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IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR TEACHING RESEARCH SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract. *This research's aim is to investigate the challenges and effective methods for teaching research skills in higher education of Afghanistan. It focuses on two main questions: (1) What factors stop students from learning research skills with current teaching methods? (2) What practices, resources, and tools best improve research skills? A mixed-methods approach was used, including surveys of 27 Master's students, 16 faculty members, and interviews with 4 professors. The results indicated that teacher-centered methods hinder skill development. 53.5% of participants expressed dissatisfaction with those methods. On the other hand, 72.1% believe that interactive methods enhance research skills, although implementation of these methods is difficult. Limited resources and lack of support from institutions are main challenges. This study suggests to its readers that using the student-centered teaching, the usage of technology, and institutional support are essential for improving research education in Afghanistan. This research provides practical recommendations for policymakers and educators. It emphasizes practical learning and faculty development in order to promote critical thinking and research.*

Keywords: *research skills, higher education, Afghanistan, teaching methods, student-centered learning.*

Introduction

Problem Statement

Research skills have a key role to play in higher education. With the help of these skills, students analyze the information, solve problems, and do contribution to the knowledge development. In Afghanistan, where higher education is transforming, the development of research skills is considered essential for the academic and professional growth of students.

However, the current teaching methods in Afghan universities often cannot provide the skills necessary for the competition at global level. Afghan higher education traditionally depends on teacher-centered methods, limited resources, and outdated curricula. These factors prevent from the development of critical research skills. Despite recent modernization efforts, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited technology use, and inconsistent curricula persist. This study especially focuses on the ongoing difficulties and challenges that Afghan students face in acquiring the skills needed for the research. The traditional lecture-based teaching methods use to restrict engagement and critical thinking.

Despite the fact that the need for improved teaching methods is growing, there is little research done on the factors causing problems for students in learning research skills.

This investigation aims to fill these gaps with identifying barriers and providing solutions which are practical.

Significance of the Study

This study gives better understanding on the impact of teaching methods in development of research skills in Afghan universities. By the recognition of challenges and effective methods, this inquiry offers valuable understandings for the educators, policymakers, and researchers. The findings can be the methods which improve the education of research, including the adoption of student-centered approaches and better technology usage. This study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it expands the literature on the development of research skills in resource-limited environments. Practically, it presents actionable recommendations for educators and institutions which are seeking to improve students' research skills.

Research objective

The main objectives of this study are the following:

1. Identifying the factors that make learning research skills difficult with current teaching methods in Afghan universities.

2. Specifying the most effective teaching methods, resources, and tools for improving research skills of students in Afghan universities.

Literature Review

Cultivating research skills is a fundamental aspect of higher education, because it aids students in enhancing their critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and capacity for independent learning. In Afghanistan, however, the higher education system faces challenges in fostering these skills because of antiquated teaching methods, insufficient resources, and a misalignment between academic curricula and the demands of the job market.

This review of the literature combines the findings of six pair reviewed articles to examine the factors which make difficult for students the learning research skills and identify effective teaching methods, resources, and tools for improving research proficiency at Afghan universities.

Challenges in Current Teaching Methodologies

Teacher-centered methods dominate in Afghan universities and limit student engagement and interaction (Farid Nikzoy, & Monib, 2021). These methods are often unsuccessful in developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for research proficiency. According to (Farid et al., 2021), for the teaching process to happen effectively it requires creating a relationship between teachers and learners based on respect, open communication, and active participation. Ineffective teaching happen when the teachers lack the necessary abilities to involve students in group projects or give constructive feedback.

Changing from the traditional teacher-centered methods to the modern student-centered approaches such as Outcome-Based Education and Student-Centered Learning (OBE-SCL), is a potential solution (Katawazai, 2021). But unfortunately, OBE-SCL’s application in Afghanistan is faced with challenges such as lack of qualified teachers, outdated curricula, and resistance to change (Ahmadzai et al., 2019; Katawazai et al., 2019, as cited in Katawazai, 2021).

Also, the continued use of the traditional grammar-translation method in the teaching of English language avoids the adoption of modern teaching methods and the integration of technology (Alokozay, Shadab, & Dauodzai, 2022).

Research Methodology

Research Process

This study uses a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) to answer the research questions. In the quantitative part of this study the researcher uses a structured survey to gather numerical data on the views of the students and the faculty about teaching methods and the challenges in learning research skills. In the qualitative part, the researcher employs semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into effective teaching methods, resources, and tools. This approach is more suitable for thoroughly understanding the research issue.

Quantitative data reveal measurable trends and patterns, while qualitative data offer detailed insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives. Combining these two approaches allows this study to triangulate the results and improves its validity and reliability. However, employing purposive sampling may limit the generalizability for the findings of this paper, and researcher bias may occur during data collection and data analysis, especially for the qualitative data. These disadvantages are lessened by following strict research protocols, such as pilot testing, ethical guidelines, and explicit data analysis procedures.

Research Sample

The study's sample consists of 27 master's students and 20 faculty members from Kabul Education University and Balkh University. These individuals were chosen due to their direct involvement in teaching or learning research skills, which allows them to offer valuable insights.

