

## ***Lecturers' Perception of the Impact of Innovation in Research Practice in Universities in South-South Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable National Development***

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### ***Abstract***

*The objective of the study was to investigate the perception of south-south university lecturers on the impact of innovation in research practice for sustainable development. The study adopted a quantitative research approach with a descriptive survey. The population comprised all academic staff in the four public universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, Nigeria which numbered one thousand five hundred and ninety one (1591) persons. Through a multistage sampling procedure, stratified random sampling and accidental sampling, a sample size of 504 was drawn from four faculties of each of the Universities: Education, Social science, Management science and Science. Data was collected through the use of self-administered questionnaire with Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.76. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analyses. The result shows, amongst others, that the professional practices of lecturers in the two states with respect to publication and overall practices were high. The study recommends, among others, that government should adequately support universities through funding and infrastructural development. This should include the provision of general satisfactory work condition and conducive environment for staff efficiency as this could help bridge any disparity in professional activities among universities in South - South Nigeria and global society.*

**Keywords:** university, innovative, research, practices, lecturers

### **Introduction**

Research has continued to be a sure way to generate new knowledge in today's knowledge-driven society. Scientific research and development generated by institutions of higher learning or universities, more than anything else, has contributed to the rapid growth of the world economy and the transformation of the few 'super' countries, particularly the 'Asian tigers', Japan, China, South and North Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Singapore, Finland (Asim *et al.*, 2007; Idika *et al.*, 2010). At all times, research is notably

equipped with characteristic potentials to solve any nation's challenge irrespective of the complexity and magnitude of any sector, and bring about national development (Idika, 2015).

Universities are expected to play a central role in a process where their core activities, such as research, teaching and community development, virile staff development programmes, generation and dissemination of knowledge, should align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are indicators of changes that reflect development in the economic, social and political sector. These development indicators are reflected in the 17 SDGs of the United Nations. Oni and Adetero (2014) note that the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) defined Sustainable Development (SD) as that which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. To this end, the functions of universities as highlighted by the Federal Government of Nigeria includes contribution to national development through high level relevant manpower training, develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society, develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, promote and encourage scholarships and community service, forge and cement national unity and promote national and international understanding and interaction (Silas, 2014). It therefore, appears that the present researchers in the Nigerian society have not been very useful as their functions have not really been translated into tangible forms to sustain the much sought after national development. Kingdom and Maekae (2013) noted that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such a society, premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing for its members.

This argument agrees with some of the indicators of sustainable development goals especially SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 4. The implication is that university innovative professional practices should meet these goals as indication of an improved economy. Muoghalu (2013) argued that Nigeria's educational system while improving is not yet fit for the demands of competitive global markets, as the system does not provide Nigerians with the skills they need to get jobs. This goes to explain the issues of unemployable skills among graduates of universities and is similar to the perception of Uriah and Wosu (2012) on issues of unemployable skills among graduate job seekers across disciplines. They declared that from a theoretical perspective, the present system of education in sub-Sahara Africa and its implementation cannot bring about the much talked about national development.

Often, the faculty one belongs should determine the area of involvement of one's research practice even though research is a core activity of all academics irrespective of faculty. In their study on library research skills needs of graduate students, Hoffman, Antwi-Nsiah, Feng and Stanley (2008) reported similarity across faculties in terms of their research

practice. The present study was necessitated by the need to assess the impact of lecturers' professional practices on sustainable national development in Nigeria. For example, Idika (2016) noted that conference attendance along with paper presentation is a practice that affords an academic a wider exposure to acquire requisite knowledge in other areas within their disciplines. In addition, Fatoki and Opeolu (2015) noted that a research article presenter having to work through a systematic process and ethical procedure is sharpened and this could enhance skills for effective professional practice. In terms of promoting conference attendance, ESF Research Conference (2008) observes that the practice pays as individuals can develop a more holistic view in problem-solving. Several authors converge in their ideas about enhancement in educational practice and professional development of the academic staff through attendance to academic meetings including workshops, seminars and conferences (Altshuler, 1999; Fourie, 2004; Tetty, 2006; Bassey et al., 2007; Burns & Sinfield, 2008; Akuegwu et al., 2013; Andries & Astrid, 2019). The authors unanimously posited that without attendance and effort in academic and professional training in this direction, the academic staff can stagnate and the relevance which they impart on their institutions and society at large may diminish. The authors therefore, suggested the necessity for universities and research bodies to support professional and skill development by providing the necessary resources to encourage attendance and full participation of academics in professional organizations' meetings.

