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## Challenges Hindering Academic Staff in Nigerian Tertiary Education from Securing Local and International Grants: A Descriptive Study

*Tantangan yang Menghambat Staf Akademik di Pendidikan Tinggi Nigeria dalam Mendapatkan Hibah Lokal dan Internasional: Sebuah Studi Deskriptif*

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### Abstract

This descriptive research aims to evaluate the perceptions of academic staff regarding the factors impeding their success in obtaining both local and international grants within Nigerian tertiary education. Employing a sample size of 240 participants from six federal universities spanning diverse geopolitical zones, a multistage sampling technique was applied. A bespoke questionnaire, "Perception of Academic on Reasons Why Academic Staff of Nigerian Tertiary Education are not Wining Local and International Grants (PASRWNWLGQ)," was utilized for data collection. The instrument demonstrated high reliability with a coefficient of 0.86. Analysis involved descriptive statistics, yielding insights into various barriers including inadequate research proposal planning, limited awareness of grant opportunities, and challenges associated with online application procedures. The study highlights the urgent need for enhanced research funding in Nigerian tertiary institutions to address these impediments. Furthermore, findings illuminate the broader consequences, encompassing diminished research development, brain-drain, and weakened international rankings, alongside dwindling morale among academic staff. This study provides critical insights for policy makers and stakeholders seeking to bolster the research landscape in Nigerian tertiary education.

#### Highlight:

- The study encompasses 240 participants from six federal universities in Nigeria, offering a comprehensive perspective on the challenges faced by academic staff in securing both local and international grants.

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- The research instrument, "Perception of Academic on Reasons Why Academic Staff of Nigerian Tertiary Education are not Wining Local and International Grants (PASRWNWLGQ)," demonstrates a high level of reliability (coefficient of 0.86), ensuring robust data collection and analysis.
- The findings shed light on critical barriers, such as deficient research proposal planning, limited awareness of grant opportunities, and online application challenges, underscoring the pressing need for increased research funding in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study also unveils far-reaching repercussions, including stunted research development, brain-drain, and a decline in international rankings, emphasizing the urgency of policy interventions to fortify the research landscape.

**Keyword:** Perception, Academic Staff, Grants, Nigerian Tertiary Education, Research Funding

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## Introduction

The National Policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) defines tertiary education as the phase succeeding Post Basic Education, offered in diverse institutions ranging from universities and inter-university centers to Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, and specialized entities like Colleges of Agriculture and Polytechnics. Scholars like Donwa [1], Chukwuajah [2], and Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar [3] underline the tripartite mission of tertiary institutions, involving teaching, community services, and research. Notably, [4] emphasizes the role of research institutes in Nigeria, elucidating their pivotal function in conducting research. Scattered across the country, these institutes play diverse roles, acting as indispensable partners for SMEs, contributing significantly to the innovation process, and shaping educational curricula. In essence, the overarching purpose of Research Institutes in Nigeria is to spearhead research initiatives, forming an integral part of the nation's intellectual and developmental landscape. Tertiary institutions and research institutions staff such as academic staff and researchers including students of both undergraduate and post-graduate are to benefit from research grants provided by both public and private institutions. Ogunode defined research grant as a complex concept. It can be defined as the fund usually obtained to carry out any scientific research. The act of securing a research grant is quite cumbersome; as it passes through a competitive process. Hence, securing a grants is an essential part of indicating a researcher's level of competence and proficiency level in research [5] Research grants are funds provided to researchers to conduct researches in their respective countries in the areas of education.

Research grant is a non-refundable fund given to researcher for the purpose of carrying out a research in a particular area of interest to the awarding institution or individual. Research grant is a fund given by a person or organisation and other specialists grant -making institution to an individual or an entity for a specific purpose linked to public benefits. Ohaeri, Olayinka, and Ogunode [6] noted that in order to have a sound research that could guarantee a grant, it is imperative for the researcher to embellish the research with relevant and attractive components such executive summary, background of the study, specific aims of the study, significance of the study, research design and methods as well as preliminary results. While other components could be brief, the research design and method need to be described in detail for proper understanding of how the research would be carried out.

The purpose of research grants is multifaceted, aiming to foster scientific, agricultural, educational, and social innovation, among other areas, thereby contributing positively to the economy. By injecting funds into research endeavors, these grants play a vital role in stimulating economic growth. The provision of financial support to researchers, whether undergraduate, post-graduate students, academic or non-academic staff, and researchers from tertiary institutions or research institutions, facilitates the expansion and enhancement of project outcomes and scope [7]. There are various categories of grants, including competitive grants, formula grants, continuation grants, and pass-through grants. Access to research grants is open to a diverse range of individuals within the academic community, reflecting the inclusivity of undergraduate and post-graduate students, as well as both academic and non-academic staff. [8] Outlines strategies for identifying suitable funders, emphasizing tools such as internet searches with alerts, institutional subscriptions to websites like Research Africa, engagement with Postgraduate/Research Offices, alignment of research projects with a funder's strategic imperatives, flexibility in response to evolving priorities of funders, transparency with funders, and adherence to institutional rules regarding funding. These project-based strategies collectively contribute to a comprehensive and effective approach in securing research grant opportunities [9].

