

Article

Impact of Academic Conferences on Lecturers' Job Performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract: Academic conferences constitute an important mechanism for professional development, knowledge exchange, research dissemination, networking and exposure to emerging developments within academic disciplines. For university lecturers, participation in conferences may contribute to improved teaching, research, publication, curriculum development, professional networking and community service. This study examined the impact of academic conference participation on lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population comprised lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. A sample of 384 lecturers was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Academic Conference Participation and Lecturers' Job Performance Questionnaire (ACPLJPQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study found that conference participation enhanced lecturers' knowledge of current developments in their disciplines, teaching skills, research competence, publication activities, professional networking and academic collaboration. The analysis further indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance. The study concludes that academic conferences constitute an important component of academic staff development in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. It recommends that university management and TETFund should increase transparent and equitable funding for conference participation, reduce bureaucratic delays in accessing conference grants, and establish mechanisms for lecturers to share knowledge gained from conferences with colleagues and students.

Keywords: Academic conferences, conference attendance, lecturers, job performance, academic staff development.

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1. Introduction

Universities occupy a strategic position in national development through teaching, research, knowledge production, innovation and community service. The effectiveness of these responsibilities depends considerably on the quality, competence and continuous professional development of academic staff. Lecturers are expected not only to possess appropriate academic qualifications but also to remain current with developments in their disciplines, acquire new pedagogical approaches, conduct research, publish scholarly works and contribute to institutional and societal development. The contemporary university environment is characterised by rapid changes in knowledge, technology, teaching methods, research methodologies and professional expectations. Possession of an academic qualification at the point of recruitment may not be sufficient to guarantee sustained effectiveness throughout an academic career. Continuous professional

development has therefore become important to the performance of university lecturers. Professional development may take different forms, including postgraduate education, seminars, workshops, mentoring, research activities, professional associations and academic conferences [1].

Academic conferences provide opportunities for scholars to present research findings, listen to presentations by other researchers, exchange ideas, receive professional feedback, establish scholarly networks and become acquainted with emerging developments within their fields. Conferences also provide opportunities for lecturers to interact with scholars from different institutions and countries [2]. These interactions may expose participants to alternative approaches to teaching, research and academic administration. Conference participation is particularly relevant to university lecturers because academic work is multidimensional. Lecturers are expected to perform teaching, research and community-service functions. Effective performance in these areas requires continuous acquisition and application of knowledge and skills. A lecturer who attends a conference may, for example, acquire knowledge about a new research methodology and subsequently apply it to research projects. Similarly, exposure to innovative teaching practices may enable a lecturer to improve classroom delivery [3], [4].

The research dimension of academic work may benefit substantially from conference participation. Conference presentations provide researchers with opportunities to communicate preliminary or completed research findings to other scholars. Feedback from conference participants can help researchers identify methodological weaknesses, improve arguments and develop manuscripts for journal publication. Conference networking can also lead to research collaboration, joint publications, grant applications and academic exchange. Evidence from Nigeria supports the importance of conferences in academic development. A study of academic staff in Federal University Gashua reported that conference participation contributed to staff development and helped staff maintain greater focus on their prescribed responsibilities. Similarly, research on Federal Universities in North-East Nigeria found that TETFund intervention in conference attendance had a significant impact on the job productivity of academic staff (AKSU Journal)

There is also evidence connecting conference participation with research productivity. Obembe's study of Nigerian university academics found that conference attendance was among the significant factors predicting scientific productivity. Okiki's investigation of teaching faculty members in Nigerian Federal Universities also found that research productivity included conference papers among other scholarly outputs, while North-Central Nigeria recorded substantial research productivity among the regions examined [5]. The importance of conferences is further demonstrated by the fact that TETFund provides conference attendance as part of its academic staff development interventions. Institutional evidence from Federal University Lafia, a Federal University in North-Central Nigeria, lists conference attendance among TETFund-funded activities alongside academic staff training and development, institution-based research and ICT support. Evidence from Federal University Dutsin-Ma similarly documents TETFund-sponsored national and international conference attendance for academic staff.

However, conference participation is not without challenges. Financial constraints, bureaucratic procedures, workload, travel costs, time constraints, security concerns and limited institutional funding can restrict lecturers' participation. A recent Nigerian study of conference attendance among educators identified socioeconomic and institutional challenges as significant constraints to conference participation.)Research on TETFund interventions at Federal University Dutsin-Ma also reported that conference attendance sponsorship had a positive effect on staff development, while bureaucratic delays in accessing staff-development funds remained a challenge.

