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Assessment of lecturer's access to research grants in Nigerian universities: Impact on knowledge creation and dissemination

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Abstract

This study evaluated lecturers' access to research grants in Nigerian Universities and its impact on knowledge creation and dissemination. Descriptive survey design was adopted by the researchers. A sample of 630 senior lecturers constituting 13% of a population of 5,218 senior lecturers in three universities in their study area participated in the study. The respondents were drawn through purposive sampling techniques. The study was based on four research questions. Data for the study was gathered through a 22-item questionnaire. The instrument was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha with a reliability index of 0.87. Data collected were analyzed using means, standard deviation and a nonparametric measure of rank correlation. Results indicated that academic research are self-funded or basically self-motivated adventures by lecturers in Nigeria, other sources of research funding are governmental intervention agencies, foreign donor's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and professional associations. It was revealed that 88.77% of the population admitted that they had never conducted a study funded via research grant in their host institutions. It was found that lecturer faces challenges in accessing research due to poor research grant writing skills, inability to develop and justify fundable budgets, lack of information on research grants, politicization of proposal reviewer team for approval, inability to meet the time frame for fulfilling the requirements for research grants, difficulty in the retirement process for research grant, inability to meet eligibility criteria, lack of interest in writing for a research grant and inability to write acceptable proposals, and stringent conditions attached to research grants. It was also found that inability to access grants dampen lecturers motivation for knowledge creation and dissemination leading to lower standard of education and poor innovation. The study concludes and recommends that management of Nigerian universities and relevant stakeholders should provide enabling environment and accessible funding opportunities for lecturers by aptly identifying and disseminating information for accessing research grants.

Keywords: Access; Research grants; Impact; Universities; Knowledge Creation; Dissemination

1. Introduction

Education is an essential process in human development. University education is perceived as the most impressive component of tertiary education. It's globally adjured as one of the means of providing education for total human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties are trained and different skills are developed. This is because it is established by law to encourage individuals to acquire various educational recognitions via teaching, research and community service delivery. But critical observations revealed that the issue of access to research grants in higher institutions has recently drawn undue public attention. It has been observed that lecturers in most African universities are unable to build their research reputation with potential grant donors due to obvious financing gap that will facilitate collaborations and partnerships (Bako, 2015). In Nigeria, the trend is most worrisome because some tertiary institutions are yet to train and enhance the academic prestige and credibility of their staff. Most of the lecturer are

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estrangle from the process and procedures for applying and winning research grants as a result of corruption and favoritism. This financing gap has consequently resulted in low research productivity and poor career advancement of most lecturers in Nigerian Universities. It has also slowed down the rate of quality hiring and promotion of faculty members (Donwa, 2016). In addition, it has equally discouraged lecturers' knowledge creation and dissemination with prestigious grant linkers including Academic hive, Google Scholar, Research Gate, LinkedIn, ORCID Account, Scopus and Author Aid to mention but a few (Akpan, Archibong & Undie, 2015). The purpose of this study therefore, is to evaluate the extent of lecturers' access to research grants in universities as a sine qua non for 21st century knowledge creation and dissemination in the theater of academia.

Academic research has been defined as a careful study of a subject, in order to discover new facts or information about it (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). It is also perceived as any form of disciplined inquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory. Research whether quantitative or qualitative can also be viewed as a scientific process of arriving at a dependable solution to societal problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data and dissemination of findings. At all times, research is notably equipped with characteristic potential to solve any nation's challenge irrespective of the complexity and magnitude of any sector, and bring about national development (Idika, 2015). Research has a way of bringing about innovations and impact that enhances all aspects of life including educational, social, economic, environmental and/or cultural outcomes. As a scientific activity, it does not need to be done in a haphazard way; procedurally carried out research work yields great success in output as it enables academics involved to solve well delineated and articulated problem systematically, evolve knowledge and disseminate the findings (Idika, 2015; Fatunde, 2017; Ekwunoye, 2017 & Adesomoju, 2018). On the other hand, a grant is a fund given by an entity – often a public body, charitable foundation, or a specialised grant-making institution – to an individual or another entity for a specific purpose linked to public benefit. Unlike loans, grants are not to be paid back. Summarily, a research grant means the funds that are awarded by a sponsor to researcher(s) to perform research and research-related activities without contractual terms or obligations.

