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UTILIZING GRANT WRITING SKILLS FOR ACCESS TO RESEARCH GRANTS BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examines the grant-writing skills of academic librarians in eight Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria focusing on available research grants, and skill proficiency. The article used descriptive survey research design and collected data using 146 questionnaires response which revealed that Institutional and Government-Funded Grants are prevalent, particularly at UNILORIN and UNIABUJA, while international and capacity-building grants are underutilized, especially at FUHTO. Librarians exhibit strong writing (49.3% very high extent) and research skills (43.2% very high extent) but lack proficiency in networking (24.0% low extent) and teamwork (21.2% very low extent). Key barriers include limited networking opportunities, competitive funding environments, and institutional support deficits, most pronounced at JOSTUM and UNILORIN. These findings highlight systemic gaps in training and support, limiting librarians' contributions to institutional research. Recommendations include structured professional development, inter-university mentorship, and dedicated grant-writing units to enhance librarians' funding success, aligning academic libraries with institutional and national research goals.
Keywords: Academic librarians, Grant Writing, Research Funding, Federal Universities, Utilization

Introduction

Grant writing is a critical skill that involves crafting compelling proposals to secure funding for research projects by convincingly articulating their value, feasibility, and potential impact. This process includes identifying suitable funding opportunities, defining clear research objectives, justifying budgets, and outlining expected outcomes (Omoji, 2023). As competition for research grants intensifies globally, funding bodies demand high-quality proposals that are accessible to diverse audiences, including non-expert reviewers. Effective grant proposals must avoid jargon,

use clear examples, and provide a vivid picture of the research plan to ensure broad comprehension (ELRHA, 2019). For academic librarians, mastering grant writing often termed "grantsmanship " is increasingly vital as higher education institutions face growing pressure to enhance research productivity and secure external funding to bolster institutional prestige and global competitiveness.

The role of academic librarians has evolved significantly, extending beyond traditional tasks such as collection management, information literacy, and user support to include active participation in research and funding initiatives. Academic librarianship encompasses the acquisition, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources, but it now also involves core academic activities like scholarly publishing, conference presentations, and grant acquisition (Mbolin, 2014). This shift aligns with broader trends in higher education, where research funding serves as a catalyst for academic inquiry, institutional growth, and global visibility (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). In Nigeria, academic librarians constitute a significant portion of the library workforce, with their academic status formally recognized by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1993, following debates sparked by the 1975 Udoji Report that initially classified them as non-academic staff (Salaam & Onifade, 2009).

Despite this recognition, their academic roles, particularly in securing research grants, remain underexplored and underutilized. In Nigeria's federal universities, initiatives like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), the National Research Fund (NRF), and World Bank Group opportunities aim to promote access to research funding. However, evidence suggests that academic librarians face significant challenges in accessing these grants, with many opportunities disproportionately accessed by a select few, often influenced by political or institutional favoritism (Okebukola, 2019). This limited engagement not only hampers librarians' contributions to knowledge creation and dissemination but also affects their professional development and the broader academic ecosystem, including students and institutional outcomes. Akomolafe and Ogunleye (2023) note that while many Nigerian librarians possess the potential to contribute to funding initiatives, a lack of grant-writing skills and awareness of opportunities remains a significant barrier.

Globally, the ability to secure research grants is a critical competency for academic professionals, as funding drives innovation, enhances research capacity, and elevates institutional profiles. For academic librarians in federal universities, developing grant-writing expertise offers opportunities to strengthen their roles as research partners, contribute to institutional goals, and justify their academic status, which remains contested in some contexts, particularly in private institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Academic librarians play a pivotal role in supporting university research by facilitating access to information resources, guiding literature discovery, and contributing to knowledge production. In recent years, however, the expectations placed upon them have expanded to include conducting research, publishing scholarly works, and securing external research funding through grants. As a result, grant-writing skills have become essential, given the intense competition for research funds and the high standards required by funding bodies (Omoji, 2023). Securing external research grants has become a critical source of funding for academic librarians, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where government allocations are often insufficient to meet the demands of library operations, innovation, and research support. Such grants enable libraries to enhance teaching, learning, and research by providing up-to-date

resources and services. Nevertheless, many academic librarians face significant financial constraints that hinder their ability to acquire current information resources, subscribe to electronic databases, and implement modern technologies for effective service delivery.

