



RESEARCH ARTICLE

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PAKISTANI ACADEMIA

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ABSTRACT

Research productivity of social sciences has become an integral part for personal, organizational and national development especially in south Asia and particularly in Pakistan. Complexities of a developing country, individual and structural factors often constitute several problems in the execution of the social research venture. The purpose of the research is to understand various issues regarding research productivity in social sciences in academia and to increase public awareness. This paper seeks to identify, highlight, justify and explain major challenges in research productivity that students and faculty members has to face and make remedial suggestions. The paper would depend on concept- aligning & explaining units of Research process and its productivity. This paper work will provide theoretical orientation; make reference to relevant theoretical and empirical literatures for adequate clarification, comprehension and action sought where needed. Qualitative research methodology has adopted along with a survey to find out challenges in research productivity. Main points of the argument are; Old methodologies of research, Management problems in data collection and interpretation, Lack of availability of latest published books, Lack of research funding, Limited time-frame for research, Unavailability of plagiarism checking software in Local-Languages, Lack of technical expertise (guidance) & support from supervisors, Lack of Theoretical Sophistication, Insufficient adjustment to the demands of Information, Communication and Technology etc.

INTRODUCTION

Research productivity is the base of a modern & developed society. In an innovative society, Knowledge & Research has a vital role in creation and management of social interests and benefits of a society. As for as the importance research methodologies of social sciences is concerned, many scholars have different views about it. Some (Kuhn) have favored natural sciences to be researched by their relevant methodology. (Kuhn, 1998) John Stuart Mill and his followers viewed that both sciences produces accurate predictions of possible/ up-coming occurrence. The difference deals with techniques not the logics (Hempel 1965 Ayer 1975)¹ Therefore both sciences are necessary for the developing society. Research can build better linkages between the expanding knowledge within both the university and in society. It can increase the applications and accessibility of that knowledge to masses.

Motive force behind the study is to address the following questions:

1. What problems/ hurdles do students / researcher and faculty member's faces in research process? (writing and publishing research papers)
2. What is faculty members' approach?
3. What is student's / research scholar's approach?
4. What are the suggestions to solve prevailing problems?

5. What kind of backing is (should be) provided by the institutions or government?

The Concept of Knowledge and Research: Human knowledge is a process of approximation. In the focus of experience, there is comparative clarity. But the discrimination of this clarity leads into the penumbral (shade) background. There are always questions left over. The problem is to discriminate exactly what we know ambiguously. Research has opened doors to eliminate this vagueness and uncertainty. Research produces Innovation and draws more heavily on fundamental knowledge. It is an important output of universities as well. Research process has the capability to "absorb" knowledge and technology from foreign sources. Research can complement, aid in absorption of research results from international networks for developing-academia. Academia research trains in professionals manners. While in domestic research universities provides attractive opportunities for scholars to get depth in their particular field. Knowledge & research goes side by side. In this era of humanity, knowledge and information technology has vital significance. Adaption of modern research techniques is the need of the time and the only way of survival. Therefore, the evidence of knowledge as a precedent for development is measured through progressive changes occasioned by creativity and innovations. Research process is involved with knowledge and the knowledge process is interlinked with these four to "know-what, why, how and who"? What kind of knowledge should be transferred? The purpose and policy should be very clear that what kind of

development and transform society we ought to see. The methodology of transmission should be up-to-date, and meet the challenges of the time. In the process of delivering knowledge or research, or the process of research conduction, a teacher/ supervisor has a very fundamental role to motivate towards research as a role model by his own research publication and productivity. Different knowledge cultures, like natural & social sciences, disciplines using quantitative & qualitative approaches or disciplines that have different concepts of data and validation needed to be unified. For integrative research projects, this means that the research question is defined jointly and the answer to the research question derives from an integration of disciplinary knowledge. It is a view that Integration needs to lead to the development of new common methods and theory and finally to new knowledge.ⁱⁱ

