

## ***Lecturers' Perception on Automation of Promotion Exercises in Universities***

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### **Abstract**

*The study was designed to examine lecturers' perception on automation of promotion exercises in universities in South- South Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 300 lecturers of different genders, academic ranks and years of teaching experience. It was guided by four research questions and three hypotheses. Perception of Academics on the Use of Automation for Promotion Questionnaire (PAUAPQ) was used to gather data. The instrument was validated by three research experts from two universities, while reliability coefficient of 0.86 was established through Cronbach Alpha statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using t-test and one way ANOVA. Results revealed that academic staff are dissatisfied with the automation of their promotion exercises. In addition, gender and rank of the academics do no significantly influence their satisfaction with regards to the automation of their promotion assessment, while years of teaching experience do. It was recommended, among others, that the university should design programmes focusing on automation literacy, regardless of gender and rank, to enhance the academics comfort with technology.*

**Keywords:** automation, perception, assessment, promotion, universities.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria, like other countries of the world, recognizes education as the major instrument for effecting national development. It is regarded as a catalyst and a means of achieving growth and development. This is because the political, socio-economic and technological advancement of any nation depends greatly on its educational system. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013), education is recognized as an instrument par excellence for achieving growth, progress and national development. This, therefore, underscores the value being placed on quality and standards which encompass quality learning, resource inputs, instructional process, effective management, monitoring and evaluation as well as manpower capacity development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The educational enterprise involves development of human intellect, technical skills, character and effective citizenship. Consequently, the issue of proper management of education has become a matter of concern for the government, educational institutions and other stakeholders in order to meet expectations of the society (Ayeni cited in Asim & Nwogwugwu, 2024). The quest for improvement in education service delivery necessitated the need for staff development in the education sector and one such staff incentive is staff promotion.

Promotion is one of the important ways through which academics' contributions to teaching, research and services can be recognized and rewarded. Many researchers have asserted that the most attractive reward perceived by the academics is promotion, which improves their objective and performance, and has significant effect on their job satisfaction (Salmuni et al., 2007; Santhapparaji & Alam, 2005). In line with this view, Ukoette et al. (2024) recently asserted that promotion is a way of igniting or rewarding a lecturer in a positive manner for their strenuous efforts and good services rendered in the dispatch of his/her duty.

Promotion plays a very crucial role in the growth and life of academics. On this, Kumar and Kannappa (2016) opined that academic growth is linked with work benefits like salary, promotion, professional growth, and their monetary benefits. Also, other benefits of promotion to academics include change of position from lower to higher, preparing them for epic position, enhancing their motivation for adequate performance and offering them employment away from their current institutions (Ansah, 2017; Nelson, 2018; Ovat et al., 2024).

In most Nigerian universities, lecturers desiring promotion from one rank to another are expected to submit photocopies (hardcopies) of their required promotion documents to various levels, for appraisal. These levels are the Department, the Faculty and Central Appointments, and Promotion Committee as well as external assessors. The submission of these hardcopies of promotion requirements has always been a burden to academics.

These burdens, as observed by the researchers, include the following:

- ✓ money spent on photocopying
- ✓ stress of moving all the journals that they published their articles from one level of promotion procedures to the other
- ✓ missing of some or all their journal articles in transit during the promotion exercise
- ✓ trauma as a result of calls when there is a missing document needed for the promotion.

The academic promotion process in Nigerian universities has traditionally been a complex and often opaque mechanism. However, with the introduction of technology, there has been a substantial shift towards digitizing these processes. This transformation promises not only to streamline operations but also to enhance fairness, accountability, and accessibility in promotion exercises. To this end, Adetunji (2019) emphasized that leveraging technology in academic administration can mitigate bias and enhance decision-making processes in promotion.

The integration of digital platforms enables academic staff to submit their promotion applications online, greatly enhancing the efficiency of the process. Many universities in Nigeria have adopted Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Human Resource

Management Systems (HRMS) to facilitate these applications. As noted by Ojo (2020), these systems allow for real-time tracking of applications and provide a transparent mechanism for reviewers to access relevant documents. This means that data plays a vital role in academic staff promotion exercise. Data analytics play an essential role in evaluating candidates' performance based on quantifiable metrics such as research publications, citations, and teaching evaluations. Traditional methods often relied on subjective interpretations, which could lead to biases. However, with technology, metrics can be standardized, promoting a merit-based evaluation process (Ibrahim & Adedeji, 2022). This shift is crucial in ensuring that deserving candidates are recognized for their contributions, as emphasized by Uche (2021).

