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University Teachers' Engagement in Academic Writing in Nepal

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Abstract

This research investigates the engagement of university teachers in research and publication activities at Tribhuvan University (TU) in Nepal. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, quantitative data from 473 teachers across 23 TU colleges were analyzed using the chi-square test, Fisher's exact test, and binary logistic regression. The results reveal a notably low level of engagement in research and publication activities among teachers. Teachers publish fewer papers in international/indexed journals compared to national journals. Urban location and Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) certification correlate with higher engagement, contrasting with lower participation in rural settings, district towns, and non-QAA accredited institutions. The study recommends fostering an academic culture that motivates and empowers teachers for research and publication. Furthermore, gender, geographical location, and institutional type (QAA vs. non-QAA) are identified as significant factors shaping teachers' research involvement and publications.

Keywords: Academic writing, academic publications, higher education, teacher engagement

The significance of academic writing as a crucial quality indicator in higher education is widely acknowledged (French, 2020), serving as a fundamental instrument for knowledge creation, dissemination, and scholarly recognition, along with fostering the professional development of educators (Cong & Jiang, 2021). In Nepalese universities, particularly at TU, the oldest in Nepal, the tradition of academic writing is nascent. Although TU recognizes its importance, policy implementation faces challenges due to financial constraints. Nonetheless, recent efforts involve teaching faculty and graduate students engaging in collaborative and self-funded studies for publications in national and international journals.

Since TU's establishment in 1959, various university entities have begun publishing journals and anthologies. Financial support from the University Grants Commission (UGC) has spurred constituent, community, and private campuses to initiate journal publications. However, concerns persist regarding the unsatisfactory quality and standards of these publications. Acknowledging the need for more rigorous processes, journals are now actively encouraging collaborative efforts among teaching faculty and students to institutionalize an academic writing culture within the university. This initiative has empowered teacher agency and engagement in writing and publications.

Varpanen et al. (2022) emphasize the pivotal role of teacher agency established through writings and publications in educational reformation. Pasa and Kharel (2020) assert that active involvement in empirical studies, exploration of new knowledge, and dissemination through academic writing not only meets academic and societal expectations but also promotes teacher professionalism.

Academic writing and scholarly publication are pivotal for the career progression of university teachers, offering extensive opportunities to delve into diverse resources (Lei & Hu, 2019). Early cultivation of writing skills is crucial, with universities emphasizing its significance (Graham, 2019). However, challenges impede teacher motivation, including financial and social disincentives, copyright concerns (McLennan, 2012), societal perceptions towards teaching (De Costa et al., 2018; Li & Rawal, 2018), and institutional obligations. Factors such as inadequate resources (Panthee, 2021), ineffective government policies, and teacher detachment from curricular innovation (Yadav, 2022) further hinder academic engagement at TU.

This article addresses the observed gap in academic writing at TU, emphasizing the need to foster a culture of research dissemination and development. Investigating teacher involvement in academic writing, seen as an extension of teaching (Cong & Jiang, 2021; McLennan, 2012), collaboration, mentoring (Adhikari, 2022; Martin et al., 2019; Neubauer et al., 2019; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023), and supervision (Bastola, 2020) at TU in Nepal is the focus. The study explores contextual nuances, practices, opportunities, and challenges perceived by teachers, unveiling motivations and strategies for enhancing research productivity. This research contributes insights into the difficulties faced by TU teachers amid regular teaching responsibilities (Timsina, 2021) and navigates their engagement in academic writing. Institutional and demographic characteristics are scrutinized, acknowledging their intersectionality.

The investigation also delves into teachers' participation in crafting research articles, texts, references, and research reports within the academic landscape. The study seeks to answer the research questions:

- What is the current status of teacher participation and engagement in academic writing in TU-FOE?
- What are the motivational opportunities and challenges that teachers have had regarding their engagement in researching and academic writing?
- How are the demographic characteristics as gender, geographical location, QAA certification, and types of institution associated their attempts and engagement in academic writing?
- What types of publications (journals, book/book chapters, reports) that TU-FOE teachers have utilised while participating and engaging in academic writing?

Study Context

The government of Nepal aims to enhance the quality and global competitiveness of higher education through its 2015 policy (MOE, 2015). TU aligns with this vision, allocating funds for research across various entities, though challenges persist in funding adequacy (TU, 2019b, p. 52). In TU-FOE, academic writing is integral to professional growth, emphasizing research and publications in lecturer recruitment (Shrestha, 2020). Promotion criteria stress the significance of national and international journal publications for associate professors and professors (Shrestha, 2020; TU Service Commission, 2013). Recognition is accorded to scholars contributing to journals with high-impact factors (Joshi, 2016). UGC Nepal has historically supported research endeavors, providing funds for article publications (Timsina, 2022; Paudel et al., 2020). TU Service Commission emphasizes the value of paper publications and completed research in examinations. High-ranked journal articles are pivotal for professorship advancements, with recognition and marks allocated accordingly (Shrestha, 2020; Gautam, 2017). TU-Service Commission sets a standard requiring a minimum of two peer-reviewed papers for the award of a PhD degree, as outlined in Table 1, reflecting the institution's commitment to elevating the scholarly contributions of its faculty.

Table 1

Marking Schemes for Research Activities in Different Positions of Teachers

Types of Publication	Professor	Associate professor Maximum points	Lecturer
Articles published in the journal	60	40	30
Research report	6	6	6
Publication of reference books	10	10	10

This guideline aims to address deficiencies in the current implementation of UGC Act provisions,

emphasizing increased teacher involvement in academic writing for enhanced higher education quality. Despite existing initiatives such as mini-research grants and collaborative research grants, the execution falls short of expectations due to limited opportunities. The allocated research budget is insufficient, creating intense competition for opportunities, with teachers from non-capital campuses at a disadvantage. Senior faculty predominantly benefit from collaborative research funds, hindering equitable distribution. A critical concern is the underrepresentation of teachers from rural districts, particularly those under FOE at TU, who face challenges accessing research and publication opportunities. This research underscores the necessity for UGC to reassess policies and distribution mechanisms, ensuring a more inclusive and collaborative approach, benefiting both the UGC's policy development and FOE institutions in promoting teacher engagement in research and academic writing.