The problem is therefore not merely whether conferences exist, but whether participation in them translates into improved job performance. Conference attendance can be measured by frequency of participation, presentation of papers, active engagement, networking and application of knowledge acquired. Job performance, on the other hand, can be reflected in teaching effectiveness, research productivity, publication, curriculum development, supervision, professional engagement and community service. Existing empirical evidence is encouraging but has important geographical and institutional limitations. For example, Bamidele's study examined conference attendance and teacher job performance in Federal Government Colleges in North-Central Nigeria and found a positive relationship. Another study examined conference participation among academic staff in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria and reported positive effects on teaching-related skills, including lesson planning, subject mastery, classroom control, presentation and questioning techniques [6]. However, these studies do not specifically focus on lecturers in Federal Universities across North-Central Nigeria (IJIRM)

This creates a contextual gap that warrants further empirical investigation. Federal Universities differ from Federal Government Colleges and Colleges of Education in terms of academic responsibilities, research expectations, promotion requirements, workload and institutional structures. University lecturers are expected to contribute substantially to knowledge production and scholarly publication in addition to teaching and community service. Therefore, findings from other categories of institutions cannot automatically be generalised to Federal Universities. It is against this background that this study investigates the impact of academic conferences on lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The quality of university education depends substantially on the competence and productivity of academic staff. University lecturers are expected to demonstrate effective teaching, produce quality research, publish scholarly works, supervise students and contribute to community development. These responsibilities require continuous professional development. Academic conferences are designed to provide lecturers with opportunities for professional interaction, knowledge acquisition, research dissemination and exposure to innovations. Through conferences, lecturers can present research papers, receive feedback from experts, establish collaborations and learn new approaches to teaching and research. Despite these potential benefits, participation in academic conferences among lecturers in Nigerian universities may be constrained by inadequate funding, limited institutional sponsorship, bureaucratic procedures, high conference registration fees, travel expenses, workload and other institutional factors. Where lecturers are unable to participate regularly, they may have fewer opportunities for professional networking and exposure to current developments in their fields [7], [8]. Furthermore, conference attendance does not automatically translate into improved job performance. A lecturer may attend a conference without presenting a paper, engaging meaningfully with other researchers or applying newly acquired knowledge. It is therefore necessary to empirically determine whether conference participation is associated with improved job performance among university lecturers. Although previous Nigerian studies have reported positive relationships between conference attendance and teacher performance, academic staff development and research productivity, relatively limited evidence specifically addresses lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to determine whether academic conference participation significantly impacts lecturers' job performance in the study area [9].

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

- 1) determine the extent of lecturers' participation in academic conferences in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria;

2) examine the level of lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria; and

3) determine the relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1) What is the extent of lecturers' participation in academic conferences in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

2) What is the level of lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

3) What relationship exists between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Concept of Academic Conference

An academic conference is a formal gathering of scholars, researchers, professionals and other experts for the presentation, discussion and exchange of knowledge. Conferences may be organised around specific disciplines, themes, research areas or interdisciplinary issues. Academic conferences commonly involve keynote addresses, paper presentations, poster sessions, panel discussions, workshops and networking activities. Their importance extends beyond the presentation of research because they provide a platform for intellectual exchange and professional socialisation. For university lecturers, conferences can serve as an avenue for continuous learning. A lecturer can learn about new theories, research methods, technologies, policies and professional practices. Conference participation may also enhance the visibility of researchers and their institutions [10].

Academic Conference Participation

Academic conference participation goes beyond physical attendance. It may involve presenting research papers, chairing sessions, participating in discussions, networking with scholars, attending workshops and establishing research partnerships. The quality of participation may therefore be more important than the mere number of conferences attended. A lecturer who actively presents a paper and receives expert feedback may derive greater professional benefits than someone who attends without active scholarly engagement.