The primary objective of the research grant is to enhance the availability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of financial resources to implement research activities. Funding assist qualifying researchers with money, equipment, or both to conduct approved research or trials. The successful lecturer or grantee is charged with responsibility of carrying out research activities, reporting progress, and preparing results for publishing. Such grant usually covers both the direct costs and indirect costs of the research work in such areas as—researchers' and graduate students' salaries and benefits, any specialized equipment and the cost of promoting your work to completion. This study sought to assess lecturer access to research grant and the impact on knowledge creation and dissemination

Objectives of the study

The objectives drawn from the topic that guided the hypotheses tested are:

- Analyze sources of research grant funding available for academic staff in Nigerian universities.
- Analyze the challenges faced by university lecturers in accessing research grants.
- Identify effective strategies which could be adopted to improve lecturers' access to grants

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Theory of motivation and Job satisfaction :(1950)

An important contribution to our understanding of individual motivation for productivity came from Frederick Herzberg's studies, which addressed the question, "What do people really want from their work experience?" Fredrick Herzberg -an American psychologist, put forward a "dual factor" theory of job satisfaction and motivation with the intention of challenging a popular view on motivation. He assumed that the absence of positively valued characteristics will lead to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg adopts his analysis of satisfaction–dissatisfaction order to get to motivation. His contention is that the presence of "satisfiers" in a job such as perks, good pay, recognition, and funding tends to motivate employee towards greater effort and improved performance and that the absence of dissatisfiers has no effect upon motivation and thereby creates ineffectiveness and job dissatisfaction. This theory really support thecrave for research funding by university lecturer on the one part and x-rayed the mindset of employee against job performance and satisfaction on the other hand.

2.2. Economic Exchange Theory

Lin (2007) posits that Individuals engage in an activity when they expect to gain economic benefits such as increased pay, bonuses, job security or career advancement. Economic Exchange Theory advocates that individual's lecturer attitude towards research is based on rational self-interest. From Lin's theory, motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic, it is only an intrinsically motivated academic staff that can on his own engage in research with his money with the intention of sharing knowledge with others. He believed that only individuals who are motivated are willing to transfer their knowledge because they expect benefit of some kind. Therefore people are willing to share knowledge because they feel satisfied with their immediate needs. They are ideally motivated by achieving their self-defined goals and fulfilling tasks. Lin (2007) states that people who engage in an activity for their own sake, out of interest or for the pleasure and satisfactions derived from the experience are known as people who are intrinsically motivated. In knowledge sharing activity, such as research and publication, people get back something in exchange for what they contributed as cost, for example, time, energy, potential loss of ownership and power, and this is referred to as extrinsic motivation. This study anchors and uphold these theories with a view of a priori expectation from government to supporting academic research funding in Nigeria via various intervention sources. Some of the sources of research grant funding include government, non-governmental organizations, foundations and international agencies, cause-related organizations (HIV/AIDS, peace, security, agriculture and religion among others (Donwa, 2016). Moreso, corporations, advertisements in mass and social media, professional/institutional newsletters, acknowledgements in articles and presentations, colleagues –word of mouth, networks, research offices (Academic Planning/Directorate) and internet sources, Okafor and Olowe (2021) opined that they constitute good sources of research grant available for academics. Furthermore, the following lists include several Federal and Private Agencies that provide national-level funding of research in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD). There are also local sources of funding, including intramural funds at the university, state funds, and local private agencies that limit funding to their geographic area (Ogbogu, 2020). To maximize one's likelihood of success in obtaining funding, it is advisable to choose a funding source and mechanism that best matches one's topic of interest, scope, and budget of the proposed research, as well as the career level (Onyeche, 2018). Private agencies are also good sources of seed money needed to collect preliminary data for larger scale Federal funding. Above all, selected agencies do offer email alerts when new funding opportunities are available.

