



Towards a New Paradigm of University Leadership Ranking: Reinventing Lecturers' Promotion Exercise Through AI-Driven and Citation Metrics in Nigeria

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Abstract

Original Research

The increasing demand for innovation, accountability, global competitiveness and research excellence has necessitated a new paradigm for university leadership ranking systems and academic promotion practices in Nigerian universities. This study explores how university leadership ranking can be enhanced by reinventing lecturers' promotion exercises through the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven technologies and citation metrics. The study further x-ray how AI can improve traditional promotion procedures by utilizing bibliometric indicators such as citation counts, h-index, research visibility, and scholarly impact to provide objective, transparent, and data-driven evaluations of academic performance. The paper argues that university leaders who adopt AI-enabled promotion frameworks are better positioned to foster innovation, academic excellence, institutional reputation, global academic visibility, institutional ranking by encouraging high-quality research outputs, and increasing their universities' standing in national and international ranking. The paper further identifies challenges associated with adoption of AI and citation-based promotion systems, including inadequate digital infrastructure, insufficient internet facilities, AI competencies among lecturers, limited access to reputable indexing databases, ethical concerns, and the risk of algorithmic bias. Despite these challenges, the integration of AI and citation-based assessment offers substantial prospects for promoting fairness, transparency, accountability, efficiency in academic evaluations, and decision-making in university administration. The study concludes that embracing AI-driven promotion frameworks and citation metrics is critical for repositioning Nigerian universities leadership within the global higher education landscape. It recommends strategic investments in digital infrastructure, academic staff training, ethical guidelines to ensure sustainable and inclusive use of AI in universities system.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Citation Metrics, Lecturers' Promotion, and Universities Research Visibility.

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Introduction

In Nigeria, the promotion of university lecturers has traditionally been based on a combination of

academic qualifications, years of experience, teaching effectiveness, research publications, professional contributions, and peer assessment.



These criteria remain important for recognizing academic growth and career progression. However, the way promotion exercises are often conducted can be fragmented and time-consuming, making it difficult to assess lecturers consistently and fairly across different departments and disciplines. The growing use of bibliometric data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides an opportunity to improve this process. Rather than relying mainly on manual assessment and publication counts, universities can use AI-supported systems to organize academic records, analyse research impact, track citation patterns, and provide clearer evidence of scholarly contribution. When carefully designed and combined with expert academic judgement, these technologies can make promotion more transparent, evidence-based, timely, and supportive of lecturers' professional development. The rapid development of tools such as ChatGPT has created new possibilities for teaching, learning, research, and academic writing in higher education (Malik, Shittu & Malik, 2026).

Artificial intelligence (AI) is defined as the simulation of human intelligence in computers designed to understand, learn, and solve problems in the same way as people do. These high-profile AI applications include advanced web search engines like Google Search, recommendation systems such as YouTube, Amazon, and Netflix; autonomous speech such as Waymo; generative and creative tools such as ChatGPT, Gamma PPT; Ask AI, Google Translate, Gemini, AI Chatbot, Orai, Suno and AI art; superhuman play and analysis in strategy games such as chess, Go; and interacting via human speech such as Google Assistant, Siri and Alexa (Shittu, Temisanren, Dairo & Ola, 2026). Perhaps, the use of technology among academic staff in Nigerian public universities seems to be become worrisome and crucial due to technostress management. Technostress is characterized by the "inability to cope with new technologies," To manage technostress in public universities, lecturers can take the following steps: encouraging open communication and support; implementing technology-related policies and training; taking regular breaks and practicing self-care; setting boundaries for technological use; and fostering a

healthy work-life balance. Therefore, this study seeks to address this critical gap in knowledge by conducting comprehensive research on the relationship between technostress and academic staff productivity in public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria (Shittu, Ola & Oladipo, 2024). The existing institutional regulations demonstrate that publication quality and scholarly contribution remain important components of promotion. lecturers' promotion remains an important mechanism for recognizing academic achievement, professional growth, research productivity, teaching effectiveness, and institutional contribution. The conventional approaches that place considerable emphasis on publication numbers and conventional assessment may not fully capture the wider contributions of contemporary academics.