Tetty (2006) averred that faculty members thrive on the intellectual and collegial stimulation, from their peers when they attend professional activities and national and international research conferences. In connection with this, Andries and Astrid (2019) several years later, have found attendance to workshop very important in acquiring state-of-the-art knowledge on external developments and as a dominant source of competitive advantage for an organization, even though their record of workshop attendance (an important mode of learning), was indicated to be highest among managers and professionals in contrast to their participation in training. Bassey et al. (2007) on their part re-affirmed in their study on academic staff research productivity in universities in South-South zone of Nigeria, that quality research practice exposes researchers to new information and sharing of socio-cultural ideas with others, and urged the government to provide enabling environment with funds extended to university to foster research activities.

The primary motivating factor for attendance to conference by academic staff and postgraduate students as noted by Altshuler (1999) and Burns and Sinfield (2008), is its usefulness as a method of meeting people who are interested in similar research areas, which meet and find themselves in discussion on vital issues including theoretical and methodological ideas. Other common issues of discussion include their schools, departments, exchange of mails for future correspondence and work life, among other interests. Some researchers however, do not make it to conference, according to the authors, because they are unsure about whether a particular conference is worth the time and money, the anomie of travelling to an unknown place with attendant security and

health issues as well as a feeling that the exercise may constitute a wasteful or painful experience (Ochai & Nedosa 1998; Downes, 2003).

However, the gains of attending seminars, workshops, conferences and presenting papers in those gatherings cannot be overemphasized. Idika (2016) and Okon (2016) identified these gains in organizations to include improving communication skills, gaining expert knowledge, networking with others and renewing motivation and confidence. The authors further explained that seminar can be a comfortable and an open environment for practicing professional communication techniques; seminars help staff become better listeners, present arguments and ideas clearly and are open to others' points of view. Moreover, group discussion and activities which are common in conferencing, seminars and workshops can also help staff practice interpersonal skills, such as dealing with conflicting opinions among group members and working together to accomplish assignments or tasks. Seminars give staff intensive exposure to a topic through presentations and discussion led by multiple experts. Seminars are an ideal opportunity for people who want to study a topic in depth, but do not enjoy reading or have the time to take classes. Along with having access to experts and exchanging perspectives, meeting new people can offer encouragement, solutions to common problems and advice for how to handle challenges. These relationships can continue into professional connections even after the seminar is over.

Organizing seminars and the likes for teachers have become a phenomenal activity in the country to prepare attendees and participants in globalization. Their attendance to these gatherings will help create an effective learning environment, improve teaching-learning situations, keep them updated on modern instructional devices and inspire them to become better teachers in the modern world. The intensive study of a seminar provides a chance to get away and dedicate oneself to the topic for a few days and then returning is with renewed motivation and rekindled enthusiasm to pursue set goals. This can lead to higher productivity and fulfillment of professional and academic goals. Workshops, seminar, conferences present platforms for retraining exercise, and can be capacity building programmes to update teachers' knowledge and skills with the new ideas and methods of teaching on a particular subject (Akuegwu et al., 2013).

A study carried out by Akuegwu, Nwi-ue and Eyo (2013) examined university lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in south-south Nigeria and its implications for sustainable development. It focused on the extent of lecturers' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring. One research question and two hypotheses were used to direct the study. A stratified random sample of 320 lecturers was drawn from a population of 3203 lecturers in four federal universities located in the area of study. Researchers' constructed questionnaire was used to collect data which was subjected to descriptive and inferential (population t-test and independent t-test) statistical analyses. Findings showed that lecturers' participation in capacity building programme is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and mentoring. Their participation was more in conferences

with a mean participation of 15.81, followed by mentoring ( $\bar{x} = 15.53$ ), paper presentation at seminars ( $\bar{x} = 15.49$ ) and lastly workshops ( $\bar{x} = 15.48$ ). It was recommended that enabling environment again, should be provided whereby university lecturers are encouraged to participate fully in capacity building programmes.