Literature Review

Academic writing and publications play a pivotal role in the multifaceted landscape of higher education, serving as a nexus for capacity development, scientific research, intellectual creativity, and cultural interaction (Carson & Herdman, 2012). This communicative process, whether qualitative or quantitative in approach, yields manifold benefits, fostering knowledge creation (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005), driving innovation (Axtell et al., 2006; Sun & Lee, 2013), and facilitating networking and collaboration among academic peers, experts, and scientific communities (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

University educators aspire to disseminate their rigorous research findings to a broader audience through peer-reviewed and indexed journals, necessitating the development of an academic culture within higher education institutions (Elander et al., 2006). The cultivation of academic culture, as argued by Williams et al. (1990), encompasses organizational practices that shape an environment conducive to research and publication. Key beliefs influencing academic culture include the organization's atmosphere, performance standards, success factors, and work ethics. Bland and Ruffin (1992) emphasize the prerequisites for a high-performance academic culture, highlighting factors such as research emphasis, positive group climate, decentralized organization, participative governance, human resources alignment, appropriate rewards, recruitment strategies, and leadership skills. According to Olvido (2022), a focus on resources and research activities is paramount in promoting a robust research culture, enhancing university teachers' ability to contribute to global transformation and cultural achievements (Shen & Tian, 2012).

Universities play a pivotal role in fostering talent, instilling confidence, promoting cultural awareness, and integrating culture for professional growth and innovation (ibid, 2012). Poet et al. (2010) found that 33% of teachers in England engage in research to enhance professionalism. Notably, top-tier universities prioritize research over teaching; Harvard University scores 92.9% in teaching and 96.6% in research, while MIT boasts a perfect 100% in research citations. The University of Tokyo scores 88% in research and 84.7% in teaching. In contrast, TU lags in both research and teaching rankings, particularly within the Faculty of Education. Cremin and Oliver (2017) highlight a dearth of data supporting teachers as writers, revealing challenges in self-confidence, writing history, and role enactment. Initiatives in initial training and professional development should empower teachers to redefine their identity, fostering academic writing and research prowess.

Many studies in Nepal point out that academic writing should be the benchmark of higher education for its quality and standards (Tamang et al. 2022; Rai & Gaire, 2021; Phyak & Baral, 2019; Acharya et al., 2023; Subedi, 2019). Tamang et al. (2022) advocating for its role in maintaining the agreed-upon quality of higher education. Rai and Gaire (2021) stress the necessity of academic writing to uphold international standards, while Subedi et al. (2022) underscore its significance in establishing academic identity. Timisina (2021) and Phyak and Baral (2019) highlight its role in fostering professionalism and professional identity. Kandel (2019) argues that academic writing promotes autonomy in utilizing teaching-learning resources. This engagement is equally important to enhance quality education as well as to establish better relationships among the faculties, students, and communities with "an ethics of care" (Czerniewicz et al., 2020, p. 963). Despite these imperatives, teachers at TU face challenges in engaging with academic writing due to limited support and opportunities for professional development. This article explores teachers' perspectives on academic writing, focusing on challenges, motivations,

attitudes, and strategies employed to enhance their skills in the absence of adequate support for research and academic writing in affiliated community and private campuses. The study aims to shed light on the current scenario, contributing valuable insights to address this academic writing gap.

Kyvik and Aksnes (2015) observed a substantial growth in scholarly publications globally, with Web of Science recording a surge from 500,000 indexed articles in 1981 to 1.5 million in 2013. Savage and Olejniczak (2022) noted an increase in journal articles per person, ranging from 3% to 64% between 2011 and 2019, contrasting a decline in books per person by 31% to 54%. Johnson et al. (2018) estimated a 5–6% annual growth in scholarly journals over the past decade, totaling 33,100 English-language journals dispersing around 3 million articles yearly. Despite this knowledge explosion, Nepali higher education, particularly at TU, grapples with fostering a research culture. This study examines the participation and engagement of TU Faculty of Education teachers in research, revealing challenges stemming from inadequate systemic intervention and institutional support, thereby illustrating the ongoing struggle within Nepali academia to integrate effectively into the global research landscape.

Methodology

Study Setting

Aiming at exploring the participation and engagement in academic writing, this research applied cross-sectional survey design. The survey was administered to the teachers who have been involved in teacher education at 23 different campuses under TU-FOE. Since its establishment, FoE has been contributing to the nation by producing and supplying all kinds of human resources needed for the teacher education in the country. It has offered teacher education programs in a wider range of subject areas including English education, mathematics education, social studies, science and information and communication technology education.

Sample and Sampling Technique

All teachers related to the Faculty of Education working at TU Nepal were considered as the population of this study. Researcher did not find official record of the total number of teachers in Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University so, a representative sample size of 385 was calculated for an unknown population. Accounting for a 20% non-response rate, the sample size was adjusted to 462. After rounding to align with the 23 campuses (21 teachers per campus), the sample size increased to 483 teachers. Following the exclusion of 10 cases with substantial missing data, the final sample size for teachers included in the research was 473. Teachers were randomly selected from selected 23 campuses located in various geographical regions, including the seven provinces (Mountain, Hill, Kathmandu Valley, and Tarai) hence multi-stage cluster random sampling technique was employed to collect the data in the research.

Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

Self-administered survey questionnaire was applied to draw the information from the teachers. The questionnaire comprised the questions relating their professional engagement, participation in academic writing, professional satisfaction and well being. Since this study mainly focuses on engagement and participation in academic writing, the quantitative information concerning it has been used. More specifically, in this paper the information relating academic writing and publication has been measured in terms of three categories: publication of research articles, books and leading/collaborating in the research projects. In addition, the teachers' attempts to publish academic papers in national and international levels have been considered well.

Since this paper is a part of the large scale study, the researchers selected in terms of their research expertise were involved in two-day orientation program. They were carefully oriented to administer the questionnaire. Regarding the teachers' engagement and participation on academic writing and publications, the researchers were oriented to administer and survey form that expected the respondents to list out the research projects that they were engaged in, the papers that they had published in the national journals and other papers that they had published international Scopus ranked journals.

Figure 1
Detail Mappings of Selected Campus Location



Sample Characteristics

In this research, various sample characteristics were systematically examined, encompassing gender, geographical location, QAA certification, and institutional types, specifically constituent and affiliated campuses. The gender distribution in the sample revealed 86.5% male and 13.5% female respondents. Geographically, 3.6% of teachers hailed from the Mountain region, 34.9% from the Hill, 48.8% from Terai, and 12.7% from the Kathmandu valley. This distribution was influenced by the concentration of campuses in the Terai and Kathmandu valley.

QAA certification status was also considered, with 29.2% of teachers from certified campuses and 70.8% from non-certified ones. QAA, endorsed by UGC, ensures quality across program facets. Additionally, institutional types played a crucial role, comprising constituent (57.5%), community (27.1%), and private (15.4%) campuses as per the University Act. Constituent campuses receive government support, community campuses rely on student fees and charity, and private campuses operate independently, charging higher fees. The comprehensive sample characteristics are detailed in the Table 2.

Table 2
Status of Sample Characteristics (n=473)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	409	86.5
	Female	64	13.5
Geographical Location	Mountain	17	3.6
	Hill	165	34.9
	Tarai	231	48.8
	Kathmandu Valley	60	12.7
QAA	QAA certified	138	29.2
	Non-QAA	335	70.8
Types of campus	Constituent	272	57.5
	Community	128	27.1
	Private	73	15.4

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected using the survey questionnaire were analysed using the tools of descriptive statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to find the status of the university teachers in research engagement, publication of journal articles in national and international journals, and publication of books. The Fisher's Exact test was employed to test the association for those variables having less than five sample in the category (Peacock & Peacock, 2011) whereas Chi-square test was used to find the association in remaining cases of publications with the sample characteristics. Additionally, the binary logistic regression was used to find out the role of the sample characteristics on academic publications.

Results

Figure 2 demonstrates that only one-fourth (24.9%) of the teachers reported that they have published some articles for the last two years. However, that rate of book publications and participation and engagement in research projects is around one-tenth i.e. 10.6% and 11.4% respectively.

Figure 2

Status of Teachers' Participation in Publishing Article, Writing Book and Engagement

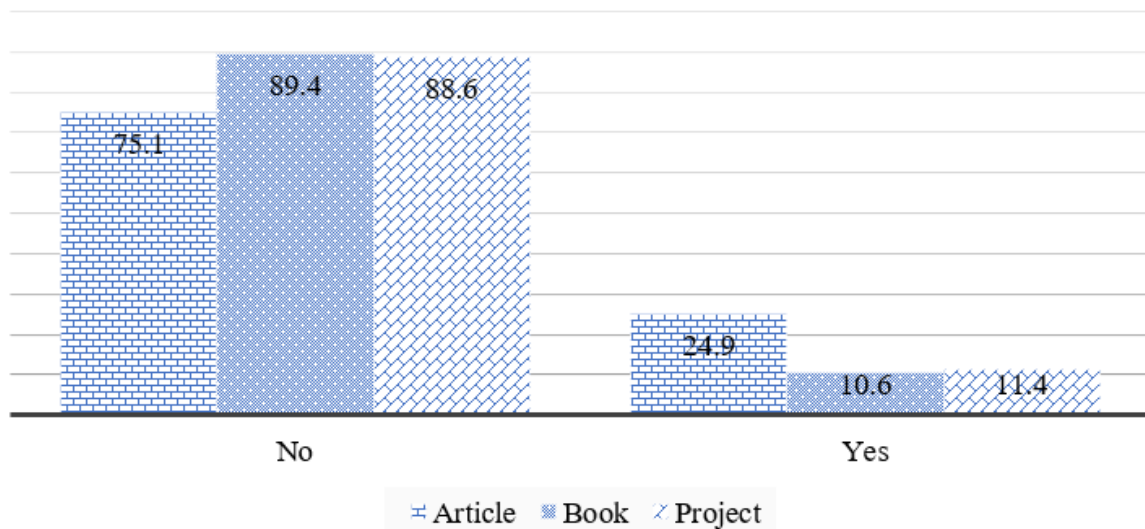


Table 3 presents teachers engagement in academic writing and in research projects at TU in the last two years. In total, 118 teachers reported that they published research articles, 50 reported to have published books/book chapters and 54 were involved in different types of research projects. However, among the teachers, 18 with respect to research articles, 10 with respect to book/book chapters, and 12 with respect to research projects reported that they had not published journal articles, books/book chapters, and involved in projects at all. The table also shows that almost all respondents published up to two journal articles (68%), books (80%), and projects (85.71%). However, the number of teachers is low as in the case of at least three articles (32%), book/book chapters (20%), and projects (14.39%). The table also demonstrates that 82% articles were published in the national journals, 90% published books/book chapters in national publications, and 80.95% worked in national research projects. The result further shows that none of the respondents published books/book chapters in international publishers and only two respondents reported that they had published in Scimago Journal Ranked (SJR) journals and international research projects.