However, University leadership and academic promotion are increasingly shaped by demands for transparency, measurable scholarly impact, and evidence-based decision-making. Consequently, the way universities identify and reward academic excellence has become an important issue in higher education governance. Promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, Reader, and Professor is more than an administrative exercise; it is a mechanism through which universities identify individuals who are capable of advancing scholarship, mentoring younger academics, leading research teams, supervising postgraduate students, contributing to institutional development, and influencing society. For example, the federal and state university promotion framework includes publication assessment, percentage contribution to co-authored work, teaching effectiveness, research, and external assessment for senior academic ranks. Its more recent guidelines also incorporate Google Scholar indicators, including minimum h-index thresholds for some senior promotions. This development reflects a broader transformation in academic evaluation. Citation databases now make it possible to examine how frequently scholarly works are used by other researchers, while AI can process large amounts of academic information and identify patterns that would be difficult for human committees to detect manually.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), bibliometric databases, and citation analytics therefore provides an opportunity to rethink how academic excellence and leadership are identified. Rajeevan and Devi, (2025) suggests that AI and machine-learning approaches could support more dynamic assessments of scholarly impact through citation prediction, network analysis, natural-language processing, and other forms of research intelligence. However, the movement toward metric-driven promotion also creates risks. Citation counts vary considerably between disciplines, languages, career stages, publication cultures, and research communities. A highly cited article is not automatically a high-quality article, just as a less-cited study is not necessarily unimportant. Recent international evidence shows that promotion policies differ substantially across countries and institutions, while bibliometric preferences are particularly pronounced in some middle-income settings (Lim et al., 2025).

Challenges of Academic Staff Promotion Exercise in Nigerian Universities

The traditional university promotion exercise remains an important mechanism for maintaining academic standards, but its implementation often presents practical challenges. In many Nigerian universities, lecturers are required to submit extensive documentation covering publications, teaching activities, supervision, research, and professional service. These records then pass through several stages of manual verification, departmental and faculty review, committee deliberation, and, for senior academic ranks, external assessment. Although these procedures are designed to ensure fairness and credibility, they can be time-consuming, administratively demanding, and sometimes inconsistent in the interpretation of evidence. Another concern is the growing emphasis on publication quantity. When lecturers feel pressured to produce a specified number of articles to qualify for promotion, academic productivity can gradually become a numbers game. Such pressure may unintentionally encourage researchers to prioritize frequent publication over originality, methodological

strength, meaningful collaboration, or research that addresses pressing societal problems. Citation metrics also require careful interpretation. Indicators such as citation counts and the h-index can provide useful evidence of scholarly visibility, but they do not tell the whole story. Citation patterns differ across disciplines and can be influenced by career length, self-citation, collaboration networks, language, and publication practices. Therefore, the real challenge is not whether Nigerian universities should embrace AI and metrics, but how these tools can strengthen evidence-based assessment without allowing algorithms and numbers to replace human academic judgment.