Among the faculty, there are 4 professors from Kabul Education University and 16 lecturers from the English Department of Balkh University. The sample size for this study paper was determined based on the research goals and the need for a group that is both manageable and representative. Although the sample size is limited, it is sufficient for an in-depth investigation of the research questions due to the qualitative focus of the study. Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method, targeting individuals with direct experience in teaching or learning research skills, to ensure the sample meets the study's objectives. The purposive sampling method may cause selection bias because participants are chosen based on their relevance to the study rather than randomly. In order to address and solve this issue, the study ensured that the sample included students and faculty members from two different departments and universities.

Instruments and Procedures

A structured questionnaire was created using Google Forms to collect quantitative data.

The questionnaire includes demographic questions and closed-ended questions using Likert scales to assess participants' views on teaching methods, access to resources, and challenges in learning research skills. The qualitative perspectives were obtained from faculty members through semi-structured interviews. The goals for the inquiries were to identify effective teaching methods, understand challenges, and gather recommendations for enhancing research skills instruction. The researcher used a survey questionnaire in this study for achieving the study's objectives and measure the opinions and experiences of the participants quantitatively.

Semi-structured interviews provide depth and context by allowing participants to describe their experiences and offer suggestions for improvement. Both instruments were pilot-tested before use to ensure clarity and relevance. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to students and faculty members. Participants were given 15 minutes to complete the survey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with faculty members of Kabul Education University, and each interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants. Some of participants faced technical problems with the researcher's online survey, and some other participants were unwilling to give detailed responses for the interview questions. To address these challenges, the researcher provided clear instructions and he assured anonymity of the participants. The instruments for study were tested in a pilot study on a number of participants. Then, the received feedback was used to better improve the questions and to ensure they were relevant to the context of higher education of Afghanistan.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative Data Analysis

For analyzing and examining the survey Google Sheets was used. Responses were summarized using descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage. The Likert scale data were also evaluated to discover trends and patterns from perceptions of the participants.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied on the interview transcripts. Key themes were identified by using colored markers to the repeated ideas. The focus was on finding challenges, effective methods, and suggestions. Google Sheets was used for quantitative analysis, while manual coding was applied for qualitative data in thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The consent letters for conducting this micro research about this study's objectives, procedures, and the participants rights were prepared in advance and distributed to all of the participants. Before the data collection began, written consent was received from the participants. In order to make the identities of the participants unidentifiable, all data were anonymized. Survey answers were safely saved and the recordings from the interview were deleted just after their transcriptions. This study followed to ethical standards, by making sure that the participants were treated with respect and protected from harm. Participants were also informed about their freedom to leave at any moment without facing any consequences. Some participants wanted to hesitate to share negative experiences because they were concerned about confidentiality of the data. The researcher solved this problem immediately by clear communication and assuring their anonymity.

Research Validity and Reliability

The researcher aligned the survey and interview questions with the research objectives to ensured validity of the content of this research paper. More validity was achieved by utilizing Likert scales and thematic analysis methods. They made it easier and simpler to analyze the data for the novice researcher. For reliability, the survey questions were tested by pilot testing to evaluate its consistency and effectiveness.

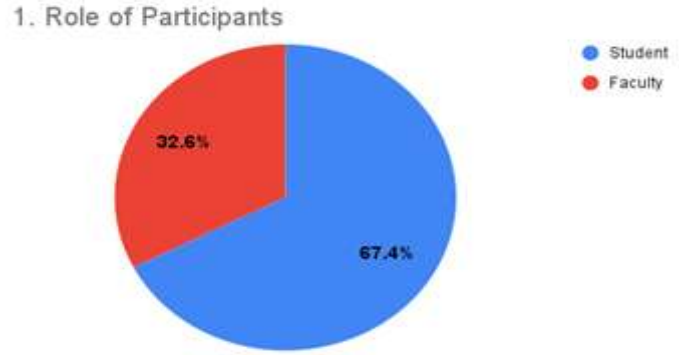
Potential biases were reduced by using mixed-methods approach. This approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in order to present balanced viewpoints.

Findings and Results

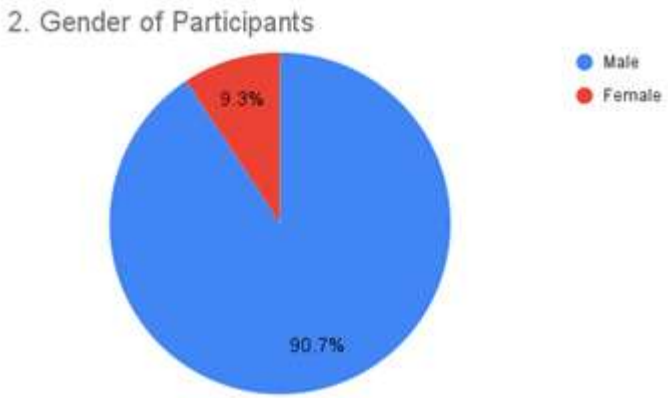
This study examines a purposive sample of 27 master's students and 20 faculty members from Kabul Education University and Balkh University. It provides a detailed view of the current state of research education in Afghanistan.