**Some benefits of technology driven promotion exercises include:**

- **Transparency enhancement:** Technology fosters transparency in the promotion process. By providing clear guidelines and accessible data on performance metrics, stakeholders can understand the criteria for evaluation and the outcomes more transparently (Nwosu et al., 2022). For instance, in Ogundipe et al., cited in Nwogwugwu et al. (2016) opined that the criteria and results of promotion exercises help demystify the process.
- **Improved efficiency:** Automation of administrative tasks associated with promotions minimizes delays that can occur due to bureaucratic procedures. Reports generated via digital systems can be produced quickly, reducing the time taken from application to decision (Balogun, 2021). This efficiency is vital for both faculty morale and institutional reputation.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Implementing technology-driven solutions can lead to significant cost savings for universities. By reducing reliance on paper-based systems, institutions can save on printing and storage costs, while also minimizing the physical infrastructure required for administration (Ogunleye, 2023). These savings can be reallocated to other essential areas within the educational institution.

In spite of the benefits of technology driven assessment for promotion, some challenges do exist with regards to implementation in Nigerian universities. For instance, resistance to change is one of the significant challenges faced in the adoption of technology-driven promotion procedures. Many faculty members are accustomed to traditional methods and may be skeptical of new systems (Oyetunde et al., 2023). It is essential to engage stakeholders throughout the implementation process to gain their buy-in and ensure that concerns are addressed. Another concern is the digital divide. The disparity in access to technology across different regions and institutions can hinder the equitable implementation of technology-driven promotion exercises. Some universities may lack the infrastructure or technical expertise necessary to support advanced systems, leading to inequitable practices within the academic community (Akinola, 2022; Nwogwugwu et al., 2024).

In addition to the challenges stated, data security is yet another concern in the implementation of technology driven assessment for promotion. The digitization of sensitive data raises concerns regarding privacy and data security. Institutions must ensure that robust cyber security measures are in place to protect academic staff's personal information and achievements from unauthorized access or breaches (Lawal, 2021). Nonetheless, technology-driven promotion exercises hold significant promise for improving the transparency, efficiency, and fairness of academic promotions in Nigerian universities. While challenges such as resistance to change and digital divide are present, proactive measures can mitigate these issues. Embracing these

technological advancements is crucial for fostering a more equitable and merit-based academic environment.

However, in spite of the discussed benefits of automation of promotion assessment, diverse perceptions still exist among the academics from universities in south-south region of Nigeria. Some staff interviewed by the researchers expressed some degree of worry and concern about the entire process, while some others wished that the promotion exercise should be automated. Yet very few others were neutral in their opinion concerning the adoption of automation in the promotion assessment. Thus, with variant academics' perceptions concerning automation of their promotion exercise, there is the need to investigate and ascertain the stand of the majority on this process. All the empirical literature found were on academics and promotional policies, criteria, processes, professional development, and none was on automation of university academics' promotion in Nigeria and in Africa. It is against this background that this study was conducted.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the perception of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?
2. What is the influence of gender on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?
3. What is the influence of rank on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?
4. What is the influence of years of teaching experience on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Gender of academic staff does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Ho2:** Rank of academic staff does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Ho3:** Years of teaching experience of academic staff do not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

### **Methodology**

The survey research design was employed for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the academics in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Stratified random sampling technique was used to divide the population into strata (universities), while simple random sampling technique was used to choose lecturers from each stratum. The sample consisted of 300 academics of different gender (male-1 and female-2), academic ranks (assistant lecturers to lecturers I-1, senior lecturers-2, readers and professors-3) and years of teaching experience (1 to 10 years-1, 11 to 20 years-2, 21 to 30 years-3 and 31 years and above-4) from the selected public universities in South-South Nigeria.

