

## **Improving Academic Events and Conference Participation by Zimbabwean Lecturers: Learning From RIO-SET 2012 Experiences.**

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**Abstract:** *While research outcomes might be important in both public and private sector in Zimbabwe, the tertiary education sector seemed to be lagging behind. Lower attendance at RIE Expo 2012(now RIO-SET) by lecturers, conference audiences and other key research stakeholders made it imperative to carry out this research. Researchers felt that a minimum of 50 participants should attend each parallel session, but the RIE 2012(RIO-SET) had an average of 15 people in each session. The methodology used a sample size of 100 lecturers chosen from 10 universities and 15 colleges across Zimbabwe using judgmental and quota sampling. Issues covered included attitudes, institutional challenges, communication challenges and financial constraints facing lecturers and their institutions. The key findings indicated that distance from the venue, publishing propensity of lecturers, communication to participants, funding, college or university vacations and institutional policies had considerable impact on the overall attendance in the RIE Expo 2012(RIO-SET) conference. The study established that the needs of lecturers closer to Harare and those outside Harare were almost similar. The major differences were on institution specific challenges where differences in research disposition and lack of resources were cited as the major reasons behind lower attendance to RIE 2012. The research results will be used for planning the future RIE Expos, and other research conferences in Zimbabwe. The researchers proposed the Attitude, Challenges and Communication (ACC) model for managing events and ensuring key stakeholder participation in research and other conferences.*

**Key Words:** *stakeholder, participants, event management, attitudes, challenges, communication, RIO-SET.*

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### **I. Background To The Study**

Events, conferences, meetings and workshops have been held and taking place since time immemorial at village, national, regional and global scales. King (1961) had already established that international conferences are an infectious and insidious remarkable phenomena of modern society. Institutions, government and intergovernmental institutions are currently run through conferences. The mega event and conference planning processes are undergoing significant change over the short and medium term (Jones, 2012). The Research and Intellectual Expo (RIE), now known as RIO-SET from 2015, was formed by the ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in 2011. Its aim was to offer a platform for economic players to exchange research outputs. The main targeted groups were university and college researchers, private sector, professionals, N.G.Os and government institutions. The focus of this research is on the state of participation and key stakeholder concerns during RIE Conference held in September 2012. The conference is divided into plenary and break away sessions. There was ongoing exhibitions at various centres which were well done and well attended. From our expectations the overall attendance should be above a thousand(1000), with breakaway sessions attracting hundred(100) delegates each. Our observations were that some break away sessions had as low as five(5) participants. This situation reflected some low attendance as given by Rhianon and Moital, 2013).

Benefits of RIE Conference to Zimbabwean university and College Lecturers.

1. The RIE annual event promotes research interest and culture to lecturers as they participate in research, presentations and critique of research output. The conference presentation skills will be sharpened by such lecturer-to-lecturer interactions.
2. The conference gives opportunity for lecturers to meet their peers from other colleges and universities for academic debates and dialogue.
3. Is RIE not a platform of peer review and feedback? The presentation are analysed and evaluated by other lecturers, professors, doctors, and academics, and the feedback is given on how to proceed writing full papers for publication. University promotion is based on the number and quality of research papers presented, defended and published.
4. Some research papers presented are part of doctoral theses hence presenters will be upgraded on the way they should carry out their doctoral researches.

When R.I.E. was introduced in 2011 February, there was massive participation by lecturers and universities given that it was a new product. In 2012 we can say that it was still new but we expect a larger participation by academics in the discussion groups. It is usually not good to research on issues of non-participation due to their sensitive nature in government run conferences and symposiums. This study, however, became compelling since the idea of research, innovation and intellectual exposition is the biggest platform that Zimbabweans can be brought to the world of learning. The thrilling nature of dramas, music, traditional dances and other performing arts saw them being attended by many participants and audience. The question remains why the core business of presenting and discussing research papers is attended by few numbers (Holey, 2002; Khodr, 2012). The researcher observed that some rooms had one presenter and four participants. The best situation is where 1 researcher was matched with 20 participants. While events, conferences and workshops are defined by participants, timing, needed space and responsibilities, the number of participants largely determine the success and magnitude of each conference (Allen, 2009).

