

## Factors Influencing Journal Publication choice among University of Benin Lecturers

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Publication of a scientific research in a peer-reviewed journal is one of the most common written means of disseminating of findings which is of importance to all researchers. However, it is also an area that often present challenges, and can result in disagreements among researchers, especially regarding the choice of journal for publication

**Objective:** To determine the factors influencing journal publication choice among University of Benin lecturers.

**Methods:** This prospective cross-sectional study was conducted among lecturers across the thirteen (13) faculties in University of Benin, Benin City. Data collection tool was a nineteen (19) item, self-administered questionnaire which elicited information on demographic characteristics, human determinant of journal publication choice and factors influencing journal publication choice. Six (6) of the questions were demographic characteristics which assessed age, sex, status, experience, faculty and department of participants. One question which assessed the human determinants of journal choice was a semi-structured question containing both closed and open-ended response options. The remaining twelve (12) questions assessed factors influencing the journal choice. The responses were scored as irrelevant = 1, less important = 2, important = 3 and extremely important = 4. The mean and standard error of mean were computed for each variable to determine the most ranked factor.

**Results:** A total of 53 lecturers who have worked between 1 and 38 years comprising 39 (73.6%) males and 14 (26.4%) females from 33 departments of all the 13 faculties were studied. The journal choice is mainly a sole decision (66.0%) of the principal investigator. Prestige, promotion and journal impact factor were the three most ranked factors in journal publication choice. The ranking of the factors was not influenced by sex, faculty, academic status, and years of experience of the participants.

**Conclusion:** Data from this study revealed that journal choice is mainly a sole decision of the principal investigator and the factors that influenced the choice were prestige, promotion and journal impact factor. Nation-wide study is highly recommended.

**Keywords:** choice of journal, determinants, publication of scientific papers

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website: [www.bornomedicaljournal.com](http://www.bornomedicaljournal.com)

DOI: 10.31173/bomj.bomj\_157\_16

#### Introduction

Research is a systematic investigative process that entails collection of data; documentation of critical information; and analysis and



interpretation of that data/information, in accordance with suitable methodologies set by specific professional fields and academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

The final stage of research is disseminating the findings to an appropriate audience. Dissemination usually takes different forms which includes a paper in a journal, conference paper or presentation, a formal report or a dissertation/thesis for postgraduate study. However, publication of a paper in a peer-reviewed journal is one of the most common written means of disseminating research findings.<sup>2</sup>

Publication is of key importance for all researchers, and is also an area that often presents challenges, and can result in disagreements among researchers, especially regarding the choice of journal for publication. Research may be conducted individually or as a team work, as such the research output in the form of publication and journal choice will be influenced by the members of the team. Research output in the form of publication has remained the currency of exchange in the university. Lecturers with adequate wait period that provide the required number of publications as stipulated by the university regulation, are rewarded with promotion to the next level. There is paucity of data on the factors influencing journal publication choice among Nigerian University lecturers. Hence, the objective of the study was to determine the factors influencing journal publication choice among University of Benin lecturers.

### Materials and Methods

This prospective cross-sectional study was conducted among lecturers across the thirteen (13) faculties in University of Benin, Benin City. University of Benin is one of the first generation universities in Nigeria. Lecturers of different cadres that had

authored a minimum of one publication and consented were recruited and studied.

Data collection tool was a nineteen (19) item, self-administered questionnaire which elicited information on demographic characteristics, human determinant of journal publication choice and factors influencing journal publication choice. Six (6) of the questions were demographic characteristics which assessed age, sex, status, experience, faculty and department of participants. One question which assessed the human determinants of journal choice was a semi-structured question containing both closed and open-ended response options. The remaining twelve (12) questions assessed factors influencing the journal choice. The responses were scored as irrelevant = 1, less important = 2, important = 3 and extremely important = 4. The mean and standard error of mean were computed for each variable to determine the most ranked factor. The higher the mean the more the ranking. Comparison of the rank of the factors influencing journal choice with sex, status, faculty and years of experience was with non-parametric test in form of Mann Whitney U test. The statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS version 20.0.