In terms of publication, Iyela (2002) explained that the professional practice by university lecturers was low; noting that many active journals in Nigeria had dropped several poorly written research articles in the early 2000. Otisi (2011) and Osisoma (2012) shared a similar opinion on the quality of research articles written by Nigerian academics. They attributed this output in quality of research to poor research orientation among academics. Alemma (1996) had emphasized that most manuscripts from Nigerian writers especially those written by females were rejected because of low standard. In particular such articles lack international or world view on issues and problems. Chiemeké, Longe and Shaib (2009) reported that research publication accounted for only 37.1% of the total publication in the journals for 6 years study period, and attributed the low research quality and ineffectiveness to inadequate information resource, economic crisis and failure to publish in reputable journals. It is also observed that despite the ‘publish or perish’ syndrome on which academics are driven to engage in publication practice, the extent of their involvement has not improved as it has remained low according to the most recent and updated World Ranking of Universities in Nigeria and in Africa (Webometrics, 2022). Two decades after the report of Iyela (2002), the topmost universities, (University of Ibadan in Nigeria and University of Cape Town) and the best ranked in Africa, are positioned in the World respectively as 1231 and 239. This obviously has great implication for sustainable development in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

Similarly, Okpe et al, (2013) report low professional practices of academics in Nigerian Universities. Their study on research output among 113 faculty members of Babcock University in Nigeria between 2001 and 2012 found that the leading professional practice in the university was publication. These observations corroborate the study of Bassey *et al.* (2007), which investigated research productivity of lecturers in the universities in South-South Zone of Nigeria and found that academics in the study area performed well in terms of publication. On the pattern of authorship of published articles, Okpe *et al.* (2013), discovered the following trend: single authorship (39.8%), joint authorship (11.9%) and multiple authorship (8%) among other findings. The results show more of single authorship implying a higher self- efficacy rather than collaborative research in carrying out professional practice in terms of publication of articles. It is of note that collaboration is one way through which research skills of academics are sharpened (Idika & Okri, 2017).

In terms of proposal writing for grant sponsorship, Effah (2003) noted that the challenges faced by academic staff in terms of winning grant is partly because the theme of their articles do not align with the needs of the available funders. Nonetheless, there are a number of research funding organizations that academics can connect to. They include Nigeria’s Funding Agency, Tertiary Education Fund (TETFUND), Association of

Commonwealth University, Alexander Von Humboldt (AVH) Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Nigeria's Bilateral Research Programmes, Nigeria's Ministries of Energy, Agriculture, Women Affairs, Mineral Resources, Nigerian Ports Authority, among others (Fatoki & Opeolu, 2015b).

From the foregoing reviewed literature, it could be noted that a large number of academics' research undertaken in Nigerian Universities are least sponsored when compared to their counterparts in advanced countries. The reason is clearly attributed to poor research skills generally and inadequate skills orientation in workshop, seminar, conference participation and grant winning proposal (Tetty, 2006; Fatoki & Opeolu, 2015b; Idika, 2016; Idika, Joshua & Umoinyang, 2017).

A typical case study on academic staff's skills and professional development is as presented by Tetty (2006) in five universities in Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. It revealed interesting variation in skills and professional development effort. For example, the respondents in all the five universities, except Botswana, expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support to their universities. In universities in Nigeria and Ghana, 65% and 75% respondents respectively expressed inaccessibility of sponsorship by way of grants for research. However, in contrast, 93% of respondents in Botswana indicated that they had access to conference.

This study is anchored on the Gestalt learning theory by Wertheimer, Kohler and Koffka (1912). The theory states that learning occurs by seeing new patterns and organizing them into a meaningful whole in the total situation. This theory perceives the whole to be greater than just the sum of the parts. The Gestalt's idea is that to learn is to see new relationships which involve problem solving, insight, thinking and understanding. The Gestalt learning consists of the recognition of both the problems to be solved (the ends) and method by which it can be solved (the means).

This theory is relevant because its central theme lies on perception of the mind. The theory posits that problems cause disorganization which inspires one to find solution (for instance, innovation in research practices among academics for sustainable national development). The theorist's position that the 'ends' and the 'means' be established before learning can really take place, has an implication in terms of the goal of university education for sustainable national development. Thus, the theory explains the reason academics should see sustainable national development as the motive which should drive their innovation in research practice.

