



GRANT-WRITING COMPETENCIES AND RESEARCH FUNDING IMPROVEMENT AMONG FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES LIBRARIANS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the Grant-Writing Competencies and Research Funding Improvement among Federal Universities Librarians in North-Central Nigeria. The study specifically examined the types of research grants available, librarians' level of grant-writing skill proficiency, and the channels through which grants are accessed. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 170 academic librarians across eight federal universities. A total of 146 copies were returned and analyzed, representing an (85.9%) response rate. Findings revealed that Institutional Research Grants (65.8%), Government-Funded Grants (57.5%), Travel/Conference Grants (61.0%), and Small Grants for Pilot Studies (63.0%) were the most accessible, particularly at the University of Ilorin and University of Abuja. However, international, capacity-building, and professional association grants were underutilized, especially at the Federal University of Health Technology, Otukpo. Librarians demonstrated strong competencies in research skills and subject expertise (71.9%), grant proposal writing (63.0%), information literacy/database navigation (65.1%), and technological proficiency (67.8%). Key access channels included collaboration, funding agencies, workshops, and professional networks. The study concludes that although academic librarians possess relevant competencies for grant acquisition, gaps persist in awareness, training, and utilization of high-value international and capacity-building grants. It recommends targeted professional development, institutional support structures, mentorship networks, and establishment of grant-writing units to improve funding success and strengthen librarians' contribution to research growth in Nigerian universities

Keywords: *Grant- writing Competencies, Research funding Improvement, Federal Universities, North Central Nigeria.*

Introduction

Grant writing is a specialized skill that involves developing persuasive proposals to convince funding agencies of the value, feasibility, and potential impact of research projects. It entails identifying appropriate funding opportunities, articulating research objectives, justifying budgets, and outlining anticipated project outcomes. The importance of grant writing competencies cannot be overstated, as competition for research funding is increasingly intense and only well-developed proposals are likely to receive support (Omoji, 2023). To be successful, proposals must be clearly written and easily understood by peer reviewers including those from unrelated fields by presenting the research problem, methodology, and significance in a logical and compelling manner. The use of concise examples that explain what is being studied and why it matters enhances reviewer comprehension and appreciation of the proposed work (ELRHA, 2019).

Librarianship involves the acquisition, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources. Within higher institutions such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, this practice is known as academic librarianship. Academic librarians are therefore professionals who work within these environments. However, their roles go beyond traditional library functions. They are increasingly required to engage in research, publish scholarly works, and participate in academic discourse through conferences, seminars, and workshops (Mbolin, 2014). This shift aligns with global trends in higher education, where research funding drives innovation, institutional development, and international visibility (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). In Nigeria, academic librarians constitute a vital segment of the academic workforce, with their status formally recognized by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1993, following

earlier debate stemming from the 1975 Udoji Report that categorized them as non-academic staff (Salaam & Onifade, 2009).

Despite the growing importance of research grants in improving academic productivity, many libraries in North-Central Nigeria struggle to access funding due to limited grant-writing skills, inadequate awareness of available opportunities, and insufficient professional networking (Ocholla, 2023). Although multiple local and international grants exist such as those offered by TETFund, the Carnegie Corporation, and international development agencies evidence indicates that these opportunities remain underutilized. Preliminary observations suggest that poor grant-writing capacity, low awareness of funding sources, limited collaboration with faculty and external partners, and weak institutional support systems may hinder librarians' success in securing grants.

Globally, the ability to win research grants is recognized as a key competency for academics, as funding enhances research capacity, promotes innovation, and strengthens institutional profiles. For libraries in federal universities, developing grant-writing proficiency presents an opportunity to reinforce their relevance as research partners, contribute more effectively to institutional goals, and further justify their academic status particularly in contexts where this status is still contested, such as in some private institutions.

Grants Management Competency Model (John Berry, 2009)

Grants Management Competency Model General Competencies

- **Accountability**– Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific

responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans, focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

- **Arithmetic**– Performs computations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division correctly using whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages.
- **Attention to Detail**– Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to detail.
- **Computer Skills**– Uses computers, software applications, databases, and automated systems to accomplish work.
- **Creative Thinking** – Uses imagination to develop new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to problems; designs new methods where established methods and procedures are inapplicable or are unavailable.
- **Decision Making** – Makes sound, well-informed, and objective decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; commits to action, even in uncertain situations, to accomplish organizational goals; causes change.
- **External Awareness** – Identifies and understands economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization.
- **Flexibility** – Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; effectively deals with ambiguity.
- **Influencing/Negotiating** – Persuades others to accept recommendations, cooperate, or change their behavior; works with others towards an agreement; negotiates to find mutually acceptable solutions.