Research Productivity of Social Sciences Literature

Review: Hence, survival in a world of such dynamism can only be tenable through positive adaptation which is a product of epistemological and ontological truths. Achieving this brings research to bear which is aimed at digging up knowledge for personal and public consumption, while seeking remedy to problems. Research as a factor of discovery and rediscovery of knowledge becomes a relevant ingredient for personal, organizational and national development. A branch of research that explores explains and describes human behaviorisms and interactions and their consequences on human existence and activities, is the social research. Complexities of human dynamism and several other individual and structural factors often constitute several problems in the execution of the social research venture. It is in this regard that this paper seeks to identify, justify and explain most of these problems plaguing the survival and astuteness of social research and where necessary, make remedial suggestions. Fundamental knowledge is an important output of the academia and the base of research productivity. Research provides an important channel for flows of knowledge, practice, knowhow between university and industry. Research productivity, channelizes the flow of knowledge, technology transfers and involve much more than systematized and codified knowledge. The social sciences do have a contribution to make to social practice, but not so large a contribution as they will make if helped to develop properly. At this point in history, the magnitude of major social problems exceeds the capacity of social scientists to solve them. The supply of trained graduates, publications, faculty consulting, conferences are all more important than patents and authority in knowledge flow (Cohen et al., 2002).

Research a Unifying & Centralizing Process: Research is a unified and a centralizing process. All steps of research process to research productivity are interlinked. Very first level starts from personal level as the research gives benefit at personal level. A research project gives interaction between people in group. In group form every individual exchanges point of views logically. The collective efforts' ultimately Give advantage to the concerned institute and finally research productivity comes into the published form. (Argyris & Schön 1996, Argote 1999)ⁱⁱⁱ.

Major Challenges in Research Productivity of Social Sciences: Some major challenges regarding research productivity are finding out there;

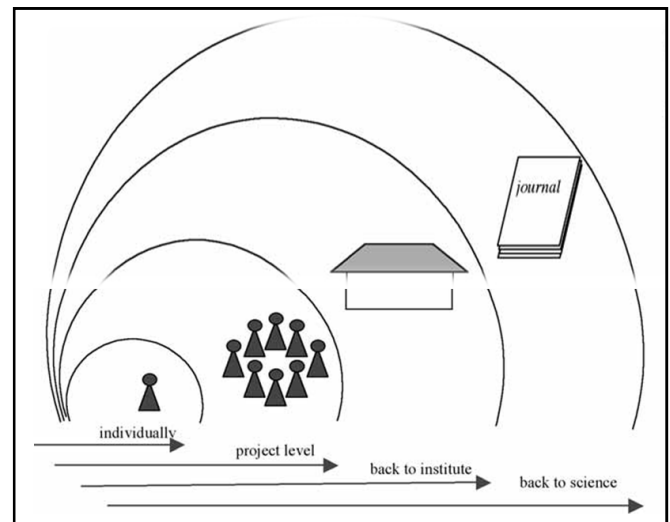


Figure 1. Steps of Unified Research

Old Research Methodologies: A very common and basic issue is old methodologies of research. Most of the institutes are not in position of offering new methodologies due to lack of finances and technical experts. Most of the students have no back-ground or experiences of research previously, before university level. Even in the university level, most of the department's research as a subject or program is not offered and if in some department's research is offered as an optional program. Due to lack of motivation and guidance, mostly student do not accept this offer and chooses the other available option. Particularly in social science descriptive and qualitative research has been given much weighted than other latest methodologies.

Management Problems in Data Collection and Interpretation (spss,etc): In quantitative research, a very important challenge is the interpretation of collected data. This major challenge has to be face not only to student researchers but also the faculty members. Most of the teacher / supervisors are not able to practice different Microsoft programs as they are untrained. In different department there is no program of stats.

Lack of Availability of Latest Published Books: Latest published book are mostly unavailable for researcher/ reader. This challenge has many reasons; unavailability of funding, unattended scholars by their supervisors, shortage of books (copies), publishers demands vary region to region, some books banned for particular continents etc. Even in net-surfing most of the books opened by the payment.

Lack of Research Funding: Research activity demands for funding because the research process can be possible by the availability of resources. To approach the relevant resources finances are necessary. It the major challenge in research process and productivity. There are Issues of conducive and supportive environment for research funding, production of academic papers, books and other modes of scholarship.

Limited Time-Frame for Research: In prevailing academia, the research offered by the university or institute is the demand of the degree and program. Mostly the given time-frame is too short, consisted upon 4-6 months at masters level and BS honors' with course work. Students feels burden and can't show the best level research initially. In senior levels of M Phil

and PhD time management is a challenge for research scholars. Mostly PhD students have involved in some kind of government, private, and part-time jobs or services. To manage both research and job is not an easy task. Some moves a cross-country struggle to devote to publications or job hunting etc. Some have family life issues especially in female ‘maternal issues’. So they entangled with multi issues and can’t manage time to work out and submit their research in set time.