Conceptual Framework for AI-Driven Academic Leadership Ranking

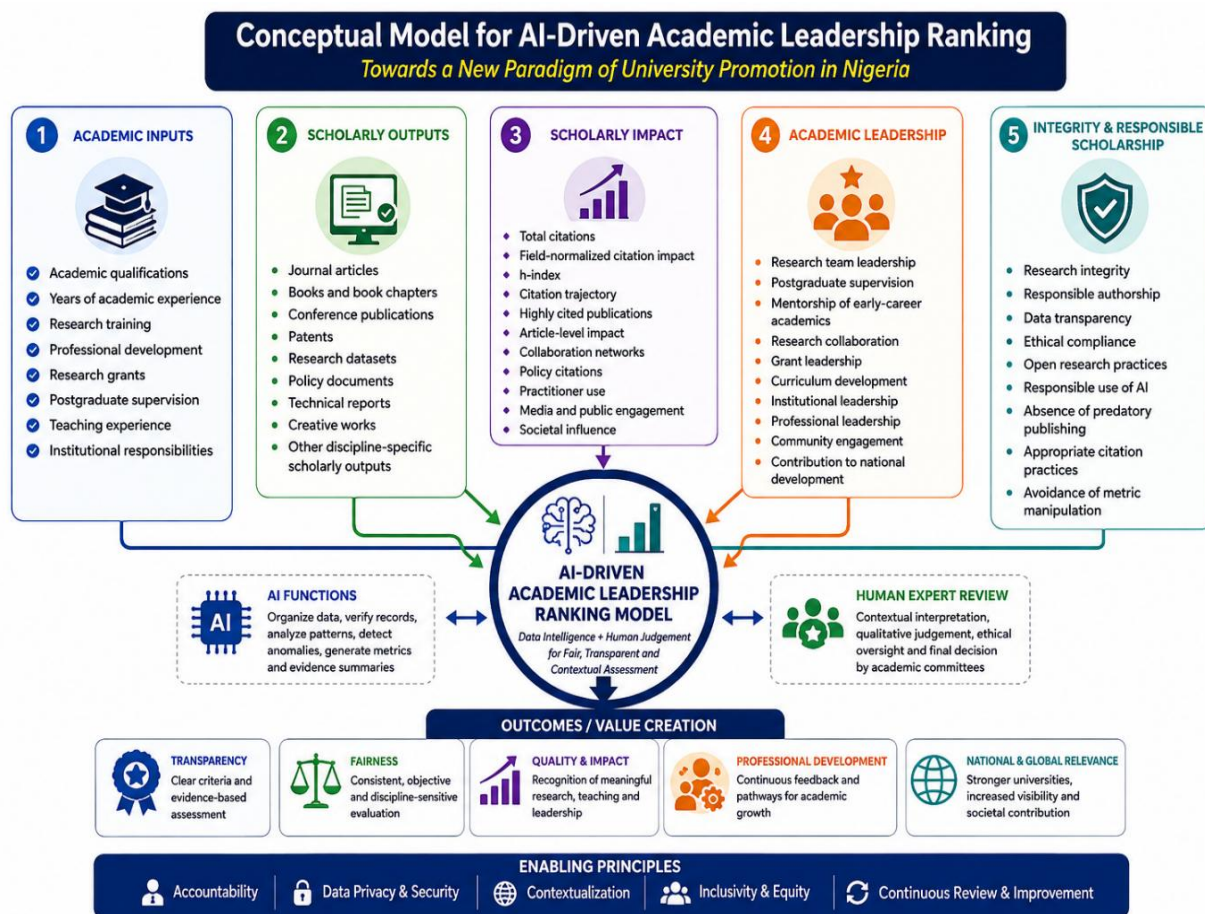
The proposed framework consists of five interconnected components:

1. **Academic Inputs:** These include: Academic qualifications; years of academic experience; research training; professional development; research grants; postgraduate supervision; teaching experience; and institutional responsibilities.
2. **Scholarly Outputs:** AI systems can organize and verify: Journal articles; books and book chapters; conference publications; patents; research datasets; policy documents; technical reports; creative works; and other discipline-specific scholarly outputs.
3. **Scholarly Impact:** Citation and alternative indicators can provide evidence of: Total citations; field-normalized citation impact; h-index; citation trajectory; highly cited publications; article-level impact; collaboration networks; policy citations; practitioner use; media and public engagement; and societal influence.
4. **Academic Leadership:** The proposed model expands promotion beyond research productivity by assessing: Research team leadership; postgraduate supervision; mentorship of early-career academics;

research collaboration; grant leadership; curriculum development; institutional leadership; professional leadership; community engagement; and contribution to national development. This is particularly important because academic leadership cannot be adequately represented by citation counts alone. Recent work on research leadership emphasizes the importance of supervision and leadership as dimensions of responsible research.

5. Integrity and Responsible Scholarship:

The system should also assess: Research integrity; responsible authorship; data transparency; ethical compliance; open research practices; responsible use of AI; absence of predatory publishing; appropriate citation practices; and avoidance of metric manipulation. The final ranking should therefore represent academic contribution, leadership, impact, and integrity, rather than simply academic popularity.



