in underrepresented areas. This will not only optimize the legal knowledge of a student but also prepare him in confronting new legal challenges.

Findings of the Study

- i. 47.8% of the research projects are on constitutional law
- ii. 41.8% of the entire output from 2017-2022 are from 2022
- iii. There is a total of 182 projects of llb research under the period of study

Conclusion

An investigation of LL.B research projects at Baze University for the period 2017 to 2022 shows that almost half of the research, 47.8%, was devoted to constitutional law. Although the results reflect the prominence of constitutional law in establishing basic legal principles and guiding societal governance, they also indicate a serious lack of diversity in research topics. For example, areas like law relating to technology, the environment, and evidence are grossly under-researched, which could portray a possible deficiency in teaching on those subjects, mentorship, and resources.

This discrepancy might result in inadequate exposure to emergent areas of law as well as unreadiness for their response to whatever challenges these will be creating in the legal profession. To achieve a more complete education in law, one needs to emphasize research in poorly represented and interdisciplinary fields. This would include offering a more diverse curriculum, advancing access to specialized resources, and mentorship in less researched areas of law. By tackling these gaps, Baze University aligns its LL.B program with the current demands of the legal profession so that graduates can meaningfully contribute to national and global legal discourses. Ultimately, the wider focus on research will enhance the students' experience and strengthen the institution's role in developing legal scholarship in Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby provided:

1. Baze University must design intervention programs to correct the overrepresentation of constitutional law, which currently stands at 47.8%, and the underrepresentation of emerging areas, such as technological law and environmental law. Some of these programs might include specialized courses along with a range of seminars and workshops on specific topical areas not commonly featured in the institution, such as technology law, environmental law, and evidence law. In so doing, students will be allowed to choose from a variety of legal subjects that would influence a more balanced output of research, making them better able to address modern global issues.
2. The university has to invest greatly in staff-development training for faculties so that they can supply mentorship in generally neglected legal areas. Such trained faculties need to be in emerging areas of law such as digital law, environmental law, and international law to give direction to students towards these areas and initiate research with a high impact and innovative research.

Interdisciplinary collaborations can also help widen the scope of research students could pursue with experts from other known fields of study.

3. Meager resource availability is often a limiting factor in venturing into less-studied subjects. Baze University should improve library collections to encompass online availability of legal databases, journals, and other multimedia resources in new areas of law. Such partnerships with technology firms, environmental organizations, and legal institutions are additional resources that can offer practical insight into research for the students in these fields. Limited resources are often an obstacle to less-explored topics. Baze University should consider expanding its collections into other areas, including providing online access to legal databases, journals, and multimedia resources in emerging fields of law. Establishing collaborative partnerships with technology firms, environmental groups, and legal institutions could provide additional resources and insights as applied cases for student research in these domains.

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