World over, knowledge creation and dissemination through University-based research, grants inclusive, has been recognized as a means for progress and national development and Nigeria as a developing country shares in this view. However, research in Nigerian Universities has assumed some critical dimensions due to lack of access to university based research. There are many brilliant university lecturers who have spent well over ten years without receiving a single research grant either from within or outside the institution. Some Professors and Senior lecturers have served in various capacities in the university without any research grant acknowledgement to foundational donors. They have used their meagre salaries in funding their research works over the years. This results in delayed promotion, low research output and publication bias which seems to be having a damaging effect on the career and integrity of academics in knowledge creation and dissemination. It also negatively portrays the credibility of accredited Faculties in the Universities terms of teaching service delivery, research and community service to the extent that most lecturers are not affiliated to prestigious grant linkers including Academic hive, Google Scholar, Research Gate, LinkedIn, ORCID Account, Scopus and Author Aid amongst others.

However, in a bid to promote access to research grant among academics in Universities, the government instituted TETFund. There is equally the initiation of National Research Fund (NRF) and the World Bank Groups (WBG) among other opportunities. Yet, there has not been a well-documented evidence in the higher institutions to show that academic staff are successfully accessing research grants in their host Universities to enhance knowledge creation and dissemination. It has been observed that research grants are mostly appreciated and vigorously accessed by politically selected members of the academic staff, while others appear to be oblivious of its existence. The government on her part wants the universities to harness external grants and embark on contracted research, thus, technically avoiding her responsibilities to fund research grants. Okebukola (2019) found that academics are having difficulty in accessing research grants and this does not only affect them but also their products who are the trainees (students), as well as the nation at large. It is in recognition of this problem that this study sought to evaluate the extent to which lecturers' access to research grants in Nigerian Universities and how it motivates their career in terms of knowledge creation and dissemination.

2.3. Empirical Review

Most literature and academic discourse has aptly emphasized over the years that most lecturers do not have access to research grants in their host universities in Nigeria. The crave for illicit funds by political office holders seems to circumvent the need for fund academic research in Nigeria. Apart from the fact that some academics lack basic information on research grants and credible grant writing skills, there is poor funding of research grants generally in

the universities. Many Departments in the Faculty of Arts Complex in the Universities of Calabar and that of Cross River State are facing limited grants opportunities owing to the stringent conditions attached to their discipline (Nworgu, 2016). This results in most lecturers' lack of interest in research grants application, inability to write acceptable proposals, inability to meet eligibility criteria and ultimately lack interest to undergo training on writing research proposals that attract grants particularly as these scholars mostly in the public universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States fall back on the use of their meagre income to fulfill their research writing obligation for academic progression (Idika, 2016). It has also been observed that some academics who are awarded grants do have tremendous difficulty in justifying a fundable budget, aligning with the retirement process and time frame for fulfilling the requirements for research grants awards, perhaps, due to the politicization of team members during proposal approval. All these issues directly and indirectly affect lecturers' professionalism in knowledge creation and dissemination via funded research (Osagie, 2022).

In one hand, individuals or a team of researchers are at liberty to apply for research grants with the purpose of assistance, to support and stimulate research, benefit a public purpose and also enhance the skills of the researcher/investigator (Akomolafe & Aremu, 2016). On the other hand, people/organizations invest in research funding for humanitarian purposes, advancing business interests, national exigencies/policies, religious obligations and tax rebates/holidays (Akomolafe & Aremu, 2016). Meanwhile others may invest just to feel good or show off regardless, whether the funds are made available for good use. Unfortunately, it has been observed over the years, that a large number of the academic staff in public Universities in Cross River State is unfamiliar with the processes involved in accessing research grants. They often complain about research grant schemes, but usually within a narrow frame of reference. Looking more broadly, problems with grant schemes can be classified as bias, waste, discouragement and orientation to interests. There are various ways to allocate research funds, including administrative decision, peer review, performance-based allocation, equality and community-based bids.

