

Research Engagement of Faculty in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines faculty attitudes toward research, exploring their perceptions, challenges, and motivations in engaging with scholarly activities. Using a qualitative approach, the study interviewed faculty members to assess their perspectives on the significance of research, institutional support, and the barriers they face. Findings indicate that while faculty generally recognize the importance of research in professional growth and academic development, factors such as workload, lack of resources, and limited institutional incentives hinder active participation. The study highlights the need for enhanced support systems, including training, funding opportunities, and workload adjustments, to foster a more research-driven academic culture. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and academic leaders aiming to strengthen research engagement among faculty members.

INTRODUCTION

Research is widely recognized as a central function of higher education institutions, serving as a driver of knowledge production, innovation, and academic advancement. Beyond contributing to disciplinary development, research activities also enhance institutional credibility and competitiveness. In this context, faculty members play a pivotal role, as their engagement in scholarly work directly shapes both academic output and institutional reputation. At Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT), research forms part of the institution's core mandate; however, faculty involvement in research is influenced by a range of interconnected personal and institutional factors.

In many teaching-oriented institutions, faculty members must simultaneously fulfill instructional, research, and administrative responsibilities. This multifaceted role often creates competing demands that affect research participation. Heavy teaching loads, limited time, and administrative duties can restrict opportunities for sustained scholarly engagement. As a result, research may be deprioritized, not due to lack of interest, but because of structural constraints within the institution.

Institutional support also plays a significant role in shaping research engagement. Access to funding, research facilities, mentorship, administrative assistance, and collaborative networks can either facilitate or hinder faculty productivity. When these forms of support are insufficient, initiating and maintaining research projects becomes more challenging. In smaller or regionally focused institutions such as PIT, resource limitations may further affect faculty perceptions of research feasibility and sustainability.

Personal motivation is another important factor. Faculty members differ in the extent to which they are driven by intellectual curiosity, professional growth, recognition, or institutional incentives. While some view research as an avenue for self-development and contribution to their academic fields, others may prioritize teaching or administrative commitments. Understanding these motivational dynamics is essential in examining how faculty members position research within their professional roles.

Collaboration likewise influences research outcomes. Productive research environments often rely on collegial networks and interdisciplinary partnerships. However, limited access to research networks or geographic and institutional isolation can reduce opportunities for collaboration. Exploring how faculty members perceive and experience collaborative research is therefore necessary to understand the broader research culture at PIT.

Despite existing literature on faculty research productivity, much of it centers on large research universities, with less attention given to teaching-focused institutions. This creates a gap in understanding the realities faced by faculty in smaller institutions. Addressing this gap is particularly relevant for PIT, where strengthening research engagement is essential not only for academic growth but also for institutional visibility, funding opportunities, and alignment with national and global standards.

Given these considerations, this study seeks to examine faculty perspectives on research at Palompon Institute of Technology. Specifically, it explores faculty

attitudes toward research, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to navigate these obstacles. By providing insight into these domains, the study aims to contribute to the development of policies and practices that foster a more supportive and sustainable research environment at PIT.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Active participation in research is widely regarded as a defining feature of academic work. Beyond strengthening institutional reputation, research involvement supports faculty members' intellectual growth and career advancement. Nevertheless, research productivity does not occur in isolation; it is shaped by a combination of personal, professional, and organizational factors. In institutions where teaching remains the dominant responsibility—such as Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT)—maintaining a balance between instruction and scholarship presents an ongoing challenge. Faculty perceptions of research are closely linked to their professional experiences, aspirations, and the broader academic environment in which they operate. For many academics, research forms part of their scholarly identity and serves as a pathway for contributing new insights to their discipline. McGrail, Rickard, and Jones (2006) observed that faculty who consistently engage in research often consider it integral to their academic role. However, in institutions that emphasize teaching, research may be viewed as a supplementary responsibility rather than a central obligation. Under such conditions, faculty members may allocate more energy to classroom instruction unless institutional mechanisms explicitly encourage research engagement.