Quantitative Results

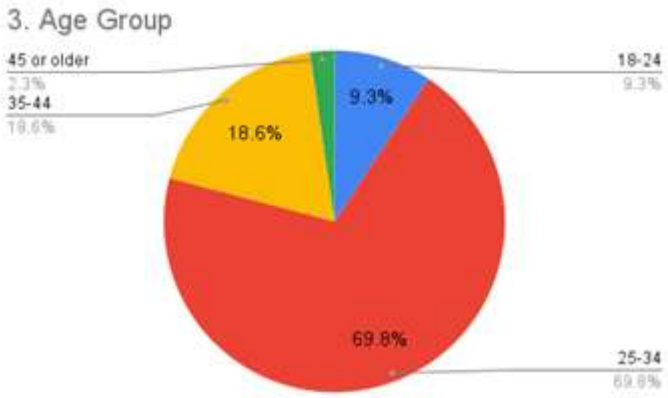
The quantitative results shed light on the opinions of the participants of this study regarding the teaching strategies, resource availability, and the difficulties that they faced in acquiring skills related to research. These results present useful suggestions and recommendations to enhance research teaching at Afghan universities. The findings points to the need for interactive, student-focused teaching methods, access to resources and training in order to promote critical thinking and research culture among students.



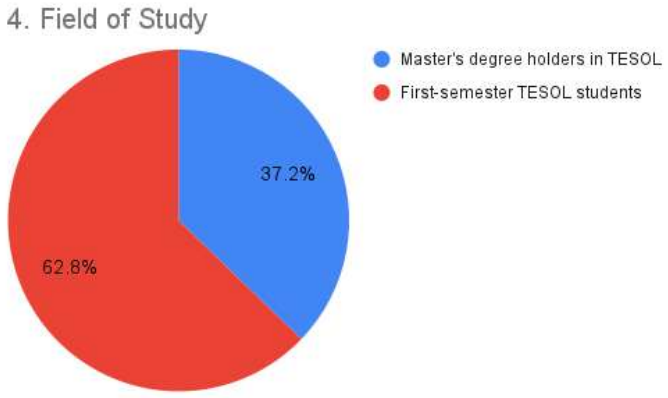
Students make up the largest percentage of responders (67.4%) according to the participant role pie chart. It shows certainly that the survey mainly reflects the perspectives of students about learning research related skills. Although, faculty members make up smaller percentage of 32.6%, their perspectives are essential for understanding teaching methods and institutional support. This distribution shows the direct impact of teaching methods on students, and viewpoints of faculty members which offer valuable context for these educational challenges.



The pie chart on gender of participants shows a large gender imbalance. It shows that in this study 90.7% of respondents are male and only 9.3% are female. This imbalance participation of male and female participants may impact the findings of this study based on gender. The findings and result might be affected more by male participants perspective than female. This imbalance may imply that future research needs a more balanced gender representation.

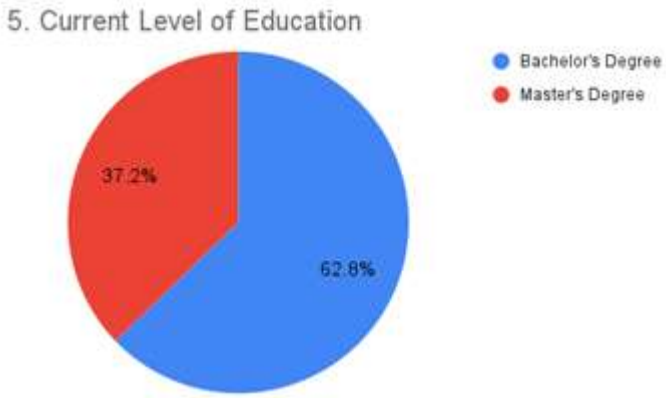


The above pie chart reveals that the majority of participants are from 25 to 34 age (69.8%). After that, the 35 to 44 age group (18.6%), the 18 to 24 age group (9.3%), and that 45 and older (2.3%). This suggests to us that the majority of responders are either early in their careers or graduate students. The limited number of younger participants (18 to 24 years) and older participants (45 and above) age groups may draw attention to knowledge gaps about knowing how the research skills evolve or develop at various educational levels.

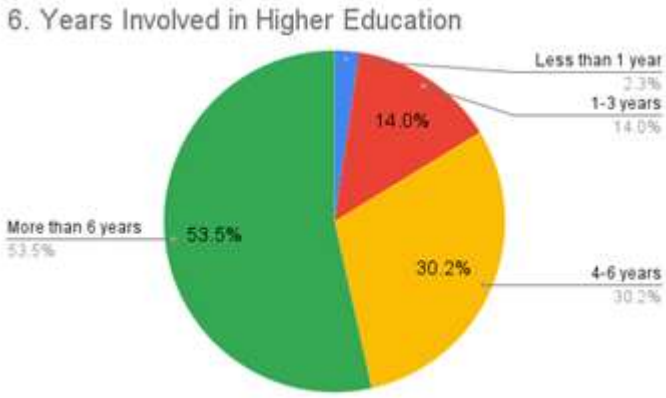


According to the pie chart above, 37.2% of respondents are the faculty members who have already graduated from TESOL program (Master's degree holders in TESOL), and 62.8% of respondents are first-semester TESOL students who are bachelors (newly enrolled in TESOL program). This distribution helps us in comprehending instructional methods and research skills in two different academic fields.