Baro, Bosah and Obi (2017) worked on access to research grant funding opportunities and challenges: A survey of academic staff members in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study revealed that only a few number of academic staff members (5%) in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria have received research grants. The study also confirmed the earlier report of Idika (2016) that a large number of research works by way of publications carried out by academic staff were funded by themselves from the meagre salary they receive. In Idika's assessment to determine the most dominant research practice of lecturers in public universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, the results showed the activities in the following order publication ($X=28.06$), paper presentation at seminar/ workshop/ symposium/conference ($X=25.51$), proposal writing for grant sponsorship ($X=24.17$), attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference ($X=23.05$) being the least. It also emerged that Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) was the highest funding body that academic staff have received research grants from. Different other research funding agencies both local and international that support studies in Nigeria as highlighted by Idika, et al (2022), include Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Alexander Von Humboldt (AVH), Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Structural Transformation and Economic Growth (STEG), Nigeria's Bilateral Research Programmes, Nigeria's Ministry of Energy, Agriculture, Women Affairs, Mineral Resources, Nigerian Ports Authority, etc. However, politics in the selection of research proposals, inadequate publicity/advertisement for research grants applications and lack of knowledge about funding agencies were identified as the most mentioned hindrances to accessing research grants in Nigeria (Baro et al 2017).

Osagie (2022) explored Federal Government funding of research grant in Universities in Nigeria: A case study of the University of Benin. Four research questions were posed to guide the study. The findings showed that less than 45% of the total recurrent revenue was allocated for research grant at the University of Benin during the 2021 academic sessions. The findings also indicated that the Federal government is not making a robust investment in university research and therefore, Nigeria is not developing in disseminating research findings from the university. In line with this, is a report by Idika et al (2022) of a case study on academic staff's skills and professional development which was carried out by Tetty in 2006 in five universities in Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. It was noted from the study's findings that the respondents in all the five universities except Botswana expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support to their institutions. In universities in Nigeria and Ghana, 65% and 75% respondents respectively expressed inaccessibility of research grant sponsorship. In contrast, 93% of respondents in Botswana indicated that they had access to conference. Akpan, Archibong and Undie (2015) found that a greater percentage of lecturers, 246 (76.35%), had not benefited from research grants for many years. Inadequate funding of research and stringent conditions attached to research grants were identified as two major constraints to accessing research funds by lecturers. Abdulaziz, Olokooba and Iyekolo (2020) explored using a descriptive survey the Tertiary Education Trust Fund intervention on academic staff access to research grants on capacity building in Lagos State University, Nigeria. The population for this study was all academic staff of Lagos State University. One hundred and ninety-six questionnaires were randomly administered to one hundred and ninety-six (196) academic staff in the university. The findings of the

study revealed that the grant seekers were not given the opportunity to access the fund intervention for qualitative transformation of academic staff in Lagos State University. The finding of the study also showed that the fund intervention in Lagos State University for academic staff capacity building was never a major priority.

Okafor and Olowe (2021) assessed the inhibiting factors to accessing TETFund IBR grant by lecturers in School of Business Studies in the Nigerian Polytechnics. The study found that the level of awareness, flow of communication, staff attitude and conditions for publications were significantly related to access of academic staff in School of Business to Internally Based Research (IBR) grant in Nigeria Polytechnics. In conclusion the level of awareness on arrival of IBR grants as well as flow of communication within various polytechnics is inadequate coupled with disbursements which are not enough to encourage academic staff towards robust research. Similarly, Akomolafe and Aremu (2016) surveyed the extent of access to research grant in Science and Technology in Nigeria Universities using the gender perspective in the South Western part of Nigeria. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that foreign agencies did create access and were the major funder for women grant seekers in the field of Science and Technology. It further showed that there was no significant difference in the funding of male and female lecturers in the field of Science and Technology in Nigerian institutions; and that no special agencies existed which created access to fund women's research in the field of Science and Technology in Nigeria.