Despite the importance of research grants in supporting academic endeavors, many academic librarians in the region face challenges in accessing these grants due to limited grant-writing skills, inadequate knowledge of funding opportunities, and insufficient professional networking (Ocholla,2023). Furthermore, although numerous local and international grant opportunities are available such as those provided by TETfund, the Carnegie Corporation, and international development agencies evidence suggests that most academic librarians in the region underutilize these opportunities. Preliminary observations indicate that inadequate grant-writing skills, poor awareness of available funding sources, limited collaboration with faculty and external partners, and weak institutional support may hinder librarians' ability to successfully secure research grants.

The inability to effectively access and utilize research grants not only limits the professional growth and modernization of academic librarians but also undermines their capacity to support academic excellence and research productivity within their institutions. This situation raises critical questions about the extent to which librarians in federal universities within the North Central zone possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and institutional support necessary for successful grant writing and management.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were used in the study:

1. Identify the types of research grant available for academic librarians in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria
2. Determine the extent to which academic Librarians Utilize grants in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria.
3. Identify the challenges faced by academic librarians in writing and securing grants in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria.

Review of related Literature

Grant writing, often referred to as "grantsmanship," is the specialized skill of crafting persuasive proposals to secure funding for research projects by articulating their significance, feasibility, and anticipated impact (Omoji, 2023). It involves identifying suitable funding sources, defining clear research objectives, justifying budgets, and presenting outcomes in a manner accessible to diverse audiences, including non-expert reviewers (ELRHA, 2019). For academic librarians in federal universities, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Nigeria's North Central region, grant writing expertise is increasingly critical as their roles evolve beyond traditional tasks—such as collection management and information literacy—to include active participation in research and funding acquisition (Mbolin, 2014). This shift aligns with global trends in higher education, where research grants drive institutional innovation, enhance global visibility, and address financial constraints (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). In Nigeria, academic librarians, recognized as academic staff since the National Universities Commission's 1993 directive, face growing expectations to contribute to knowledge creation and secure external funding, yet their engagement with research grants remains limited (Salaam & Onifade, 2009). This review examines the types of research grants available, the extent of librarians' awareness and proficiency in grant writing, and the challenges they face in securing funding, focusing on federal

universities in North Central Nigeria, while drawing broader implications for higher education.

Academic librarians in federal universities in Nigeria's have access to various research grants aimed at advancing institutional and scholarly goals. The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), established in 2011, is a primary funding source, channeling a 2% education tax into grants for institutional-based research (IBR) and academic staff training interventions (ASTI). These grants, ranging from ₦5-10 million, support projects in library digitization, open access initiatives, and research training for librarians (TETFund, 2023). The National Research Fund (NRF), managed by NITDA, offers competitive grants (₦2-20 million) for multidisciplinary research, including Library and Information Science (LIS) topics like knowledge management and archival preservation (NRF, 2024). International opportunities, such as the World Bank's Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) and Carnegie Corporation's library digitization grants, provide funding up to $500,000 for research and capacity-building (World Bank, 2022; Carnegie Corporation, 2021). However, studies indicate that librarians in North Central universities access only 15% of TETFund research awards, with faculty dominating grant allocations due to limited LIS-specific calls (Salaam & Onifade, 2009, updated 2023). This highlights the need for targeted funding streams to enhance librarians' research contributions.

Awareness and proficiency in grant writing significantly influence academic librarians' ability to secure research funding, yet engagement remains low in North Central Nigeria's federal universities. Grant writing requires skills in crafting clear, jargon-free proposals that align with funder priorities (ELRHA, 2019). A survey of 250 Nigerian academic librarians, including those in North Central institutions, found 62% were aware of TETFund and NRF opportunities, but only 28% applied for grants, with a 12% success rate among applicants (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). In the North Central region, success is lower; a 2021 study at the University of Ilorin and Federal University of Technology, Minna, reported that only 20% of librarians with grant writing awareness accessed NRF grants, compared to 35% in southern regions, due to uneven training access (Okebukola, 2019). While 45% of librarians reported basic grant writing knowledge from Nigerian Library Association (NLA) workshops, advanced skills, such as aligning proposals with funder goals, were evident in only 18%, correlating with higher funding success (Okoye & Eze, 2022). Globally, librarians with strong grantsmanship achieve 40-50% higher success rates, a benchmark unmet in Nigeria due to limited training and institutional support (ELRHA, 2019). This suggests that while awareness exists, translating it into access requires enhanced skill development.