Master's degree holders in TESOL are likely more experienced with traditional research methods because they are now faculty members, while First-semester TESOL students participants might focus more on applied linguistics and practical research. This distribution emphasizes that research skills are shaped by the specific academic focus of the participants.



According to this pie chart, 62.8% of the participants have bachelor degree, and 37.2% of the participants possess master degree. The majority of participants which are bachelor's degree holders individuals who are at the beginning of their academic journey, maybe with little or no experience in advanced research. On the other hand, the master's degree participants provide insights about research education at a higher level. This distribution highlights the differences in the level of research skill development between undergraduate and master's degree holders.



The pie chart shows that 53.5% of respondents have been involved in higher education for more than 6 years, 30.2% for 4 to 6 years, 14.0% for 1 to 3 years, and 2.3% for less than 1 year. This distribution emphasizes that educators should differentiate their teaching methods when teaching the research skills to different experience levels in research. The participants in the early stages (less than 1 year and 1 to 3 years) may need basic support, while the participants with more experience (4 to 6 years and over 6 years) may require advanced trainings in research. It is important to provide ongoing support and assistance at different levels of experience to address their diverse needs. This continuous support and assistance could be workshops and mentoring.

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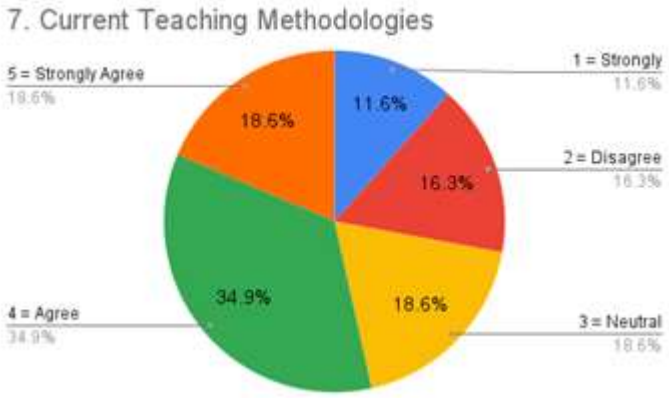
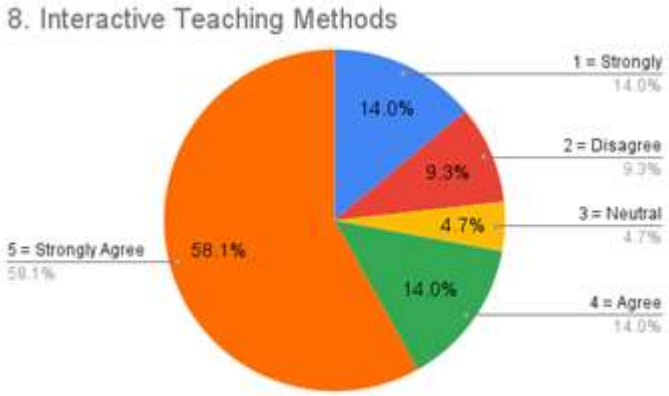


It is revealed by pie chart "the effectiveness of teaching approaches" that 53.5% of respondents are agreeing or strongly agreeing. It generally indicates satisfaction with current teaching methods but also it suggests the need for improvement. In contrast to that, 27.9% of respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, 18.6% are neutral. These mixed responses suggest the need for more engaging and student-centered teaching methods to better support the development of research skills and address the varying levels of satisfaction among participants.



The pie chart for interactive teaching methods shows that 72.1% of participants agree or strongly agree that these methods improve research abilities. So, in order to ensure their effectiveness, they need strong support.

However, 23.3% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This contradicts the hypothesis of this research paper that student-centered methods always improve research skills.

This dissatisfaction points to the challenges poor implementation or ineffective interactive strategies in universities of Afghanistan. To address this issue, there is need for greater focus on the integration and proper implementation of engaging and research-focused teaching methods to enhance effectiveness and participant satisfaction.