The conceptual model presents a balanced approach to evaluating academic leadership by combining Artificial Intelligence (AI) with human professional

judgement. According to Dairo, Shittu, Beyioku and Odekunle (2025), Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved from a theoretical concept into a

transformative force that now underpins almost every aspect of global life from communication and commerce to healthcare and education. The model is designed to support a fair, transparent, and context-sensitive system for academic leadership ranking and university promotion in Nigeria. The model begins with academic inputs, which represent the qualifications and professional experiences of an academic. These include academic qualifications, years of experience, research training, professional development, research grants, postgraduate supervision, teaching experience, and institutional responsibilities. These factors provide the foundation for assessing an academic's professional capacity. The second component is scholarly outputs, which focuses on what academics produce. These include journal articles, books and book chapters, conference publications, patents, research datasets, policy documents, technical reports, creative works, and other discipline-specific contributions. AI can assist in organizing, verifying, and analysing these records. The third component is scholarly impact, moves beyond simply counting publications. It considers citations, h-index development, highly cited publications, collaboration networks, policy citations, practitioner use, public engagement, and societal influence. This ensures that academic assessment considers the actual influence of scholarly work. The fourth component is Academic Leadership, which recognizes contributions that may not be captured through publication metrics. These include postgraduate supervision, research team leadership, mentoring early-career academics, research collaboration, grant leadership, curriculum development, institutional responsibilities, professional leadership, and community engagement. The fifth component is integrity and responsible scholarship, serves as an ethical safeguard. It emphasizes research integrity, responsible authorship, data transparency, ethical compliance, responsible AI use, appropriate citation, and avoidance of predatory publishing and metric manipulation. At the centre of the model is the AI-driven academic leadership ranking model, where AI processes and analyses evidence while human experts provide contextual interpretation, ethical oversight, and final judgement. Ultimately, the

model seeks to promote transparency, fairness, quality, professional development, and national and global relevance, while ensuring accountability, privacy, inclusivity, contextualization, and continuous improvement. According to Shittu, Idowu and Lawal (2020), online teaching is an application of electronic devices to impart knowledge and acquire skills through the internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV and CD-ROM, Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom and digital collaboration. According to Shittu, Ola and Adedapo (2021), Learning Management System has been introduced in many higher education institutions to connect lecturers and students online through internet facilities without the confines of physical traditional classroom. It is an academic online portal that uses digital software to connect classroom lecturers and students in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Nigerian universities faced the reality of limited preparedness for online teaching. The LMS offers online dealing with assignments, course content management, chats, forums, lesson plans, quizzes, tests, assignments, surveys, file sharing and resources, not all of these features will work for an institution (Shittu, Temisanren, Dairo & Mohammed, 2025).

Research Quality and Productivity

This dimension should not simply count publications. AI-assisted analysis can classify publications according to relevance, peer-review status, indexing, authorship contribution, research originality, methodological robustness, and disciplinary significance. These includes:

1. **Citation and Scholarly Impact:** Citation indicators should include multiple measures rather than one number. Possible indicators include: Normalized citation impact; h-index; citations per publication; citation trajectory; highly cited papers; field-weighted citation impact; article-level metrics; and responsible altimetric. This approach is preferable to relying exclusively

on journal impact factors (Humanize AI). Recently, lecturers in most public universities were under pressure to complete their research work based on a well-known proverb: "publish or perish". This research tress involved academic publications for promotion; attending national and international academic conferences, supervision of the undergraduate project and postgraduate dissertation and Ph.D. thesis (Shittu, Temisanren, Dairo & Ola, 2026).

