

Research Attitudes and Capabilities of Faculty Members in Higher Education Institution

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ABSTRACT

Faculty members are expected, if not required to conduct research to improve educational practice. However, low research productivity has been a perennial challenge for most academic institutions especially in developing countries. To understand the situation, this study focused on the attitudes and research capabilities of faculty members. It utilized a descriptive survey

design using a survey questionnaire to gather data from college faculty members of an archdiocesan institution. Analysis of results revealed that faculty members attitude towards research is high, which means that they have a positive opinion towards research. Moreover, faculty members perceive their capabilities towards research as high. This means that although they have some reservations, such as lack of experience, they see themselves as capable of doing research. Results also revealed that the number of research conducted by faculty members determined their attitudes and capabilities towards research. A closer look at the number of research conducted reveals that more research experience leads to higher research engagement. It is then highly recommended that departments in charge of institutional research in academe should take advantage of the positive attitude and capability of faculty members and utilize this towards creating a culture of research in the institution.

KEYWORDS

Research and education, research productivity, descriptive, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

It has been established in many literature and studies that faculty research is significant in the improvement of educational practices, and, eventually the progress of a nation. It has become the basis for new developments and is used in making sound decisions. With this, much is expected from teachers who are viewed as an authority in terms of research. As a result, the conduct of research is strongly promoted in the academe, especially in higher education institutions.

However, in a study conducted by Lee and Field (2011) in which they surveyed over 2,000 faculty members at seven state universities in the Minnesota State University System, they found that young faculty at the rank of instructor show little interest in research, while young assistant professors report significantly more interest and satisfaction in research than do any other faculty groups. Since those at the rank of instructor only very rarely have terminal degrees, engaging in research may be a low personal and job priority for teachers at that rank. Since most faculty members with a doctoral degree within the Minnesota system are hired at the assistant professor level, an interesting and plausible interpretation of this finding

is that the new faculty with a doctoral degree have the most interest in research. They added that faculty members lose some of that interest after teaching within the system for a while. Chief among their findings is that faculty at public undergraduate institutions are extremely interested in and derive great satisfaction from teaching. In effect, they are considerably less enthusiastic and also more divided with regard to their attitudes toward research.

In the Philippines, Hairon as cited by Pamatmat (2016), described that teachers are superheroes in the classroom because of the challenging nature of the work as they learn, unlearn, and relearn. Despite being busy teaching, job-related duties, and classroom management, the conduct of research is a must for teachers in facing new and more challenges and toward becoming better practitioners. In the case of tertiary education in the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed the fact that the primary role of colleges and universities in the country is to generate and disseminate knowledge; hence, the responsibility and function to undergo research and related scholarly investigations in various disciplines should not be relegated to the back seat. The dilemma is the teacher's right attitude in conducting research. Because conducting research will not become a habit and as effective if the researcher cannot conceptualize the research accordingly, and if he cannot systematically do the tasks from keeping records to writing the manuscript, and finally analyzing the gathered data.

In like manner, Abaro and Marino (2016) stated that, in theory, some teachers are not skillful in conducting research, particularly classroom based or action research. They stressed that teachers could not address the problems encountered in classrooms if they are not skillful in conducting research. As a recommendation, they emphasized that this situation should not be neglected and should be given attention not only by the Department of Education but also other institutions who are affected by their teaching performance.

At Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC), the Institutional Research Office (IRO) has to work harder in order to motivate teachers to conduct research. In fact, provisions for incentives, mentoring, and other research-related assistance has been provided. In addition, recent initiatives of the IRO included the conduct of research-related seminars to guide faculty members in writing their research. With all these efforts exerted, the IRO feels that much still need to be done if the institution aims to produce active faculty researchers. Hence, this study is conducted to better understand how the

Institutional Research Office of HCDC can be of more accurate service to the members of the academe, especially to the full-time faculty members.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to look into the attitudes and capabilities towards the research of full-time faculty regular members of Holy Cross of Davao College as the basis for the faculty development program. It specifically answered the following questions:

1. What are the demographic profiles of the full-time faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College in terms of:

- 1.1 age
- 1.2 highest educational attainment
- 1.3 sex
- 1.4 years of teaching
- 1.5 number of researches conducted
- 1.6 teaching load

2. What is the level of attitudes towards research of full-time regular faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College in terms of:

- 2.1 research usefulness for profession
- 2.2 research anxiety
- 2.3 research attitudes towards research
- 2.4 relevance to life
- 2.5 research difficulty

3. What is the level of capabilities in doing research of the full-time regular faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College in terms of:

- 3.1 proposals
- 3.2 research tool
- 3.3 data gathering
- 3.4 data analysis
- 3.5 conclusion and recommendation

3.6 referencing

3.7 research presentation

4. Is there a significant difference in the level of level of attitudes towards research of full-time faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College when analyzed by profile?

5. Is there a significant difference in the level of capabilities in doing research of full-time faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College when analyzed by profile?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive research design to fulfill the objectives set in this study. According to Shields and Rangarajan (2013), descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population being studied. It does not describe what caused a situation. In this study, descriptive research was adopted to describe the characteristics of full-time regular faculty members of HCDC in the aspects of their research attitudes and capabilities.

A three-part survey questionnaire was utilized to gather data for the study. Part I of the questionnaire sought information about the faculty-respondents' age, sex, highest educational attainment, number of researches conducted (includes academic requirements and institutional research output from the school year 2010-2011 to 2014-2015), years of teaching, and teaching loads for the past five years. In addition, Part II of the survey questionnaire is a modified version of the Attitude towards Research (ATR) Questionnaire, which was used to gather data about faculty attitudes towards research.

On the other hand, Part III is a researcher-made questionnaire that was used to gather data about faculty research capabilities (Appendix A). Both questionnaires passed validation and reliability testing. Using simple random sampling, both questionnaires were distributed to identified full-time faculty members of HCDC - from basic to tertiary level. However, one of the limitations of data collection is time constraints which resulted in the distribution of the questionnaire towards summer vacation. In effect the collation of the questionnaire was done during summer break. Of the 156 questionnaires distributed, 58 of them were collected, equating to a valid sample size of 30 percent. Analysis of the data from the retrieved

questionnaire utilized the following statistical tools: frequency, weighted mean, independent t-test, and analysis of variance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis. A detailed discussion follows the presentation of the result to provide meaning and implication to numerical data.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 provides a comprehensive background of the full-time faculty involved in the study. This is necessary to understand the needs of the faculty members based on their characteristics.

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of Faculty Members

Demographic Profile	f	Percent	Demographic Profile	F	Percent
Age					
56 yrs – 65 yrs. Old	6	10.3	Years of Teaching		
44 yrs – 54 yrs. Old	8	13.8	20 yrs. and above	11	19.0
33 yrs – 43 yrs. Old	19	32.8	14 yrs. – 19 yrs.	9	15.5
23 yrs – 32 yrs. Old	21	36.2	8 yrs. – 13 yrs.	12	20.7
No response	4	6.9	5 yrs. – 7 yrs.	15	25.9
			2 yrs. – 4 yrs.	11	19.0
Total	58	100.0	Total	58	100.0
Highest Educational Attainment					
			Number of Research Conducted		
Post-Graduate	4	6.9	Three or more	6	10.3
Post-Graduate Level	8	13.8	Two	13	22.4
Master Degree	17	29.3	One	35	60.3
Master Level	16	27.6	None	4	6.9
Bachelor Degree	11	19.0	Total	58	100
No Response	1	1.7			
Total	58	100.0			
Sex					
			Teaching Load		
Male	41	70.7	Partially Deloaded	8	13.8
Female	17	29.3	With Extra Load	31	53.4
Total	58	100.0	Full Load	18	31.0
			No Response	1	1.7
			Total	58	100

As seen on the table, the majority of the full-time faculty members of Holy Cross of Davao College are aged 23-32 years old and they comprised 36.2 percent of the sampled population. This is followed by faculty members who are 33 to 43 years old, and they comprised 32.8 of the same sampled population. On the other extreme, 10.3 percent of the population is aged 56 to 65 years old.