The data for this study was collected using an instrument titled: Perception of Academics in the Use of Automation for Promotion Questionnaire (PAUAPQ) developed by the researchers. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A is for personal data, while section B contains 14 items, using four scales of Very Satisfied (VS) =4 points, Satisfied (S) = 3 points, Dissatisfied (D) = 2 points and Very Dissatisfied (VD) = 1 point, in which the respondents

were requested to indicate their level of satisfaction. The minimum score obtainable from the instrument was 14 while the maximum score obtainable was 56.

The instrument was validated by three research experts from the University of Calabar and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. A reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.86$  was established through Cronbach Alpha statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test for gender and ANOVA for academic rank and years of teaching experiences, at .05 level of significance.

## Presentation of results

**Research question 1:** What is the perception of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings and standard deviation on the perception of academic staff on automation of promotion exercises

SN	Items			
1	Promotion requirements in the university.	3.33	1.28	Satisfied
2	Automation of promotion exercises in the university.	1.24	2.59	Not Satisfied
3	The university's automation of promotion is fair and equitable.	2.66	1.13	Satisfied
4	The university's automation of promotion provides opportunities for career development.	3.12	1.82	Satisfied
5	Promotion exercises in the university are made easier by automation.	2.81	1.54	Satisfied
6	Automation of promotion still involves use of paperwork in the university	2.18	1.13	Not Satisfied
7	There is stagnation in promotion due to automation.	2.36	1.38	Not Satisfied
8	Cost of promotion exercise has reduced significantly due to automation.	2.66	1.31	Satisfied
9	Automation reduces the time used in promotion exercise of academic staff.	3.23	1.13	Satisfied
10	Automation of promotion exercises increases staff motivation to work.	3.01	1.54	Satisfied
11	The automation of staff promotion exercise is profoundly frustrating.	1.47	1.57	Not Satisfied
12	Automation of promotion exercise is difficult to computer illiterate academic staff.	2.14	1.54	Not Satisfied
13	Automation of promotion has brought about less paperwork both on the part of management and staff.	2.36	1.32	Not Satisfied
14	My promotion on the current job is satisfactory due to automation.	2.14	1.45	Not Satisfied
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.48</b>		<b>Not Satisfied</b>

**Note:** N = 300; Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 1, revealed that seven out of 14 items recorded satisfaction on the part of academic staff (lecturers) and an equal number also denoted dissatisfaction among academic staff. Furthermore, the grand mean was found to be 2.48 which is slightly lower than the criterion

mean of 2.50 (threshold mean). This implies that the perceptions of academic staff towards automation of promotion exercises are considered not satisfactory by academic staff of the various universities in South-South Nigeria.

**Research question 2:** What is the influence of gender on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?

**Ho1:** Gender of academic staff does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Table 2:** Summary of t-test analysis on the influence of gender on academic staff's satisfaction with automated promotion assessment

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.	Decision
Satisfaction scores	Male	186	29.02	6.333	.621	298	.535	Not Significant
	Female	114	28.55	6.177				

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of male and female academics on the issue of whether they are satisfied with the automation of promotion assessment in their various universities. The mean values were almost the same but for fractional differences, which is an indication that gender does not influence academic staff's satisfaction with automated promotion assessment. On further statistical analysis the  $t_{(298)} = .621$ ,  $p > .05$  level of significance, hence not significant. Thus, the stated null hypothesis 1 is accepted. That is to say that gender of academics does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Research question 3:** What is the influence of rank on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?

**Ho2.** Rank of academic staff does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Table 3:** Summary of ANOVA analysis on the influence of rank on academic staff's satisfaction with automated promotion assessment

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Assistant Lecturers to Lecturer 1	75	28.36	6.290
Senior Lecturers	171	28.74	6.101
Readers and Professors	54	29.83	6.757
Total	300	28.84	6.268

  

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	72.382	2	36.191	.921	.399	Not Significant
Within Groups	11673.938	297	39.306			
Total	11746.320	299				

Table 3 revealed that the calculated  $F_{(2, 297)} = .921$ ,  $p > .05$  level of significance. Hence, null hypothesis 2 is not rejected. This implies that rank of academic staff does not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment. That is to say that

irrespective of their rank, academics appears to have the same perception about automation of promotion assessment.

**Research question 4:** What is the influence of years of teaching experience on satisfaction of academic staff on automation of promotion assessment?