2. **Teaching Effectiveness:** A lecturer who publishes extensively but consistently performs poorly in teaching should not automatically rank above a colleague who demonstrates both strong research performance and outstanding teaching practice. Academic excellence should reflect a reasonable balance between knowledge creation and the ability to effectively communicate that knowledge to students. Teaching indicators may include: Peer evaluation; student feedback interpreted cautiously; curriculum innovation; teaching materials; digital pedagogy; student learning outcomes; postgraduate teaching; and instructional leadership.
3. **Supervision and Mentorship:** Academic mentorship involves developing other academics and students. Indicators may therefore include: completed postgraduate theses; successful doctoral supervision; postgraduate completion rates; mentorship of early-career researchers; research-team development; and evidence of mentees' academic progression.
4. **Research Leadership:** This dimension recognizes: Principal investigator roles; research group leadership; international collaboration; major grants; conference leadership; editorial responsibilities; research centre leadership; and interdisciplinary initiatives. Leadership is the ability of a superior officer to influence the behaviour of a follower or subordinate in order to

accomplish educational goals and objectives (Mohammed, Shittu & Lawal, 2019).

5. **Innovation and Knowledge Transfer:** Universities should recognize academics whose work moves beyond journal publication into: Patents; software; prototypes; industry partnerships; policy applications; consultancy based on scholarly expertise; community innovations; and commercialization.

How Artificial Intelligence Can Reinvent the Promotion Exercise

AI should not be designed to replace the promotion committee or make final decisions about academic advancement. Rather, it should function as an academic intelligence assistant that helps committees organize evidence, identify relevant patterns, verify academic records, and provide objective insights to support informed decision-making. Final promotion decisions should remain with qualified academic experts who can consider disciplinary differences, professional context, individual circumstances, and the broader contributions of each lecturer. According to Mohammed, Shittu, Abudu, Mohammed and Mohammed (2025), the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially generative AI, has significantly impacted the ecosystem of higher education institutions across the world. Generative AI can be described as systems with intelligence to create original content such as text, summaries, learning notes, or analysis based on a large volume of information. Examples of such tools used in learning institutions include ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, and Turnitin. In this way, AI can improve the efficiency, transparency, and consistency of the promotion process without removing the human judgment that is essential to evaluating academic excellence.

1. **Automated Academic Portfolio Analysis:** AI can organize a lecturer's CV, publications, grants, teaching records, supervision history,

awards, and professional activities into a standardized academic profile.

2. **Citation Intelligence:** An AI system can integrate information from recognized scholarly databases to identify: Citation growth; influential publications; citation networks; collaboration patterns; disciplinary citation differences; unusual citation behaviour; and research trajectory.
3. **Authorship Contribution Analysis:** AI can help examine authorship patterns and identify the candidate's role in collaborative publications. This is highly relevant to Nigeria because existing promotion guidelines already require clear statements about authorship and percentage contribution in multi-authored publications.
4. **Research Impact Mapping:** Natural-language processing can identify connections between a lecturer's publications and: Sustainable Development Goals; government policy; professional guidelines; industry practice; public debate; patents; and community interventions.
5. **Promotion Eligibility Dashboard:** Instead of lecturers discovering promotion requirements only when the annual exercise begins, an AI-powered dashboard could provide a continuously updated profile showing: Current achievement → promotion requirements → evidence available → gaps → recommended development actions. This would transform promotion from a stressful annual event into a continuous professional development process. Recent evidence from academic medicine illustrates the potential of AI-assisted tools to help faculty navigate complex promotion and tenure requirements and improve transparency in academic career development (Yeo et al., 2025).

data. If historical promotion decisions contain institutional or disciplinary biases, automated systems may reproduce those biases.

2. **Metric Gaming:** Academics may attempt to manipulate citation counts through excessive self-citation, citation exchanges, inappropriate authorship practices, or strategic publishing. Recent research has highlighted the wider problem of citation manipulation and the prominence of Google Scholar as a source of citation information in academic evaluation.
3. **Data Privacy:** Promotion databases contain sensitive professional information. Universities must therefore establish clear rules concerning data collection, storage, access, retention, and use.
4. **Digital Inequality:** Academics working in disciplines with smaller citation communities or those publishing in locally relevant journals may be disadvantaged by global citation indicators.
5. **AI Hallucination and Misclassification:** AI-generated assessments may contain errors. Every AI-generated claim should therefore be traceable to verifiable evidence.
6. **Over-automation:** The greatest danger would be allowing a numerical score to become an automatic promotion decision.