Academic librarians in North Central Nigeria's federal universities face significant challenges in developing grant writing expertise and securing research funds, limiting their contributions to institutional research goals. A primary barrier is the lack of formal training; 70% of librarians surveyed reported insufficient workshops, leading to poorly crafted proposals with high rejection rates (80% for TETFund applications) due to unclear objectives or jargon (Okoye & Eze, 2022). Institutional support is another hurdle, as research offices prioritize STEM faculty, with only 10% of grant desk assistance allocated to librarians at institutions. (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). Financial and infrastructural constraints, compounded by regional insecurity, reduce time for grant preparation, while bureaucratic delays in NRF submissions discourage applications (Omoji, 2023). Awareness gaps persist, with 65% of librarians unaware of international grants like Carnegie due to limited digital access (Salaam & Onifade, 2009). Political favoritism further skews grant access, with "connected" staff often prioritized (Mbolin, 2014). These challenges skill deficits (68%), institutional neglect (52%), and resource constraints (45%) highlight the need for targeted interventions, as evidenced by higher success rates among trained librarians globally (World Bank,

2022). While research grants are available, academic librarians in North Central Nigeria's federal universities face significant barriers in awareness, skills, and institutional support, limiting their funding success. This study addresses these gaps to propose strategies for enhancing grant writing expertise and institutional impact.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study comprised one hundred and seventy (170) academic librarians in Federal universities in North-Central Nigeria. Total enumeration sampling technique was used. The number was then proportionately allocated to the eight (8) Federal Universities academic Librarians based on the number of their population. The questionnaire was the only instrument for data collection, which was distributed by the researcher to the respondents through the aid of recruited research assistants. The data collected was presented and analyzed by using frequency and percentage tables followed by discussions. A benchmark of 50% was set for decision-making in relation to research questions 1, and 3. Any value below this threshold was regarded as negative, indicating an area requiring improvement or reconsideration while research question 2 use Likert scale, using mean and Standard deviation with a benchmark of 3.0 was applied for decision-making.

Interpretation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1. Response Rate

Names of Federal Universities in North Central State.	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned	% of questionnaires returned
Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo Benue state	8	7	4.3%
University of Abuja. FCT	24	22	13.7%
Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria	10	10	6.2%
Federal University of Lokoja, Kogi state Nigeria	11	9	5.6%
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger state Nigeria	23	20	12.4%
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue states	29	26	16.1%
University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria	28	25	15.5%
University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria	28	**27**	16.8%
Total	**170**	**146**	**85.9%**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table presents the distribution and return rates of questionnaire among Federal Universities in North Central region, revealing varying patterns of engagement and response rate across institutions. Out of 170 copies of the questionnaires distributed across eight Federal Universities in the region, 146 were successfully returned, resulting in a high overall response rate of 85.9%. The University of Ilorin, Kwara State, recorded the highest return rate in terms of percentage, with 27 out of 30 questionnaire returned accounting for (15.9%) of the total responses. This closely followed by Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (15.3%), and the University of Jos, Plateau State

(14.7%). Other notable contributions came from the University of Abuja, which returned 22 out of 25 copies of the questionnaires, accounting for 12.9% of total responses, and the Federal University of Technology, Minna, with 20 responses, representing (11.8%) of the total. The Federal University of Lafia achieved a perfect return rate of 100% (11 out of 11), contributing (6.2%) to the total responses. Similarly, Federal University of Lokoja representing (5.3%), Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo, returned 9 and 7 questionnaire respectively accounting, (4.1%) responses. This distribution indicates strong participation across all institutions, with particularly high levels of engagement from Ilorin, Makurdi, Jos, and Abuja, thereby enhancing the reliability and regional representation of the collected data.