Table 3*Distribution of Publications and Research Projects based on National and International Level*

Number of Works	Articles			Books		Research Projects		
	Total (%)	National (%)	Int. (%)	Total (%)	National (%)	Total (%)	National (%)	Int. (%)
One	34(7.19)	33(6.98)	10.0(2.11)	22(4.65)	20(4.23)	26(5.50)	21(4.44)	2(0.42)
Two	34(7.19)	26(5.50)	4.0(0.85)	10(2.11)	9(1.90)	10(2.11)	7(1.48)	-
Three	9(1.90)	6(1.27)	2.0(0.42)	1(0.21)	1(0.21)	4(0.85)	5(1.06)	-
Four	8(1.69)	6(1.27)	4.0(0.85)	4(0.85)	3(0.63)	1(0.21)	-	-
> four	15(3.17)	11(2.33)	2.0(0.42)	3(0.63)	3(0.63)	1(0.21)	1(0.21)	-
Total	100(21.14)	82(17.37)	22(4.65)	40(8.46)	36(7.16)	42(8.88)	34(7.19)	2(0.42)

Association of Research and Publication Across the Sample Characteristics

The range of participants having the culture of writing articles is 5.5% to 38.3%. The Chi-square test statistics shows that there was a significant association between the culture of writing articles with sample characteristics such as geographical location and types of institution. The result further shows that the rate of publishing articles was found to be comparatively high with respect to those teachers working in Kathmandu Valley (38.3%) and the constituent college (34.2%) as compared to other categories under geographical location and types of institution respectively. Whereas similar results were measured with respect to the participation and engagement in the research projects. The range of participants having a culture of writing books is 2.7 to 20.0%. The Chi-square test statistics presents that there was a significant association in writing books with respect to gender, geographical location and types of institution whereas the results were found to be in favor of males (11.7%), Kathmandu Valley (20.0%), and constituent college (14.0%). The range of respondents in doing research projects was found to be 2.7% to 20.0%. Moreover, the detailed visual representation of the participation in all activities is presented in Figure 3 with estimate plots.

Table 4*Detail of Research and Publication across the Sample Characteristics (n=473)*

Variables	Articles		Books		Projects		Total
	No(%)	Yes(%)	No(%)	Yes(%)	No(%)	Yes(%)	
Gender	Insig		Sig		Insig		
Male	303(74.1)	106(25.9)	361(88.3)	48(11.7)	358(87.5)	51(12.5)	409(100)
Female	52(81.3)	12(18.8)	62(96.9)	2(3.1)	61(95.3)	3(4.7)	64(100)
Geo location	Sig		Sig		Sig		
Mountain	16(94.1)	1(5.9)	15(88.2)	2(11.8)	15(88.2)	2(11.8)	17(100)
Hill	110(66.7)	55(33.3)	148(89.7)	17(10.3)	143(86.7)	22(13.3)	165(100)
Tarai	192(83.1)	39(16.9)	212(91.8)	19(8.2)	213(92.2)	18(7.8)	231(100)
Kathmandu Valley	37(61.7)	23(38.3)	48(80.0)	12(20.0)	48(80.0)	12(20.0)	60(100)
QAA	Insig*		Insig		Insig		
QAA certified	98(71.0)	40(29.0)	122(88.4)	16(11.6)	119(86.2)	19(13.8)	138(100)
Non-QAA	257(76.7)	78(23.3)	301(89.9)	34(10.1)	300(89.6)	35(10.4)	335(100)
Types of INS	Sig**		Sig		Sig		
Constituent	179(65.8)	93(34.2)	234(86.0)	38(14.0)	229(84.2)	43(15.8)	272(100)
Community	107(83.6)	21(16.4)	118(92.2)	10(7.8)	119(93.0)	9(7.0)	128(100)
Private	69(94.5)	4(5.5)	71(97.3)	2(2.7)	71(97.3)	2(2.7)	73(100)

*Insig-Insignificant; **Sig-Significant

The results of multiple binary logistic regression by taking four sample characteristics considered as independent variables and publication of articles and books and working on research project work as dependent variables were calculated in this section. The results were considered under three models: Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 for research projects, book and journal article publication respectively. The Model 1 to 3 gives significant results with $\chi^2(7, N=473)=30.71, p=0.000.05$, $\chi^2(7, N=473)=24.78, p=0.000.05$, and $\chi^2(7, N=473)=73.69, p=0.000.05$ respectively. Model 1 explained between 6.3% (Cox and Snell R²) and 12.4% (Nagelkerke R²) of the variances of 88.6% of the cases whereas Model 2 explained between 5.1% (Cox and Snell R²) and 10.4% (Nagelkerke R²) of the variances of 89.4% of the cases. Additionally, Model 3 explained between 12.6% (Cox and Snell R²) and 18.7% (Nagelkerke R²) of the variances of 76.1% of the cases (Table 5). Table 5 shows that gender, status of QAA affiliation, geographical locations, and types of institutions are significant predictors to the engagement of teachers in research project works. The results show that the participation of male teachers in research projects was found to be 1.24 times more than female counterparts with 95% CI (1.04-11.82). Similarly, the participation of teachers in research projects from non-QAA was found to be -1.06 times less as compared to QAA-certified colleges with 95% CI=(0.15-0.79). Moreover, the participation in research projects from Kathmandu Valley was found to be 0.97 and 1.22 times more than Hill and Tarai respectively whereas teachers from constituent were found to be 1.64 times more than teachers from their private counterparts.

Table 5 also shows that gender, geographical location, and types of institutions are the significant predictors of publishing books. The results show that the participation of male teachers in writing books was found to be 1.55 times more than female counterparts whereas the teachers from constituent colleges published books 1.59 times more than private counterparts. Moreover, the participation of publishing books from Kathmandu Valley was found to be 1.18 times than Hill and 1.21 times more than the teachers from Tarai. Additionally, the publication of research articles found to be 0.84 times more by teachers from QAA-certified colleges with reference to non-QAA colleges, 2.43 and 1.27 times more by teachers from Mountain and Tarai with reference to Kathmandu Valley respectively. Also, the teachers from constituents' colleges published research articles 2.04 times more than their private counterparts. Similar results were measured in Figure 3.