Unavailability of plagiarism checking software in Local-Languages: To check the research authenticity, plagiarism checking is essential. Different programs are available for this purpose in different international or national languages. But this service is not available in our national language. Many programs of social sciences are being taught in Urdu and research work is also in process. Most of the students go with short cut; copy paste option so the research productivity is satisfactory.

Students Attitudes: Due to lack of motivation and interest, most of the students avoid research. Research is not easy, partly because the student has to be able to think well and work independently. Researcher needs certain curiosity and a certain passion to get to the root of the research problem. Need to think and concentrate, and not be distracted. Students need to be well-intentioned towards the advices of supervisor. A student/ researcher can get decision which direction the research should sensibly go and set up objectives from the research problem and the review. A research student must be independent to some extent.

Lack of Technical (Guidance) and Support from Supervisors: Supervisor should take a research that comes under his expertise. Researcher should keep in connection with their supervisors. However, often issues are being seen about the mismatch supervisors. Researcher has expectation regarding research guidance. Many supervisors managed to secure their academic roles in a much friendlier economic climate and don’t understand the harsh reality faced by current attempting to find academic jobs. Equally, even though the majority of end up outside of academia, there are times when supervisors can be dismissive of those choices, thus leaving their previous supervisees feeling like they failed. The most important ability of the mentor, adviser, and supervisor to guide, motivate, inspire the student researcher is missing. These are also the problems of the mentor, adviser, and supervisor in guiding student researcher. The faculty has the duty to supervise the research but they have many responsibilities as well and at the same time; administrative duties, invigilation, to attend different seminars’ and conferences etc. Transfer of knowledge into practice of research is not easy. It calls for patience on the part of research mentor, adviser, and supervisor.

Lack of Local Publishing Journal to Channelize Research: Although local magazines’ and journals are in great number but the acceptable criteria of recognized journal’ set by the higher education commission is very few in number. An Academic publication of a scholar makes or breaks his career. This is one of the most challenging aspects that the research would publish. The utility of a research has far reaching effects by channelization. Otherwise it will be merely a part of a library.

Lack of Supportive Environment for Research Environment and Access to Resources: The drafted research study demands to the study partners or fellows to visit going different institutions for data collection or some other research-purpose. Sometimes the relevant environment put up some barriers, particularly if the research is controversial or sensitive so it causes an additional challenge for the researcher due to non-cooperative behaviors and absurdity. It becomes contradiction and puzzle for researcher due to non-availability of supportive resources at a time when need those most. Reconnection to those resources without any official/institutional affiliation could be quite challenging. As for as the Supportive environment is concerned, a researcher has to face many other issues to conduct research; funding, production of academic papers or books and other modes of scholarship.

Faculty Role and their Multiple Issues

Productivity of university faculty; the research also examined the roles played by various sub factors

- Job Involvement
- Competitiveness
- Intolerance
- Administrative obligation
- self- productiveness
- accomplishment targets
- functioning on multiple projects at the same time

The research quantity and quality both effects and indicates the lack of research productivity of faculty. Findings shows the behavior and performance, self-efficiency, working on multiple projects, and Job involvement are all sub factors or challenges related to research productivity.

Obstacles in Research Process for Student/ Researcher

A student has to face some possible obstacles in research activity usually. These are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Obstacles in Research Process for students

Before research	During research	After research
▪Information Resources	▪Funding Resources	▪Publication Outlet
▪Appropriate Topic	▪Language (Foreign/Native)	▪Finding Appropriate journal
	▪Availability of relevant material	
	▪Latest published material	
	▪Timely guidance and supervision	
	▪Time for writing	
	▪Writing skills	
	▪Data Interpretation Skills	

Research Productivity of Social Sciences in Academia: The social sciences do have a contribution to make to social practice, but not so large a contribution as they will make if helped to develop properly. At this point in history, the magnitude of major social problems exceeds the capacity of social scientists to solve them. Therefore, educational/research development should be given utmost attention if sustainable economic growth and development must be enhanced. Since a healthy, well-educated, innovative people make an economy

more productive, it is apparent that capacity building through investment in human capital, particularly education and research can enhance economic growth, alleviate poverty and protect the economy of Pakistan. Universities cannot survive in isolation from the components of a national and international research system. Both the quantity and quality of research counts as research capacity and performance of a researcher can be evaluated. Literature indicates that the country's development depends on research and spends a hefty amount of money on research.