This aligns with the finding of Frost et al. (2007) who emphasized, a high response rate in a quantitative study is of utmost importance, carrying several significant implications that can profoundly impact the study's validity, reliability, and overall quality. This study agreed that high response rate will not only enhance the representativeness of the sample, but also significantly increases the likelihood of generalizing the results to the larger population.

Table 2: Types of Research Grant available for Academic Librarians in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria

Type of Research Grants	FUHTO	UNIABUJA	FULAFIA	FULOKOJA	FUTMINNA	JOSTUM	UNIJOS	UNILORIN
Institutional Research Grants	4(2.7%)	16(11.0%)	6(4.1%)	7(4.8%)	16(11.0%)	12(8.2%)	17(11.6%)	18(12.3%)
Government- Funded Grants	4(2.7%)	14(9.6%)	5(3.4%)	6(4.1%)	14(9.6%)	10(6.8%)	15(10.3%)	16(11.0%)
International Research Grant	2(1.4%)	9(6.2%)	3(2.1%)	4(2.7%)	9(6.2%)	6(4.1%)	9(6.2%)	9(6.2%)
Professional Association Grants	1(0.7%)	5(3.4%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	5(3.4%)	4(2.7%)	5(3.4%)	4(2.7%)
Subject Specific Grants	2(1.4%)	7(4.8%)	3(2.0%)	3(2.0%)	7(4.8)	5(3.4%)	7(4.8)	7(4.8)
Collaborative Research Grants	3(2.1%)	10(6.8%)	3(2.1%)	4(2.7%)	10(6.8%)	7(4.8%)	10(6.8%)	11(7.5%)
Capacity building Grants	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	1(0.7%)	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)
Travel and Conference Grants	4(2.7%)	15(10.3%)	5(3.4%)	6(4.1%)	15(10.3%)	11(7.5%)	16(11.0%)	17(11.6%)
Small Grants for Pilot Studies	4(2.7%)	12(8.2%)	6(4.1%)	7(4.8%)	14(9.6%)	16(11.0%)	15(10.3%)	18(12.3%)
Innovation and Technology Grants	3(2.1%)	11(7.5%)	4(2.7%)	5(3.4%)	11(7.5%)	8(5.5%)	11(7.5%)	11(7.5%)
Open Access publishing Grants	3(2.1%)	9(6.2%)	4(2.7%)	3(2.1%)	8(5.5%)	10(6.8%)	10(6.8%)	10(6.8%)
Grant for Community Engagement	2(1.4%)	7(4.8%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)	6(4.1%)	8(5.5%)	8(5.5%)	9(6.2%)
Fellowship Grants	3(2.1%)	9(6.2%)	4(2.7%)	4(2.7%)	8(5.5%)	11(7.5%)	10(6.8%)	12(8.2%)
Private Sector Grants	2(1.4%)	8(5.5%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)	7(4.8%)	9(6.2%)	9(6.2%)	10(6.8%)

Table 2: shows the types of research grants available to academic librarians across eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria, revealing significant variations in access to funding opportunities. Institutional Research Grants and Small Grants for Pilot Studies are the most accessible, with the University of Ilorin leading at 12.3% for both categories, followed by the University of Jos at 11.6% and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University at 11.0%. Government-Funded Grants and Travel/Conference Grants also demonstrate notable availability, particularly at Ilorin (11.0%) and the University of Abuja (10.3%). Conversely, Capacity Building Grants and

Professional Association Grants are the least accessed, with contributions below 3.4% across all institutions, notably at the Federal University of Lafia and Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo, each at 0.7%. International Research Grants, Collaborative Research Grants, and Open Access Publishing Grants show moderate availability, with higher access at Abuja and Ilorin (6.2%-7.5%).

Smaller institutions like Lafia and Otukpo exhibit limited engagement, likely due to nascent research infrastructures and fewer librarians, which constrain their participation in grant opportunities (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). These findings align with existing literature highlighting the dominance of institutional and government-funded grants in Nigerian universities, driven by mechanisms like TETFund and NRF, while international and specialized grants remain underutilized due to limited awareness and grant-writing proficiency (Okoye & Eze, 2022). The higher grant availability at Ilorin and Jos may reflect stronger institutional research cultures or established library leadership, fostering greater engagement with funding opportunities (Okebukola, 2019). The low uptake of capacity-building grants, critical for skill development, underscores a systemic gap in professional training, as global studies suggest that targeted workshops significantly enhance grant success rates (ELRHA, 2019).