### **Research questions**

Two research questions were used for this study:

1. What proportion of academic staff in both Akwa Ibom and Cross River State universities were involved in professional practice?
2. What is the dominant professional practice of the academic staff of the universities?

## **Hypothesis**

**Ho1:** Professional practice in terms of attendance at seminar, workshop, symposium and conference, paper presentation, publication and proposal writing for sponsorship by academic staff of universities of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States are not significantly high.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design is suitable for this study as it aimed at describing the nature of a situation as it existed at the time of the investigation (Isangedighi, 2012). The study area covers Cross River and Akwa Ibom states, in Nigeria. The area is made up of 49 local government areas with Calabar and Uyo as their state capitals. The people of both states share similar characteristics in terms of food, beliefs, religion and myths, language and occupation. They are popularly called Akwa–Cross by virtue of their proximal location. Education has been embraced as a tool for socialization and preservation of culture in these states.

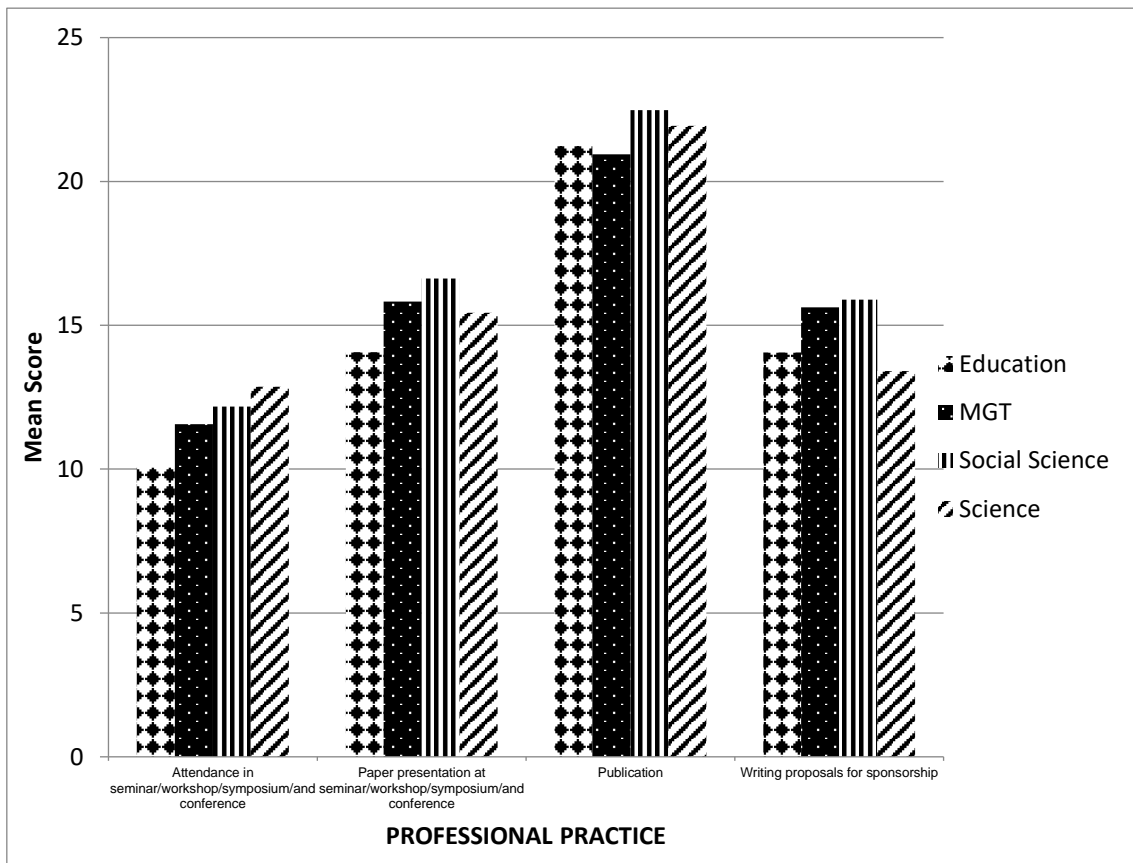
The population consisted of all academic staff in the four public universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States (namely University of Calabar, University of Cross River State (formally Cross River State University of Technology), University of Uyo and Akwa Ibom State University) numbering one thousand five hundred and ninety one (1,591). Through multistage sampling procedure, academics were sampled from four faculties in each of the universities (Education, Social science, Management science and Science). The sample size was five hundred and four (504) which distribution embraced all cadres of academic staff from Assistant lecturer to Professor. Data collection was through the use of self-administered questionnaire tagged “Lecturers Professional Practice Questionnaire” (LPPQ). The instrument was divided into two parts. Part one consisted of the demographic data of academic staff in terms of name of institution, faculty, rank among others. Part two was designed to elicit information on each of the sub-variables of research practices from academics of the four universities. The instrument consisted of seven-point scaling which was qualitatively rated as: more than five times (6 points), five times (5 points), four times (4 points), three times (3 points), twice (2 points), once (1 point), never (0 point).