When it comes to the full-time faculty members' educational qualification, 29.3 percent of them hold a master's degree, followed by 27.6 percent who belong to master level. On the other end, 6.9 percent of the full-time faculty members have a post doctorate degree.

As for sex, 70.7 percent of the sampled population is male, comprising the majority. The females compose only 17 percent of the full-time faculty members. In terms of years of teaching, majority of the full-time faculty members (25.9%) have been teaching at Holy Cross of Davao College for 5 to 7 years at the time of the data gathering; followed by faculty members who have been teaching for 8 to 13 years (20.7%). On the other hand, 15.5 percent of the faculty members have been teaching for 14 to 19 years.

As for the number of researches conducted, more than half of the faculty members (60.3%) have conducted one research pertaining to their academic requirements in graduate studies. When it comes to teaching loads, more than half of the faculty members (53.4%) have extra teaching loads.

Attitudes towards Research of Full-time Regular Faculty Members

Table 2 provides the analysis on the attitudes of faculty members towards research. In general, their attitudes can be described as high ($M=2.87$). This means that the faculty members have a positive opinion towards research. This is favorable because a positive attitude towards research is a key to success and progress in knowledge based societies (Voorwald, 2010). This implies faculty members' openness to participate in research improvement efforts of the institution as signified by the attendance in the various research-related activities initiated by the IRO.

Table 2. Attitudes towards Research of Full-time Regular Faculty Members

Indicators of Attitude	Mean	sd	Description
Research usefulness for profession	3.55	0.42	Very High
Research Anxiety	2.24	0.85	Low
Positive attitudes towards research	3.01	0.58	High
Relevance to life	2.92	0.50	High
Research difficulty	2.63	0.71	High
Overall	2.87	0.41	High

Looking closely at the result of the statistical analysis, the full-time faculty members rated very high in terms of research usefulness for profession ($M=3.55$). This means that they have a strong positive opinion towards the usefulness of research in teaching. This corroborates with the theory of Herzber that when one considers the knowledge acquired from undertaking research as meaningful and relevant, it would affect his intrinsic motivation. In addition, Austin (2018) pointed out that teachers are trained to research because it is beneficial to their profession. Research does not only develop teachers' research competencies but also their teaching skills.

This result further is consistent with the analysis that teachers' anxiety towards research is moderately low. This means that research does not make faculty members nervous, stressed, anxious, nor scared. They also disagree that research is a complex endeavor and complicated. This implies that they have low anxiety level towards research. Gmelch, Lovrich, and Wilke (2003) have already pointed out that teachers experience low anxiety level in the different stages of research endeavor making them in better condition to do research with greater quality.

The last three indicators for attitudes of HCDC faculty towards research all rated as high with the following: positive attitudes towards research ($M=3.01$), relevance to life ($M=2.92$), and research difficulty ($M=2.63$). This means that full-time faculty members have positive attitudes towards research and its relevance to life. As Alamdari and Afsthoon (2018) pointed out, without research, we would not be where we are today. This also corroborates with Bandura's Theory of Self-efficacy, which assumed that humans find ways to survive primarily by relying on their efficiency.

The last indicator of attitude towards research is the research difficulty to which the teacher-respondents rated high (2.63). Based on the questionnaire used for this study, this means that they have trouble with arithmetic; they have difficulty understanding research concepts, and they make many mistakes in research. In the study of Wang and Guo (2011), they highlighted that some of their participants acknowledged a deficiency in their own perceptions about research and expressed some dissatisfaction because, even though they acknowledged the value, they did not enjoy learning about research nor did they possess knowledge of how to apply it in life, especially the topic on statistic.

Ajzen and Fishbien (2010) also said that staying motivated and working on the plan in large research projects is a big challenge for researchers because it is hard for the researcher and research team to remain motivated

and to keep moving forward against research obstacles, work pressure, and personal commitments. Finally, after a researcher has completed his study, the final challenge is to know how to make sense of the data he has collected. A researcher has to connect his finding with the existing research, compare the methodology of the books that he has read. He has to analyze the data using the right software and see whether the finding answers the researcher's questions and hypothesis, biases, and whether the result can be generalized or not.