## **II. Statement Of The Problem**

The researcher expected a minimum of 100 lecturers at each parallel thematic presentation. The plenary session of 07/09/12 started around 8.00 am with around 10 people. The numbers increased to 50 around 10.30 am on the same session. Were the people not aware? Were they busy with other things? What should be done to ensure more participation by lecturers? What attraction and persuasion is needed? What logistical issues are needed to engage lecturers to learn more? The President of Zimbabwe and Chancellor of State Universities already said "No one can say I am full of knowledge – I no longer want to learn. It's not true." Given that lecturers are the very people who train teachers, engineers, managers and other professionals there is need for them to be engaged in these conferences.

## **III. Research Questions**

Using the above discussion of the statement of the problem, the following questions came up.

- (i) What were the attitudes of lecturers to RIE Research Conference?
- (ii) What institution specific challenges affected the lecturers' attendance to RIE Conference in 2012?
- (iii) What are the communication needs behind low attendance to RIE 2012?

## **IV. Research Objectives**

The research objectives for this paper are as follows:

- (i) To determine the attitudes towards RIE Conference by lecturers.
- (ii) To establish some institutions specific reasons which affected RIE 2012 attendance by lecturers
- (iii) To establish the communications reasons behind low attendance by lecturers to RIE 2012 Conference.

## **V. Research Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub> : There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between those in Harare and those outside Harare.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between Universities and Colleges.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between male and female respondents.
- H<sub>4</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between those in Harare and those outside Harare.
- H<sub>5</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between Universities and Colleges.
- H<sub>6</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between males and females.
- H<sub>7</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between those in Harare and those outside Harare.
- H<sub>8</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between Universities and Colleges.
- H<sub>9</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between males and females.

## **VI. Literature Review Conceptual Framework**

### **6.1 Event Management Concept**

Mehndiratta (2009), sees any event management activity as a marketing effort targeted at particular clients. Mehndiratta (2009) gave a model for planning successful events focusing on stakeholders as follows:

1. Know your guest's profile (educational level, frequency of visit, location)

2. Know your guest's preferences (in terms of food, health) and special needs (food allergies, religion requirements, dietary restrictions)
3. Accommodation set up (bed, sleeping arrangements)
4. Communicate the type of event anticipated.

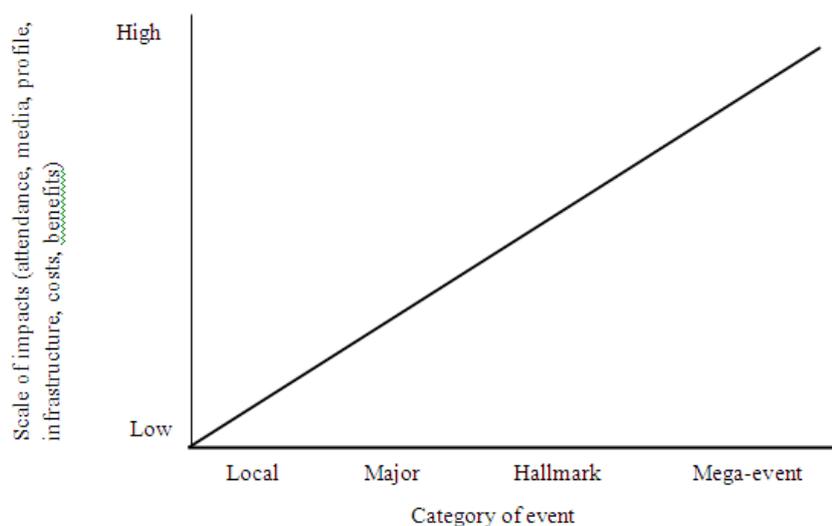
Event management in developing countries are influenced by location cultural content organisational factors, uneven socio-economic factors and resistance to change by potential conference delegates. Despite these issues, there are opportunities to refashion the hosting of mega events and conferences in ways which are more embedded, locally oriented, inclusive, diverse and culturally sensitive (Jones, 2012). Bourne and Walker (2005) viewed conferences and workshops as projects that succeed only if key stakeholders are engaged. They recommended use of Stakeholder Circle that identifies and prioritise key project stakeholders and develop an engagement strategy to build and maintain robust relationship with those key stakeholders. If RIE planners prioritise lecturers and manage their conference expectations, a higher level of participation will be achieved for the benefit of the society. Robert(2003) noted that frequent and thorough communication is critical for stakeholder dialogue.