Table 5

Effect of Sample Characteristics on Research Publication and Projects (n=473)

Variables	Projects (Model 1)		Books (Model 2)		Articles (Model 3)	
	B	Odd Ratio (95% CI)	B	Odd Ratio (95% CI)	B	Odd Ratio (95% CI)
Constant	-2.75*	0.06	-3.31*	0.036	-1.73*	0.177
Male	1.24*	3.46 (1.04-11.82)	1.55*	4.73(1.09-20.41)	0.55	1.73(0.84-3.56)
Non-QAA	-1.06*	0.35(0.15-0.79)	-0.74	0.48(0.20-1.14)	-0.84*	0.43(0.24-0.79)
Ktm* Valley		Reference		Reference		Reference
Mountain	-0.62	0.54(0.10-2.82)	-0.70	0.50(0.10-2.61)	-2.43*	0.09(0.01-0.73)
Hill	-0.97*	0.38(0.16-0.91)	-1.18*	0.31(0.13-0.76)	-0.59	0.56(0.28-1.10)
Tarai	-1.22*	0.30(0.12-0.73)	-1.21*	0.30(0.12-0.74)	-1.27*	0.28(0.14-0.58)
Private		Reference		Reference		Reference
Constituent	1.64*	5.16(1.19-22.38)	1.59*	4.91(1.13-21.40)	2.04*	7.69(2.67-22.17)
Community	0.39	1.47(0.25-8.58)	0.73	2.07(0.36-11.93)	0.96	2.614(0.76-9.03)
Cox & Snell		0.063		0.051		0.126
R Square						
Nagelkerke R Square		0.124		0.104		0.187
Correctly classified %		88.6		89.4		76.1

*Kathmandu

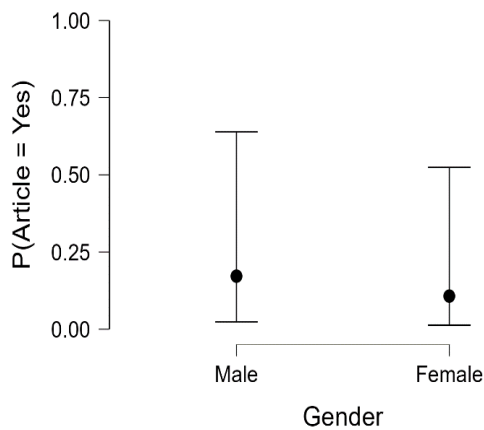
Figure 3*Visual Representation of Estimates based on Sample Characteristics*

Figure 3(a_1) Estimate plot of article publication based on gender

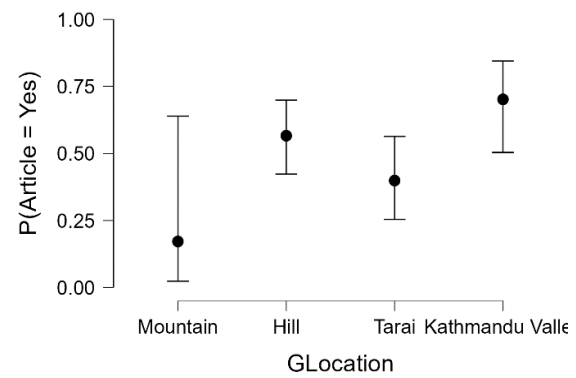


Figure 3(a_2) Estimate plot of article publication based on geographical location

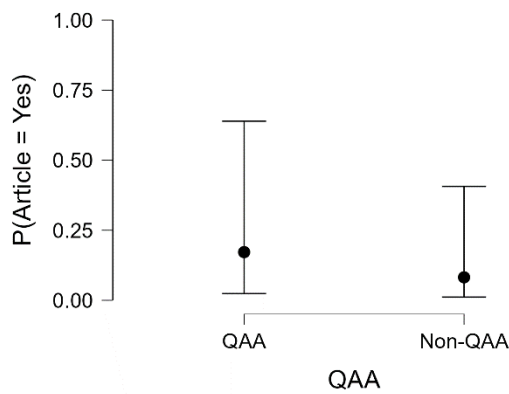


Figure 3(a_3) Estimate plot of article publication based on QAA affiliation

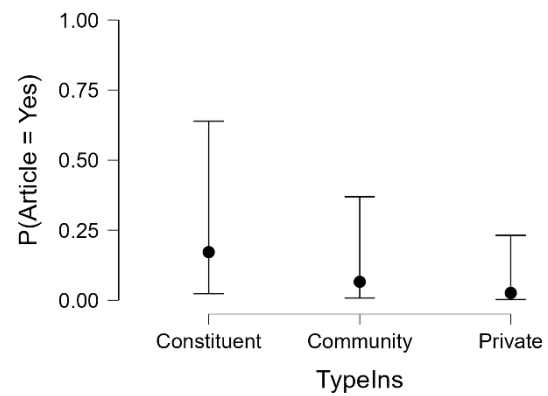


Figure 3(a_4) Estimate plot of article publication based on types of institutions