Research grant funders or sponsors are classified into two namely internal and external. The internal in Nigeria include public institutions like TETFund and private institutions. The external funders also include foreign government and private institutions and international organizations. Research grant also focus on research topics like education, ICT, ender studies, climate change, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, peace and conflict (herder-farmer), (in) security (terrorism and insurgency), demography, climate change and environmental challenges, youth and urban planning among others.

Musa, Abubakar, and Ogunode & Adihikon [10] maintained that various institutions and organizations that provide sponsorship or confer research grants. These entities include TETFUND, Senate central research grants, industry-commissioned research initiatives, foundations, international NGOs such as Ford Foundation, Heinrich Bols, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, CODESRIA, and the Social Science Research Council. Additionally, support for theses and self-sponsorship are common avenues, along with collaborations with regional bodies like ECOWAS, international entities such as the EU and World Bank, and philanthropic organizations like the Bill Gates Foundation.

Conditions to fulfil to attract research grants are: Principal investigator must be a Ph.D. holders, submission of Proposal containing statement of research objective, Review of extant literature, methodology, work plan and A priori expectation. Raymond [11] noted that each research granting organization has their own process and requirements in evaluating grant applications. Even within a research granting organization each research grant may have its own requirements. For a grant application to be successful t researcher need to meet the requirements, demonstrate he or she has the capability to fulfil the objective of the grant. A simple item such as a deadline date for submission is strictly adhered to and failure to do so comes with automatic rejection. Previous success in getting grants and following through with successful completion makes for future success like the



snowball (rolling down the hill getting bigger and bigger) effect. According Raymond your focus as a researcher is to address the requirements, goals of the specific grant. For example, if the grant is about studying the impact of a government policy on industry competition then your proposal should be constructed to be spot on that topic and no other. Travel grants may be given to enable the researcher to present the findings of their study and disseminate that to the public. They are still considered grants but the basis is the research to comply with the grant is already done.

## Statement of Problems

Academic staff of tertiary institutions and researchers of research institutions are saddled with responsibilities of conducting researches. In order to enhance research conduct and development globally both public and private institutions local and international institutions are providing funds to both undergraduate, post-graduate and lecturers. It has been observed that many Nigerian academic and researchers every year fails to secure local and international research grant funding for their research. Nigeria government established an agency called (TETfund), this agency is tasked with responsibilities of funding researches by using education taxes corporations pay to fund research. It has been difficult for many academic staff to access the fund due to many factors. Some lecturers complained that the procedure shuts them out, while some officials of the research agency, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETfund) alleged that the quality of research papers submitted are mostly inadequate. It is based on this problem that this study is aimed to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to assess the perception of academic staff on reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants. The specific objectives are to;

1. find out the reasons for reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants; and
2. assess the implication of poor accessibility to local and international grant by academic staff tertiary education in Nigeria.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the reasons for reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants?
2. What is the implication of poor accessibility to local and international grant by academic staff tertiary education in Nigeria?

## Methodology

This study employed a survey-type descriptive research design, focusing on 240 participants selected from six federal universities across each geopolitical zone. The sample comprised 40 academic staff members from each university, totalling the academic staff population of the six federal universities. The study utilized a multistage sampling approach to select states, followed by simple sampling to choose federal universities in each state. The selection of respondents employed a purposive sampling technique. Data collection utilized a researcher-designed instrument named the Perception of Academic on Reasons Why Academic Staff of Nigerian Tertiary Education are not winning Local and International Grants Questionnaire (PASRWNWLGQ), face-validated by an educational research expert. The questionnaire had three sections: Section A gathered personal data, Section B comprised 10 items, and Section C contained 5 response options each. Respondents indicated their perceptions on reasons why academic staff are not winning grants. The instrument's reliability was determined through the test-retest technique, administering it twice to 50 academic staff members over a two-week interval. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating instrument reliability. Researchers administered the questionnaire in participants' institutions, achieving a 100 percent response rate with all 240 copies retrieved. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were employed for data analysis, considering items with a mean rating of 3.0 as accepted and those below 3.0 as not rejected.

## Data Analysis

	Reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants include;	Mean	S.D	Remarks

1	Poor research proposal plan and development	3.41	1.99	Agreed
2	Lack of information on local and international Grant opportunities	3.15	1.32	Agreed
3	Lack of technical known on filling of Grant online forms	3.31	1.88	Agreed
4	Difficulties and unwillingness to comply with accountability requirements research Funders	3.11	1.28	Agreed
5	Stringent conditions attached to research grants	3.09	1.91	Agreed
6	Lack of effective capacity on part of tertiary institutions	3.28	1.82	Agreed
7	Poor collaboration skills among staff	3.00	1.25	Agreed
8	Poor institutional arrangement to aid to support academic staff	3.19	1.39	Agreed
9	Poor local research grants opportunities	3.37	1.99	Agreed
10	Lack of interest of academic staff	2.88	1.29	Agreed
	Total Mean	3.36		

**Table 1.** What are the reasons why academic staff of Nigerian tertiary education are not winning local and international grants?