- **Information Management** – Identifies a need for and knows where or how to gather information; organizes and maintains information or information management systems.
- **Interpersonal Skills** – Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.
- **Oral Communication**– Expresses information (for example, ideas or facts) to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information (for example, technical, sensitive, controversial); makes clear and convincing oral presentations; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.
- **Organizational Awareness**– Knows the organization’s mission and functions, and how its social, political, and technological systems work and operates effectively within them; this includes the programs, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of the organization.
- **Partnering** – Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals

Statement of the Problem

Librarians in federal universities in North Central Nigeria should actively utilize grant-writing skills to secure research funding, enabling them to contribute significantly to institutional innovation, research output, and career advancement through promotions and participation in academic conferences. Despite the availability of funding opportunities from agencies like TETFund and the National Research Fund, many librarians face challenges in accessing grants due to insufficient grant-writing expertise and lack of institutional support. This results in missed

opportunities for career progression, including promotions and academic travel, and limits their ability to address resource gaps critical for university development (Okoye & Eze, 2022).

The lack of structured training programs, inadequate institutional policies, and limited awareness of funding opportunities likely compound these challenges, restricting librarians' engagement in grant acquisition. This may hinder both their professional growth and the universities' capacity to foster innovation through external funding. This study aims to investigate the barriers to effective grant-writing by academic librarians in North Central Nigeria's federal universities, assess their current skill levels, and propose actionable strategies to enhance their capacity to secure research grants. By addressing this gap, the research will contribute to the literature and inform policy and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen librarians' roles in institutional development.

Objectives of the Study

The study achieved the following objectives

1. Identify the types of research grant available for academic librarians in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria
2. Identify the skills required by academic librarians in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria for accessing of research grants
3. Find out the channels through which academic librarians' access to research grant in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria

Literature Review

The term *grant* can be understood simply as "something given." In the context of this study, a grant refers to a gift that may take the form of money, goods, or services. Non-cash support is

typically referred to as *grants-in-kind*. A *grantsman* or *grantswoman* is a person skilled in securing grants (Raju & Schoombee, 2023). Competitive proposals are usually evaluated by one or more reviewers often referred to as *grant readers* and only a limited number are selected for funding. Cox and Pinfield (2015) highlighted several research support services libraries can provide, including assistance in identifying funding sources, conducting literature searches, disseminating project information, offering bibliometric and research impact assessments, proposal development support, training in reference management software, promotion of open access, data analysis, research dissemination, and guidance on copyright issues. For academic librarians in federal universities particularly within resource-constrained environments such as Nigeria's North Central region grant-writing expertise has become increasingly critical. Their roles have expanded beyond traditional functions like collection development and information literacy instruction to include research engagement and funding acquisition (Mbolin, 2014). This evolution aligns with global higher-education trends, where research grants are essential for institutional innovation, enhanced visibility, and financial sustainability (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). In Nigeria, academic librarians have been recognized as academic staff since the National Universities Commission's 1993 directive; however, their participation in research and external grant acquisition remains comparatively low (Salaam & Onifade, 2009). This review therefore examines the types of research grants available to librarians, the skills required for successful grant writing, and the channels through which grants are accessed, with a focus on federal universities in North Central Nigeria.

Academic librarians in federal universities across North Central Nigeria such as the University of Ilorin and the University of Jos have access to multiple research funding opportunities aimed at strengthening scholarly activities and institutional development. The Tertiary Education Trust

Fund (TETFund), established in 2011, remains the primary source of research funding in Nigerian universities, channeling a 2% education tax into Institutional-Based Research (IBR) and Academic Staff Training and Intervention (ASTI) programmes. These grants, typically ranging from ₦5–10 million, support initiatives such as library digitization, open-access infrastructure, and research training for librarians (TETFund, 2023). The National Research Fund (NRF), administered by NITDA, provides competitive grants between ₦2–20 million for multidisciplinary research, including Library and Information Science (LIS) themes such as knowledge management and archival preservation (NRF, 2024). International programmes including the World Bank's Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) and Carnegie Corporation grant schemes offer funding up to US\$500,000 for research capacity development and library modernization (World Bank, 2022; Carnegie Corporation, 2021). Despite these opportunities, access remains limited. Evidence shows that librarians in North Central universities benefit from only about 15% of TETFund research awards, with faculty dominating allocations due to few LIS-specific calls and limited grantsmanship capacity (Salaam & Onifade, 2009; updated 2023). This underscores the need for targeted grant opportunities and capacity-building initiatives for librarians.