Furthermore, is trying to encourage faculty members at all universities to write as many good quality research papers as possible and benefit from the results that can serve the society better to boost the economic, social and educational prosperity. A comparison with the other countries in the region or in the world shows the low percentage, especially in the fields of social sciences and humanities. Pakistan ranks 43rd in scientific research publication^{iv}, while 502,804 papers followed by China with 320,800 and United Kingdom with 139,683 research documents. On the other hand, India ranked ninth worldwide.^v

International Comparison of Research Productivity& rank of Pakistan

Table 2. Source: CAP survey, 2007¹

Country	Article Average	Non-publication (%)
Korea	11.6	1.9
Hong Kong	10.6	7.1
Japan	9.7	11.3
USA	5.0	26.2
China	9.2	15.8
Malaysia	4.8	29.3
Italy	8.8	6.2
Canada	6.6	10.9
Australia	7.3	11.4
UK	6.9	10.9



The biggest number of books is published per year in China, US and UK



In Asia and Middle East, three top countries are China with published books 440,000, Russia published 120,512 and India published 90,000 books. The report shows that Pakistan stands at the fifty five numbers in world ranking.

Research Survey Details

Research Methods for Survey: For the research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches has applied for data collection and analysis Two research instruments were employed in the study: questionnaire and interviews. The survey was conducted in two section, 1st from faculty members and 2nd from students.

Participants in the Study: The ten participants in the study were female academic staff of the University of the Punjab Lahore. The student’s participants were both boys and girls of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of the Punjab Lahore.

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Demographic information of respondents

Table 4. Demographic information of respondents

Respondents	Departments	Frequency
Faculty	Social sciences	10
Students (female)	Bs Honors Islamic studies	110
Student (female)	PhD	10
Students	Bs Honors Geography, Geology	80
Gender (male)	Geography	49
Female (female)	Geography, Geology	31
Age group students (17-20)		89
Age group students (20-24)		111
Age group students (28-35)		10

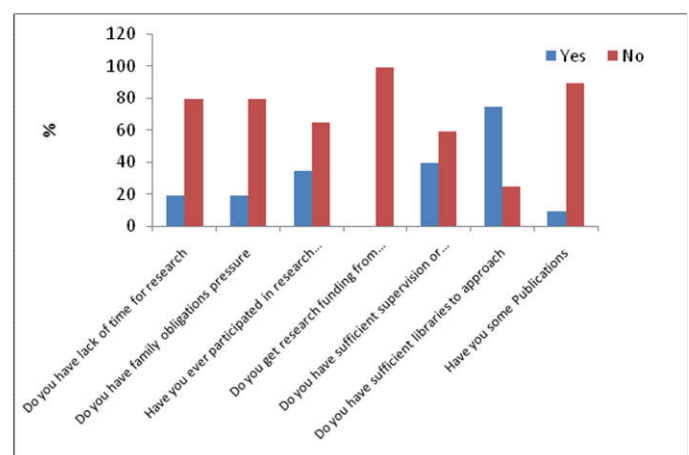
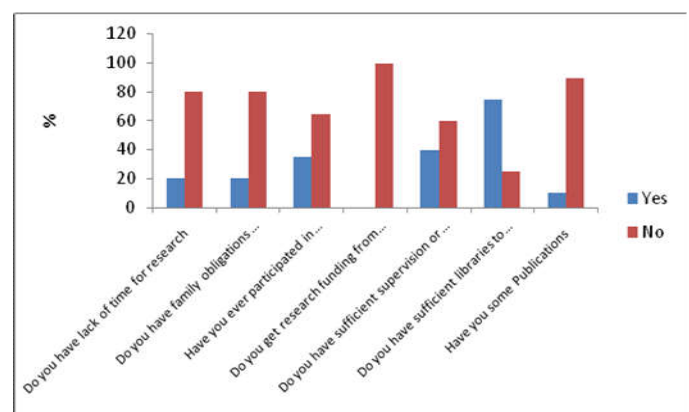
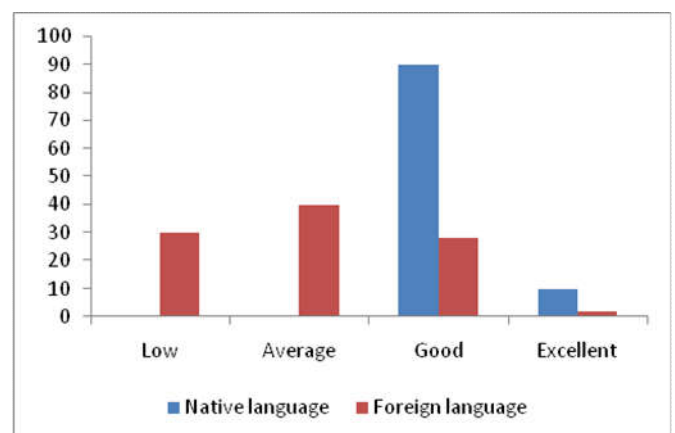
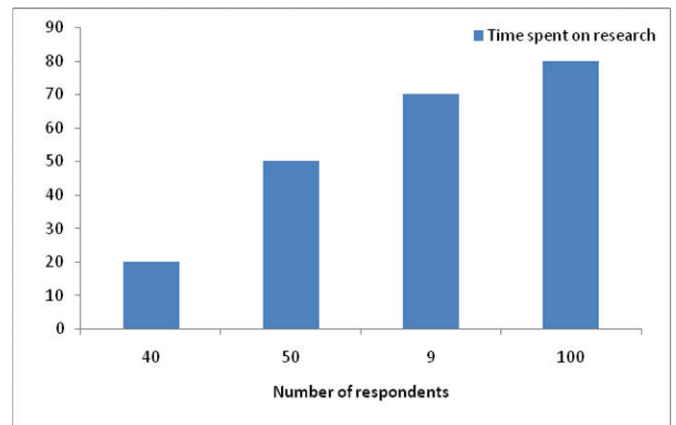
Questionnaire: The questionnaire consists of sixteen items (view Appendix)