### 6.2 Marketing Mix and Event Management

The seven P's can be used for guiding event management for conference organisers. Product include all components of the service performance that create value for customers and include event programme, transport, accommodation, meetings and interactions. It must provide value to the customer but does not have to be tangible at the same time (Belovience et al, 2010; Seekings, 1999). Price represent the costs and charges for critical participants to attend and must be within their reach. This can be done using discounts, offers, incentives and rebates, affordable conference fees and hotel expenses(Kotler, Bowen and Wood, 2006). Great consideration must be given to the venue and methods of delivering conference services as part of the place mix. Promotion include communication programmes, media and messages to reach out to the participants(Musterman and Wood, 2006). People include RIE employees, lecturers and exhibitors involved in the conference. These RIE employees must be good at service delivery. Processes and methods for delivering services to participants need to be effective to increase productivity and success. Physical evidence include brochures, pamphlets, and printouts showing descriptions of services and products. In addition, presentation rooms, decorations, signs and vehicles provide tangible evidence of the event. All these aspects could affect the attitude of lecturers on the conferences and expos.

### 6.3 Event Categorisation

The events can be categorised into local, major, hallmark and mega-event. This is shown by Fig I below



et al (2001) Fig I: Categorisation of Events.

Bowdin et al (2001) summarised these categories as follows:

1. Special events. Occur outside the normal programme.
2. Hallmark events. Provide high levels of visibility to the community.
3. Mega-events. Achieve extra ordinary levels of visitors, media coverage, prestige or economic impact.
4. Various criteria. Can be used to "pigeon - hole" events.

RIE Conference can be classified in the -MICE- meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions/events. Classification of events determine the level of effort required in their management (Rogers, 2008).

#### 6.4 Event management innovations

To make events more attractive Belovience et al (2013) proposed the following tactical elements for event management.

1. **Human Resources Needed.** Do we have enough staff or do we need to hire especially qualified staff? Technical secretariat, promoters, coordinators, image consultants, event organisers, protocol consultants, chairmen, speakers, security staff, medical services, translators and interpreters and clearing and maintenance(Palmer, 2002).
2. **Technical Equipment.** What do we need? Public address system simultaneous, translation, recording studios, cinema, production, media coverage and broadcasting and corporate videos.
3. **Communication.** What do we need to make our event known? Advertising, marketing and communication, graphic design and printing, media coverage, script writers, multimedia, web design mailing and merchandising (Musterman and Wood, 2006).
4. **Entertainment And Social Programmes.** Do we want a dynamic event? Entertainment, artists, DJs, Karaoke, shows, cultural visits, music evenings
5. **Stage and Furnishing.** What kind of presentation do we want? Furnishing hire, digital visual art, party commodities, platforms, stages, decor and design, stage design and assembly, notices, signposting and labelling.
6. **Social Programme.** How many free time activities shall we offer? Lunches and dinners, catering, gala dinners, opening and closing ceremonies and gifts.
7. **The Venue.** Where do we want to hold the event? Town halls, boats bars and discos, wine cellars and vineyards, congress and convention centres, historic buildings, castles, palaces, sport facilities, in the open air, hotels, restaurants, lounges(Beloviene et al, 2013).

Shone and Parry (2010) categorised special events into personal events, leisure events, cultural events and organisational events. RIE Conferences seem to fall into organisational events. Typology of events by Getz (2007) include cultural celebrations, private events, political, state, recreational, educational/ scientific, sport competitions, business/trade and art and entertainment. RIE can be classified as educational and scientific.