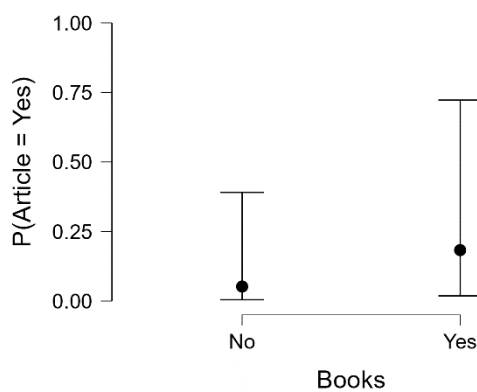


Figure 3(a_5) Estimate plot of article publication based on book publication

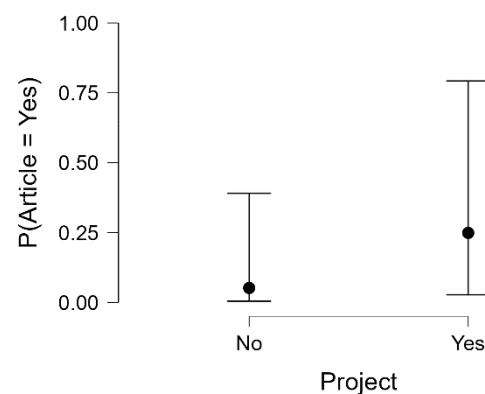


Figure 3(a_6) Estimate plot of article publication based on engagement in research project

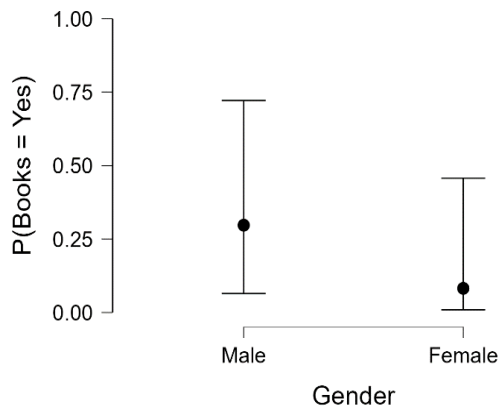


Figure 3(b_1) Estimate plot of book publication based on gender

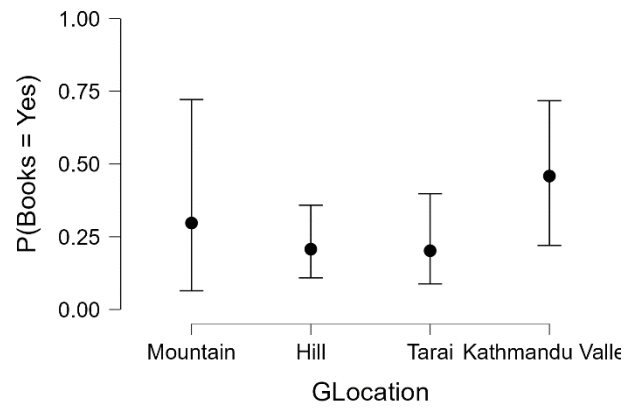


Figure 3(b_2) Estimate plot of book publication based on geographical location

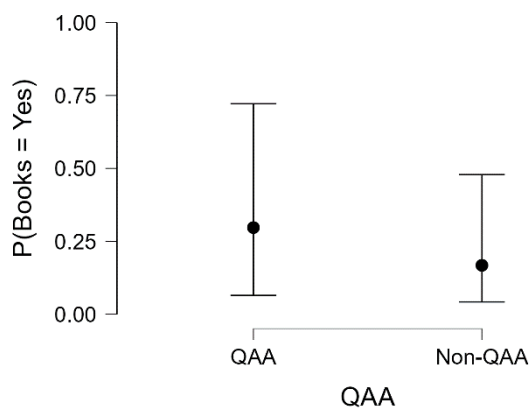


Figure 3(b_3) Estimate plot of book publication based on QAA affiliation

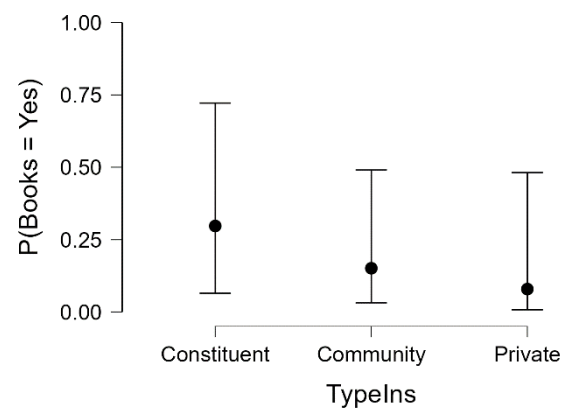


Figure 3(b_4) Estimate plot of book publication based on types of institutions

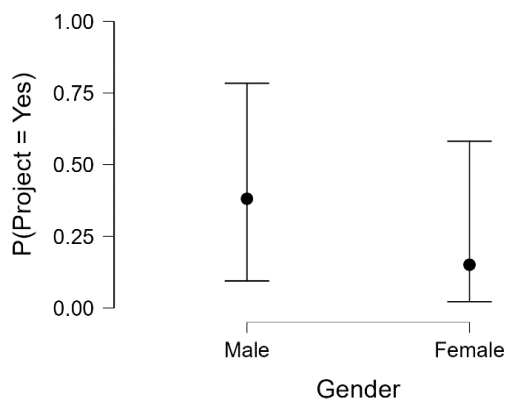


Figure 3(c_1) Estimate plot of engagement in research project based on gender

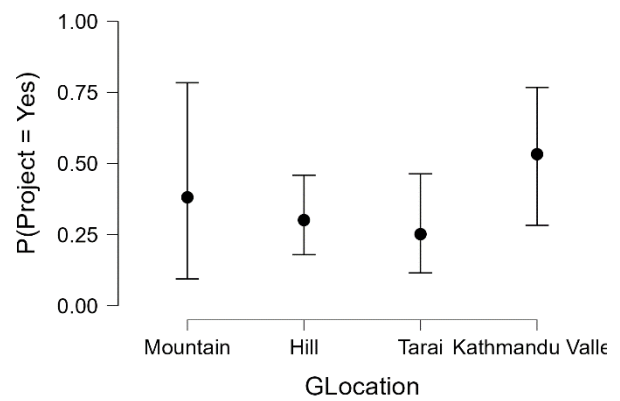


Figure 3(c_2) Estimate plot of engagement in research project based on geographical location