Interview: Interview has been also conducted with some selective member from each group of program. To make the most of the interviews, they were conducted as semi-structured interviews. Faculty members mainly focused on the research and academic publication in recent years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

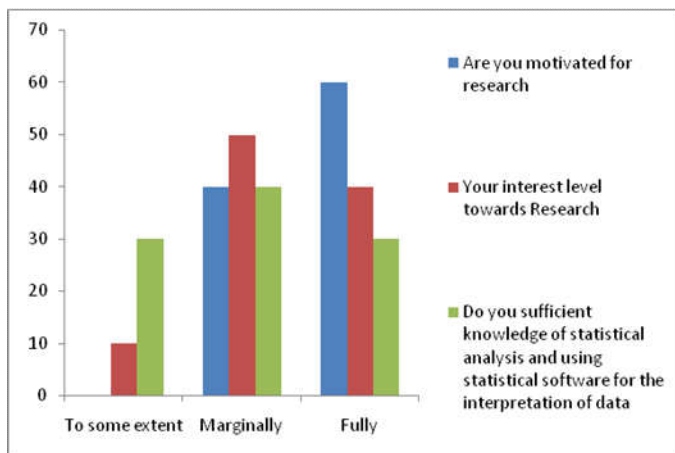
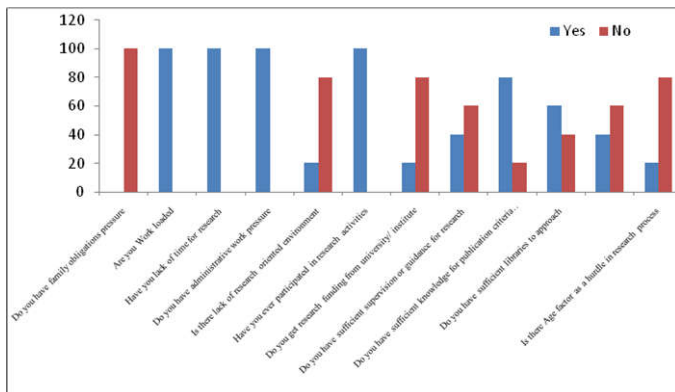
This section reports and discusses the results from the analysis of the questionnaire and interview.

Data Collected from Students/ Researchers: There is given collected data (information) regarding the scholars/researchers attitudes towards research and their obstacles publication, and their obstacles to local and international publication.



Responses from Faculty

There is given below the collected data regarding the faculty members' attitudes towards research and their obstacles publication, and their obstacles to local and international publication.



Conclusions

The survey data has exposed the major challenges regarding research and research productivity of student researchers and faculty as well.