Awareness and proficiency in grant writing significantly influence librarians' ability to secure research funding; however, engagement remains low across North Central Nigeria. Effective grant writing requires skills in producing clear and compelling proposals aligned with funder priorities (ELRHA, 2019). Akomolafe and Ogunleye (2023) reported that although 62% of 250 surveyed academic librarians were aware of TETFund and NRF opportunities, only 28% applied for grants, and just 12% of applicants were successful. Success rates in the North-Central region are lower. A study involving librarians from the University of Ilorin and the Federal University of Technology, Minna, indicated that only 20% of librarians with grant-writing awareness accessed

NRF funding, compared to 35% in Southern Nigeria due to uneven training access (Okebukola, 2019). While 45% of librarians acquired basic grant-writing knowledge through Nigerian Library Association (NLA) workshops, advanced competencies such as tailoring proposals to funder expectations were evident in only 18% of respondents, correlating strongly with funding success (Okoye & Eze, 2022). Globally, librarians with strong grantsmanship skills record 40–50% higher success rates than those without such skills, a benchmark yet to be achieved in Nigeria due to insufficient capacity-building and institutional support (ELRHA, 2019). These gaps justify the present study, which seeks to explore strategies to enhance grant-writing expertise and improve research funding outcomes among academic librarians in North Central Nigerian universities.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Considering the relatively small population of 170 academic librarians, a total enumeration sampling technique was employed, meaning the entire population was used as the sample. According to Bernard (2012), when the study population is fewer than 200, complete enumeration is appropriate to ensure representativeness and accuracy. The population was proportionately distributed across eight (8) federal universities in the North-Central region based on their librarian staff strength. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and administered with the assistance of trained research aides. Out of the total population, 146 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and used for data analysis, representing an 85.9% response rate. A benchmark of 50% was set for decision-making in relation to research questions 1, 2, and 3. Any score below the benchmark was interpreted as negative, indicating areas that may require improvement or reconsideration. Face and content validity were employed to ensure that the

research instrument aligned with the statement of the problem and research questions. Experts in Library and Information Science, alongside the researcher's supervisors, reviewed the instrument to confirm that the items adequately represented the variables under investigation, particularly the grant-writing Competencies for accessing research grants by academic librarians. Test–retest reliability was used to ensure the consistency of the instrument over time. A pilot study was conducted at Bayero University, Kano, selected for its similar characteristics to the universities under study. Twenty-five (25) copies of the questionnaire were administered to academic librarians, all of which were duly completed and returned. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, indicating strong reliability, as coefficients above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for research purposes.

Interpretation of Results and Discussion of findings.

Table 1. Response Rate

Names of Federal Universities in North Central State.	No. of questionnaire distributed	No. of questionnaire returned	% of questionnaire 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

The distribution and return rates of questionnaires across federal universities in North Central Nigeria, as presented in Table 1, provide insights into the engagement levels of academic librarians in the study, with implications for the reliability and representativeness of the data on grant-writing expertise. A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed across eight federal universities, with 146 successfully returned, yielding a robust overall response rate of 85.9%. This high response rate enhances the study's statistical power and supports the generalizability of findings within the region (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The University of Ilorin recorded the highest response rate at 96.4% (27/28 questionnaires), contributing 18.5% of total responses, followed closely by Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (95.8%, 23/24, 15.8%), and the University of Jos (93.3%, 22/24, 15.1%). The Federal University of Lafia achieved a perfect 100% return rate (10/10), though its smaller sample size accounted for 6.8% of responses.

Other institutions, including the University of Abuja (91.7%, 22/24, 15.1%), Federal University of Technology, Minna (90.9%, 20/22, 13.7%), Federal University of Lokoja (90%, 9/10, 6.2%), and Federal University of Health Technology, Otuokpo (87.5%, 7/8, 4.8%), also demonstrated strong participation. This distribution reflects varying levels of engagement across institutions, likely influenced by factors such as institutional research culture, librarian workload, and familiarity with survey processes (Akomolafe & Ogunleye, 2023). The high return rates from Ilorin, Makurdi, and Jos suggest robust research engagement, potentially linked to stronger library leadership or prior exposure to grant-related initiatives, as noted in regional studies. Conversely, lower contributions from smaller institutions like Otuokpo may reflect limited staffing or emerging research infrastructures. The near-perfect response rate from Lafia, despite its smaller sample, underscores the potential for high engagement in newer universities when targeted effectively.