**Ho3:** Years of teaching experience of academic staff do not significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

**Table 4:** Summary of ANOVA analysis on the influence of years of teaching experience on academics' satisfaction with automated promotion assessment

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1 to 10 years	45	26.27	4.835
11 to 20 years	90	29.20	6.373
21 to 30 years	132	30.11	6.573
31 years and above	33	26.27	4.686
Total	300	28.84	6.268

  

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	741.279	3	247.093	6.646*	.000	Significant
Within Groups	11005.041	296	37.179			
Total	11746.320	299				

  

(I) Years of teaching experiences	(J) Years of teaching experiences	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	Decision
1 to 10 years	11 to 20 years	-2.933	.076	NS
	21 to 30 years	-3.847*	.004	Sig.
	31 years and above	-.006	1.000	NS
11 to 20 years	1 to 10 years	2.933	.076	NS
	21 to 30 years	-.914	.753	NS
	31 years and above	2.927	.137	NS
21 to 30 years	1 to 10 years	3.847*	.004	Sig.
	11 to 20 years	.914	.753	NS
	31 years and above	3.841*	.016	Sig.
31 years and above	1 to 10 years	.006	1.000	NS
	11 to 20 years	-2.927	.137	NS
	21 to 30 years	-3.841*	.016	Sig.

NS = Not Significant at .05 level of Significance

Table 4 shows that the various categories of years of teaching experience had different mean values, thus years of teaching experience of academics influence their satisfaction of the automation of their promotion assessment. On further analysis with one-way analysis of variance, the  $F_{(3, 296)} = 6.646$ ,  $p < .05$  level of significance. Therefore, the stated hypothesis three is rejected. This implies that years of teaching experience of academics do significantly influence their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment.

Consequently, a post hoc test was carried out to ascertain precisely where the differences actually lie. This was carried out through Scheffé test, and the following were the outcome. There was a significant difference between academics that taught for 1 to 10 years and those that taught for 21 to 30 years. Also, there was a significant difference between academics that taught for 21 to 30 years and those that taught for 31 years and above. A closer perusal of the results revealed that academics that taught for 21 to 30 years are more satisfied with automation of promotion assessment than other categories.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The study revealed that the perceptions of academic staff toward automation of promotion exercise is not satisfactory to the academic staff of the various universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that the expectations of the academics on the automation of promotion which includes streamlined operations, enhanced fairness, accountability, and accessibility in promotion exercise are yet to be achieved. In affirmation, Nwosu et al. (2022) asserted that for automation to foster transparency in the promotion process, it must provide clear guidelines and accessible data on performance metrics, so that stakeholders can understand the criteria for evaluation and the outcomes more transparently.

In addition, the findings of hypotheses one and two revealed that the perceptions of academic staff toward automation of promotion exercise do not differ based on gender and lecturers' ranks. The findings in hypothesis one negate the findings of Ukoette et al. (2024), who conducted a study on gender difference on lecturers' promotional policy on merit and found a significant difference on lecturers' gender. Hypothesis two findings agree with that of Nelson (2018), who examined the implementation of promotion policy in the university of Cape Coast, and found a non-significant influence of the lecturers' rank.

Furthermore, the findings of hypothesis three revealed that years of teaching experience of academics significantly influences their satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Nelson (2018), which indicated that knowledge about promotion criteria and procedure among lecturers varied based on the years of experience.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that academic staff are dissatisfied with automation of promotion exercises (assessments). In addition, gender and ranks of academics do not significantly influence the satisfaction of academic staff with regards to automation of promotion assessment. On the other hand, years of teaching experience do significantly influence academic staff's satisfaction with automation of promotion assessment in favour of academics that have taught for 21 to 30 years in the universities in South-South region of Nigeria.

## Recommendations

1. In view of the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following are recommended:
2. University authorities should endeavour to improve on automation of academic staff promotion assessment with a view of saving time and cost on the part of academic staff, which will in turn boost their satisfaction.
3. The university should design programmes focusing on automation literacy, regardless of gender and ranks to enhance academics' comfort with technology.
4. The university should offer targeted support to academics with varying years of teaching experience, addressing unique concerns and needs.
5. Future research can be done on exploring the impact of automation on academics' workload and productivity.

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