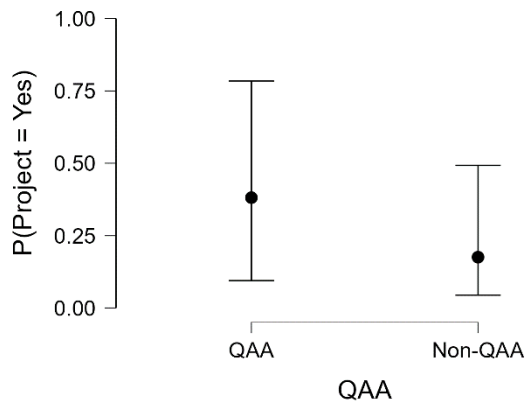


Figure 3(c_3) Estimate plot of engagement in research project based on QAA affiliation

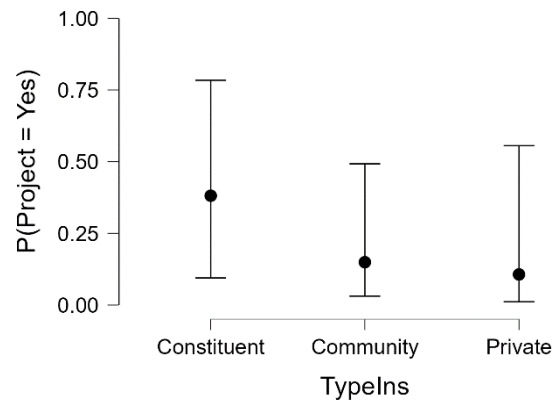


Figure 3(d_4) Estimate plot of engagement in research project based on types of institutions

Discussion

University teachers are most expected to participate in academic pursuits particularly doing research and making publications so that the knowledge that they generate through the research is disseminated to the wider audience (Magi & Beerkens, 2016; Waghid, 2002). This research particularly aimed to find out how the teachers working at TU in Nepal participated and engaged in researching and publications. The analysis of the self-reported data from the teachers in terms of the gender, geographical locations, campus types and research and publication types (projects, books and journal papers) shows that the teachers working at TU-FoE have notably low participation in doing research and publications. The analysis also revealed that the teachers had a poor culture of researching and academic writing. Both institutional support mechanism and individual initiation are weak behind such a situation. Most of the teachers reported that they have had very few opportunities and insufficient budgetary incentives for participating and engaging in academic research works. Such a financial constraint has driven most of the teachers to seek alternative activities (engaging in different types of extra job opportunities) for sustaining their livelihood rather than engaging in rigorous academic research and publications. The analysis also revealed that lack of job security, low level job satisfaction and fluid professionalism have also pushed the teacher educators and teachers backward in their research engagement and publications (Timsina, 2021; Akpan, 2013). Teachers at TU are categorized as permanent, contract and part-time. The teachers working on contract and part-time basis are facing the challenges of job security and satisfaction which, in turn, has affected their research engagement and publications. Whereas, the permanent teachers also are not well facilitated with the incentives for getting engaged in individual as well as collaborative research. In this regard, the UGC and University authorities often explain that they have had only a few limited seats and incentives as the higher education itself is consuming only around the 3% of the total budget of the nation.

The budget allocated for the research and teacher professionalism is notably low (UGC, 2021). More recently, slightly more budgets have been regulated in research in higher education, which has promoted the participation and engagement of teaching faculties in researching and publications. Another result that the analysis of the data revealed that the provision of teacher promotion and upgrading is mostly occupied with experience rather than research engagement, publications and citations. As the TU regulation itself states, 20% for Lecturer and 21% for Associate Professor and Professor weightage of marks for the promotion of teachers in internal competition whereas 40% for Assistant Lecturer, 50% for Assistant Professor, and 70% for Professor and Associate Professor in the case of the open competition (TU, 2021). As the analysis of the data reveals, such a provision has distracted the teacher educators and young teachers from their participation and engagement in research and publications. Although, TU has made a provision of allocating 10% of its total budget for engaging teachers and staff in a number of research activities like mini research, collaborative research, and national priority research, the allocated research budget is significantly low for managing research in its 62 constituent and 1084 affiliated campuses. Equally, although UGC has also allocated its budget for engaging

university teachers in research and publications, it is not sufficient as well as the teachers working in the campuses of the rural settings have hardly got the access and opportunities to utilize the allocated funds and incentives. In FY 2022/23 the approved budget of UGC invested 0.016% of the recurrence budget for the quality improvement program in higher education. Of the total quality improvement fund, 33.85% was spent on teaching/study visits, 25.63% on capacity development programs such as research training, capacity development training, workshops, seminars and conferences, fellowships and training, and only 40.52% was accorded for research funding such as research promotion and infrastructure, and fellowship and thesis (UGC, 2023). The imperative recommendation for publishing specific articles in SJR-ranked journals implies a prerequisite qualification for both applying for and successfully concluding all the research projects supported by the research endowment fund of TU (TU, 2019a) and the UGC (UGC, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2023). Consequently, prioritizing the culture of academic writing is emphasized (TU, 2022). Additionally, the absence of suitable and periodic vacancies within the university, particularly for promotions to Associate Professor and Professor may serve as a demotivating factor for teachers, potentially impacting their enthusiasm for academic engagement.