In the assessment of reasons for why Nigerian tertiary institutions academic are not winning local and international grants, data collected revealed that all items from 1 to 10 agreed on mean score and SD of 3.41 and 1.99, 3.15 and 1.32, 3.31 and 1.88, 3.11 and 1.28, 3.09 and 1.91, 3.28 and 1.82, 3.00 and 1.25, 3.19 and 1.39, 3.37 and 1.99 and 2.88 and 1.29 and a total mean of 3.36. This means that poor research proposal plan and development, lack of information on local and international grant opportunities, lack of technical known on filling of Grant online forms, difficulties and unwillingness to comply with accountability requirements research funders, stringent conditions attached to research grants, lack of effective capacity on part of tertiary institutions, poor collaboration skills among staff, poor institutional arrangement to aid to support academic staff, poor local research grants opportunities and lack of interest of academic staff are reasons for why Nigerian tertiary institutions academic are not winning of local and international grants.

	Implications of poor accessibility to local and international Grant by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria include;	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Poor research development in tertiary institutions	3.52	1.31	Agreed
2	Brain-drain	3.23	1.72	Agreed
3	Abscond of sponsored academic staff	3.09	1.82	Agreed
4	poor international	3.02	1.88	Agreed

	ranking			
5	Low morale of academic staff	3.19	1.91	Agreed
6	Total Mean	3.21		Agreed

**Table 2.** *Table2: What is the implications of poor accessibility to local and international Grant by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?*

On the assessment on implications of poor accessibility to local and international grant by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Data obtained disclosed that 1 to 5 are in agreement with the items with mean score and SD of 3.52 and 1.31, 2.32 and 1.72, 3.09 and 1.82, 3.02 and 1.88 and 3.19 and 1.91 and a total mean of 3.21. This implies that poor research development in tertiary institutions, Brain-drain, abscond of sponsored academic staff, poor international ranking and Low morale of academic staff are implications of poor accessibility to local and international grant by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## Discussion of Findings

Result collected analysed showed that academic staff agreed that that poor research proposal plan and development, lack of information on local and international grant opportunities, lack of technical known on filling of Grant online forms, difficulties and unwillingness to comply with accountability requirements research funders, stringent conditions attached to research grants, lack of effective capacity on part of tertiary institutions, poor collaboration skills among staff, poor institutional arrangement to aid to support academic staff, poor local research grants opportunities and lack of interest of academic staff are reasons for why Nigerian tertiary institutions academic are not wining of local and international grants. This finding is in agreement with the submission of former Vice-Chancellor, Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU), Ilesha, Prof Sola Fajana, who listed some of the challenges hindering access to research grant as lack of skill, competence and experience to effectively compete for grants; difficulties and unwillingness to comply with accountability requirements of some research funders and structural information issues precluding researchers from getting to know specific needs of an industry that may attract industry funding.

In addition, Ohaeri, Olayinka, and Ogunode [6] noted that the stringent conditions attached to research grants, lack of information, time frame for meeting the requirements, difficulty in the retirement process as well as inadequate training on writing research proposals are part of the challenges hindering lecturers from accessing the funds. Longe [12] NUC and Lawal [13] listed the following as reasons or factor militated against academic staff from win international grant or local grant to include lack of creativity, unhealthy rivalry and unwillingness to collaborate with other colleagues. Also, Lawal [14] concluded that stringent conditions attached to research grants, lack of information, time frame for meeting the requirements, difficulty in the retirement process as well as inadequate training on writing research proposals are part of the challenges hindering lecturers from accessing the funds. Ogunode [15] identified inadequate funding and stringent conditions attached to research grants as major constraints to accessing research funds by lecturers.

Also, the result indicated that poor research development in tertiary institutions, Brain-drain, neglects of sponsored academic staff [16], poor international ranking [17] and low morale of academic staff are implications of poor accessibility to local and international grant by academic staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This result is in line with the discovered of Adedoyin [18] and Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, and Ajape [19] that found out that discouragement, low research development and brain drain are associated with institutions or academics that poorly accessed local and international grant.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that various factors, including poor research proposal planning, insufficient information on grant opportunities, lack of technical knowledge in online grant application processes, difficulties in meeting accountability requirements, stringent grant conditions, inadequate institutional capacity, poor collaboration skills, limited support for academic staff, scant local research grant opportunities, and a general lack of interest among academic staff, contribute to the challenges faced by Nigerian tertiary institutions in securing local and international grants. The study also identifies implications such as poor research development, brain-drain, the departure of sponsored academic staff, diminished international rankings, and low morale among academic staff due to limited access to grants.

Based on this, the paper recommended that:

1. The government should enhance research grant funding in tertiary institutions to provide more resources for academic staff to pursue local and international grants.
2. Tertiary institutions should organize workshops on grantsmanship, equipping academic staff with the skills

necessary for global competitiveness in securing international grants.

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