#### 6.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Event Communication

The motivation to attend conferences by audience and participants are mainly defined under economic, participation, social and political benefits (Goldblatt, 2002). In an earlier paper by Bell and Tunnicliff (1996) titled "Future Search for Stakeholders", encourage using a large number of stakeholders when holding conferences. Using more stakeholders was described as a basis of building more knowledge and resources that bring a rich picture to conference goals and objectives. When preparing for a conference, organisations like RIE should treat all its participants as part of its stakeholders. Boesso and Kumark (2009) described a firm as a nexus of connections and contracts between stakeholders with managers as the central node. In this discussion, RIE could identify universities and college lecturers as important stakeholders who need to be managed at various stages of conference preparations. The study by Boesso and Kumar (2009) indicate that the greater the priority accorded to the stakeholder group, the greater the efforts required at engaging that stakeholder group through communication, resource sharing and planning.

### VII.Methodology

The research philosophy used was mainly positivism which applied exploratory survey methods. A sample of 100 respondents was taken from 10 Zimbabwean Universities and 15 Colleges, covering Mutare, Harare, Masvingo, Bulawayo, Gweru, Kwekwe and Bindura. Both teacher training and polytechnic colleges were covered in this study. The study used quota sampling and judgemental sampling. The respondents were those who knew about RIE but did not attend the 2012 event. Some detail of respondents are shown by Table I below.

**Table I Demographic Factors of Respondents**

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
Station: University	64	64.00
College	36 <b>100</b>	36.00
Gender: Male	62	62.00
Female	38 <b>100</b>	38.00
Age : Below 31	6	6.00
31 to 40	24	24.00

41 – 50	28	28.00
51 – 60	33	33.00
Above 61	9	100
Area of specialisation: Science	20	20.00
Arts	17	17.00
Maths	14	14.00
Commerce	30	30.00
S. Sciences	19	100
Income levels: <\$501	7	7.00
\$501 – \$1100	38	38.00
\$1101 and above	55	100
Number of dependents: <3	23	23.00
3 to 5	36	36.00
6 to 8	29	29.00
>9	12	100
Qualifications: Diploma	21	21.00
Degree and above	79	100
Experience in T.E.: 0 – 2	12	12.00
3 – 5	41	41.00
6 – 8	30	30.00
9 and above	17	100
Locations: In and around Harare	51	51.00
Away and far from Harare	49	100

Source: Survey Results 2013

### VIII. Findings And Discussions Of Results

The discussion of research results start with analysing the attitudes of lecturers to conferences, the institution specific factors and communication needs of lecturers. Basic mean value analysis and hypotheses testing are used for stressing the relative weight of responses.

#### 8.1 Attitudes To The RIE Research Conferences

##### 8.1.1 Mean Value Analysis

The discussion on this measure started with variables with the smallest mean values.

Table II: Attitudes to RIE 2012 Conferences

	Mean
Longer time was scheduled for RIE Conference.	2.43
Nature of presenters not attractive.	3.11
Nature of topics to be discussed not interesting.	2.83
Venue and accommodation problems.	2.20
Timing of the programme not conducive to my situation.	2.55
General attendance not rewarded.	2.04
Lack of knowledge on the importance of RIE Conference.	2.44
Not knowing that I am the target participant.	2.62
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>2.5275</b>

Source: Survey Results 2013

**General attendance not rewarded(M=2.04).** This was the most pressing problem that could have caused low participation by lecturers in RIO-SET 2012. The RIE Conference attendance by the audience has no immediate reward attached to it. Delegates might feel not recognised by the hosting organisation. Nature of rewards and their value might need to be determined and offered to attract and retain more participants and delegates. **Venue and accommodation problems(M=2.20).**The venue could be located far away from the generality of target participants. Some people feel that venue might need to be set at a central place like Gweru or on rotation basis to capture more lecturers who are located in universities around the country. Some lecturers will need to look for hotel accommodation on their own which might be expensive. This could be a reason which caused low turnout in 2012 Conference. **Longer time was scheduled for RIE Conference(M=2.43).**The respondents felt that RIE Conference could take 3 days of their crucial time. Conference that take fewer days might be more popular since delegates might want to attend to other personal, professional and social functions elsewhere. A 3 day conference could be optimal if resources and facilities are conducive to accommodate such delegates. **Lack of knowledge on the importance of RIE Conference(M=2.44).** This fourth ranked attitude factor indicate lack of cognitive understanding by lecturers on the value of RIE Conferences in their personal, professional and economic development. This might be covered by increasing intensity of awareness based promotional