University Proposed Ranking Categories

Instead of producing one simplistic university-wide league table of individual lecturers, universities could generate several complementary categories:

1. Research Excellence
2. Research Impact
3. Teaching Excellence
4. Postgraduate Mentorship
5. Academic Leadership
6. Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
7. Societal Impact
8. International Collaboration
9. Responsible Scholarship

Risks and Ethical Considerations in Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

1. **Algorithmic Bias:** AI systems learn from available

10. Emerging Academic Leadership

This approach would prevent a single number from defining an academic career. A professor who is a transformational teacher should be recognized for teaching leadership. A researcher whose work changes public policy should receive recognition for societal impact. A scholar who builds a productive research team should be recognized for academic leadership.

Implications

This study proposes a new approach to university leadership ranking in which AI-driven analytics and citation metrics support, rather than replace, expert academic judgment. The proposed Lecturer Academic Leadership Index (LALI) brings together research productivity, citation impact, teaching effectiveness, postgraduate supervision, research leadership, innovation, societal contribution, academic citizenship, international visibility, and research integrity. The framework recognizes that academic excellence is multidimensional and cannot be adequately represented by publication counts or citation scores alone. Recent scholarship similarly emphasizes the importance of transparency, fairness, human oversight, and responsible governance when AI is used in higher education assessment (Colonna, 2025; Alipasa & Ramirez, 2026). Citation indicators, h-indexes, journal metrics, altmetrics, and AI-generated evidence should therefore be interpreted within disciplinary, career-stage, institutional, and national contexts. For Nigerian universities, a transparent AI-assisted promotion system could reduce administrative workload, strengthen consistency, identify emerging academic leaders, and improve research competitiveness. However, its success will depend on explainability, data privacy, equity, human oversight, and accessible appeal mechanisms. Ultimately, AI should function as an academic intelligence assistant, not an automated judge of academic careers.

Conclusion

The future of academic promotion in Nigerian

universities should not be a choice between traditional peer judgment and technological assessment. A more promising approach is to combine the strengths of both. Artificial Intelligence can make promotion processes faster, more transparent, and evidence-based by organizing large academic portfolios and identifying patterns that may be difficult to detect through manual assessment. However, AI and citation metrics should support rather than replace academic judgment. They cannot fully capture qualities such as originality, teaching excellence, mentorship, leadership, integrity, or societal contribution. The proposed Lecturer Academic Leadership Index (LALI) provides a pathway toward a more balanced assessment by bringing together research productivity, citation impact, teaching, supervision, research leadership, innovation, institutional service, societal contribution, and responsible scholarship. Ultimately, academic promotion should recognize more than publication numbers or citation scores. It should identify scholars who demonstrate sustained intellectual contribution, integrity, leadership, mentorship, and meaningful impact. Properly governed, AI can serve as an intelligent assistant that helps universities make fairer, more transparent, and better-informed promotion decisions.

Recommendations

Based on the proposed framework, Nigerian universities should:

1. Develop institutional AI-assisted promotion platforms that consolidate teaching, research, supervision, leadership, and impact evidence.
2. Adopt responsible citation metrics that account for disciplinary and career-stage differences.
3. Avoid single-metric promotion decisions. No h-index, citation count, journal ranking, or AI score should independently determine promotion.
4. Introduce academic leadership as a formal promotion dimension, particularly at Senior Lecturer, Reader, and Professor levels.

5. Strengthen research-impact assessment by recognizing policy, community, industry, innovation, and professional contributions.
6. Create transparent AI governance policies covering explainability, privacy, data security, bias monitoring, and human oversight.
7. Provide lecturers with continuous academic dashboards showing their progress toward promotion requirements.
8. Establish independent metric-audit mechanisms to identify gaming, manipulation, and inaccurate bibliometric records.
9. Protect locally relevant Nigerian scholarship from being undervalued simply because it receives fewer international citations.
10. Review promotion indicators periodically, because academic practices, research technologies, and scholarly communication continue to change.

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