Research capabilities of the Full-time Faculty Members

Table 3 shows that the faculty members rated moderately high in all indicators of capabilities. This means that they believe they are capable of preparing and executing the proposal, research tool, data gathering, data analysis, conclusions and recommendations, referencing, and research presentation. However, this belief comes with some reservations.

Table 3. Levels of Capabilities in Doing Research of the Full-time Regular Faculty Members of HCDC

Indicators of Capabilities	Mean	Sd	Description
Proposal	2.85	0.56	High
Research Tool	2.67	0.54	High
Data Gathering	2.89	0.51	High
Data Analysis	2.65	0.71	High
Conclusion and Recommendation	2.93	0.59	High
Referencing	3.15	0.68	High
Research Presentation	2.97	0.64	High
Overall	2.87	0.50	High

This reservation may come from problems with writing skills. Hayland (2008) stressed that most problems with research come from the lack of writing skills of researchers. Hayland further pointed out that a poorly written research paper is disastrous. Therefore simply believing that one is capable of doing research is not enough. This belief in one's capability should be coupled with linguistics competence in order to organize one's thoughts and make the research paper intelligible to readers.

In addition, a study by Suwanwala (2011), which investigated perceptions of research productivity of academic lecturers in Chulalongkorn University, the most famous institution in Thailand, found that many lecturers did not

realize the importance of conducting research, and many of them lacked the knowledge, skills, experience, and resources to do research.

Similarly, a study conducted in Ratchapat Lampang Institution (Wongwichai, 2010) reported issues raised by institution academic members related to research problems that are claimed to cause low quantity and quality of research productivity. It was found that institution problems first arose because there was no research unit to act as the central conduit for information and corroboration and that there were insufficient research funds and resource availability to support researchers. In addition, promotional efforts, technical management and administration systems were inadequate. Second, personal problems appeared important, often because academic lecturers had insufficient research knowledge and experience, suggesting that they lack confidence to conduct research, while in addition, there was no encouragement or attractive motivation methods within the institution. Third, academic lecturers usually conducted research in the topics that they were personally interested in rather than attempting to conduct research that would be more beneficial to both their local community and to national development. Lastly, there were no properly developed networks among institutions, government, and private organizations to utilize the research outcomes.

The result of the analysis on research capabilities of faculty members aligns with Bandura's Self-efficacy theory. How researchers feel or think greatly influences their research performance. Hence although they believe they are capable of conducting research, their reservations come in the way resulting in low research productivity as reflected in the data on the number of researcher faculty members have conducted in the last five years (Table 1).

Test of Difference on Level of Attitudes

Table 4 presented the results of the test of difference when the level of attitudes of full-time regular faculty members of HCDC was analyzed by profile. Based on the table, it is very evident that in all aspects of the faculty member's profile, no significant difference was found. This means that there is no significant difference in the full-time regular faculty members' attitude towards research when analyzed and categorized by age ($F=0.504$; $p\text{-val}<0.707$), sex ($F=0.031$; $p\text{-val}<0.861$), education ($F=2.364$; $p\text{-val}<0.053$), number of research ($F=1.046$; $p\text{-val}<0.359$), years of teaching ($F=1.524$; $p\text{-val}<0.209$) and teaching load ($F=2.081$; $p\text{-val}<0.135$). This implies that

intrinsic factors do not influence faculty members' interest to engage in research.

Table 4. Test of difference when the level of attitudes of the respondents are analyzed according to their profile

Profile	F-value	p-values	Decision @ 0.05 Level	Interpretation
Age	0.540	0.707	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Sex	0.031	0.861	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Education	2.364	0.053	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Number of Research	1.046	0.359	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Years of Teaching	1.524	0.209	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Teaching Load	2.081	0.135	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The findings of this study align with the theory of Herzber which emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation in the conduct of research. Similarly, Horodnic and Zait, (2015) found that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with research productivity, whereas extrinsic motivation is negatively correlated. This claim further aligns with Zhang (2006) who found that self-efficacy has a strong positive relationship with research productivity.

Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that a low level of skill, experience and/or success in research will produce low levels of self-assurance about one's capacity to research. Bandura (1993) noted that people who have a low sense of efficacy for accomplishing a task might avoid it; those who believe they are capable should participate readily. Regardless of demographics, individuals who feel efficacious are hypothesized to work harder and persist longer when they encounter difficulties than those who doubt their capabilities.

Test of Difference on Levels of Capabilities

Table 5 presents the test of difference on capabilities of conducting research of full-time regular faculty members of HCDC. Almost similar to attitudes towards research, no significant difference on levels of capabilities in conducting research was found when faculty members were categorized by profile except in terms of number of research. This means that there is no significant difference in the full-time faculty members' levels of capabilities in doing research when analyzed by age ($F=0.502$; $p\text{-val}<0.734$), sex ($F=0.000$;

p-val<0.734), education (F=1.35; p-val<0.26), years of teaching (F=0.65; p-val<0.63) and teaching load (F=2.071; p-val<0.134) .

Table 5. Test of difference when the level of capabilities of the respondents are analyzed according to their profile

Profile	F-value	p-value	Decision @ 0.05 Level	Interpretation
Age	0.502	0.734	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Sex	0.000	0.734	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Education	1.35	0.26	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Number of Research	3.49	0.04	Reject	Significant
Years of Teaching	0.65	0.63	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Teaching Load	2.071	0.134	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The result is in line with the findings of Abarro and Marino (2016), who concluded in their research that the research capabilities of public secondary school teachers in writing a research proposal is affected by their position and not affected by age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment and research seminars/trainings attended. The research capabilities of public elementary school teachers with respect to writing a research proposal and a publishable research paper or article are affected by sex, civil status and research seminars/trainings attended and not age, position and by highest educational attainment.

Likewise, Narag, Cavan and Agustin (2016) found that research capabilities of the faculty members were categorized into four dimensions such as knowledge, financial, time and technical. Further, the research capabilities of the teachers do not have significant relationship with their personal profile like age, sex, civil status, training/ seminars attended and status in school.

On the other hand, a closer look at the number of research conducted reveals that there is a significant difference in the research capabilities of faculty members when analyzed in terms of number of research conducted (F= 3.49; p-val<0.04). This means that the more research one conducts, the higher is his/her capability to conduct research. This is in line with the findings of Beck (1990) who found that faculty members with graduate degrees generally reported higher levels of interest in research than their many other respondents who reported limited experience in most research tasks.

In addition, using a Tobit regression model on a representative sample Horodnic and Zait (2015) found that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with research productivity, whereas extrinsic motivation is negatively correlated. Hence, they concluded that faculty members who take a strong interest in their work and education are, as a consequence, more productive researchers. On the other hand, faculty members who are, in general, extrinsically motivated will however substitute their efforts toward activities that are more financially profitable.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Faculty members exhibit a positive attitude towards research. They view research as beneficial to their profession as well as to life in general. Although they have some reservations due to several factors, they feel that they have sufficient knowledge in research such as in writing the proposal, research tool, data gathering procedure, data analysis, conclusions and recommendations, referencing and research presentation. With sufficient guidance, faculty members believe that they can be productive researchers. Moreover, demographic profiles do not affect research productivity of faculty members. In fact, they are more motivated intrinsically than extrinsically. Their desire to advance in their career and their confidence in their research skills drive them to embark on a research task.

Departments in charge of research in an institution should take advantage of the faculty members' positive attitude towards research. This is an advantageous starting point for inculcating a culture of research. It is also a good baseline in designing programs that are geared towards improving the research capability of faculty members, especially those who have insufficient research skills and exposure. Further, academic institutions should reach out to the faculty members who exhibit a desire to conduct research but lack the necessary competence to start. Appropriate guidance, support and funding should be afforded to them in order to mould more faculty researchers. Further research may also be conducted to explore the specific needs of novice researchers.

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