Concept of Lecturers' Job Performance

Job performance refers to the extent to which an employee effectively carries out responsibilities associated with his or her position. For university lecturers, job performance is multidimensional. It includes effective teaching, preparation of instructional materials, student assessment, research, publication, supervision, academic advising, curriculum development and community service. Consequently, measuring lecturers' performance should not be limited to classroom teaching alone. Okiki's investigation of academic staff in Nigerian Federal Universities demonstrates the importance of research output in academic work, reporting scholarly outputs including journal publications, technical reports, conference papers, working papers and occasional papers [11].

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

This study is anchored on Social Learning Theory, associated with Bandura. The theory proposes that people learn through observing others, interacting with them and interpreting their experiences. Academic conferences provide a strong environment for social and professional learning. Lecturers interact with experienced scholars, observe research presentations, listen to keynote addresses and participate in scholarly discussions. Through these activities, they can acquire knowledge and professional behaviours that may subsequently be applied to their own academic responsibilities. For instance, a lecturer may attend a conference and observe a new approach to student-centred teaching. The lecturer may subsequently adopt aspects of that approach in classroom practice. Similarly, exposure to a new research methodology may influence the lecturer's future research activities [12]. The theory therefore provides a useful explanation of how conference participation may influence job performance. The knowledge and practices acquired through interaction with other academics can be transferred to teaching, research and other academic responsibilities.

Empirical studies have increasingly examined the relationship between staff development, conference participation and academic performance. A study on the impact of TETFund capacity-building interventions among academic staff in Federal Universities in North-East Nigeria examined conference attendance, higher-degree acquisition, publication and research performance. The study reported that TETFund intervention in conference attendance had a significant impact on academic staff job productivity. This finding is particularly relevant because North-East and North-Central Nigeria share several institutional and socioeconomic characteristics (IEMPS Journals).

Mela, Modibbo and Jim examined TETFund-sponsored conference attendance and academic staff development at Federal University Gashua. Their study found that conference attendance contributed to staff development and helped academic staff maintain greater focus on their prescribed responsibilities. Bamidele investigated the relationship between conference attendance and job performance of teachers in Federal Government Colleges in North-Central Nigeria. The study used 442 retrieved questionnaires from a sample drawn from 12 Federal Government Colleges and found a positive relationship between conference attendance and job performance.. Similarly, a study of academic staff in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria examined the impact of conference participation on job performance [13]. The findings indicated that conferences helped academic staff improve lesson planning, subject mastery, classroom control, lesson presentation and questioning techniques. Obembe investigated determinants of scientific productivity among Nigerian university academics and found that conference attendance was a significant predictor of scientific productivity. This finding provides support for the proposition that conference participation may extend beyond professional networking to measurable scholarly productivity. Dahir, Abdallah and Ado investigated academic activities and research productivity among university lecturers in Kano State. Their study reported that conference and workshop participation was perceived as a facilitator of research productivity, while statistical analysis showed a moderate positive relationship between academic activities and research productivity. Bello et al. examined TETFund interventions and staff development at Federal University Dutsin-Ma. Their study found that TETFund conference-attendance sponsorship had a positive significant effect on staff development, although the effect was reported to be relatively low. The researchers also identified bureaucratic delays in accessing staff-development funds as a challenge.

Research on academic staff development at Federal University Gashua also found strong positive evidence concerning conference participation. Survey evidence showed that most respondents agreed that conference attendance enhanced intellectual

socialisation and awareness of developments in their areas of specialization. Research on institutional factors and research productivity in Nigerian Federal Universities has similarly highlighted the importance of funding and institutional support [14]. The reviewed studies generally indicate a positive association between conference participation and professional development, teaching competence, research productivity or job performance. Nevertheless, much of the existing evidence focuses on Colleges of Education, Federal Government Colleges, individual universities or regions outside North-Central Nigeria. The present study therefore extends the literature by examining lecturers in Federal Universities across North-Central Nigeria.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance without manipulating either variable. The study was conducted in Federal Universities located in North-Central Nigeria. The North-Central geopolitical zone comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The population comprised academic staff of Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The lecturers were selected because they are directly involved in teaching, research, supervision, publication and community service and are potential beneficiaries of academic conference opportunities. A sample of 384 lecturers was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. First, Federal Universities were grouped according to states and institutional characteristics. Selected institutions were then sampled using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling. Finally, lecturers were selected proportionately from faculties and departments. The instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Academic Conference Participation and Lecturers' Job Performance Questionnaire (ACPLJPQ).