Ogbogu (2020) examined the mode of access to research grants and its implications in knowledge creation and dissemination. Findings revealed that politics of funding discourages academics from accessing research grants in their host Universities; this was found to contribute to poor quality teaching and research, poor conditions of work and insufficient attention to staff development, among others. In the same vein, Lawal (2022) carried out a study to explore the accessible grant funding sources for academic staff in tertiary institutions in Ogun State of Nigeria. Findings indicated that academics are not encouraged to explore other sources of grant funding due to lack of linkage to endowments, consultancy services and commercial ventures among other grantors. Onyeché (2018) worked on the alternative sources of funding research grants for effective management of public Universities in the Niger Delta States of Nigeria. A sample of 600 management staff was randomly selected from 1,620 management staff from the nineteen (19) public universities in the Niger Delta. The survey method was adopted. Analysis and presentation of data were made using Means without off-point 2.5 and above as accepted factors. The study revealed nine (9) main grant funding sources that public Universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria could engage to enhance the research practices of academic staff. Top on the list according to the ranking of the opinions of the respondents (management staff) was the establishment of funding initiatives such as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

Buttressing this fact, Nworgu (2016) and Okujagu (2018) alluded that a well-funded research grant supports individuals, a team of researchers and institutions to become recognized by their research productivity. Idika, Orji & Idika (2022) noted in support, that where access to sponsorship of research grant is guaranteed, academics and institutions could become more proactive in their problem-solving research practices and the innovative transformation so generated will affect national development. Most advanced nations of the world, USA, Great Britain, Asian Tigers, among others, have recognized this secret, and today constitute more of donors than recipients of grants.

From the review of literature, it is observed that there is no empirically tested research on lecturers' access to internally based research grants in Universities: Implications for knowledge creation and dissemination in Cross River State of Nigeria generally, hence, the relevance of the present study. The current study focuses on the perspective of academic staff in public Universities in Cross River State.

3. Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study which covered three Universities namely, University of Calabar (UNICAL), University of Cross River State (UNICROSS) and University of Uyo (UNIUYO). The population of the study comprised all the academic staff in the three institutions. Purposive and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Purposive sampling was deemed fit because the researchers wanted to access a particular subset of academics, as all the participants of the survey were selected because they fit into the profile of the study. Similarly, proportionate sampling was essentially adopted since the population is composed of several subgroups that are vastly different in number. Therefore, the number of participants from each subgroup (University) is determined by their number relative to the entire population. Hence, a total of 204 lecturers were drawn from University of Calabar, 203 from University of Cross River State and 223 from University of Uyo. This gave a total sample size of 630 respondents from the rank of Senior lecturers (319 males and 311 females). Data for the study was collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled Lecturers' Access to Research Grant for Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Survey (LARGKCDs) which was face-validated by an expert in Educational Measurement, Research and Statistics. The instrument consisted of three sections. Section A sought personal data of the respondents such as gender, age, and years

of research experience, qualification and rank. Section B consisted of 9 items. Eight of them had 5 response options each, where one (1) was the least score and 5 the highest score. The respondents were required to indicate their awareness of research grant funding and the sources accessed. Section C was made up of thirteen (13) items, ten of them had 5 response options each. The respondents were required to rate the challenges to accessing research grants by ticking one of the 5 options against each item. The 11th item was an open ended question which required the respondents to suggest one possible strategy for improving lecturers' access to research grants in Nigerian Universities. The instrument was administered to the respondents in their various institutions by the researchers. Copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned on the spot. All the 630 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, gleaned accordingly and found valid for coding and analysis. The response rate achieved was 100 percent. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used for data analysis. An item with a mean rating of 3.0 was regarded as significant while a mean rating below 3.0 was regarded as insignificant.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Research Question 1