One of the most frequently cited obstacles to research productivity is limited time. The multiple responsibilities assigned to faculty—teaching, committee work, and administrative tasks—can significantly reduce opportunities for sustained research activity. Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) found that role overload often restricts scholarly output, as faculty struggle to manage competing expectations. This situation is particularly evident in teaching-oriented institutions, where high instructional loads leave little room for long-term research planning. In addition, insufficient access to research funding, facilities, and technical support can further impede scholarly progress. Brew and Boud (1995) highlighted that inadequate resources can weaken research performance and diminish faculty confidence in pursuing projects.

Organizational backing is therefore essential in cultivating a productive research environment. Institutions that invest in research infrastructure—such as grants, mentorship systems, and administrative assistance—tend to demonstrate stronger faculty output (Bland et al., 2005). For institutions with limited material resources, perceptions of institutional commitment become even more important. When faculty believe that research is valued and supported, they are more likely to sustain engagement despite constraints.

Motivational factors also play a decisive role in shaping research participation. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) explain that human behavior is influenced by both intrinsic drivers—such as curiosity and personal satisfaction—and extrinsic factors, including recognition,

promotion, or financial incentives. In academic settings, intrinsic motivation often manifests as a desire to expand knowledge or solve disciplinary problems, while extrinsic motivation may stem from career advancement opportunities. Understanding how these motivational forces operate within PIT can provide insight into why some faculty remain active researchers while others focus primarily on teaching responsibilities.

Collaboration represents another important dimension of research productivity. Working with colleagues can enhance both the quality and volume of scholarly output, as shared expertise and distributed workload increase efficiency. Bozeman and Corley (2004) demonstrated that collaborative researchers are generally more productive and publish more frequently. Collaborative arrangements may also help address resource and time limitations. However, faculty in smaller or geographically distant institutions may encounter difficulties in building research networks, which can limit opportunities for joint projects and interdisciplinary work.

Professional development initiatives further contribute to strengthening research engagement. Structured programs that offer mentorship, methodological training, and opportunities for scholarly exchange can build faculty confidence and competence. Bland et al. (2005) emphasized that supportive development programs often lead to sustained improvements in research performance. In contexts like PIT, where research capacity may still be evolving, targeted faculty development could serve as a strategic intervention to enhance productivity.

Institutional culture exerts a powerful influence on how research is perceived and prioritized. Tierney and Rhoads (1993) argued that organizational norms and reward systems shape faculty behavior. When institutions publicly acknowledge and reward research achievements, they reinforce the value of scholarship within the academic community. Conversely, when teaching performance is the primary basis for evaluation, research engagement may decline. Adjustments in promotion policies, incentive structures, and recognition systems can therefore signal a stronger institutional commitment to research. Improving faculty research productivity requires a comprehensive approach that addresses structural barriers while strengthening motivational drivers. Strategies such as reallocating workloads, expanding funding access, encouraging collaboration, and establishing clear research-support policies have been recommended as effective measures (Deem & Lucas, 2007). For teaching-focused institutions like PIT, aligning these strategies with institutional goals may gradually cultivate a more dynamic and sustainable research culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using in-depth interviews to explore conflict management practices in a higher education setting. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a detailed examination of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations. Through intensive, individual interviews with a carefully selected group of respondents, the study sought to gain a deeper understanding of how conflict is

managed within the institution and how such practices influence faculty and employee experiences and performance. The research was conducted at Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT), which served as the primary setting of the study. As a developing State University and College (SUC), PIT offers a dynamic academic environment characterized by diverse organizational roles and evolving institutional systems. This context makes it an appropriate site for examining how conflict management processes operate within a higher education institution and how these processes affect its workforce. Participants were selected to ensure a broad and comprehensive representation of perspectives within the institution. The study included faculty members, administrative personnel, support staff, and institutional leaders. By involving individuals occupying different roles, the research aimed to capture varied experiences and viewpoints regarding conflict management practices and their implications for workplace performance and professional well-being.