programmes. Jones (2012) said delegates attend conferences which improve their status and credentials. **Timing of the programme not conducive to my situation (M=2.55)**. Some respondents felt the conference was set at a time when they were busy with work schedules. The last semester of the year and third terms of most colleges are scheduled with examination preparation. Lecturers might be doing other income generating activities that they might view as more beneficial than attending RIE Conferences. **Not knowing that I am the target participant (M=2.62)**. Some lecturers felt that the RIE Conference was targeting all people who can display their intellectual capabilities. The focus of research and publications was diluted by the wider presentations like dramas, music, farming displays and sports. This could have given lecturers option not to attend the 2012 RIE Conference. **Nature of topics to be discussed not interesting (M=2.83)**. This was a 50:50 rating where others felt topics need to be upgraded and others felt topics were generally interesting and importance could be linked much on other factors other than attendance levels. The Ministry is currently refocusing the topics to meet the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics mandate. **Nature of presenters not attractive (M=3.11)**. The mean value was 3.11. This was above 2.50 and the factor was of low power to be blamed for influencing non-attendance of lecturers Delegates for such conferences are attracted by personalities, such as professors, doctors and other influential presenters. RIO-SET started by using influential local and international key note and plenary presenters who were attractive to the audience as per programmes. Other reasons could be responsible for low attendance in 2012.

### 8.1.2 Hypothesis Testing On Attitudes towards Rie Conference

$H_1$  : There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between those in Harare and those outside Harare.

$H_2$ : There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between Universities and Colleges.

$H_3$ : There are no significant differences in attitudes to RIE conference between male and female respondents.

**Table III: Summary of Test Statistics**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Inside and around Harare & Away and far from Harare	8	0.566	0.144
Pair 2	University & College	8	0.547	0.161
Pair 3	Male & Female	8	0.922	0.001

## IX. Results

### **H<sub>1</sub>: Fail to accept H1, r=0.566, p=0.144**

When organising conferences there is need to differentiate those travelling from distant areas and those coming from the locality. The study established that there are some differences in attitudes between those lecturers around Harare and those far away from Harare. It shows distance affect attitude to conferences and hence the participation levels.

### **H<sub>2</sub>: Fail to accept H2, r=0.547, p=0.161**

There were noted differences in attitudes between college lecturers and university lecturers on the RIE features. Universities and colleges are all in the tertiary education sector and fall under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. The emphasis on research seems to be more inclined to universities than in colleges. Lecturers in universities are directly promoted based on the quality and quantity of their research output. As a result, university based people could have higher motivation to research, present and attend conferences than their counterparts based in colleges.

### **H<sub>3</sub>: Accept H3, r=0.922, p=0.001**

Attitude to conferences can vary on gender lines. The study established that there is no gender differences on the attitudes to RIE Conferences between male and female lecturers. Similarity of attitudes could be linked to similarity of expectations of both gender groups to the conference benefits.

## 9.2 Institution Specific Factors

### 9.2.1 Mean Value Analysis

The discussion of results started with those with smallest mean and representing the most critical problem under institution specific factors. The mean values are given in front of each variable.

**Table 1.4 Institutions Specific Means**

	Mean
Lack of resources for funding the travel.	2.08
The institution was on vacation hence lecturers not available.	3.22
Some key institution programmes clashed with RIE dates.	2.73
Discouragement by peers and colleagues.	2.88
Discouragement by bosses.	2.27
Lack of preparation for the conference by the institution.	2.57
Lack of research culture in the institution.	1.93
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>2.5257</b>

Source: Survey Results 2013

**Lack of research culture in the institution(M=1.93).** Lecturers felt that participation in RIE Conference was hampered by lack of shared research culture in their institutions. Some institutions say that lecturers should research at their own spare time. This kills the hearts of researchers and make them fail to appreciate any institution that encourage research work. This could have caused a low turn out of lecturers at RIE 2012. “Headmasters” of these universities and colleges differ in the way they appreciate and implement research cultures. Some just speak about its importance. Others support by offering resources and walking the talk. Others punish those who research though in a subtle way. **Lack of resources for funding the travel(M=2.08).** This was rated the second pressing institution specific problem. College and universities lack enough resources to fund more lecturers to attend such conferences. Due to lack of seriousness and insight, some college and university administrators just refused to pay out for such conferences. This could have made 2012 a less populated conference than optimal.