What are the sources of research grant funding available for academic staff in Nigerian

Universities? The result of the data analysis for this research question is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean scores and rank order of academic staff knowledge of sources of research grant funding (N=630)

Items on the sources of research grant funding available for academic staff	X	S.D	Rank order
Local Agencies	1.04	1.02	8 th
Consultancies	1.11	1.03	7 th
Industrial and Private sectors	1.12	1.04	6 th
Professional Associations	2.91	1.05	5 th
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	3.84	2.02	4 th
Foreign donors	4.73	2.11	3 rd
Governmental sectors	5.52	2.13	2 nd
Self-funded or self-insured plans	6.12	3.44	1 st
Cut-off mean	3.00		Index

Source: Field work, 2022

Table 1 shows that the major sources of research grant funding available to lecturers in Nigerian universities is self-funded or self-insured plans with the highest mean score of 6.12 and a Standard deviation of 3.44. This is followed by governmental sectors whose mean score is 5.52 with a standard deviation of 2.13 and foreign donors whose mean value is (X=4.73; SD=2.11), while the least source of research grant funding is local agencies which is ranked 8th position in the order.

4.2. Research Question 2

What are the challenges faced by university lecturers in accessing research grants?

The answer to this question is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 revealed that poor research grant writing skills has the highest mean score of 5.10 and a standard deviation of 3.41 with the first in the rank. This implies that poor research grant writing skill is the most significant challenge faced by academic staff in accessing research grants in the sampled Universities. This is followed by inability to justify a fundable budget whose mean score is 4.75 with a standard deviation of 2.90. This item ranked the second while lack of information on research grants ranked third with a mean score of 4.71 and a standard deviation of 2.43 in that order. Equally viewed as challenges were stringent conditions attached to research grants, lack of interest in research grants, inability to write acceptable proposals, inability to meet eligibility criteria, lack of training on writing research proposals

that attract grants, difficulty in the retirement process for research grants, time frame for fulfilling the requirements for research grants and politicization of team members during proposal approval as well as poor funding of research grants in the Universities ($X=1.31$; $SD=1.03$). Although these items are viewed as challenges but they are not significant constraints because their mean scores are less than the acceptable mean score of 3.00.

Table 2 Lecturers' rating of the challenges which are hindering access to research grants (N=630)

Items on the challenges of lecturers in accessing grants	X	S.D	Rank order
Poor funding of research grants generally in the universities	1.31	1.01	13 th
Limited research grants in my discipline	2.63	1.02	12 th
Stringent conditions attached to research grants	2.74	1.03	11 th
Lack of interest in research grants	2.85	1.05	10 th
Inability to write acceptable proposals	3.17	1.06	9 th
Inability to meet eligibility criteria	3.48	1.01	8 th
Lack of training on writing research proposals that attract grants	3.61	1.02	7 th
Difficulty in the retirement process for research grants.	3.72	1.13	6 th
Time frame for fulfilling the requirements for research grants	3.83	1.41	5 th
Politicization of team members during proposal approval	4.64	2.91	4 th
Lack of information on research grants	4.71	2.43	3 rd
Inability to justify a fundable budget	4.75	2.90	2 nd
Poor research grant writing skills	5.10	3.41	1 st
Cut-off mean	3.00		Index

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

4.3. Research Question 3

What are the effective strategies for improving lecturers' access to research funding?