The self-reported data analysis from teachers highlights a prevalent trend of limited publication activity, primarily within national journals, with minimal presence in international and SJR-ranked journals. To address this, recent initiatives by TU, UGC, and the Government of Nepal offer incentives and grants to motivate teachers to conduct research and publish in high-profile journals. However, teacher participation in research projects remains notably low. Consequently, TU, other universities, UGC, and various governmental and non-governmental organizations have introduced policies to hire academic experts with a strong focus on writing and publications. Notably, respondents exhibit a lack of publications with international publishers, low contributions to SJR-ranked journals, and international projects. This disparity is partly attributed to the prevalence of non-permanent faculty, as only 46% are permanent, and institutional programs predominantly benefit permanent teachers. Additionally, the ecological location plays a role, with Kathmandu valley teachers displaying higher engagement in academic writing compared to counterparts in hills, mountains, and outside Kathmandu, citing limited access and opportunities for research and academic writing.

Recent university policies prioritize research and publication for faster teacher promotion, particularly benefiting constituent campus teachers in public universities like TU. Despite inclusive measures, emphasis on research has grown, with male teachers showing higher research engagement than females. Female teacher recruitment remains low, and their involvement in academic writing and publications lags behind males, despite a 33% reservation policy in initial higher education teaching recruitment (TU, 2021). Societal structures limiting female education access contribute to this disparity. Domestic responsibilities, such as childcare and household chores, further hinder female academic engagement. QAA-accredited campus teachers exhibit greater involvement in academic activities, aligning with UGC's 2022 policy linking QAA accreditation to research and publication incentives, motivating teachers to contribute to national and international journals.

Conclusion

The engagement of teachers in research and publication is nowhere satisfactory especially concerning the publications in international and high-ranked journals. With reference to the sample characteristics, the teachers of QAA-certified colleges and those working in urban areas have comparatively better participation in research and publication. This finding holds significant implications not only for TU but also for other universities in Nepal. The insights garnered from this study can inform the government of Nepal, the UGC, and other stakeholders in promoting an academic culture in which the teachers will be more engaged in researching and making national and international publications. Although, this study targeted on the teacher education programmes at TU, this is almost similar in other higher education streams and universities across the nation. Implementation of the policies concerning quality in higher education and the financial constraint are the major challenge because of which teachers are less participated and engaged in academic writing and publications. Therefore, the concerned stakeholders including the government, UGC, the universities and the campuses need to reconsider to promote academic culture assuring equity for either sexes, geographical location, and the type of the

campuses across the nation. Still, there is a pressing need for further investigation among teachers in other faculties. Additionally, QAA-certified colleges, given their journal publication provisions, should exert extra effort to uphold quality standards, especially considering the absence of internationally indexed education journals in Nepal.

Implications

Detail of the implications of the research are explored in this section.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings highlight the need to integrate research into teaching practices, fostering a research-oriented pedagogy among university educators. Teachers at TU demonstrate limited participation in research and academic writing, which reflects a lack of research culture within the institution. By embedding research skills into teacher training programs, educators can enhance their teaching methodologies, aligning them with contemporary academic developments. Capacity-building initiatives, such as workshops, training sessions, and mentorship programs, should be implemented to empower teachers with the necessary skills for conducting and publishing research. Furthermore, promoting collaboration between teachers and students in research projects can elevate the academic rigor of teaching practices and create a more dynamic learning environment.

Research Implications

The analysis reveals that teachers' engagement in high-quality research, particularly in internationally ranked journals, is minimal. This underscores the need for targeted strategies to enhance research productivity, such as mentorship programs and partnerships with experienced researchers. Gender disparity is a notable concern, as female teachers show lower participation in research due to structural barriers like domestic responsibilities and societal expectations. Addressing these barriers through gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible schedules and childcare support, is crucial. Additionally, geographical and institutional disparities indicate that teachers in rural and non-QAA-certified institutions face significant challenges in accessing research resources. Collaborative research initiatives and equitable distribution of funding can bridge these gaps, fostering inclusive research participation.

Policy Implications

The findings underscore the urgent need for policy reform to promote research engagement among university teachers. Financial constraints are a significant barrier, with limited budgets allocated to research activities in higher education. Policymakers must advocate for increased funding to support research projects, infrastructure, and academic training. Additionally, promotion criteria should be revised to prioritize research output and publication in high-impact journals rather than solely relying on teaching experience. Transparent and equitable access to research incentives, especially for contract and part-time faculty, is essential to motivate teachers across all employment categories. Expanding QAA accreditation to more campuses and linking it to research incentives can further strengthen the academic culture within universities.

Socio-Cultural and Institutional Implications

Cultural and institutional barriers also play a role in limiting research engagement. Teachers in rural areas and those outside urban centers, such as Kathmandu Valley, face challenges in accessing resources and opportunities for academic writing and research. This disparity highlights the need for a systemic shift to create equitable research ecosystems across geographical regions. Societal structures that limit female participation in higher education and research must be addressed through inclusive policies and support mechanisms. Institutions must take proactive roles in promoting research by providing infrastructural support, organizing academic conferences, and fostering collaborations with international bodies. Developing and maintaining nationally recognized journals with international indexing can also serve as a stepping stone for local researchers to reach global platforms.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

The study provides critical insights for policymakers, university authorities, and funding bodies such as the UGC. Collaborative efforts are necessary to promote an academic culture where research is prioritized and valued. Universities and government bodies must invest in creating infrastructure and opportunities for research, ensuring equitable access across gender, location, and campus types. The

lack of sufficient funding and incentives must be addressed through budgetary reforms and strategic investments. Furthermore, stakeholders should consider revising promotion and recruitment policies to reward research engagement and outputs, fostering a competitive yet supportive academic environment. Lastly, QAA-certified institutions should lead by example, upholding high research standards and motivating other campuses to follow suit.

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Ethical Approval

This study is a part of National Priority Research entitled “Teacher Education Program in Nepal: Reorienting Policies and Practices” conducted by Dean Office, Faculty of Education TU Nepal. Hence ethical approval for the research was obtained from Ethical Review Board of Research Directorate Office, TU , Nepal (Ref. No. 224/079/80).

Participant Consent

The participant consent was taken in written form from all participants.

Disclosure Statement

All authors declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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