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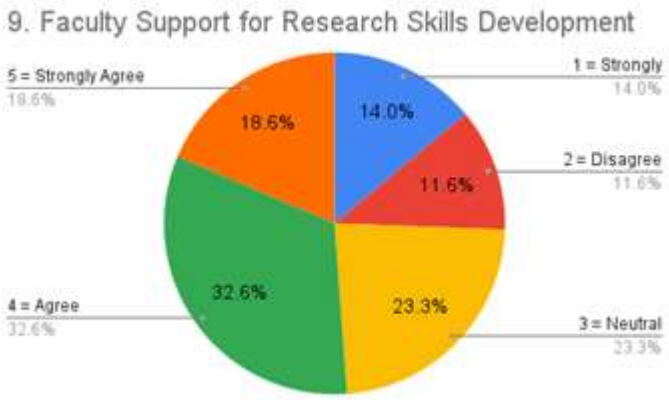
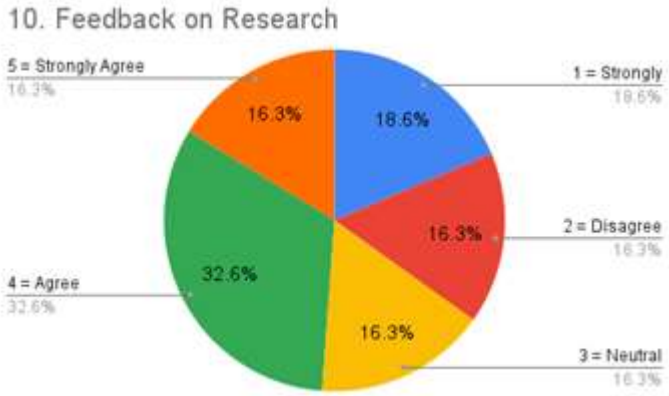
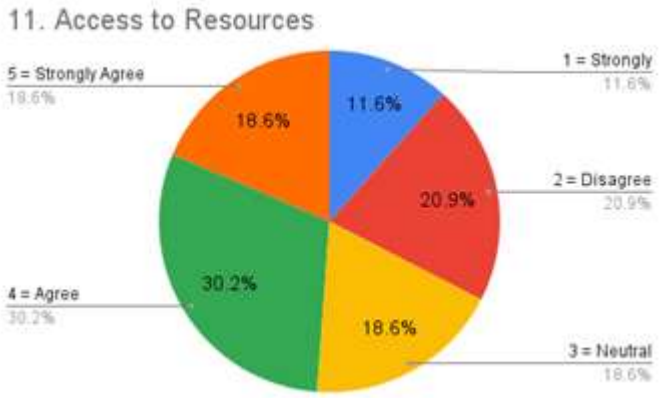


In this pie chart which illustrates faculty support for the development of research skills 51.2% of respondents agree or strongly agree. It suggests some amount of faculty assistance and support. On the other hand, 25.6% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree. It demonstrate a big gap in support or lack of support. In addition, 23.3% of respondents remained neutral. These conflicting answers show that faculty support at university is not consistent. Therefore, there is need for better faculty training, improved resources, and standardized methods in order to provide more effective and consistent support for the developing of research skills.



This pie chart about the feedback on research shows that 16.3% of respondents are neutral. It points to inconsistent or unclear feedback. %34.9 are opposed or strongly opposed. This illustrates large gap in giving satisfactory feedback. Only 48.9% are agree or strongly agree, which is almost moderate. This issue suggests that the lack of constructive and continuous feedback is a major barrier against the development of effective research skills in Afghan higher education. It highlights the need for improved mechanisms of feedback and faculty training.



The pie chart which asked about the access to resources in higher education in Afghanistan shows that there are differing opinions and beliefs. According to this pie chart, 48.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree. It indicates that the resources are satisfactory. However, 32.5% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree which this shows their dissatisfaction. Furthermore, 18.6% of the respondents remained neutral for this question. This difference suggests that the having access to resources is not equal in all institutions. Therefore, the researcher claims that there is a need for more effective teaching methods, better resource distribution, and innovative approaches in order to provide equal access and support for all the students and faculty members.

This pie chart which is related to access to research skills training shows that 27.9% of respondents are neutral. 34.9% agree or strongly agree, while 37.3% disagree or strongly disagree. It is showing a gap in access to training programs. This issue indicates that there is the need for interactive, targeted, and accessible professional development opportunities to enhance the research skills of students and members of the faculties.

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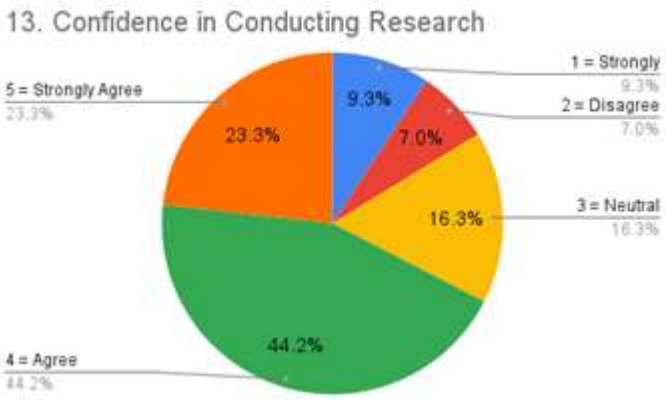
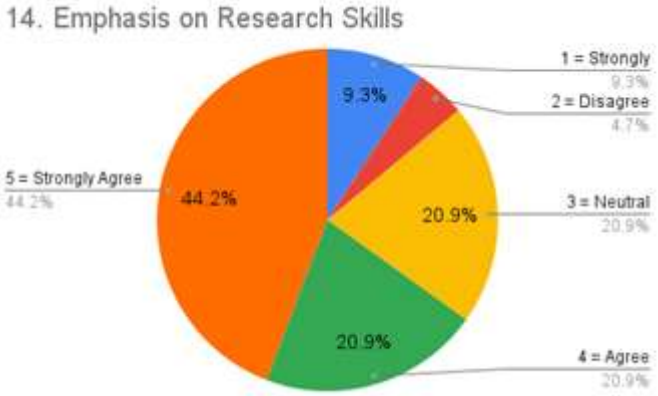


The pie chart above illustrates the confidence level of the participants in this study. By looking at it, we can understand that 67.5% of respondents feel confident when conducting research. It informs us about the strong foundation they have in research skills. Conversely, 16.3% remained neutral in response to this question, and 16.3% were disagree or strongly disagree which shows their lack of trust in conduction of research. Based on these diverse responses, we can understand the deficiencies in resources, training, and mentoring. Addressing these challenges is possible through interactive teaching approaches, access to resources and mentoring. Only then all participants will gain confidence.