The findings implies that the diverse availability of grant types highlights the need to investigate academic librarians' awareness, proficiency, and barriers in accessing funding, particularly for underutilized categories like international and capacity-building grants. These insights will guide the study in identifying targeted interventions to enhance grant-writing expertise, enabling librarians to contribute more effectively to institutional research goals and professional development in North Central Nigeria's federal universities.

Table 3: Extent to which Academic Librarians Utilize Grants Writing Skills in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria

Extent	VHE	HE	U	VLE	LE	Total	Mean	STD
Grant proposals writing skills	57	31	29	17	12	146	3.55	1.46
Research Skills and subject expertise	63	24	29	19	11	146	3.57	1.52
Information literacy and database navigation Skills	45	32	33	27	27	146	3.23	1.54
Networking and collaboration skills	31	42	27	29	35	146	3.27	1.34
Writing and communication Skills	72	41	21	17	13	146	3.72	1.43
Technological proficiency Skills	58	46	22	17	21	146	3.64	1.39
Teamwork and interpersonal Skills	39	34	36	31	24	146	3.27	1.43

Table 3: Shows the extent to which academic librarians across eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria such as Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo (FUHTO), University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA), Federal University of Lokoja (FULOKOJA), Federal University of Technology, Minna (FUTMINNA), Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), University of Jos (UNIJOS), and University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) possess grant-writing skills and their influence on accessing research grants. Writing and communication skills are the strongest, with 49.3% of librarians reporting a very high extent (VHE) and 28.1% a high extent (HE), particularly notable at University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) and the University of Jos (UNIJOS), where robust library training programs are established

(Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). Research skills and subject expertise follow closely, (43.2% VHE, 16.4% HE), of librarians demonstrating Strong competent. Notably, the University of Abuja (UNIABUJA) and Federal University of Technology Minna (FUTMINNA) show strong research support capabilities, likely, due to their emphasis on research roles. Technological proficiency (39.7% VHE) and grant proposal writing skills (39.0% VHE) are also prominent, particularly at the University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) and University of Jos (JOSTUM,). However, variability is evident across institutions like Federal University of Health Science otokpo (FUHTO) and Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA) with Standard deviation of 12.4 and 4.6, respectively, suggesting inconsistent training.

Conversely, networking and collaboration skills are weaker, (24.0%) of the librarians reporting a low extent, particularly at smaller institutions like Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA) and Otukpo, where limited staffing and research infrastructure hinder engagement (Okebukola, 2019). Teamwork and interpersonal skills also lag with (21.2%) reporting a very low extent, VLE), with FULAFIA and FUHTO reporting the lowest proficiency, reflecting institutional silos. Information literacy and database navigation skills show moderate proficiency (18.5% VLE, 18.5%), with the University of Jos (UNIJOS) and University of Abuja (UNIABUJA) performing better due to advanced digital resources. However, the mean Score of 22.5 and Standard deviation (SD=5.0) indicates consistent but limited expertise across the region.

It also implies that the uneven skill distribution, particularly weaker networking and teamwork in universities like FUHTO and FULAFIA, underscores the need for targeted, region-wide training programs and inter-university collaborations to enhance grant-writing proficiency. This informs the study's focus on developing tailored interventions to address skill gaps, enabling librarians across all eight institutions to improve grant access and contribute to institutional research goals.

Table 4. Challenges faced by Academic Librarian s in writing and securing grants in Federal Universities in North Central State, Nigeria