The answer to this question is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Respondents' submission on strategies for improving lecturers' access to research grants

Items on the strategies for improving access to research grants	N	X	S.D	Remarks
Easing the stringent criteria/conditions for accessing research grants	630	3.32	1.02	Accepted
The university management should train staff on grant writing skills	630	3.54	1.01	Accepted
Academic staff should use the internet/websites for information on research funding agencies.	630	3.76	1.01	Accepted
The university management should provide information on research grants	630	3.98	1.02	Accepted
Government should compulsorily increase funding of universities especially research.	630	3.10	1.01	Accepted
ASUU should create awareness about research grants among members	630	3.21	1.02	Accepted
Linkages and collaboration among universities/industries should be established	630	3.42	1.21	Accepted
Researchers should reach out to relevant industries for funding	630	3.63	1.22	Accepted
Faculty/Departments should organize training workshop on writing quality research grant proposals.	630	3.85	1.21	Accepted

The Heads of Department should actively seek information on research grants and publicize any available grants to lecturers	630	3.09	1.20	Accepted
The university should give research grants to departments for easier access	630	3.12	1.10	Accepted
Faculty/University research committees should create awareness/provide information to staff.	630	3.24	1.21	Accepted
A research grant bulletin-quarterly should be established by NUC.	630	3.27	1.20	Accepted
Annual publication of donor agencies in the university by Post Graduate School	630	3.29	1.11	Accepted
Cut-off mean		3.00		Accepted

Source: Field work, 2022

5. Discussion of Findings

One of the findings of this study indicated that self-funded/self-insured plans is the major source of research grant funding available for academic staff in Nigerian universities who meet the eligibility requirements of the research grant proposal. This is quite pathetic as it is ranked the highest by the respondents. The finding implies that it is the primary source of research grant funding for university academics in Nigeria, while governmental sectors and foreign agencies are not very popular as revealed in this study. As a result, this finding is in agreement with that of Idika (2016) ; Baro, Bosah, and Obi (2017) who opined that majority of university academics make use of personal funds to finance their research rather than wait for governmental or foreign agencies' support which may not be regular and dependable. The reason for this result is not unconnected with the deplorable condition of managing university education generally and provision of research grants in particular. Proposal writing for sponsorship of research was among the least activities of the academic staff in universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States (Idika, 2016). This present finding agrees with the works of Bako (2015) and Akpochofo (2019) who reported that access to university research grant in Nigeria has become a herculean task to the extent that it is being funded by either graduate students, staff-in-training or academic staff who would need grants majorly for promotion. They added that over 80% of successfully completed research grants have been from salaries. However, this finding is at variance with the report of Donwa (2016) that university research grants in Nigeria is funded mainly from governmental supports in collaboration with donor agencies. Although he argued that in few instances, research grants have been won and funded by foreign agencies, but where they were obtained was not a regular annual event.

The poor funding nature of research grants has forced many scholars to use their meagre salaries to fund their research for the sake of promotion (Idika; Nworgu, 2016). The finding also showed that the respondents rated inadequate funding of research generally as the major challenge to accessing research grants. This particular challenge is critical because if adequate funds are not provided, university lecturers cannot access substantial amount to carry out quality research that can bring transformation and development or stand competition with those of their counterparts globally. Subsequently, these staff with their institutions may remain invisible in the global research publication circles. This finding corroborates that of Okujagu (2018) and Idika et al (2022), who reported that grant accessing opportunities in Nigerian universities are not adequate (as high as 65% academics expressed dissatisfaction with grant support) and this exerts great impact not only on academic and economic life of lecturers but on national development. Also indicated as constraint to accessing research grants are stringent conditions attached to research grants. This probably accounts for some lecturers' lack of interest in accessing research funds.