The status of the lecturers was categorized as young (Graduate Assistant, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II and Lecturer I) Intermediate (Senior Lecturer) and Senior (Associate Professor and Professor), years of experience was categorized into 1-10 years and >10 years.

The faculties were also categorized into science-based faculties (Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Life Sciences, Basic Medical Science, Social Sciences, Engineering, Dentistry, Physical Sciences, Medicine and non-science-based faculties (Arts, Law and Education).



**Results**

A total of 53 lecturers who have worked between 1 and 38 years, comprising 39 (73.6%) males and 14 (26.4%) females from 33 departments of all the 13 faculties were studied. More than half of the participants (52.8%) had worked for 1-10 years. Nearly one-third (30.2%) of the participants were 31

to 40 years, about one-fifth (20.8%) were lecturer II and about one-third 18 (34.0%) of the participants were from non-science oriented faculties. The journal choice decision is mainly a sole decision (66.0%) followed by collective decision (54.7%) and advice of senior colleagues (37.7%).

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and who Decides Journal choice of the Participants**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age (years)</b>		
20-30	2	3.8
31-40	16	30.2
41-50	15	28.3
51-60	15	28.3
>60	5	9.4
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	39	73.6
Female	14	26.4
<b>Years of experience</b>		
1-10	28	52.8
>10	25	47.2
<b>Academic status</b>		
Graduate assistant	2	3.8
Assistant lecturer	6	11.3
Lecturer II	11	20.8
Lecturer I	9	17.0
Senior Lecturer	9	17.0
Associate Professor	8	15.1
Professor	8	15.1
<b>Faculties</b>		
Law	2	3.8
Agriculture	8	15.1
Veterinary Medicine	1	1.9
Life Sciences	4	7.5
Basic Medical Science	2	3.8
Social Sciences	4	7.5
Engineering	5	9.4
Arts	6	11.3
Dentistry	7	13.2
Physical Sciences	3	5.7
Education	6	11.3
Medicine	5	9.4
<b>Who decides the journal choice*</b>		
Sole decision	35	66.0
Collective decision	29	54.7
Senior colleague advice	20	37.7
Others	8	15.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>173.5</b>

\*= more than one response, others = institution promotion criteria, colleagues



Prestige (3.57±0.10), promotion (3.57±0.10) and journal impact factor (3.46±0.08) were the three most ranked factors in journal publication choice. The fourth and fifth most ranked factors were policy of the journal (3.33±0.11) and speed of publication (3.19±0.13) respectively. Open access was the least ranked factors. The ranking of the factors was not significantly influenced by sex, faculty, academic status, and years of experience of the participants.

**Table 2: Factors Influencing Journal choice among the Participants**

Variable	Male	Female	Young /Intermediate	Senior	Science	Non science	Total
Absence of journal publication fee	2.67±0.19	2.79±0.30	2.57±0.20	3.00±0.26	2.66±0.20	2.78±0.27	2.70±0.16
Prestige/perceived quality of journal	3.62±0.11	3.43±0.23	3.49±0.13	3.75±0.11	3.60±0.11	3.50±0.20	3.57±0.10
Journal impact factor	3.47±0.10	3.43±0.14	3.43±0.10	3.53±0.13	3.47±0.11	3.44±0.12	3.46±0.08
Importance of journal for Promotion, tenure and assessment	3.51±0.12	3.71±0.16	3.62±0.12	3.44±0.18	3.57±0.12	3.56±0.17	3.57±0.10
Recommendation of journal by colleagues	2.84±0.13	2.79±0.19	2.84±0.12	2.79±0.21	2.73±0.14	3.00±0.14	2.82±0.10
Positive experience with publisher/editor	2.63±0.15	3.00±0.26	2.70±0.15	2.80±0.26	2.65±0.17	2.89±0.20	2.73±0.13
Open access journal	2.76±0.16	2.43±0.29	2.59±0.17	2.86±0.25	2.64±0.17	2.72±0.24	2.67±0.14
Policy of journal	3.29±0.12	3.46±0.24	3.36±0.13	3.27±0.21	3.26±0.14	3.47±0.19	3.33±0.11
Speed of publication	3.08±0.17	3.50±0.17	3.22±0.16	3.13±0.26	3.24±0.17	3.11±0.21	3.19±0.13
Likelihood of article acceptance	2.87±0.15	3.07±0.20	2.86±0.14	3.07±0.23	2.91±0.14	2.94±0.22	2.92±0.12
Copyright policy of journal	2.95±0.17	3.00±0.23	2.84±0.16	3.27±0.25	2.91±0.17	3.06±0.24	2.96±0.14
Relevance of the journal for my community	3.03±0.14	3.21±0.21	3.03±0.14	3.19±0.23	3.06±0.15	3.11±0.18	3.08±0.12