According to the pie chart which depicts need for greater emphasis on research skills shows that 65.1% of respondents agree or strongly agree. It implies that more emphasis is needed on the research abilities. In contrast, 14% disagree and strongly disagree and 20.9% were neutral with current methods. These varied responses reflect differing opinions which are not the same. Based on these divers ideas there is a need improvements via interactive teaching methods.

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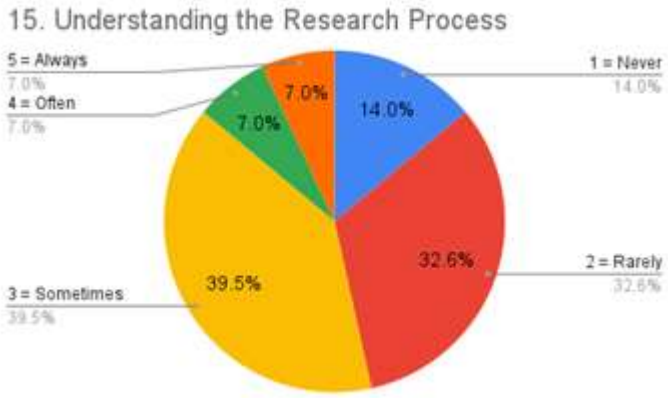
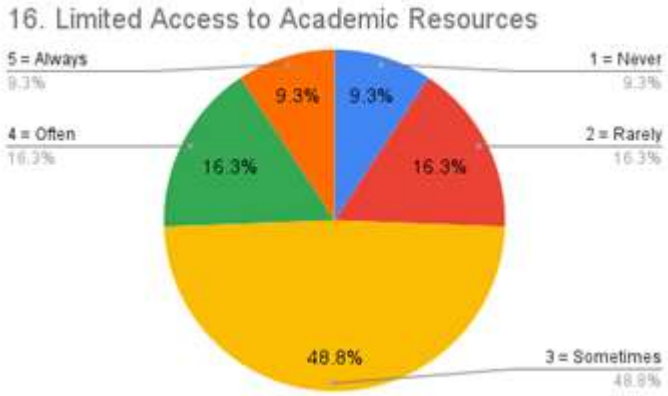


The pie chart regarding the understanding of the research process shows that 53.5% of respondents face challenges. Among them, 39.5% said they sometimes face difficulties, 7.0% mentioned they often face challenges, and 7.0% stated that they always encounter obstacles. In contrast, only 32.6% rarely or never face difficulties. These data shows that most participants struggle with understanding the research process. Therefore, more effective and student-centered teaching methods are needed to reduce confusion and improve research proficiency in Afghan higher education.



The pie chart on limited access to academic resources indicates that 74.4% of respondents are faced with challenges. Specifically, 9.3% said that limited access always avoid their research, 16.3% reported that it often hinders them, and 48.8% mentioned that they sometimes face this issue. Just 25.6% of individuals rarely or never encounter this problem. These findings clarifies a major obstacle which is limited access to academic resources for the development of research skills in Afghan universities. So, it emphasizes the need of easing access to resources and providing support for improving research capacity.

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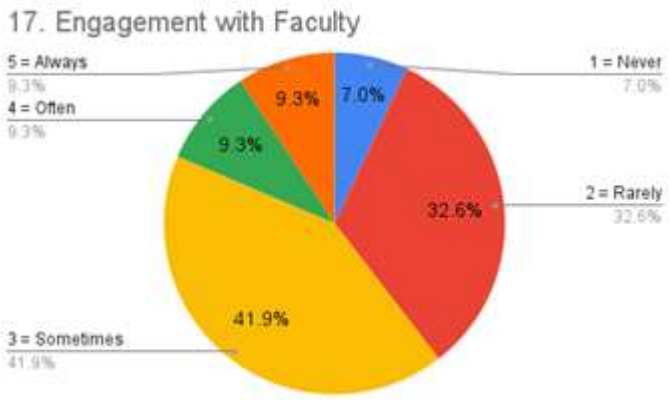
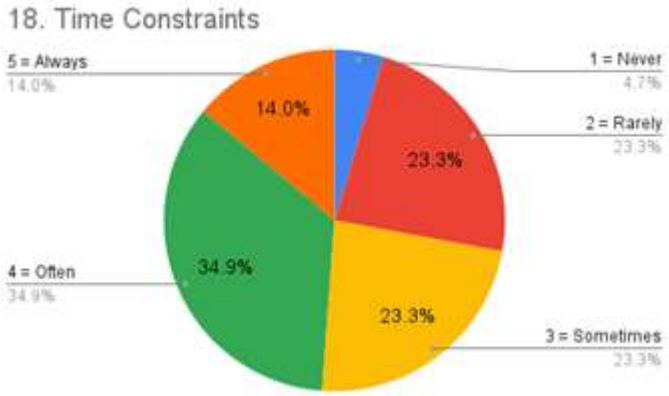
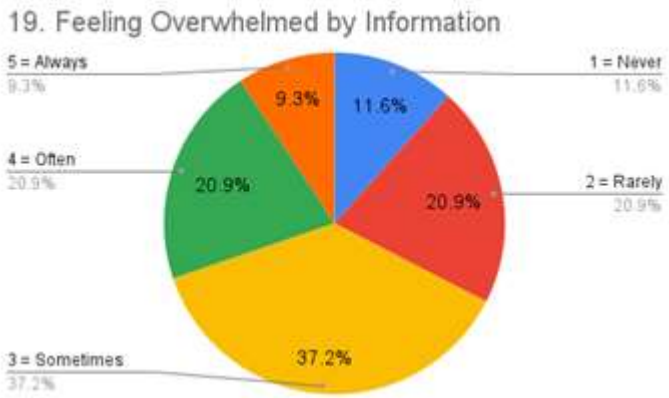