Table 4 shows that respondents have suggested a wide range of strategies which could be adopted to enhance lecturers' access to research grants for knowledge creation and dissemination. It is interesting to note that among the suggestions for improvement, the strategies such as increasing funding especially research grants to universities, and provision of adequate information on research grants by university management. Others include easing the stringent criteria/conditions for accessing research grants, the university management should train staff on grant writing skills, and academic staff should use the internet/websites for information on research funding agencies, ASUU should create awareness about research grants among members and linkages and collaboration among universities/industries should be established among others. These strategies have been listed as being prominent among others. This finding is in agreement with that of Fatunde (2017) who found that without proper orientation of lecturers towards research grants, university-based researchers and scientists cannot undertake meaningful research. The finding is equally in consonant with that of Egwunyenga (2017) who found that higher education administrators at Federal and State levels ought to devote substantial amount of their National and State budgets to research in order to add value to the national economy. On the provision of information on research grants, Adesomoju (2018) found that it is important for university

management to assist lecturers to know where research grants are available and the conditions to be fulfilled in accessing them. It was also found that the easiest way to facilitate information on research grants is for universities to connect with prestigious grant linkers including Academic hive, Google Scholar, Research Gate, LinkedIn, ORCID Account, Scopus and Author Aid to mention but a few. Access to research grants with most major funding agencies could be done on-line because collaborative research is mostly facilitated and enhanced through on-line communication.

In the light of the findings of this study it could be concluded that the extent of lecturers' access to research grants in the sampled institutions is very low, perhaps due to the fact that the major source of research grant funding available to lecturers in Nigerian universities is self-funded or self-motivated adventures, followed by governmental sector and foreign agencies. Self-funded is rated and identified as the most potent source of research grant funding accessed by academic staff. Majority of the academic staff in University of Calabar, University of Cross River State and University of Uyo did not successfully benefit from research grants for several years because of lack of access and inadequate funding of research grants generally, and stringent conditions attached to research grants. These are two major challenges faced by University lecturers in accessing research grants in the sampled institutions under study.

5.1. Impact of grant inaccessibility on knowledge creation and dissemination

The findings of this study show that the sample lecturers in the three Universities used for the study faces many challenges in accessing research grants. The impact of grant inaccessibility and inadequate research funding is very high in Nigeria, contributing to lack of innovations and low drive for advanced frontiers of knowledge. This also affect approach to academic programmes, reduce the effectiveness of educational curriculum and hamper research productivity in terms of knowledge creation and dissemination. It is the responsibility of every institution to make research grant easily accessible, to secure and provide stringent-free research grants for effective teaching and learning experience, to encourage quality action research and community service to take place. The Research and Development Directors in the University, have the onerous task of planning, organizing, coordinating those carrying out research in various Institutes, colleges, Faculties, and Departments, hence, must be engaging and advocating for continuous utilization of digital technologies and innovations in the research processes for lecturers of the University. As unanimously agreed by Idika (2015; 2016), Fatunde (2017), Egwunyenga (2017), Adesomoju (2018), and Idika, Orji & Idika (2022), successfully carried out research work enables academic staff to solve identified problem, create knowledge and disseminate the findings; academics are motivated to be more proactive in their problem-solving research activities where adequate access to grant is provided. Thus, it behooves the university management and relevant stakeholders to encourage and link their lecturers with prestigious grant linkers including Academic hive, Google Scholar, Research Gate, LinkedIn, ORCID Account, Scopus and Author Aid for unrestricted access to the research grants community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study in the sample Universities, it is therefore, recommended that:

- The Government should appreciate the importance of research in national development and increase access to grant and funding of university research substantially.
- Management of universities should develop modalities for identifying and disseminating information to lecturers on research grants and funding opportunities and the attainable conditions for accessing them.
- Adequate incentives should be given to lecturers to motivate them to actively participate in research activities for effective knowledge creation and dissemination both within and outside their host universities.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that grants motivates research adventures, which propels human and technological advancement. Knowledge acquired in diverse fields through academic research improves technical-labour skills leading to increased productivity, growth and overall better standard of living for citizens. Therefore, knowledge creation and dissemination can only be more effective and continuously improved upon by providing enabling learning environment, supportive stakeholder's participation and financial appropriations as well as direct –easy access to research grants.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There are no conflict of interest to disclose. The study was thought out in its originality with apriori expectation.

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