In first step of survey students / researcher has given a very clear point of view as;

The result shows that researchers' ability of reading & writing for native language is quite satisfactory as compare to foreign language. Average time is being spent on research tasks. It is also clear that the students have no lack of time for research. The findings showed that overall students in the fields of social sciences and humanities are not as aware of the importance of research as they should be. Most of the students do not chose research project (thesis), if they are given the choice. On the other hand, students viewed that they do not get any research funding from the university or the institute. Most of the student at junior level of BS honors had never taken part in any kind of research. Senior students viewed that they have not given proper guidance and supervision both. They have sufficient libraries for work. Mostly students have no publication and some have done. The students with publications have local publications only and they faced very serious barriers in this regard. The findings showed that overall the faculty in the fields of social sciences and humanities are aware of the importance of research and publication. However, their interest

in research and publication is not as high. Promotion or salary increase is major incentives for them. Although faculty members are aware of the importance of research overall, they 'place little emphasis on research activities due to lack of time and other responsibilities like administrations etc. they have no family obligations in this regard. Senior professors have shown more interest and importance at compare to middle-age. As middle-aged have other. The finding reveals that the environment is research oriented but the problem is inconsistent behavior towards research and lack of supervision regarding latest research techniques and especially the interpretation of data. Other problems are lack of funding, lack of time and insufficient libraries and research resources. Faculty members have sufficient knowledge for publication criteria for different referred journals but they have to face same sort of obstacles' to publication as students.

Recommendations

- Adaption of modern research techniques is the need of the time and the only way of survival.
- Need of bridging research training institutions.
- Research-policy makers should see integration as providing a better solution to a research problem than a disciplinary or multidisciplinary approach.
- At the university level there is very much needs to teach the "Research" as a compulsory subject in a semester.
- Motivational guidance and some incentives should be given/ increase to faculty and students/ scholars as well.

Therefore, educational/Research development should be given utmost attention. Since a healthy, well-educated, innovative people make a society more productive, it is apparent that capacity building through investment in human capital, particularly education and research can enhance economic growth, alleviate poverty in Pakistan.

End notes

- ⁱ Hempel C. G., 1959, "The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning", *Revue*. Reprinted in A. J. Ayer (ed.) 1975.
- ⁱⁱ Bärbel Tress, Gunther Tress and Gary Fry, *Defining concepts and the process of knowledge production in integrative research*, p: 6
- ⁱⁱⁱ: Argyris, C. and Schön, D.A., (1996) *Organizational Learning. II. Theory, method, and Practice* Addison-Wesley, Reading.
- ^{iv} Dawn, Ikram Junaidi December 25, 2011
- ^v Scimago (2017) Institute Ranking, *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*. social sciences (miscellaneous) research report

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS
1. Gender: (Male / Female)
2. Age: (17-20) / (20-24)/ (more)
3. Qualification: Bs Honors'
4. Place of Education:
5. Reading & writing ability for native language? Low –Average- Good-Excellent
6. Reading & writing ability for foreign language? Low – Average -Good- Excellent
7. Time Spend on Research? 20% 50%70% More than 80%
8. Importance of Research? Not Some Marginally Very Extremely
9. Your interest level towards Research Not Some Marginally Very Extremely
10. Have you ever participated in research activities? Yes/ No
11. Have you some Publications? Yes/ No
12. If yes than where? Local National International
13. Barriers to Publication No Some Serious Very serious
14. Do you get research funding from university/ institute? ? Yes/ No
15. Do you have sufficient supervision or guidance? Yes/ No
16. Do you have sufficient libraries to approach? Yes/ No

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FACULTY;
Q: Are you motivated for research?
Q: Do you have family obligations pressure?
Q: Are you Work loaded?
Q: Have you lack of time for research?
Q: Do you have administrative work pressure?
Q: Your interest level towards Research;
Q: Is there lack of research oriented environment?
Q: Have you ever participated in research activities?
Q: Do you get research funding from university/ institute?
Q: Do you have sufficient supervision or guidance for research?
Q: Do you have sufficient knowledge for publication criteria for different referred journals?
Q: Do you have sufficient libraries to approach?
Q: Have you been attending academic workshops/seminars to develop research skills
Q: Do you sufficient knowledge of statistical analysis and using statistical software for the interpretation of data?
Q: Is there Age factor as a hurdle in research process?
Q: Have you some Publications/ If Yes than where?
Q: Barriers to Publication?