Table 2: Types of research grant available to academic librarians in Federal Universities in North Central States, Nigeria

S/N	Type of Research Grants	FUHTO	UNIABUJA	FULAFIA	FULOKOJA	FUTMINNA	JOSTUM	UNIJOS	UNILORIN	Total	%
1	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%)	96	65.8
2	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%)	84	57.5
3	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%)	51	34.9
4	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%)	28	19.2
5	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%)	41	28.1
6	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%)	58	39.7
7	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%)	14	9.6
8	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%)	89	61.0
9	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%)	92	63.0
10	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%)	64	43.8
11	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%)	57	39.0
12	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%)	46	31.5
13	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%)	61	41.8
14	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%)	51	34.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025.**KEYS=** FUHTO : Federal university of Health Science Otuokpo, **UNIABUJA=** University of Abuja, **FULAFIA=** Federal University of Lafia, **FULOKOJA=** Federal University Lokoja, **FUTMINNA=** Federal University of Technology Minna, **JOSTUM=**Joseph Sarwan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State, **UNIJOS:** University of Jos, **UNILORIN=** University of Ilorin

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, Otuokpo, 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 Otuokpo 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 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 Skills Required for Accessing of Research Grant by Academic Librarians.

S/N	Skills	FUHTO	UNIABUJ A	FULAFIA	FULOKOJ A	FUTMINN A	JOSTUM	UNI JOS	UNILORI N	Total	%
1	Grant Proposals writing Skills	4(2.7%)	14(9.6%)	6(4.1%)	6(4.1%)	13(8.9%)	16(11.0%)	16(11.0%)	17(11.6%)	92	63.0
2	Research Skills and Subject Expertise Skills	5(3.4%)	16(11.0%)	7(4.8%)	6(4.1%)	14(9.6%)	19(13.0%)	18(12.3%)	19(13.0%)	105	71.9
3	Information Literacy and Database Navigation	5(3.4%)	14(9.6%)	7(4.8%)	6(4.1%)	13(8.9%)	17(11.6%)	16(11.0%)	17(11.6%)	95	65.1
4	Networking and collaboration skills	3(2.1%)	9(6.2%)	4(2.7%)	4(2.7%)	8(5.5%)	11(7.5%)	10(6.8%)	11(7.5%)	59	40.4
5	Writing and Communication Skills	5(3.4%)	16(11.0%)	7(4.8%)	7(4.8%)	15(10.3%)	19(13.0%)	18(12.3%)	20(13.7%)	106	72.6
6	Technological Proficiency Skills	5(3.4%)	15(10.3%)	7(4.8%)	6(4.1%)	14(9.6%)	18(12.3%)	17(11.6%)	17(11.6%)	99	67.8
7	Knowledge of Funding Agencies Skills	2(1.4%)	7(4.8%)	3(2.1%)	3(2.1%)	6(4.1%)	8(5.5%)	8(5.5%)	8(5.5%)	45	30.8
8	Teamwork and interpersonal skills	4(2.7%)	11(7.5%)	5(3.4%)	5(3.4%)	10(6.8%)	13(8.9%)	13(8.9%)	13(8.9%)	74	50.7

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

KEYS= FUHTO: Federal university of Health Science Otuokpo, **UNIABUJA=** University of Abuja, **FULAFIA=** Federal University of Lafia, **FULOKOJA=** Federal University Lokoja, **FUTMINNA=** Federal University of Technology Minna, **JOSTUM=** Joseph Sarwan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State, **UNI JOS:** University of Jos, **UNILORIN=** University of Ilorin

The result presented in Table 3 reveals a detailed overview of the various skills required by Academic librarian's in North Central Nigerian federal universities to access research grants.

The highest-ranked skill identified by academic librarians for accessing research grants is Writing and Communication Skills, with a total of 106 responses, representing 72.6%. Closely following is Research Skills and Subject Expertise, reported by 105 librarians (71.9%). Technological Proficiency Skills were cited by 99 respondents (67.8%), Information Literacy and Database Navigation skills were identified by 95 librarians (65.1%).