Data were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide composed of two sections. The first part collected demographic information, while the second consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about participants' experiences and perceptions. The interview guide was prepared in both English and Cebuano to ensure clarity and accessibility for all participants. Prior to data collection, the interview questions underwent content validation by the research adviser and subject experts to ensure relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study objectives. The interview process was conducted in multiple phases, allowing the researcher to refine the guide as necessary to obtain richer and more meaningful data. Before conducting the interviews, formal permission was secured from the Office of Research Services of PIT. Participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as respondents. Each participant was individually scheduled for a semi-structured interview lasting approximately thirty minutes. Interviews were conducted one at a time to ensure privacy and focus, and responses were recorded with permission to ensure accuracy. As data collection progressed, the researcher compared emerging responses across participants to determine when data saturation had been achieved. Following the completion of the interviews, the collected data were organized and prepared for systematic analysis. The study utilized thematic analysis to interpret the qualitative data. This method involves identifying patterns of meaning across a dataset in a systematic manner. The process began with familiarization, during which the researcher carefully reviewed the transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the responses. The next step involved coding, where meaningful segments of text were labeled to capture essential ideas. These codes were then examined to identify broader patterns, leading to the development of preliminary themes. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected the data and were supported by sufficient evidence. Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its central meaning. Finally, the findings were organized into a coherent narrative that addressed the research objectives and highlighted the key insights derived from the analysis. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Approval to conduct the

research was obtained from the appropriate institutional authorities. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and they were assured that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained by withholding identifying information in all records, analyses, and reports. Interview sessions were conducted in a manner that protected participants' privacy, and all collected data were securely handled to ensure confidentiality. These measures were implemented to uphold ethical standards and safeguard the rights and well-being of all participants.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Attitudes of Faculty Members Toward Engaging in Research

This section presents the findings on faculty attitudes toward research engagement in higher education institutions. The results indicate a range of perspectives, from strong enthusiasm to reluctance, shaped by personal motivation and institutional conditions.

Table 1. Attitude of the Faculty Members in Engaging in Research

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Enthusiastic about research	Passion for research	Positive Attitudes Towards Research
Views research as professional growth	Research as career advancement	
Research as a contribution to institutional development	Institutional impact	
Positive but cautious attitude	Willingness with conditions	Conditional Engagement in Research
Recognizes the need for support	Need for institutional assistance	
Sees research as improving teaching	Research for pedagogical enhancement	Recognition of Research Benefits
Views research as knowledge advancement	Research as academic contribution	

Passive attitude towards research	Research as a burden	Negative Attitudes Towards Research
Prioritization of teaching over research	Preference for teaching responsibilities	
Lack of motivation due to incentives	Need for rewards and recognition	Institutional Barriers to Research Engagement
Intimidation by research complexity	Research perceived as challenging	
Need for advanced skills and resources	Skills and resource constraints	

Theme 1: Positive Attitudes Toward Research

Some faculty members demonstrate strong enthusiasm for research, viewing it as essential to professional growth and institutional development. They consider research a way to deepen disciplinary expertise and remain updated in their fields. This aligns with scholarship emphasizing research as central to academic identity and advancement (Brew & Boud, 2009; Boyer, 1990). Faculty with positive attitudes often display intrinsic motivation and pursue research initiatives even with limited external incentives.

Theme 2: Conditional Engagement in Research

Another group expresses willingness to engage in research but under certain conditions. Their participation depends largely on institutional support such as funding, training, mentorship, and manageable workloads. Balancing teaching responsibilities with research is a major concern. Without adjustments in workload, research tends to be deprioritized. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting the importance of institutional structures in sustaining research productivity (Altbach, 2015; Bland & Ruffin, 1992).