Section A: demographic information; Section B: academic conference participation; and

Section C: lecturers' job performance. Conference participation was measured using indicators such as frequency of attendance, paper presentation, networking, participation in workshops and engagement with research developments.

Lecturers' job performance was measured through indicators including teaching effectiveness, research activities, publication, supervision, curriculum development and professional engagement. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale: Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), Very Low Extent (1). Three experts in Educational Administration and Planning and Measurement and Evaluation examined the instrument. Their observations were used to improve the clarity, relevance and adequacy of the questionnaire items.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested using lecturers from Federal Universities outside the selected sample. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. The researcher and trained research assistants administered the questionnaires to the sampled lecturers. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the first two research questions. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer Research Question Three and test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

Important methodological note: Because you did not provide your actual questionnaire dataset, the numerical results below are illustrative empirical results, not claimed field findings. They are structured to show how the completed empirical paper can be presented. Replace the figures with your actual SPSS results before publication.

Research Question One

What is the extent of lecturers' participation in academic conferences in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1. Mean Ratings on Lecturers' Academic Conference Participation.

S/N Academic Conference Participation	Mean	SD	Decision
1 I regularly attend academic conferences related to my discipline	3.18	0.76	High
2 I participate actively in conference paper presentations	3.05	0.81	High
3 Conferences expose me to current developments in my field	3.54	0.62	High
4 I establish professional contacts through conferences	3.46	0.66	High
5 I participate in conference workshops and technical sessions	3.21	0.75	High
6 I receive useful feedback on my research through conferences	3.38	0.70	High
7 I use conference opportunities to develop research collaborations	3.31	0.74	High
8 I attend conferences supported by my university/TETFund	2.87	0.91	High
Grand Mean	3.25		High

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result

The table indicates that lecturers' participation in academic conferences was generally high, with a grand mean of 3.25. The highest mean was recorded for exposure to current developments in their fields (3.54), followed by professional networking (3.46) and receiving research feedback (3.38). Participation in university/TETFund-supported conferences recorded the lowest mean of 2.87.

Research Question Two

What is the level of lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 2. Mean Ratings of Lecturers' Job Performance.

S/N Job Performance Indicator	Mean	SD	Decision
1. Effective preparation and delivery of lectures	3.49	0.59	High
2. Effective use of contemporary teaching methods	3.31	0.69	High
3. Effective supervision of students' academic work	3.45	0.61	High
4. Participation in research activities	3.37	0.68	High
5. Publication of scholarly research	3.29	0.72	High
6. Development and improvement of course materials	3.43	0.64	High
7. Participation in curriculum development/review	3.18	0.77	High
8. Contribution to community service/professional activities	3.27	0.73	High
Grand Mean	3.35		High

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result

The table shows that lecturers' job performance was generally high, with a grand mean of 3.35. Effective preparation and delivery of lectures recorded the highest mean (3.49), followed by student supervision (3.45) and course-material development (3.43).

Research Question Three

What relationship exists between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance?

Table 3. Relationship Between Academic Conference Participation and Lecturers' Job Performance.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Conference participation	384	3.25	0.48			
Lecturers' job performance	384	3.35	0.44	0.62	0.000	Significant

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result

The result indicates a positive relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance, with a correlation coefficient of $r = .62$ and $p < .05$. This indicates a moderately strong positive relationship. Therefore, greater academic conference participation is associated with higher reported job performance among lecturers in the study context [15].

Test of Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 4. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

Variables	N	r	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Conference participation and job performance	384	0.62	0.000	0.05	Reject H_0

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Decision

Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Findings of the Study

The following findings emerged from the illustrative analysis:

1) Lecturers' participation in academic conferences was found to be generally high.

Conferences provide lecturers with opportunities to acquire current knowledge and developments in their disciplines.

2) Conference participation enhances professional networking and creates opportunities for research collaboration.

3) Lecturers' overall job performance was found to be high across teaching, research, supervision and professional activities.

4) Academic conference participation had a positive relationship with lecturers' job performance.

5) The relationship between conference participation and job performance was statistically significant [16].

The findings suggest that conferences can contribute to improved teaching and research performance when lecturers actively participate and apply knowledge gained.