**Discouragement by bosses(M=2.27).** Respondents felt that most of their supervisors pay lip service in the area of research and development issues. Preparations and actual participation is reduced since some immediate supervisors fail to consciously value research. They say out discouraging statements to their subordinates and even give them some duties that will make it impossible to prepare and attend RIE Conference. This might have led to low participation of lecturers at RIE 2012. **Lack of preparation for the conference by the institution(M=2.57).** It seems institutions will always fire fight to ensure that RIE Conferences is attended. Failure to prepare could mean that time tables, resources and other networking was not aligned to the RIE dates, this could have reduced number of lecturers who participated in the 2012 RIE Conference. **Some key institution programmes clashed with RIE dates(m=2.73).** Some colleges could be preparing for graduations, holding sports days, examinations, tutorials and workshops. This means the lecturers were caught up in such local programmes and fail to attend the 2012 RIE Conference. **Discouragement by peers and colleagues(M=2.88).** Though at lower rate, some lecturers indicated that their peers could have discouraged them to travel such distance for sharing research information. This could have held a couple of lecturers backward for attending the RIE 2012 Conference. **The institution was on vacation hence lecturers not available(M=3.22).** The early September of 2012 RIE date had some colleges on vacation and lecturers could be in their homes. This could have led to lower numbers at RIE 2012. Fortunately, this factor was not covering universities whose semesters were already opened.

**9.2.2 Hypothesis Testing On Institution Specific Factors**

*H<sub>4</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between those in Harare and those outside Harare.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between Universities and Colleges.*

*H<sub>6</sub>: There are no significant differences in institution specific challenges to RIE conference attendance between males and females.*

**Table V: Summary of Institution Specific Challenges Statistics**

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Inside and around Harare & Away and far from Harare	7	0.824	0.023
Pair 2 University & College	7	0.868	0.011
Pair 3 Male & Female	7	0.591	0.162

**H<sub>4</sub>: Accept H<sub>4</sub>, r=0.824, p=0.023**

It appears the challenges facing institutions seem to be similar whether near Harare or far away from Harare. Institution specific challenges could be based on management style, resource levels and research culture. These factors could be distance-neutral.

**H<sub>5</sub>: Accept H5, r=0.868, p=0.011**

The study established that institutional challenges of colleges and universities are generally similar. RIE will expect higher attendance if both colleges and universities solve their research linked challenges.

**H<sub>6</sub>: Fail to accept H6, r=0.591, p=0.162**

The study established that male lecturers and female lecturers felt institutional challenges at different levels. The gender differences in roles, attitudes and perceptions could be behind that. Male lecturers were generally unmoved by institution specific challenges than female lecturers.

**9.3 Communication Needs behind Low Attendance to RIE 2012**

**9.3.1 Mean Value Analysis**

**Table VI: Communication Needs Means**

	Mean
Need to use mass media (TV, Radio, Newspapers, etc)	1.83
Use of Individual e-mails.	2.27
Telephoning each lecturer.	3.00
Institutional visits to each college/university and address lecturers.	1.77
Exhibitions at ZITF, Bookfair, Agricultural Show, etc.	2.08
Constant reminders and high frequency of communication.	2.09
Putting individual incentives and recognition on attendance (e.g. Cups, T-Shirts, Certificates, etc.)	1.92
Incentives to College/University with a higher attendance percentage.	2.17
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>2.1413</b>

**Institutional Visits To Each College/University And Address Lecturers(M=1.77).** This was the most preferred approach for communicating the RIO-SET conferences. Human contact is highly important for a strong and lasting communication impact. For this programme that was at some introductory phase, RIE officers could go and sell the idea in the relevant institutions. Prospective respondents will get the importance of attending such conferences. RIE might not have done this approach before. This communication approach has power to address some institutional problems of these universities and colleges. **Need to use Mass Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers)(M=1.83).** The mass media was used by RIE for the call for papers and announcing dates for conferences. This will touch many people, including lecturers and will encourage more participation. The message should indicate that RIE is the mother of other conferences done by individual colleges and universities in the country and even Southern of the Sahara. **Putting individual incentives and recognition on attendance(M=1.92)** All lecturers feel highly motivated to attend seminars, conferences and workshops where their attendance is recognised. Even those who will be part of the audience need such recognition. The knowledge they get is useful directly and indirectly to the whole society. This will put some seriousness on the programme. Immediate incentives could be lunches and teas. Some RIE Conference buses that ferry people to and from town could incentivise people to attend plenary and parallel sessions. **Exhibitions at ZITF, Bookfair, Agricultural Shows(M=2.08)** The RIE should have a stand under each exhibition platform. Big ideas need to be displayed and shown to people. Journals, publication papers and intellectual property that were displayed through RIE could be shown to the people. If society see the programme to be important then lecturers will be pushed to attend in high numbers. **Constant Reminders And High Frequency Of Communication(M=2.09)** This was raised as the fifth important event. Communication strategy for increasing lectures attendance at RIE Conferences. When all messages are fed, the communication budget should be enough to fund more frequent messages to remind potential and current participants of the event. **Incentives To College/ University With A Higher Attendance Percentage(M=2.17)** The research established that attendance could be boosted by engaging principals and vice chancellors of respective academic institutions and universities. If colleges are competing for sending more delegates to RIE, we will expect more lecturers than in the 2012 session. Supervisors of these lecturers will ensure that their subordinates are provided with resources and other facilities that improve attendance. **Use of individual e-mails of lecturers** was ranked seventh(M=2.77) while **telephoning each lecturer** put at number eight(M=3.00). These two approaches are part of direct marketing to prospects. These were expected to upgrade attendance. The confirmation of logistics to attend could be in the hands of college and university management. Pressure from the sending institution, colleagues and society members seems important for lecturers to attend the RIE Conference than the direct efforts of RIE itself.

### 9.3.2 Hypothesis Testing For Communication Needs For Participants

*H<sub>7</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between those in Harare and those outside Harare.*

*H<sub>8</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between Universities and Colleges.*

*H<sub>9</sub>: There are no significant differences in communication needs behind low attendance to RIE conference between males and females.*

**Table VII: Summary Statistics for Communication Needs**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Inside and around Harare & Away and far from Harare	8	0.972	0.000
Pair 2	University & College	8	0.917	0.001
Pair 3	Male & Female	8	0.972	0.000

## X. Results

### **H<sub>7</sub>: Accept H7, r=0.972, p=0.000**

Communication barriers are linked to personalities and institutional challenges. From this study, there is no difference on the communication needs of institutions closer to Harare and those far away from Harare. RIE needs to apply similar communication tools and strategies for all lecturers regardless of their institutional location.

### **H<sub>8</sub>: Accept H8, r=0.917, p=0.001**

There is similar communication needs for all lecturers whether at a university or a college. RIE needs to use similar rigour in communicating with principals, deans, vice chancellors, directors, professors and lecturers of all types of academic institutions.

### **H<sub>9</sub>: Accept H9, r=0.972, p=0.000**

There are no gender differences on communication strategies to ensure increase in attendance to RIE Conferences between male and female lecturers. There is need to widen communication media and approaches for all stakeholders regardless of their gender type.

### 10.1 Intention to Participate by Respondents

From this presentation, if RIE implements the recommendations from this study, about 66% participants are going to attend the next RIE Conference (most likely, likely and may attend).

**Table VIII: Overall Commend And Intentions.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Most likely to attend	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Likely to attend	18	18.0	18.0	43.0
	May attend	23	23.0	23.0	66.0
	Uncertain	17	17.0	17.0	83.0
	Unlikely to attend	16	16.0	16.0	99.0
	Most unlikely to attend	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey Results, 2013.

Creating positive participants attitudes, dealing with sources of institutional barriers and communicating the conference in a persuasive manner will increase the likelihood of lecturer attendance in future RIE Conferences.

## XI. Conclusions

The study on lecturer participation at RIE Conferences produced the following conclusions.