The instrument’s face validity was established as a result of high level of agreement among experts (in Measurement and Evaluation, and Educational Psychology) consulted. The Cronbach alpha estimation yielded overall coefficient of 0.76 which indicated the reliability of the instrument for use in data collection. Data collection was done with the help of three doctoral students in the Department of Educational Foundations who also assisted in conveying the copies of the instrument. Administration and retrieval of instrument lasted for a period of one month. All the returned copies of the questionnaire were screened and coded. The completely filled questionnaires were subjected to data analysis. Statistical tools employed for data analyses include bar chart, mean, standard deviation and population t-test.

**Presentation of results**

**Research question one:** What proportion of academic staff in both Akwa Ibom and Cross River State universities were involved in professional practice?

As shown in Figure 1, the extent of involvement of academic staff in professional practices based on faculty rating, indicates that, for attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium/and conference, Sciences performed marginally higher from the mean scores than the rest in the following order: Sciences ( $\bar{x}=12.86\pm 1.98$ ), Social Science ( $\bar{x}= 12.18 \pm 1.98$ ), Management Science ( $\bar{x}=11.56\pm 1.98$ ) and Education ( $\bar{x}= 10.05\pm 1.98$ ).



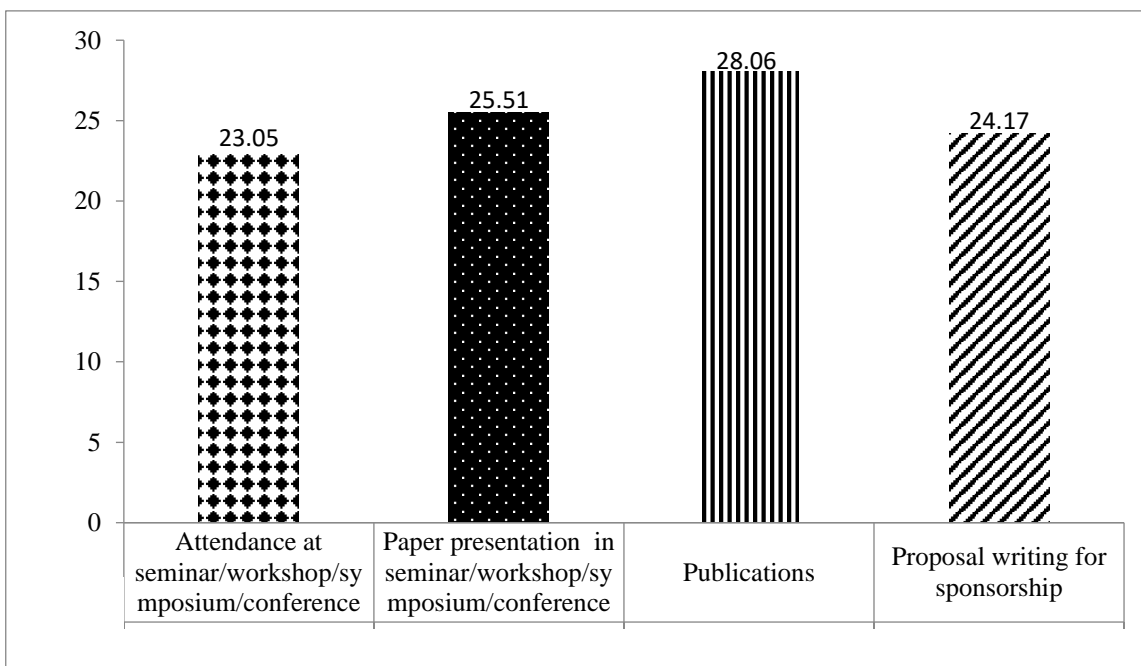
**Fig 1:** Proportion of academic staff in the universities, involved in professional practices in faculty

For Paper presentation, Social Science performed marginally higher than others in their mean scores. The mean scores for the faculties show Social Science ( $\bar{x}=16.62\pm 1.07$ ), Management Science ( $\bar{x}=15.82\pm 1.07$ ), Science ( $\bar{x}=15.44\pm 1.07$ ), and Education



( $\bar{x}=14.07\pm 1.07$ ). For Publications, the most involved faculty was also Social Science ( $\bar{x}=22.48\pm 0.69$ ), followed by Science ( $\bar{x}=21.93\pm 0.69$ ), Education ( $\bar{x}=21.23\pm 0.69$ ) and Management Science as the least with the mean value of  $20.94\pm 0.69$ . The lecturers in Faculty of Social Science ranked highest in Proposal writing for sponsorship ( $\bar{x}=15.89\pm 1.20$ ). This was followed by Management Science ( $\bar{x}=15.62\pm 1.20$ ), Education ( $\bar{x}=14.06\pm 1.20$ ), and Science as the least with a mean of  $13.41\pm 1.20$ .

**Research question two:** What is the dominant professional practice of the academic staff of the universities?



**Fig 2:** Proportion of academics staff in the universities, involved in professional practices

The results in fig 2 indicate that the most dominant professional practice among academic staff in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States is Publications ( $\bar{x}=28.06\pm 7.64$ ). This was followed by Paper presentations at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference ( $\bar{x}=25.51\pm 9.13$ ); Proposal writing for sponsorship ( $\bar{x}=24.17\pm 7.13$ ); and the least is Attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference ( $\bar{x}=23.05\pm 6.15$ ).

**Ho1:** Professional practice in terms of attendance at seminar, workshop, symposium and conference, paper presentation, publication and proposal writing for sponsorship by academic staff of universities of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States are not significantly high.

**Table 1:** Summary of population t-test result of research practices of academic staff in universities in Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State (n= 504)

SN	Variables		$\bar{x}$	$\mu$	SD	t-value	Df	p-level
1.	Attendance seminar/workshop/symposium/conference	at	23.05	21.00	6.15	65.35*	503	.000
2.	Paper presentation seminar/workshop/symposium/conference	in	25.51	15.00	9.13	70.00*	503	.000
3.	Publications		28.06	15.00	7.64	68.47*	503	.000
4.	Proposal writing for sponsorship		24.17	12.00	7.13	65.41*	503	.000
5.	Overall research practices		25.20	15.75	9.51	67.31*	503	.000

\*  $p < .05$ , df (524), t-critical = 1.96

From Table 1, attendance at seminar/workshop, symposium and conference is found to be significantly high ( $t=65.35$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); paper presentation in seminar/workshop/symposium and conference is significantly high ( $t=70.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); publication is significantly high ( $t=68.47$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); writing of proposals for sponsorship is significantly high ( $t=65.41$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); and overall professional practice is also significantly high ( $t=67.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the professional practice of lecturers in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States is significantly high. According to their mean values, publication ranks first (28.06), followed by paper presentation (25.51), proposal writing for sponsorship (24.17) and the least mean score being attendance (23.05).

### **Discussion of the findings and implications for sustainable national development**

The findings of this study showed that academic staff of universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States have engaged in high level of professional practice like publication, paper presentation at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference, attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference, and writing research proposal for sponsorship. This has implication for national development. This finding shows that these professional activities could be avenues for brainstorming on policy issues of concern which could yield solutions to some of society's problems.

Paper presentation: Many lecturers perceive this practice as an exercise for promotion; the result therefore, is not a surprise. However, its relevance to the developmental needs (SDGs) of the Nigerian society still leaves much to be desired.