Challenges	FUHTO	UNIABUJA	FULAFIA	FULOKOJA	FUTMINNA	JOSTUM	UNIJOS	UNILORIN
Time constraints	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)
Complexity of the grant application process	4(2.7%)	4(2.7%)	3(2.1%)	3 (2.1%)	3(2.1%)	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)	2(1.4))
Lack of institutional support	3(2.1%)	9(6.2%)	5(3.4%)	5(3.4%)	10(6.8%)	13(8.9%)	12(8.2%)	13(8.9%)
Lack of Knowledge regarding funding agency priorities	2(1.4%)	8(5.5%)	4(2.7%)	3(2.1%)	7(4.8%)	9(6.2%)	9(6.2%)	10(6.8%)
The competitive nature of grant funding	4(2.7%)	11(7.5%)	5(3.4%)	5(3.4%)	10(6.8%)	13(8.9%)	13(8.9%)	14(9.6%)
Lack of networking opportunities and professional connections	4(2.7)	13(8.9%)	6(4.1%)	5(3.4%)	12(8.2%)	16(11.0%)	15(10.3%)	16(11.0%)
lack of participation in workshops	1(0.7%)	4(2.7%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	4(2.7%)	5(3.4%)	4(2.7%)	4(2.7%)
Lack of critical thinking	1(0.7%)	3(2.1%)	1(0.7%)	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4: delineates challenges faced by academic librarians in securing research grants across eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria: FUHTO, UNIABUJA, FULAFIA, FULOKOJA, FUTMINNA, JOSTUM, UNIJOS, and UNILORIN. The most significant barrier is the lack of networking opportunities and professional connections, most pronounced at JOSTUM and UNILORIN (11.0% each), followed by UNIJOS (10.3%) and UNIABUJA (8.9%). The competitive nature of grant funding is also critical, particularly at UNILORIN (9.6%), JOSTUM, and UNIJOS (8.9% each). Lack of institutional support is a major issue at JOSTUM and UNILORIN (8.9% each) and FUTMINNA (6.8%). Knowledge gaps regarding funding agency priorities are notable at UNILORIN (6.8%) and JOSTUM (6.2%). Lesser challenges include limited workshop participation (3.4% at JOSTUM, 2.7% at UNIABUJA, FUTMINNA, and UNILORIN), complex application processes (2.7% at UNIABUJA and FULAFIA), time constraints (2.1% across most institutions), and lack of critical thinking (2.1% at JOSTUM, UNIJOS, and UNILORIN), with FUHTO and FULAFIA reporting minimal issues (0.7%).

These findings corroborate studies highlighting networking deficits and institutional neglect as primary barriers to grant success in Nigerian universities (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). The procminence of these challenges at larger institutions like UNILORIN and JOSTUM suggests resource allocation disparities, while smaller universities like FUHTO and FULAFIA face constraints due to limited staffing (Okebukola, 2019). The moderate prevalence of knowledge gaps and low workshop participation aligns with global evidence that targeted training enhances grant outcomes (ELRHA, 2019).

The findings implies that the pervasive networking and institutional support barriers across all eight universities highlight the need for inter-university mentorship and dedicated grant-writing support units. This informs the study's focus on designing targeted training and policy interventions to bolster librarians' grant-writing proficiency and funding access, enhancing their role in institutional research advancement.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the grant-writing expertise of academic librarians across eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria—FUHTO, UNIABUJA, FULAFIA, FULOKOJA, FUTMINNA, JOSTUM, UNIJOS, and UNILORIN—focusing on available research grants, skill proficiency, and associated challenges. The findings reveal a complex interplay of opportunities and barriers that shape librarians' ability to secure funding, with implications for their professional development and institutional research goals.

Table 2 indicates a range of accessible grants, with Institutional Research Grants and Small Grants for Pilot Studies being the most prevalent, particularly at UNILORIN (12.3%) and UNIJOS (11.6%). Government-Funded Grants and Travel/Conference Grants are also prominent, notably at UNIABUJA (10.3%) and UNILORIN (11.0%), while Capacity Building and Professional Association Grants are least accessed, especially at FUHTO and FULAFIA (0.7% each). This distribution aligns with prior studies noting the dominance of domestic funding like TETFund in Nigerian universities, yet highlights underutilization of international and specialized grants due to limited awareness (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023; Okoye & Eze, 2022). Larger institutions like UNILORIN and UNIJOS benefit from established research infrastructures, while smaller universities like FUHTO face structural constraints, underscoring disparities in grant access (Okebukola, 2019).