### 9.1 Lecturer's Attitudes On The RIE Conference And Their Participation

The lecturers perceived that attendance for RIE was not rewarded, venue and accommodation had challenges, longer time was scheduled for the RIE Conference, lecturers lacked knowledge on the importance of RIE Conference and conference programmes time-tabled when lecturers were busy. These conference participation and lecturer attitude related factors could have largely caused the low participation of college and university lecturers in the RIE 2012(Now RIO-SET).

### 9.2 Institution of Origin Specific Challenges Behind Low Attendance by Lecturers.

The study established that colleges and universities lacked research cultures, lacked resources, had discouraging bosses and peers, lacked preparation and had programmes that clashed with RIE dates. These factors could have

made the RIE 2012 get fewer academic visitors (lecturers). Source institutions were seen to be influential in the success or failure of the host's conferences.

### **9.3 Communication Needs Behind Success Of Lecturer Participation At RIE Conferences**

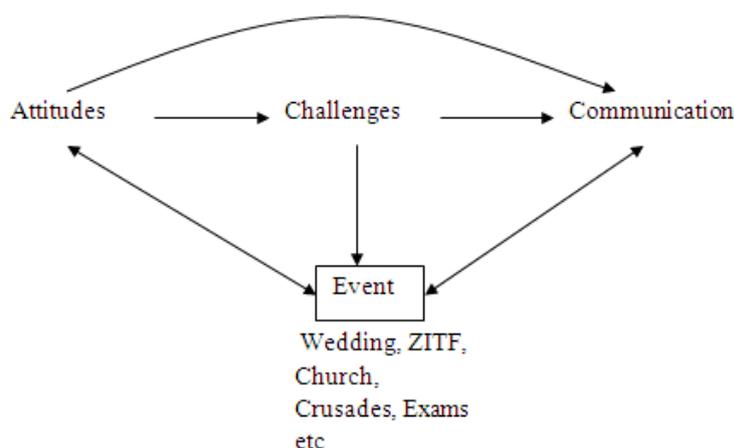
The lecturers were found to require institutional visits by RIE staff, use mass media like TV, Radio and newspapers, use of incentives and recognition on attendance by RIE, exhibitions at ZITF, Agricultural Shows and Bookfair, and constant reminder communications. Incentives to college/university that bring more lecturers, use of e-mails and telephoning each lecturer were also given as communication strategies for boosting lecturer participation.

### **9.4 A New Events Management Model: The Attitudes, Challenges and Communication Model(AC C-Model)**

**Attitudes** – Are emotional feelings towards an object or idea. It could be a positive or negative emotional feelings towards specific programme features such as that of RIE.

**Challenges** – Institutional specific hindrances. These are challenges that participants face in their own organisations. Event organisers need to draw people from their institutional cocoons and spheres.

**Communication** – Approaches to influence and attract participants to the conference or event centres. Communication depends on the nature of target audience and participants.



**Fig III: Our Own Events Model**

The above model links event organisers to event participants by analysing the attitudes, challenges and communication needs of those participants. This will enable increase in the number of participants at each conference or event. This proactive model is applicable at weddings, exhibitions, examinations, church events or gatherings, political rallies, workshops, summits, conventions and conferences at family, village, regional and global level.

## **XII. Recommendations**

The RIE secretariat is recommended to continuously communicate the benefits that lecturers might get from attending conferences. Institutions should contribute funds for lunches and teas for lecturers in their establishment. This commitment fee will drive supervisors to put effort to encourage lecturers to attend the RIE Conference. Certificates of attendance need to be issued to participants and audience that attend all the three days of RIE Conference. This will link recognition, incentives and lecturer participation. There is need to seek funding to assist in accommodation for all lecturers from places outside Harare. The Belvedere, Harare Polytechnic and other boarding facilities could be used preferably if RIE is done by August Holiday. RIE should lead in campaigns to encourage research within tertiary education institutions. This can be done through engaging institutions in managing their research inputs and outputs. Publishing of presented papers should be done immediately to attract presenters and lecturers. Lecturers favour conference platforms that run journals which publish interesting articles in time. Multi-media channels must be used to communicate the event to different places.

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