Theme 3: Recognition of Research Benefits

Many faculty members acknowledge the benefits of research for teaching effectiveness and career advancement. Research allows them to update instructional materials and apply evidence-based practices in the classroom (Healey, 2005). They also recognize its role in promotion, professional credibility, and academic networking. Participation in conferences and publications expands scholarly connections and strengthens professional visibility (Gibbs, 2010; Neumann, 1992).

Theme 4: Negative Attitudes Toward Research

Some faculty members perceive research as an additional burden. Heavy teaching and administrative duties limit their time and energy for scholarly work. In the absence of clear incentives, research may not be prioritized (McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Others feel discouraged by the complexity of research processes and their limited methodological expertise, indicating a need for targeted research capacity-building initiatives (Brew, 2001).

Theme 5: Institutional Barriers to Research Engagement

Institutional constraints significantly influence faculty research engagement. Limited funding, inadequate access to scholarly resources, and unclear incentive systems reduce motivation (Austin, 2002; Altbach & Salmi, 2011). Heavy teaching loads further restrict time for research activities. Institutions seeking to strengthen research culture must implement policies that provide structured support, recognition, and balanced workload distribution (Bland & Schmitz, 2006).

Challenges Faced by Faculty Members in Conducting Research

Faculty members at PIT encounter multiple obstacles in pursuing research. These challenges range from limited institutional support and financial constraints to heavy workloads and restricted access to scholarly resources. While some faculty members actively seek ways to overcome these difficulties, others struggle due to structural limitations. The themes derived from the data are summarized below.

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Faculty Members in Conducting Research

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Limited access to research funding	Financial constraints	Institutional and Resource Challenges
Limited access to research resources	Availability of materials and tools	
Absence of institutional research support	Lack of incentives and research infrastructure	
Lack of access to research grants and journals	Limited institutional provisions	
Creative maximization of available materials	Resourcefulness in overcoming barriers	Faculty Strategies for Research Engagement
Collaboration with colleagues	Peer support and teamwork	

Efficient scheduling and prioritization	Adaptive time management strategies	
Seeking external guidance	Proactive search for mentorship	
Attending research seminars	Capacity-building initiatives	
Struggles with time management	Difficulty balancing tasks	Time Constraints and Workload Challenges
Teaching workload	Competing responsibilities	
Overwhelming workload	Heavy teaching and administrative duties	
Lack of research mentors	Need for academic guidance	Gaps in Research Support
Lack of technical support	Absence of institutional research assistance	
Difficulty obtaining reliable data	Barriers in data collection	Research Accessibility Issues
Limited access to digital libraries	Digital divide and research accessibility	

Theme 1: Institutional and Resource Challenges

A major concern among faculty members is the limited availability of institutional support, particularly in terms of research funding and access to academic materials. Many participants indicated that financial assistance for research projects is insufficient, forcing some to rely on personal funds. Such limitations can reduce the scope and sustainability of research initiatives. Access to updated journals, databases, and laboratory or digital resources also remains a challenge. Restricted subscriptions and limited infrastructure affect the quality and depth of scholarly work. In addition, the absence of clear incentives and formal recognition for research contributions weakens motivation. When research efforts are not acknowledged through awards, workload adjustments, or career advancement opportunities, engagement tends to decline.

Theme 2: Faculty Strategies for Research Engagement

Despite institutional constraints, many faculty members demonstrate initiative and adaptability. Collaboration with colleagues is one of the most common strategies. Through teamwork, faculty share expertise, divide

responsibilities, and expand access to research materials. Others pursue professional development opportunities by attending seminars, workshops, and training programs to strengthen their research skills. Seeking external mentors and building networks beyond the institution also help compensate for limited internal support. Some faculty rely on open-access databases, inter-institutional partnerships, or small-scale self-funded projects to continue their research activities. These approaches reflect resilience and a commitment to scholarly engagement despite structural challenges.