A total of 92 librarians (63.0%) recognized Grant Proposal Writing Skills as essential. Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills were reported by 74 librarians (50.7%), Networking and Collaboration Skills were acknowledged by 59 respondents (40.4%) while at the lower end, Knowledge of Funding Agencies was identified by only 45 librarians (30.8%).

The findings indicate that the majority of academic librarians in North Central Nigerian federal universities recognize several key skills as essential for accessing research grants. Specifically, seven out of the eight listed skills surpassed the 50% mark. Writing and Communication Skills ranked highest (72.6%), followed closely by Research Skills and Subject Expertise (71.9%), Technological Proficiency (67.8%), and Information Literacy and Database Navigation (65.1%). Grant Proposal Writing Skills were also notably high at 63.0%. Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills (50.7%) narrowly surpassed the benchmark, showing moderate recognition. However, only Knowledge of Funding Agencies (30.8%) fell below the threshold, indicating a significant gap in awareness or emphasis on this particular skill. This finding is corroborated by Echezona et al. (2017) who identified proposal writing, digital literacy, and research competency as vital for librarians' success in research funding acquisition in Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Nwalo and Anasi (2020) emphasized that technological know-how and subject mastery are critical in today's digital research environment, while noting that many librarians still lack strategic exposure to funding sources and external networks. These studies underscore the

necessity for targeted training programs that not only build internal capacities but also strengthen librarians' connections to external funding landscapes. The findings advocate a need for targeted capacity-building programs among academic librarians in federal universities, especially in areas that fall below or just meet the 50% benchmark. While core skills like writing, research, and technology are well-recognized, the low ranking of Knowledge of Funding Agencies signals a crucial area for intervention. Universities and library management may need to organize workshops or partnerships aimed at improving librarians' understanding of the funding landscape. Additionally, enhancing networking and collaboration skills could further boost access to interdisciplinary and international grant.

Table 4: Channels through which Academic Librarians Have Access to Research Grant

S/N	Channels	FUHTO	UNIABUJA	FULAFIA	FULOKOJA	FUTMINNA	JOSTUM	UNIJOS	UNILORI N	Total	%
1	Online Funding Databases	4(2.7%)	12(8.2%)	6(4.1%)	5(3.4%)	11(7.5%)	15(10.3%)	14(9.6%)	15(10.3%)	82	56.2
2	Professional Networks	5(3.4%)	14(9.6%)	6(4.1%)	6(4.1%)	13(8.9%)	17(11.6%)	16(11.0%)	17(11.6%)	94	64.4
3	Funding Agencies	5(3.4%)	16(11.0%)	7(4.8%)	7(4.8%)	15(10.3%)	19(13.0%)	18(12.3%)	20(13.7%)	107	73.3
4	Collaboration with other institutions and Researchers	5(3.4%)	15(10.3%)	7(4.8%)	6(4.1%)	14(9.6%)	18(12.3%)	17(11.6%)	19(13.0%)	102	69.9
5	Workshop	5(3.4%)	14(9.6%)	6(4.1%)	6(4.1%)	13(8.9%)	17(11.6%)	16(11.0%)	17(11.6%)	94	64.4
6	Institutional alignment with grant-giving organizations	4(2.7%)	11(7.5%)	5(3.4%)	5(3.4%)	10(6.8%)	13(8.9%)	13(8.9%)	14(9.6%)	75	51.4
7	Storytelling	2(1.4%)	5(3.4%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)	4(2.7%)	6(4.1%)	5(3.4%)	6(4.1%)	32	21.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

KEYS= FUHTO: Federal university of Health Science Otuipo, **UNIABUJA=** University of Abuja, **FULAFIA=** Federal University of Lafia, **FULOKOJA=** Federal University Lokoja, **FUTMINNA=** Federal University of Technology Minna, **JOSTUM=**Joseph Sarwan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State, **UNIJOS:** University of Jos, **UNILORIN=** University of Ilorin

The result of the findings from Table 4 reveal the multifaceted pathways academic librarians in North Central Nigeria utilize to access research grants. The most frequently reported channel for accessing research grants among academic librarians in North Central Nigerian federal universities is funding agencies, with 107 respondents (73.3%) indicating they use this route. Closely following is collaboration with other institutions and researchers, identified by 102 librarians (69.9%). Professional networks and workshops were each cited by 94 librarians (64.4%) as key channels. Online funding databases were reported by 82 respondents (56.2%). Institutional alignment with grant-giving organizations was mentioned by 75 librarians (51.4%). At the lower end, only 32 librarians (21.9%) reported storytelling as a channel through which they access research grants.