This pie chart which is about interaction with faculty shows that 60.5% of respondents find interacting with faculty challenging. Specifically, 9.3% always, 9.3% often, and 41.9% sometimes encounter difficulties and struggle. In contrast to that, 39.6% rarely or never face any issues or struggle. These findings and results suggest that limited interaction between students and faculty is a big problem. It also suggest that improving communication and interactive strategies is a need for strengthening academic relationships and supporting the development of research skills.



The pie chart above regarding the time limitations shows that 72.2% of respondents face time constraints or limitations: Nearly 35% of the participants often encounter time limitations. 23.3% sometimes do, and 14% always face constraints while conducting research. On the other hand, only 28% encounter restrictions of time rarely or never. These results indicate that time limitations contribute significantly to the challenges in acquiring research skills. Adaptable and student-focused teaching approaches is required to solve this problem.



The above which illustrates the feelings of being overwhelmed by information reveals that 67.4% of respondents regularly or constantly feel overwhelmed by the volume or amount of information. Specifically, 20.9% often feel overwhelmed, 37.2% sometimes feel this way, and 9.3% always have the experience of this feeling. On the other side, just 32.5% are rarely or never overwhelmed. These findings indicate that both heavy workloads and insufficient teaching methods create challenges in in gaining skills for research. In order to improve the learning experiences for the students, manageable material along with supportive teaching methods is proposed.

Specific Changes to Improve Teaching of Research Skills:

Respondents suggested key issues for improving research skills instruction. Many participants of this study emphasized the value of real-world experience and suggested incorporating research into various subjects through practical projects. One participant noted that, "*Research skills should be integrated into various subjects, not just confined to research courses.*" Another person commented, "*We need practical research projects every semester.*" The development of teachers was also a focal point. One respondent suggested, "*Teachers should adopt modern teaching methods for research.*" Another mentioned, "*We need to enhance our teaching skills.*" Additionally, another objective was resource improvement, which included expanding library items and modernizing computer laboratories. Suggestions included "*Our computer lab needs upgrading.*" and "*We need more materials in our libraries.*" Workshops and financial support were also emphasized. One saying: "*We need more workshops and training for students and teachers.*" and another suggesting: "*There should be financial support for researchers.*" Student-centered learning was also a key focus. One recommendation was that "*Classes should include more student-centered activities.*" Some participants suggested building a stronger research culture by saying: "*We need a research study center.*" These insights show us the need for practical research, teacher training, better resources, and targeted and focused support to improve research skills in higher education.

Discussion of the Results

This study presents clarification and explanation about several opportunities and challenges which are related to teaching research skills inside the Afghan universities. The findings highlight numerous key barriers to effective research education, including outmoded teaching techniques, limited resources, and a lack of institutional support.

However, the study also uncovers potential areas for improvement, including the implementation of student-centered teaching approaches and enhanced access to practical learning experiences. These insights suggest several strategies to boost students' research abilities, such as the necessity for faculty training, curriculum updates, and greater investment in resources and technology.