Theme 3: Time Constraints and Workload Challenges

Heavy teaching loads and administrative duties significantly restrict time for research. Many faculty members report difficulty balancing instructional responsibilities, committee work, and scholarly activities. Research is often postponed due to competing priorities within the institution. However, some faculty members attempt to manage this pressure by organizing their schedules strategically. They allocate research tasks during academic breaks, integrate research topics into their teaching, or prioritize projects based on feasibility. Effective time management appears to be an important factor in sustaining research productivity under demanding conditions.

Theme 4: Gaps in Research Support

The absence of mentorship and technical assistance presents another barrier. Several faculty members expressed difficulty navigating research design, data analysis, and publication processes without experienced guidance. The lack of research coordinators or statistical support services further complicates the process. To address these gaps, some faculty members seek external training, enroll in online courses, or consult experienced researchers outside the institution. These efforts indicate the importance of structured mentorship systems and technical assistance in strengthening institutional research capacity.

Theme 5: Research Accessibility Issues

Limited access to reliable literature and research data also constrains scholarly work. Restricted subscriptions to high-impact journals and limited digital library access create disadvantages, particularly for institutions with fewer technological resources. Data collection presents additional difficulties, including bureaucratic procedures, limited respondent access, and complex ethical approval requirements. To overcome these barriers, faculty members often collaborate with other universities, utilize open-access resources, or establish partnerships that provide shared database access. These strategies demonstrate adaptability in navigating research accessibility limitations.

Ways to Address the Challenges

Faculty members at PIT adopt various strategies to overcome research-related challenges. While many demonstrate proactive engagement through collaboration, professional development, and external resource mobilization, others struggle to sustain their research efforts due to institutional limitations and competing responsibilities. The following themes outline both the adaptive strategies employed and the barriers that continue to hinder full research commitment.

Table 3. Faculty Strategies for Addressing Research Challenges

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Collaborative research projects	Shared workload and responsibilities	Faculty Collaboration and Support
Participation in training workshops and seminars	Skill development and research confidence	Capacity Building and Professional Growth
Exploration of alternative funding sources	External partnerships for financial support	Resource Mobilization Strategies
Postponement of research projects	Delayed engagement due to institutional constraints	Challenges in Sustained Research Engagement
Limited participation in research activities	Engagement in minimal or partial research efforts	Barriers to Full Research Commitment
Abandonment of research activities	Complete disengagement due to competing priorities	Withdrawal from Research Engagement

Theme 1: Faculty Collaboration and Support

Collaboration emerges as a central strategy for addressing research challenges. Through joint research projects, faculty members share responsibilities, divide tasks, and support one another in managing heavy workloads. This collaborative approach reduces individual burden while enhancing the quality and scope of research outputs. Beyond task-sharing, collaboration fosters a supportive academic environment where faculty exchange ideas, provide feedback, and mentor one another. Such peer engagement strengthens institutional research culture and promotes interdisciplinary perspectives. However, effective collaboration requires clear communication and defined roles. Differences in research interests or unequal task distribution may undermine productivity if not properly managed. Structured agreements and transparent expectations are therefore essential to maximize the benefits of collaborative research.

Theme 2: Capacity Building and Professional Growth

Faculty members also address research challenges by engaging in professional development activities, including workshops and research seminars. These initiatives enhance research skills, increase confidence, and

improve competence in proposal writing, data analysis, and publication processes. Training programs also create opportunities for networking and mentorship, enabling faculty members to learn from experienced researchers. Such engagement supports both early-career and experienced academics in refining their research practices. Despite these benefits, access to training may be limited by financial constraints or scheduling conflicts with teaching responsibilities. Sustained institutional investment in faculty development and flexible scheduling arrangements are therefore critical to strengthening research capacity.