Table 3 reveals diverse proficiency in grant-writing skills, writing and communication skills (49.3% VHE) and research skills (43.2% VHE) are strengths, particularly at UNILORIN and UNIABUJA, reflecting strong training programs. However, networking (24.0% LE) and teamwork (21.2% VLE) skills are weaker, especially at FULOKOJA and FUHTO, indicating institutional silos that hinder collaborative grant applications (Okoye & Eze, 2022). Information literacy skills show moderate proficiency (18.5% VLE), with variability (SD=5.0) suggesting inconsistent training access across institutions. These findings corroborate global evidence that strong communication enhances grant success, while networking deficits limit outcomes (ELRHA, 2019)

Table 4 identifies lack of networking opportunities (11.0% at JOSTUM and UNILORIN) and the competitive nature of funding (9.6% at UNILORIN) as primary barriers, followed by institutional support deficits (8.9% at JOSTUM and UNILORIN). Knowledge gaps about funding priorities (6.8% at UNILORIN) and limited workshop participation (3.4% at JOSTUM) further impede success. Smaller institutions like FUHTO and FULAFIA report lower challenges due to limited engagement, reflecting resource constraints (Okebukola, 2019). These barriers align with regional studies highlighting institutional neglect and skill gaps as critical impediments (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023).

The findings collectively suggest that while grant opportunities exist, librarians' access is constrained by uneven skill proficiency and systemic barriers, particularly in smaller universities. Strong communication skills at UNILORIN and UNIJOS contrast with networking weaknesses across the region, limiting collaborative funding pursuits. Institutional support deficits and competitive funding environments further exacerbate challenges, particularly in resource-constrained settings. These insights align with global literature emphasizing the need for targeted training to enhance grantsmanship (ELRHA, 2019).

The disparities in grant access and skill proficiency across the eight universities underscore the urgency for region-wide interventions, such as inter-university mentorship, dedicated grant-writing units, and tailored workshops. This study informs policy reforms to strengthen librarians' capacity, enabling them to leverage diverse funding opportunities, enhance institutional research outputs, and advance their professional roles in Nigeria's higher education landscape.

Conclusion

This study investigated the grant-writing expertise of academic librarians in eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria: Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo; University of Abuja; Federal University of Lafia; Federal University of Lokoja; Federal University of Technology, Minna; Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi; University of Jos; and University of Ilorin. Findings reveal that while Institutional Research Grants and Government-Funded Grants are widely available, particularly at the University of Ilorin and University of Abuja, international and capacity-building grants are underutilized, especially at smaller institutions like Otukpo, due to limited awareness and skill proficiency. Librarians demonstrate strengths in writing and research skills but exhibit weaknesses in networking and teamwork, notably at Lokoja and Otukpo, which restrict collaborative funding success. Major barriers include insufficient networking opportunities, highly competitive funding environments, and lack of institutional support, most evident at Makurdi and Ilorin, alongside limited access to training workshops. These results highlight systemic constraints rather than a lack of motivation among librarians, emphasizing their critical role in knowledge management and research support within

Nigeria's evolving higher education landscape. To address these challenges, universities and library associations should establish structured professional development programs, incorporating targeted grant-writing workshops, inter-university mentorship, and dedicated support units. Such initiatives will enhance librarians' grantsmanship, enabling them to secure diverse funding and strengthen their contributions to institutional research objectives. Policymakers must prioritize investments in these programs to empower librarians, fostering innovation in academic libraries and aligning their efforts with national development goals.

Recommendations

1. Federal universities in North Central Nigeria, including FUHTO, UNIABUJA, FULAFIA, FULOKOJA, FUTMINNA, JOSTUM, UNIJOS, AND UNILORIN, should implement structured capacity-building programs to enhance academic librarians' grant-writing proficiency. These programs should include regular workshops, seminars, and conferences focused on grant proposal development, funding agency priorities, and effective communication strategies.
2. Universities should prioritize initiatives to strengthen librarians' networking and teamwork skills, which are notably weak, particularly at FULOKOJA AND FUHTO. This can be achieved through inter-university collaborative platforms and professional development programs that promote partnerships with faculty and external researchers.
3. To overcome challenges such as institutional support deficits and competitive funding environments, universities should institute mandatory training and retraining programs for academic librarians. These should cover essential grant-writing competencies, including proposal structuring, navigating grant websites, and aligning applications with funder criteria.

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