Interpretation of Results

The interview data underscores several factors which they impact the development of research skills in Afghanistan and they are including cultural, institutional, and educational challenges. The results and findings of this study show poor teaching strategies, restricted access to resources, and a lack of faculty support provide major challenge and significant obstacles for the students. Hypothesis 1 of this study proposed that students in Afghan universities encounter difficulties in acquiring research and these findings support it. Quantitative data for this research revealed that 53.5% of participants agree or strongly agree which current teaching methods are ineffective, and 27.9% disagree or strongly disagree. It is their showing dissatisfaction from traditional like teacher-centered approaches. Furthermore, this notion was more supported by qualitative interviews with faculty members which confirmed lack of practical application and student-centered learning. The purpose for the research question 2 was to identify the most effective teaching methods, resources, and tools in order to enhance the research skills of the students in the Afghan universities. The findings of this study now demonstrate that interactive and student-centered methods like practical research projects and workshops are very helpful and effective in improving research proficiency. These findings firmly confirm Hypothesis 2, which it proposed that the interactive and student-centered teaching approaches would be more effective than traditional lecture-based methods. The qualitative data of current research demonstrated that all faculty members strongly agree on the importance of practical application and student engagement, because the participants emphasized on the need for more workshops, updated resources, and institutional support.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study align with previous research on the difficulties of teaching research skills in resource-limited environments. This study emphasizes on the ineffectiveness of old and conventional teaching methods which is consistent with Farid et al.'s (2021) criticism of teacher-centered approaches' failure to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In the similarly studies, the problems and difficulties of implementing Outcome-Based Education and Student-Centered Learning (OBE-SCL) in Afghanistan were also explored and covered by Katawazai (2021) and Ahmadzai et al. (2019), who mentioned issues such a shortage of trained teachers and out of date curricula. These difficulties and challenges are consistent with this study's conclusions as well regarding the necessity of curricular reform and improved or enhanced faculty training. The existing literature stresses the importance of soft skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving which enhance research competence. Hashemi 2020 and Mofleh and Mangal 2023 noted that these skills have not received sufficient attention in Afghan higher education, aligning with this study's findings on the value of practical learning experiences and student engagement.

Furthermore, this study's suggestion to integrate ICT tools and digital resources into the curriculum is supported by the significant role technology plays in enhancing research capabilities, as also mentioned by Alokozay et al. 2022.

Another surprising finding was the significant gender disparity or imbalance in survey responses. There was 90.7% of the participants male gender and only 9.3% female gender. This disparity or imbalance is possibly a reflection of the broader gender dynamics inside Afghanistan's higher education system in which female students and members of faculty face or encounter extra additional barriers such as social restrictions and domestic responsibilities they have. The little or limited representation of female participants may have influenced the findings of this study, particularly related to the gender-specific challenges in learning research capabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researches should focus on including larger and more diverse samples from different universities and academic fields to gain a broader understanding about the challenges and effective methods in teaching research skills which was not covered by this micro research. Furthermore, future studies should conduct a deeper investigation about gender-specific challenges, particularly the barriers related to the female students and members of faculty that they face in developing and acquiring research competencies. Research can explore the experiences from women in Afghan higher education and investigate on how cultural and social factors affect their participation and contributions to the research. Future research also should and can examine the implementation of interactive and student-centered teaching methods in by detail which was not done in this study. The case studies from universities that have successfully implemented these strategies can offer to us valuable learnings or insights, and longitudinal research would be also beneficial in order to evaluate their long-term effects on students' research abilities. Furthermore, investigations should look very carefully to the role of the technology in research education, specifically about the ICT tools and how these tools and online platforms can help us overcome resource limited and constraints settings and enhance our access to the research materials.

Conclusion

This study underlines the challenges and difficulties of teaching research skills in the Afghan universities. These challenges and difficulties contain traditional teaching methods, insufficient resources, and insufficient inadequate support and backing. The results and findings of this study show that interactive and student-centered methods such as practical research projects and workshops are more successful and effective for developing research skills compare to the traditional lecture-based approaches. Nonetheless, implementing and applying these approaches and methods requires teacher training, updated curricula, and for access to resources and the technology. Moreover, it is essential to address cultural and gender barriers, especially for female students and faculty members in order to create and promote a more inclusive research environment. Afghan universities should prioritize enhancing practical learning in order to improve research education by providing institutional support, and investing in faculty training.

These changes and improvements will not only boost and enhance research skills and abilities of the students but also equip them for success in both academic and professional settings.

Implications and Recommendations

Universities need to prioritize presenting opportunities of practical research by integrating theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. Regular workshops on research methodologies should be organized and held by institutions both for academics and students. P2 offered his recommendation as the following: "*Participating in international workshops and conferences enhances research knowledge.*" Extra research classes should be incorporated into the curriculum for the students with clear guidelines. One of the points that P3 put emphasis on was that "*Students should receive clear guidelines, instructions and rubrics.*" The researcher suggest that the universities should invest in the modern technology, make the resources more accessible and offer faculty members financial and professional support. P4 made the point that "*Research requires funding and institutional support to succeed.*"

Limitations of the Study

This study just like other studies has a few limitations and restrictions. Firstly, the sample size in this study was somehow small. Only twenty faculty members from two institutions (Kabul and Balkh) and twenty-seven first-semester TESOL students participated. The findings may not be as broadly applicable due to the limited sample size, even with the purposive sampling used to guarantee relevant experience. Secondly, there was a gender imbalance in the survey responses which may have affected the results of this study in relation to the learning of research skills. Future studies should aim to include a more balanced gender representation in order to gain a more complete understanding about these issues.

Another restriction or limitation could be the possibility of researcher bias during qualitative data collection and data analysis. Although the research in this study followed the standard research processes, such as pilot testing and ethical criteria, the researcher's interpretation of interview data could have influenced the findings. Additionally, the use of pie charts for presenting quantitative data may not fully portray the complexity and depth of the data being collected. Although, they are excellent for visual depiction of quantitative data.

Lastly, this study focused on just two universities in whole Afghanistan. This may not completely represent or reflect the experiences of all higher education system of the country. A wider range of institutions should be considered to be included in future studies in order to gain a bigger picture about the challenges and opportunities in teaching research capabilities.

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