Proposal writing: Disappointingly, this activity happens to be one of the least perceived activities among lecturers, whereas this is a practice that should spur action research with its attendant innovations and development. If society is benefiting from the research output of universities, they will be motivated to sponsor proposals for research, knowing that the end solution could come out from their activities.

From the results, publication is the most dominant professional practice (fig 1). This is quite revealing and underscores the 'publish or perish' syndrome propagated by academics, which could be linked to the need for publication as a major criterion for academic staff promotion. This result also shows the level of dissemination of information from research findings. The implication of these is that there should be collaboration of

local organizing committee (LOC) members with stakeholders directly involved in the consumption of research findings from the University. On the other hand, paper presentation which ranked second could be due to the negative attitude towards conference attendance, thus, academics miss the knowledge from shared innovations that could arise from the critique of their papers during presentation. However, this position indicates that academics' effort to present papers at conferences is not relatively poor. Proposal writing ranked third. This result underscores the poor motivation or sponsorship of grant proposals presented by academics. The reason for the poor sponsorship as explained by some authors is that some proposals are not aligned with current themes and sustainable development goals of the global society. Much needs to be done in this area.

Attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium and conference ranked least. This result could be attributed to the popular complaint of academics about inadequate funding for logistics, registration, attendance, and participation, which are basic for any conference. The recent change in the psycho-socio-economic and political settings prompted by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic is a factor that cannot be downplayed as issues of poor attendance to conferences are raised.

These findings are contrary to the reports of Altshuler (1999), Tetty (2006), Bassey *et al.* (2007), Burns and Sinfield (2008), ESF Research Conference (2008), Akuegwu *et al.* (2013), Fatoki and Opeolu (2015), Okon (2016), Andries and Astrid (2019) who claimed that enhancement in educational practice and professional development of academics come majorly through attendance to academic meetings. Bassey *et al.* (2007) carried out a study on academic research productivity of lecturers in South-South Nigeria and found that academics in this area have performed well with respect to professional practices of attending conferences, seminars, workshops and publication. Andries and Astrid (2019) found that workshop attendance which is an important mode of learning was highest among managers and professionals in contrast to their participation in training. Conference attendance along with paper presentation is a practice that affords an academic a wider exposure to acquire requisite knowledge in other areas within his discipline (Idika, 2016). And acquiring state-of-the-art knowledge through increased attendance to academic and professional meetings could facilitate further innovations with development.

However, the results of this study agree with the position of Okpe *et al.* (2013), Ochai and Nedosa (1998), Downes (2003) and Idika (2016) who reported that attendance at seminars and conferences were at low ebb in some universities. Some have stayed back from attending academic meetings for fear that they would meet with wasteful and painful experiences (Ochai & Nedosa, 1998; Downes, 2003). This has caused some academic staff to resort to relying on online publishing and sending their papers rather than attend academic meetings for academic replenishment and development. Similarly, Okpe *et al.*, Akuegwu (2013), and Idika's (2016) rating of publication as the leading research practice in Nigeria is further indication that most academic staff in the area of study preferred to send their papers for publication rather than attending seminars and conferences. The

present study has not rated attendance higher than publication. So much attention however, needs to be paid to this activity if it must contribute its quota to the desired innovations for national development. Without attendance and effort in staff training, the academic staff can stagnate and the relevance which they impart on the university and society may diminish (Altshuler, 1999; Fourie, 2004; Tetty, 2006; Burns & Sinfield, 2008).

The relatively high involvement of academic staff in publications is not surprising as it is a vital practice by which every academic staff necessarily contributes new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge and without which professional advancement of the lecturer is not facilitated. The question is to what extent is this in terms of impact on national development? There should be a way that published works should inform policy and made relevant to the development of the economy at all levels. Lecturers' activities or output should be laden with solution to problems of society. To this end, researches should be action based for practical application so that through this, national development could be engendered. Besides, the articles of lecturers for publication are expected to be referred by stakeholders in the Nigerian society and the global community; this is viewed as the only way the research activities of the academics as problem-solving venture can be established.

