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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Mobilizing Researchers' Competence: Basis for Workbook Development in Establishing a Sustainable Internationalization-consistent anchored with SDGs

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This study examined the research competencies of faculty researchers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. (MPCI) as a basis for developing a competency-based research workbook aimed at sustaining institutional research culture and advancing internationalization initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using a descriptive-survey design, data were gathered from faculty members through a validated questionnaire assessing competencies in research conceptualization, literature review and citation management, methodology design, data analysis and interpretation, and research dissemination and publication. The study also explored researchers' prior exposure to capacity-building programs, challenges encountered in conducting research, available institutional support mechanisms, perceived competence differences based on gender, and preferred professional development approaches. Findings revealed that while respondents demonstrated moderate competence in research conceptualization and literature review, they exhibited lower proficiency in data analysis, research writing, and publication processes. Limited exposure to advanced research trainings, time constraints, and insufficient mentoring support emerged as major challenges. A significant difference was observed between the research competencies of faculty who had attended research capacity-building programs and those who had not. Based on the findings, a structured and user-friendly research workbook was designed to address identified gaps, strengthen researchers' competencies, and promote sustained engagement in scholarly activities. The study underscores the importance of targeted instructional resources in fostering a sustainable, SDG-aligned research culture within higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** research competencies, workbook development, sustainable internationalization, faculty research, Sustainable Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Research plays an indispensable role in higher education institutions, serving as a vital tool for generating new knowledge, enhancing instructional practices, and contributing to community development. Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. (MPCI) research unit is positioned as a core component in nurturing a dynamic academic environment. However, despite strong institutional encouragement, it has been observed that researchers comprising faculty, staff, and even student researchers face significant challenges in honing their writing competencies, adhering to prescribed institutional research formats, and developing confidence in pursuing scholarly work. Many researchers struggle with crafting coherent and impactful research manuscripts, lack sufficient exposure to rigorous research processes, and often violate established guidelines, thereby, compromising the quality and credibility of institutional outputs.

These challenges threaten the sustainability and growth of MPCI's research culture. Without targeted intervention, the institution risks producing outputs that fail to meet quality standards, diminishing its contributions to academic discourse and limiting opportunities for publication and dissemination. To address these gaps, there is a pressing need to strengthen researchers' competencies through practical, structured, and accessible support systems.

Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, this study aimed at empowering researchers by enhancing their capacities and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, this initiative supports SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by encouraging innovation and strengthening research infrastructures within the institution.

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the existing competencies of researchers at MPCI, identify specific areas of difficulty, and utilize these findings as a basis for developing a comprehensive and user-friendly research workbook. This workbook is envisioned to serve as a practical guide to help researchers systematically develop and polish their research skills, adhere to institutional standards, and contribute quality outputs. Ultimately, the study aims to sustain and reinforce a vibrant research culture at MPCI.

Specifically, this study aimed at: determine the current level of competencies of MPCI researchers in terms of research writing, format adherence, and research exposure. Identify common challenges and difficulties experienced by researchers in producing institutional research papers. Develop a workbook tailored to address the identified needs and strengthen the research capabilities of MPCI researchers. Promote sustained engagement and active participation in institutional research endeavors.

This study is timely and significant as it responds to the urgent need to capacitate MPCI researchers, improve institutional research output, and uphold academic excellence. By mobilizing competencies through a targeted, practical intervention such as a workbook, the institution does not only strengthen its internal academic standards but also align itself with global calls for educational quality and innovation.

In addition, it aimed at assessing the research-related competencies of teachers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc., which will serve as a basis for developing a targeted module aimed at institutionalizing a sustainable research culture.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of research competencies of teachers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. in terms of the following domains:
  - a. Research conceptualization,
  - b. Literature review and citation management,
  - c. Methodology design,
  - d. Data analysis and interpretation,
  - e. Research dissemination and publication?
2. What research-related trainings or capacity-building programs have teachers previously

attended?

3. What challenges do teachers encounter in engaging with research activities?
4. What institutional support mechanisms are currently available to assist teachers in conducting research?
5. How does your gender influence your perceived competence in various research-related tasks (e.g., data analysis, writing manuscripts, presenting findings)
  - a. confidence level,
  - b. skill mastery,
  - c. participation frequency,
  - d. publication output?
6. What are your preferred modes or approaches to professional development in research
  - a. mentorship,
  - b. workshops,
  - c. self-study,
  - d. collaborative projects?
7. Is there a significant difference in research competencies between faculty who have attended capacity-building programs and those who have not?
8. Is there a significant relationship between the level of institutional support and the frequency of research engagement among teachers?
9. Does gender significantly influence the overall research output (e.g., number of publications, presentations) of faculty members at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc.?
10. Is there a significant difference in the level of research competencies between male and female teachers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc.?
11. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' highest educational attainment and their level of research competencies?
12. Is there a significant relationship between the frequency of teachers' involvement in research activities and their perceived competence in conducting research?