From the above findings, funding agencies (73.3%), collaboration with other institutions and researchers (69.9%), professional networks (64.4%), workshops (64.4%), online funding databases (56.2%), and institutional alignment with grant-giving organizations (51.4%) were all reported by more than half of the respondents. In contrast, storytelling was the only channel below the benchmark, with only 21.9% of respondents acknowledging its use. These findings align with earlier studies that emphasize the importance of formal structures and collaborative mechanisms in research funding access. The prominence of funding agencies and inter-institutional collaborations corroborates existing literature on the reliance on external funding bodies and research partnerships. The reliance on professional networks and workshops also supports the idea that knowledge sharing and capacity-building initiatives are crucial in grant acquisition.

Discussion of Findings

This study examines the grant-writing expertise of academic librarians across eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria Federal University of Health Technology, Otuokpo (FUHTO), University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), Federal University Lafia (FULAFIA), Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA), Federal University of Technology Minna (FUTMINNA), Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), University of Jos (UNIJOS), and University of Ilorin (UNILORIN).

The investigation focuses on available research grants, librarians' level of grant-writing proficiency, and the channels through which grants are accessed. Findings reveal a dynamic interaction between opportunities and constraints that influence librarians' success in securing research funding, with broader implications for professional growth and institutional research productivity.

Table 2 The findings indicate that the majority of academic librarians in North Central Nigerian federal universities recognize several key skills as essential for accessing research grants. Specifically, seven out of the eight listed skills surpassed the 50% mark. Writing and Communication Skills ranked highest (72.6%), followed closely by Research Skills and Subject Expertise (71.9%), Technological Proficiency (67.8%), and Information Literacy and Database Navigation (65.1%). Grant Proposal Writing Skills were also notably high at 63.0%. Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills (50.7%) narrowly surpassed the benchmark, showing moderate recognition. However, only Knowledge of Funding Agencies (30.8%) fell below the threshold, indicating a significant gap in awareness or emphasis on this particular skill. This finding is corroborated by Echezona et al. (2017) who identified proposal writing, digital literacy, and research competency as vital for librarians' success in research funding acquisition in Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Nwalo and Anasi (2020) emphasized that technological know-how and subject mastery are critical in today's digital research environment, while noting that many librarians still lack strategic exposure to funding sources and external networks. These studies underscore the necessity for targeted training programs that not only build internal capacities but also strengthen librarians' connections to external funding landscapes.

Table 3 The most frequently reported channel for accessing research grants among academic librarians in North Central Nigerian federal universities is funding agencies, with 107 respondents (73.3%) indicating they use this route. Closely following is collaboration with other institutions and researchers, identified by 102 librarians (69.9%). Professional networks and workshops were each cited by 94 librarians (64.4%) as key channels. Online funding databases were reported by 82 respondents (56.2%). Institutional alignment with grant-giving organizations was mentioned by 75 librarians (51.4%). At the lower end, only 32 librarians (21.9%) reported storytelling as a channel through which they access research grants.

From the above findings, funding agencies (73.3%), collaboration with other institutions and researchers (69.9%), professional networks (64.4%), workshops (64.4%), online funding databases (56.2%), and institutional alignment with grant-giving organizations (51.4%) were all reported by more than half of the respondents.

Conclusion

This study investigated the grant-writing expertise of academic librarians in eight federal universities in North Central Nigeria: Federal University of Health Technology, Otuokpo; 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 Otuokpo, due to limited awareness and skill proficiency. Librarians exhibit strong writing and communication skills Research and subject Expertise skills and Technological proficiency skills, Key Channels include Funding Agencies, Collaboration with other institution and professional networks and workshop. Finding reveal that Federal universities in North Central Nigeria 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. University management should organize workshops, conferences, and training programs to empower librarians with skills in networking, collaboration, and clarifying funding agency expectations. Institutions should support academic librarians in developing their grant-writing abilities through effective storytelling channels that align with the IT competitive environment.

Recommendations

1. Federal universities in North Central Nigeria 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. University management should organize workshops, conferences, and training programs to empower librarians with skills in networking, collaboration, and clarifying funding agency expectations.
3. Universities Management should support academic librarians in developing their grant-writing abilities through effective storytelling channels that align with the IT competitive environment

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