Funding and access to institutional/TETFund sponsorship remain important considerations in expanding lecturers' participation in conferences.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that lecturers' conference participation was generally high suggests that academic conferences remain an important professional-development activity in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The finding is consistent with evidence from Federal University Gashua, where conference attendance was found to contribute to academic staff development and professional focus. The high rating given to exposure to current developments is particularly significant. Academic disciplines continuously change as new theories, methodologies, technologies and research findings emerge. Conferences provide a platform where scholars present recent developments. The opportunity to obtain such information can help lecturers update their course content and research activities.

The finding concerning professional networking is also consistent with the broader role of conferences. Academic conferences bring researchers from different institutions together and provide opportunities for collaboration. These networks can develop into joint research, publications, grant applications and academic exchange. The finding that lecturers reported relatively high job performance is consistent with the expectation that professional-development activities contribute to academic effectiveness. Evidence from North-Central Colleges of Education showed that conference participation helped academic staff improve lesson planning, subject mastery, classroom management, lesson presentation and questioning skills [17].

The positive relationship between conference participation and lecturers' job performance is one of the major findings of the study. The result is consistent with Bamidele's study, which found a positive relationship between conference attendance and teacher job performance in Federal Government Colleges in North-Central Nigeria. Although Bamidele's study focused on teachers rather than university lecturers, the geographical similarity strengthens the relevance of the finding (IJIRM). The finding is also consistent with evidence from Federal Universities. Research on TETFund capacity-building intervention in Federal Universities in North-East Nigeria found that conference attendance significantly affected academic staff productivity [18]. Similarly, Bello et al. found that TETFund conference sponsorship had a positive significant effect on staff development at Federal University Dutsin-Ma.

The result also agrees with Obembe's of finding that conference attendance was a significant predictor of scientific productivity among Nigerian university academics. This suggests that conference participation may contribute particularly to the research dimension of lecturers' work by providing opportunities for research presentation, expert feedback and scholarly networking. However, the relationship should not be interpreted as meaning that conference attendance alone causes high job performance. Other factors may influence lecturers' performance, including institutional funding, workload, research facilities, leadership, ICT resources, motivation, academic qualifications and organisational culture. Evidence from research on Nigerian Federal Universities indicates that institutional factors, particularly funding and organisational culture, are important determinants of academic research productivity [19].

The findings therefore support the argument that conferences are potentially valuable components of academic staff development but should operate alongside other professional-development and institutional-support mechanisms.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the impact of academic conferences on lecturers' job performance in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The study established that academic conferences provide lecturers with important opportunities for knowledge acquisition, research dissemination, professional networking, research collaboration and exposure to new developments. The empirical analysis, as illustrated, indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between academic conference participation and lecturers' job performance. This finding is consistent with several Nigerian studies that have linked conference participation with academic staff development, research productivity and professional performance.

The study concludes that academic conferences should be regarded not merely as social or professional gatherings but as important instruments of academic staff development. Their value is maximised when lecturers actively participate, present research, interact with other scholars and apply knowledge gained to teaching, research and other academic responsibilities. Nevertheless, conference participation requires adequate institutional support. Without reliable funding, transparent selection procedures and efficient administrative processes, many lecturers may not have equal opportunities to participate. Consequently, university management and relevant funding agencies need to strengthen mechanisms that support equitable and meaningful conference participation. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Federal Universities should increase institutional funding for lecturers' participation in relevant national and international academic conferences. TETFund should continue and strengthen conference attendance as an academic staff-development intervention while ensuring transparent and equitable access. Universities should simplify procedures for accessing conference sponsorship so that approved lecturers can receive funds within sufficient time to register and travel. Conference sponsorship should be distributed transparently across faculties, departments, academic ranks and disciplines to avoid concentration of opportunities among a small number of lecturers. Universities should prioritise lecturers who present original research papers because active scholarly participation is more likely to produce professional and research benefits than passive attendance. Lecturers returning from conferences should be encouraged to organise departmental seminars or faculty presentations to share important knowledge and innovations acquired. Conference participation should be integrated with institutional research strategies. Lecturers should be encouraged to develop conference presentations into journal articles and collaborative research projects. Improve institutional monitoring: Universities should maintain records of lecturers' conference participation and assess how conference experiences contribute to teaching, research and other academic activities. Universities should support participation in credible virtual and hybrid conferences where physical attendance is financially or logistically difficult. Academic workload should be managed to enable lecturers to participate in professionally relevant conferences without compromising teaching responsibilities.

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