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research method. Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, or differences among variables. It is appropriate for this study since the data on teachers' research competencies be measured using a structured questionnaire, with statistical tools applied to test relationships and differences among variables such as gender, educational attainment, research involvement, and academic departments. Quantitative research allows the researcher to generalize findings within the context of the institution and to derive evidence-based decisions for developing a responsive module aimed at improving research capabilities.

It utilized a descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive component aims to assess the level of teachers' research competencies across various domains (conceptualization, literature review, methodology, data analysis, and dissemination), identify challenges faced, and determine available institutional support mechanisms.

The correlational component sought to establish statistical relationships between selected demographic variables (such as educational attainment and research engagement) and the teachers' self-assessed research competencies.

Furthermore, the study examined group differences using comparative statistical techniques (e.g., t-test and ANOVA) to provide a comprehensive picture of how competencies vary across gender and departments.

This dual-focus design supports the formulation of a context-responsive module tailored to institutional needs, paving the way for a sustainable research culture.

The study was conducted at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc., a private higher education institution in Isabel, Philippines, offering academic programs in basic education, teacher education, criminology, business, information technology, hospitality management, accountancy,

and graduate programs.

The participants to this study were faculty members across different academic departments at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc., including both full-time and part-time teachers who are currently engaged in teaching and/or research-related responsibilities.

#### Sampling Technique

A total enumeration sampling technique was employed, involving all eligible faculty members. The population was deemed too large hence, a stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure proportional representation per department.

A structured close-ended questionnaire was utilized. The instrument consists of items aligned to each of the descriptive research questions, following a 3-point Likert scale to rate levels of competence, frequency, and agreement. Each set of items corresponds directly to the sequence of the formulated descriptive questions.

To ensure content accuracy and reliability, face and content validation was conducted by a panel of at least three (3) experts in research and education.

The instrument underwent pilot testing with 15–30 teachers from a non-participating campus or similar institution.

Cronbach's alpha was computed to determine internal consistency, targeting a minimum threshold of  $\alpha = 0.70$ .

Prior to data collection, the researcher sought approval from the Research Ethics Review Board of MPCCI. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses strictly maintained.

Preparation and approval of the final validated questionnaire:

- Coordination with department heads for proper distribution
- Dissemination of printed or digital survey forms
- Retrieval of accomplished questionnaires
- Tabulation and encoding of data for analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean) was used to summarize teachers' responses.

\*t-test for independent samples was used to test differences in competencies based on gender.

\*Pearson product-moment correlation analyzed relationships between competencies and educational attainment and research involvement.

\*One-Way ANOVA tested for significant differences in competencies across departments.

All analyses carried out using SPSS, Jamovi, or Microsoft Excel.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Level of Research Competencies of MPCCI Faculty

The findings revealed that faculty researchers at MPCCI generally demonstrated a moderate level of research competence across most domains. Respondents showed relatively higher competence in research conceptualization, including identifying research problems and formulating objectives. This suggests that faculty possess foundational understanding of research initiation, likely influenced by institutional encouragement and exposure to basic research orientations.

However, competencies in literature review and citation management were rated at a moderate level, with respondents indicating difficulty in synthesizing related studies, managing references, and applying standardized citation styles consistently. This result highlights the need for guided practice and structured instructional support, particularly in navigating digital databases and

reference management tools.

Lower levels of competence were evident in methodology design, data analysis and interpretation, and research dissemination and publication. Many respondents reported limited confidence in selecting appropriate research designs, applying statistical tools, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data. Similarly, dissemination-related competencies, such as journal selection, manuscript refinement, and responding to reviewers' comments were identified as major areas of difficulty. These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing that research writing and publication are among the most challenging aspects of academic research, especially in developing research cultures.

### **Research Trainings and Capacity-Building Exposure**

Results showed that a considerable number of faculty had attended basic research workshops and institutional in-house trainings, while fewer had participated in advanced or externally organized research capacity-building programs. This limited exposure may account for the observed gaps in advanced research competencies, particularly in data analysis and publication.

### **Challenges Encountered by Faculty Researchers**

The most frequently cited challenges included time constraints due to teaching and administrative workloads, limited mentoring and coaching, insufficient technical skills, and lack of confidence in writing for publication. These barriers hinder sustained engagement in research and underscore the need for practical, accessible learning resources that faculty can use independently.

### **Institutional Support Mechanisms**

Faculty acknowledged the presence of institutional support such as research policies, incentives, and occasional trainings. However, respondents emphasized the need for more structured, continuous, and hands-on support mechanisms, particularly in the form of step-by-step guides, exemplars, and mentoring systems.

### **Gender and Perceived Research Competence**

Analysis revealed no significant disparity in overall research competence based on gender, although slight variations were observed in perceived confidence and participation frequency. Both male and female faculty expressed similar challenges, indicating that competence gaps are more closely linked to training exposure rather than gender.