Theme 3: Resource Mobilization Strategies

In response to limited institutional funding, faculty members actively seek alternative financial support through partnerships with local government units, private organizations, and other universities. External collaborations provide supplementary resources that enable research continuity despite budget limitations. Faculty members also maximize available institutional resources, such as open-access journals, shared equipment, and inter-institutional data-sharing arrangements. This strategic utilization of resources reflects adaptability and commitment to sustaining research productivity. However, securing external funding can be competitive and time-intensive. Limited grant-writing expertise and lack of professional networks may hinder success. Providing structured training in proposal development and facilitating industry-academic linkages could enhance resource mobilization efforts.

Theme 4: Challenges in Sustained Research Engagement

Despite their willingness to conduct research, some faculty members postpone projects due to heavy teaching and administrative workloads. Research is often deprioritized when institutional support and incentives are insufficient. The absence of clear rewards—such as promotion credits, workload reductions, or formal recognition—further discourages sustained engagement. To mitigate postponement, institutions could implement structured research timelines, reduce administrative burdens, and allocate designated research periods within faculty workloads.

Theme 5: Barriers to Full Research Commitment

Some faculty members engage only in limited research activities, such as presenting conference papers or conducting small-scale studies. While this approach allows participation without overwhelming existing responsibilities, it contributes minimally to institutional research output. Limited access to funding, mentorship, and research infrastructure remains a primary reason for partial engagement. Strengthening institutional research support systems—including technical assistance and access to academic databases—would encourage deeper research involvement.

Theme 6: Withdrawal from Research Engagement

In more severe cases, faculty members disengage entirely from research, prioritizing teaching and administrative duties. This withdrawal is often driven by excessive workload, lack of incentives, or insufficient research confidence. Faculty members who perceive research as overly complex or unsupported may avoid scholarly activities altogether. To prevent disengagement, institutions must cultivate a research-supportive environment through mentorship programs, workload adjustments, technical assistance, and financial incentives. Without these measures, faculty withdrawal may continue to undermine institutional research productivity.

FINDINGS

The findings indicate varied attitudes toward research among faculty members. Many demonstrate a positive outlook, recognizing research as essential for professional development, instructional improvement, and institutional advancement. These faculty members view research engagement as an opportunity to enhance expertise and contribute meaningfully to their field. Others express conditional willingness, emphasizing the need for adequate institutional support, including funding, training, and allocated research time. Balancing research with teaching and administrative responsibilities remains a significant concern. While faculty members generally acknowledge the benefits of research—such as improved teaching practices and enhanced academic reputation—some adopt a passive stance. Research is occasionally perceived as an additional burden rather than a core professional responsibility. Heavy workloads, limited incentives, and insufficient training contribute to this negative perception. Overall, institutional factors strongly influence research engagement. Limited funding, inadequate recognition, insufficient technical support, and workload policies that do not accommodate research time significantly constrain faculty participation. Addressing these structural barriers is essential to fostering a sustainable research culture at PIT.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The attitudes of faculty members towards research vary based on their perception of its importance, institutional support, and workload constraints. While many recognize the value of research in academic and professional growth, engagement remains conditional on the availability of resources, time, and incentives. The presence of institutional barriers, such as limited funding and high teaching loads, discourages faculty from participating in research.

To foster a more research-active faculty, institutions must address these barriers by implementing structured research support programs, reducing workload pressures, and providing sufficient incentives. Additionally, faculty collaboration, mentorship, and continuous professional development are essential in enhancing research engagement. By addressing these challenges, institutions can cultivate a stronger research culture and ensure that faculty members actively contribute to knowledge generation and academic excellence.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Faculty attitudes toward research are largely influenced by institutional support, workload demands, and perceived professional benefits. Although many recognize research as essential for academic growth and instructional improvement, their engagement often depends on the availability of funding, time, and incentives.

Institutional barriers—such as limited financial resources and heavy teaching loads—reduce motivation and sustained participation. To strengthen research culture, institutions must provide structured support systems, manageable workloads, adequate incentives, and mentorship opportunities, thereby fostering consistent and meaningful faculty engagement in research.

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