Publication seen as a dominant practice among lecturers has some implication for self-growth and national development. For example, Fatoki and Opeolu (2015a) claimed in agreement that publication that brings visibility and relevance to the academics and the university are the ones done in journals with high impact factor. Chiemekwe, Longe and Shaib (2009) reported among others, that research publication from Nigerian academics in the journals accounted for only 39.1% of the total number of publications in the journal for the six year study period. The study attributed the low research output and ineffectiveness among academics in Africa including Nigeria, to inadequate information resource, economic crisis, inability of Nigerian libraries to subscribe to current journal leading to lack of development in faculties and failure of staff to publish in reputable journals. Agreeing to the above, Alemma (1996) earlier posited that Nigerian academics are not able to meet international publication standard and therefore, have their manuscripts rejected because the skills to align their papers with international issues and problems are lacking.

The findings of this study in terms of relatively low paper presentation, also agrees with Basse et al, (2007) and Akuegwu (2013) that most lecturers' productivity are in publications rather than conference presentations. Altshuler (1999) and Downes (2003) had asserted that academics performing poorly in paper presentation in relation to publication are attitudinal noting the feeling with which presenters see the exercise as costly, wasteful and an experience not worthwhile; while others lack the boldness for public presentation. The present study opines that the authors of papers not presented may be afraid to be critiqued for lack of innovation. It is on this note that Altshuler (1999) and Fatoki and Opeolu (2015), called for lecturers to be encouraged and be informed on the

gains of conference paper presentation as it provides an excellent means of putting one's research on the front line. The implication of this is that if research practices are actually carried out for national development and the academics are sure that their output would be reckoned with, their negative attitude towards conference attendance and paper presentation may reverse. The expected change in attitude can generate the desired innovation in their research practices that can affect national development.

The findings of this study placed proposal writing for sponsorship as the third ranked exhibited professional practice among academic staff in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. These findings are not unexpected as writing award winning proposal demands the proposer's expertise in the whole process. This finding agrees with Tetty's (2006) report where respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support for research in their universities. As high as 65% and 76% respondents from Nigeria and Ghana expressed non-accessibility of grants sponsorship of proposals and conference travels; others expressed delays and lack of clarity regarding criteria for awarding grants. However, 93% of respondents in Botswana and other places indicated that they had access to sponsorship and conference grants as well as centres for academic development (Effah, 2003; Otisi, 2011; Fatoki & Opeolu, 2015b). Unanimously, the authors agree that the skill for this activity is inadequate and they noted that the enhancement of skills for grant proposal writing is boosted by academic staff's knowledge of some local, national and global strategic research themes on which funders often align their grant calls. This suggests that university research practices of affected universities should be made innovative by linking its search for problem-solving with issues that bother society in which they operate. Where access to sponsorship is guaranteed, academic staff could be more proactive in their problem-solving research practices.

From the findings above, the differences in the extent of involvement of lecturers as revealed by the performance of the different faculties where they work is negligible, implying that majority of the lecturers in these faculties are all involved in the research practices explored. Hoffman *et al.* (2008) found similarities across faculties in terms of graduate students' research practices. However, the study discovered that for paper presentation at seminar, workshop, symposium, conference, the faculties of education and science seemed to perform very low compared to others. This could be adduced to funding and study designs. Faculty of science also ranked least in performance with respect to research proposal writing for sponsorship. This could be explained by the stringent criteria involved in writing grant proposals, and also the stiff global competition for grants that limit their chances of getting grant awards. On the other hand, the Faculty of Science topped the ranking in performance with respect to attendance at seminar/workshop/symposium/conference, and in Publications. The motivation to work harder is driven by the mere knowledge that their research output is solution laden. Okpe *et al.* (2013) and Idika and Okri (2017) reported that lecturers should key into collaborative activities as a way of enhancing proposal writing capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

A major goal of the tertiary education in Nigeria for achieving the overall function of national development is research. Research is sine qua non to national development. An analysis of the pattern of development in the developed countries indicates a high premium on research. It can be seen that research has come to assume an indispensable practice among lecturers in many nations' universities including Nigeria. This report recommends that lecturers around the globe continue to align their research practices not for promotion alone but also for practical application in solving some of the problems plaguing the world in general, and the Nigerian society in particular.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) To boost innovative research for sustainable development, staff should be encouraged to attend and fully participate in academic and professional meetings that will help to promote and sustain their publication and research grant proposal writing activities.
- 2) For policy reasons there is need to create stronger link between local organizing committee (LOC) members of various conferences and the stakeholders consuming the research findings.

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