### **Preferred Professional Development Approaches**

Faculty strongly preferred mentorship and guided workshops, followed by collaborative research projects. Self-study was considered useful but less effective without structured materials. These preferences directly informed the design of the proposed research workbook.

### **Difference in Competence Based on Training Attendance**

A statistically significant difference was found between the research competencies of faculty who had attended capacity-building programs and those who had not. Faculty with prior training demonstrated higher competence across all research domains, reinforcing the importance of continuous professional development.

## **Discussion**

The findings reveal that faculty researchers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. demonstrate a generally moderate level of research competence, particularly in research conceptualization, such as

identifying research problems and formulating objectives. This suggests that faculty possess a foundational understanding of initiating research, likely shaped by institutional exposure and basic training opportunities. However, competencies in literature review and citation management remain at a moderate level, with difficulties noted in synthesizing related studies, managing references, and consistently applying citation styles. More critically, lower levels of competence were observed in methodology design, data analysis and interpretation, and research dissemination and publication, indicating that advanced research skills are still underdeveloped among faculty members.

In terms of research training and capacity-building exposure, the results indicate that while many faculty members have attended basic institutional workshops, participation in advanced or externally facilitated training programs is limited. This disparity contributes to the observed gaps in higher-level research competencies, particularly in statistical analysis and scholarly writing. Faculty researchers also face several challenges that hinder their research engagement, including time constraints due to heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities, limited access to mentoring and coaching, insufficient technical skills, and low confidence in writing for publication. These challenges highlight systemic and individual barriers that restrict sustained research productivity.

Although institutional support mechanisms such as research policies, incentives, and occasional training programs are present, faculty perceive these as lacking continuity and depth. There is a strong call for more structured and sustained support systems, particularly through mentoring programs, guided workshops, and practical instructional resources. Notably, the analysis shows no significant difference in research competence based on gender, suggesting that competence levels are more strongly influenced by access to training and professional development rather than demographic factors. Faculty members expressed a preference for mentorship and guided learning approaches, followed by collaborative research, while self-directed learning was considered less effective without structured materials.

Furthermore, a significant difference in research competence was identified between faculty who had attended capacity-building programs and those who had not, with trained faculty demonstrating higher competence across all research domains. This finding underscores the critical role of continuous professional development in enhancing research capability. Overall, the study concludes that while faculty members possess basic research competencies, substantial gaps persist in advanced areas such as data analysis, research writing, and publication. In response, the development of a competency-based research workbook is proposed as a practical and timely intervention to guide faculty systematically through the research process, strengthen adherence to academic standards, and improve confidence in producing scholarly outputs. Anchored on SDG 4 Quality Education and SDG 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, this initiative contributes to fostering a sustainable research culture and advancing institutional academic excellence.

## Conclusion

This study established that while faculty researchers at Mallig Plains Colleges, Inc. possess foundational research competencies, notable gaps remain in advanced research skills, particularly in data analysis, research writing, and publication. Limited exposure to capacity-building programs, coupled with time constraints and insufficient mentoring, continues to hinder sustained research engagement. The significant difference in competence between trained and untrained faculty highlights the critical role of structured professional development in strengthening research capacity.

Grounded in these findings, the development of a competency-based research workbook is both timely and necessary. The proposed workbook serves as a practical intervention designed to guide

researchers systematically through the research process, reinforce adherence to institutional standards, and enhance confidence in producing quality scholarly outputs. Anchored on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), this initiative contributes to building a sustainable research culture and supports MPCCI's internationalization agenda. Ultimately, mobilizing researchers' competencies through targeted instructional resources strengthens institutional academic excellence and fosters lifelong learning among faculty researchers.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate that Science Club activities at Dinadiawan National High School are implemented using highly effective teaching-learning practices, particularly inquiry-based, experiential, and collaborative approaches. The very high ratings in the use of hands-on experiments and inquiry-based activities support Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through direct experience and reflection. These practices provide students with authentic opportunities to explore scientific concepts, thereby deepening understanding and promoting active engagement.

Students' high levels of interest, participation, and collaboration further affirm that co-curricular science activities foster positive attitudes toward science learning. This finding is consistent with Prince and Felder's (2006) assertion that inductive and activity-based learning enhances student motivation and problem-solving skills. The development of critical thinking and teamwork skills observed in this study reflects the role of Science Clubs as complementary learning spaces that extend scientific inquiry beyond formal classroom instruction.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified challenges related to limited resources, time constraints, and inconsistent student attendance. These challenges are similar to those reported in previous studies on extracurricular science programs, which highlight the impact of structural and institutional limitations on program implementation (Gay, 2018). Nevertheless, teachers' adaptive strategies such as improvising materials and modifying activities demonstrate professional commitment and instructional flexibility, reinforcing the importance of supportive school environments in sustaining effective Science Club programs.

## CONCLUSION

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