## Discussion

The choosing a journal for publication is the most important and least understood decision. The process of choosing a suitable journal to publish the research findings is very important and requires patience because publication opportunities and models are constantly changing. The factors influencing journal publication choice among University of Benin lecturers revealed that prestige of the journal, university acceptable journal for promotion and journal impact factor were the most important journal choice for publication. Journal prestige being the topmost ranked factor in this study was similar to the report among active clinical and research faculty of Stanford University School of Medicine by Frank,<sup>3</sup> but contrasted with report among medical and dental researchers in India by Sandesh and Wahrekar<sup>4</sup> and reports among Nigerian medics by Olusegun et al.,<sup>5</sup> where journal indexing were the topmost ranked factors. The prominence of prestige in ranking could be explained by the fact that any researcher desires to derive benefit and be credited for their contribution to the body of knowledge. For instance, having in a prestigious journal is expected to facilitate a higher chance of citations.

Publication as a currency of exchange in the university established why promotion and prestige were the top ranked influencing factors. The inability to publish or possess publication in unacceptable journal, is tantamount to no progress in terms of career progression and promotion in the university, explaining why publication in acceptable journal for promotion was ranked the same as journal prestige in this study.

Impact factor devised by Eugene Garfield, is frequently used as a proxy for the relative importance of a journal within its field tying it to prestige which was the third ranked factor.<sup>6,7</sup>

This is similar to the finding among medical and dental researchers in India<sup>4</sup> where it was the third ranked factor but contrasted with finding of a previous study conducted by Warlick and Vaughan<sup>2</sup> in United States of America who reported journal impact factor as the most ranked factor influencing journal choice for publication.

Policy of the journal ranked fourth among factors influencing journal publication choice among the participants and this may be related to the provision of the hard copy of the journal without additional fee as the university insist on hard copy submission for promotion evaluation. Speed of publication was ranked as the fifth most ranked factors because the earlier publications in area establishes the research as a leader and founder in that field of research.

Open access was the least ranked factors influencing journal publication choice among the participants even when it advocates free and full access of papers, as nearly all young scientists read journals almost exclusively in digital format and are even reluctant to look for articles from traditional journals.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that the lack of hard copy journal emanating from open access publishing and poor likelihood to distinguish the open access journal that is include or not included in Beall predatory journal hampered this factor consideration among the participants.

Absence of journal publication fee was seen as second to the least factor influencing journal publication choice among the participants. Although, free submission and publication is a significant factor for individual health researchers, the fact that most journals in Nigeria require either submission or publication fee or both has facilitated making a norm among lecturers that research publication requires fees.



The fact that decision in journal publication choice is a collective decision in more than half of the participants and is also greatly influenced by advice of senior colleagues explained why the ranking of the factors was not influenced by sex, faculty, academic status, and years of experience of the participants. It can be implied that mentoring is apparently operational among the lecturers in University of Benin.

This prospective research study was limited to a population of lecturers from a single institution but the regulation of universities in Nigerian in terms of academic standard, criteria for employment and promotion by Nigerian University Commission (NUC) may make findings applicable within other institutions. However, nation-wide study is recommended

### Conclusion

Data from this study revealed that journal choice decision is mainly sole decision of the principal investigator and the factors that influenced the choice were prestige, promotion and journal impact factor. Nation-wide study is highly recommended.

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**Cite this Article as:** Benlance Ekaniyere Edetanlen, Clement Chinedu Azodo. Factors Influencing Journal Publication choice among University of Benin Lecturers. **Bo Med J 2019;16(2):** **Source of Support:** Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared

