

Research Article

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Examining the Impact of Institutional Support on Research and Development in Nepalese Universities: A Focus on Disparities, Gender, and Regional Inequities

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Abstract

Background/purpose. The aim of this study is to investigate the extent and effectiveness of university support for research and development in Nepal, with a focus on existing policies, institutional mechanisms, funding structures, and challenges faced by academic researchers.

Materials/methods. This study used a descriptive and analytical research design, gathering primary data from 385 respondents through structured surveys from seven provinces and 46 campuses, different arenas, and job titles. Inferential techniques have been applied to explore relationships between institutional support and various demographic and professional factors.

Results. STEM (science, technology, engineering, and medical sciences) researchers had notably higher odds of receiving training support (OR = 2.3), access to research grants (OR = 2.8), and international publication support (OR = 2.9). Senior faculty members were more likely to receive seminar incentives and book publication support than junior faculty. Conversely, females, administrative staff, and those in the humanities or from the Karnali and Sudur Paschim provinces reported significantly lower support.

Conclusion. The study concludes systemic biases in research support, with a clear preference for STEM fields, senior academics, and centrally located institutions. Junior faculty, peripheral regions, and female researchers face structural disadvantages in accessing resources and institutional backing. These disparities contribute to an unequal research environment, limiting the diversity and inclusivity of academic innovation. The research infers critical inequities in the support system for university research in Nepal.

1. Introduction

Research and development (R&D) are fundamental drivers of innovation, economic growth, and societal progress. In the context of developing countries like Nepal, universities play a pivotal role in advancing knowledge, addressing local challenges, and contributing to national development through research. However, the landscape of university-supported R&D in Nepal is still evolving, with several opportunities and challenges shaping its trajectory.

Nepal's higher education institutions, particularly its universities, are mandated not only to impart knowledge but also to generate new knowledge through research. Despite this mandate, the research output from Nepali universities remains relatively low due to constraints such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, lack of institutional incentives, and weak industry-academia linkages. Moreover, research activities are often fragmented and heavily dependent on external donors rather than being strategically integrated into university priorities.

Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of strengthening university-based R&D to promote sustainable development and innovation. Initiatives by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the establishment of Research Management Cells (RMCs) within universities, and international collaborations have begun to create a more supportive environment for research. However, the scale and effectiveness of these efforts vary significantly across institutions.

International examples provide valuable insights for shifting higher education by investing in policy reforms. Giroux and Giroux (2014) infer a crisis in education in America due to the mobility of students during the most transformative age in modern Chinese culture, roughly ten years, across the United States. They highlight the growing aspirations of students to meet global demands, a challenge that reshaped education systems. Kirby (2022), meanwhile, outlines China's higher education transformation between 1915 and 1925, emphasizing how the internationalization of Chinese universities drove structural reforms. According to Kirby, the re-enrollment surge between 1998 and 2003 marked a shift toward globally inspired learning networks, promoting a move from rote learning to innovative and creative thinking. He notes that the learning system began to emphasize "cooperation and competition" (p.257), underpinned by investments in faculty development and laboratory infrastructure. These initiatives enabled China to rapidly modernize its education sector—an experience from which Nepal may draw inspiration in strengthening its own university-led research and development efforts.

Nepalese universities lag in addressing the current need for innovation and social change in Nepal. The long-term identification and execution of research-driven policy are urgent needs. For the formulation and execution of the policy, university assistance in research and development is a significant change agent. This study explores the extent and effectiveness of university support for research and development in Nepal, examining existing policies, institutional mechanisms, funding structures, and the challenges faced by academic researchers. Understanding the current status and identifying gaps is essential for recommending strategies that can enhance the role of universities in fostering a robust and impactful research ecosystem in Nepal.

1.1. Problem of the Study

The fundamental problem addressed by this study is the persistent inequity in the distribution of institutional support for research within Nepalese universities. Despite policy-level recognition of the importance of R&D, support systems remain unevenly structured and biased toward particular groups—most notably senior faculty in STEM fields and those based in central regions (Thomas et al., 2020; Jiang & Wang, 2024; Угнич et al., 2015). Conversely, female researchers, junior faculty, administrative staff, and academics in the humanities or from peripheral provinces like Karnali and Sudur Paschim often receive disproportionately less support. This structural imbalance results in

limited access to research grants, professional development opportunities, and recognition mechanisms, thereby creating an unequal and fragmented research environment. Such systemic disparities marginalize underrepresented groups and undermine the broader goal of building a diverse and innovative academic landscape in Nepal.

Building on the context outlined above, this study was undertaken to examine the levels of mindfulness among university students and explore their relationship with psychological hardiness. The study addresses its core problem through the following research questions:

- How is institutional research support distributed among faculty and staff across different academic disciplines, genders, and professional ranks in Nepalese universities?
- What regional disparities exist in access to research grants, training opportunities, and publication support, particularly between central and peripheral provinces such as Karnali and Sudur Paschim?
- How do systemic institutional practices contribute to inequities in research support for underrepresented groups, including female researchers, junior faculty, and administrative staff?

1.2. Importance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses a critical and previously underexplored area within Nepal's higher education landscape: the inequitable distribution of institutional research support. While existing literature acknowledges challenges in building research capacity, it often does so in a generalized or narrow manner, focusing primarily on STEM disciplines or senior academic staff. Such approaches overlook the nuanced, intersectional barriers experienced by marginalized groups—particularly female academics, early-career faculty, administrative staff, and those working in humanities, education, or in geographically remote provinces.

By filling this literature gap, the current study provides a more comprehensive and data-driven analysis of how demographic, disciplinary, and regional factors influence access to research support. It includes a wide range of respondents and uses statistical methods to carefully assess differences, providing a strong basis for understanding unfairness in research settings.

The study's findings provide a scholarly understanding of academic equity and provide evidence-based insights for policy formulation and institutional reform. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to national conversations on higher education development, inclusive academic growth, and the strategic alignment of research systems with broader goals of equity, innovation, and regional development in Nepal.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

The role of universities in supporting research and development (R&D) is crucial, especially in fostering regional innovation ecosystems and economic growth. Numerous studies indicate that universities serve as essential players in transforming knowledge into practical applications that benefit both local and national development. For instance, universities of applied sciences particularly emphasize their technological expertise and involvement in entrepreneurship, playing a significant role in nurturing student startups and entrepreneurial innovations (Sorama, 2020; Jongbloed, 2015). Technology-assisted entrepreneurship is a new dimension for the sustainability of the nation.

Moreover, the concept of universities as hybrid organizations is increasingly relevant for innovation. They evolve beyond traditional education-focused roles to actively engage in research and development, aligning their efforts with industry needs (Jongbloed, 2015). This dual role

positions universities as vital components of innovation ecosystems that drive economic and technological advancements (Brown, 2016). Their ability to connect different parts of national innovation systems highlights how important they are in facilitating resource sharing and creating partnerships that encourage innovation.

Universities face challenges in fulfilling these roles due to government policy provision. A lack of coherent strategies that integrate educational efforts with innovation objectives can hinder their effectiveness in these ecosystems (Hadidi & Kirby, 2015). Therefore, while universities are positioned to contribute positively to R&D and innovation, their success relies on establishing strategic policies and cultivating partnerships that align their capabilities with industry and local economy needs (Thomas et al., 2020; Jiang & Wang, 2024; Угнич et al., 2015). Research and development are the foundations of national development.

The model aligns with the Triple Helix Theory, which advocates for integrated interactions among universities, industries, and governments to spur economic and social development. Policies that incentivize these collaborations further enhance university contributions to research and innovation, therefore assisting in financial sustainability and relevance in the current economic landscape, as documented by Chumba (2020). The internal cooperation and coordination between academic institutes, industries, and the government contribute to each other.

2.2. Empirical Review

Current researchers have engaged in both national and international practices that align with contemporary requirements. The skills of the learners have to be in line with the current digital technology. Yuan (2022) studied the five academic challenges of Chinese students pursuing higher education in China. The study concentrated on the five challenges: language barrier, critical discerning skill, class participation, coordination and cooperation, and the new academic goals. Academic institutes in America address these challenges to assist foreign students. Karakaş Kurt and Güneyli (2023) studied the skills of the students and the value of the technology and deduced that there is a correlation between twenty-first-century skills and technology-assisted learning. They point out that social learning supports knowledge and skills more than individual learning.

Yin (2024) explored the similarities and differences between the Chinese education system and the American education system. The findings include uniformity in policy and practices, rigorous teaching methods, fixed curricula, and regular professional development training, whereas the American education system embarks on flexible policies, innovative pedagogical strategies, diverse curricula, and instructor autonomy in teaching techniques.

Gong (2024) studied the Chinese and American education policies and inferred that Chinese education was exam-oriented and the admission system was narrow, but Americans valued fairness over flexibility and a holistic approach, giving priority to diversity, due to which the US was the choice for foreign students. Learners must focus on understanding historical progress, its development, and the requirements for future advancement. Young et al. (2024) analyze the historical changes in education in Northern Europe. Their study deduces that the success of the university rests on the dynamic process of interbranch relations among the universities for academic enhancement.

Examining regional innovation dynamics, universities contribute significantly through partnerships with businesses and researchers, which is a significant aspect. The intensity of collaboration between universities and industry greatly influences product development outcomes, underscoring the importance of effective university–industry partnerships for innovation success (Temel et al., 2013). These collaborations enhance knowledge transfer and help establish regional clusters that lead to economic resilience and growth (Thomas et al., 2020). Collaboration gears up knowledge and financial support for the nation.

Research indicates that educational institutions' strategic partnerships with businesses can significantly enhance the effectiveness of innovation processes and entrepreneurial activities (Schiuma & Carlucci, 2018). Additionally, the establishment of infrastructures to support entrepreneurial development, such as incubation centers and collaborative platforms, is critical for fostering innovation (Schlegel et al., 2021). In regions lacking robust innovation frameworks, universities can elevate local economies through targeted initiatives that address both educational and market needs (Litardi et al., 2020). Research and development support for identifying market needs and driving innovation to achieve the financial sustainability of the nation through education.

A fundamental aspect of university support for research is the provision of adequate research services, particularly through university libraries. Hussain and Rafiq (2023) highlight that many university libraries in Pakistan currently struggle to offer advanced research support services due to the limitations of unskilled staff and a lack of resources. In a supportive context, libraries can serve as integral partners in the research lifecycle by providing crucial information resources and research management services, as underscored by Tang and Zhang (2019), who emphasize the need for librarians to integrate their services into the core activities of universities to enhance their value and competitiveness.

Moreover, enhancement of research capabilities often occurs through university-industry partnerships, which serve as critical conduits for innovation. Gorlach (2017) notes that such partnerships are mutually beneficial: while universities can engage in problem-solving research relevant to industry, they also gain access to funding and resources that support their R&D initiatives. These partnerships create a situation where both sides benefit, helping universities focus their research on what industries need, which, according to Rybníček and Königsgruber (2018), greatly improves product development and the real-world use of research findings.

The entrepreneurial university model emerges as a key strategy for fostering this collaboration for the knowledge economy and sustainable financial independence. Awad and Salaimeh (2023) describe how universities can diversify their funding sources and create ecosystems that promote entrepreneurial initiatives through business incubators.

Additionally, effective management of these partnerships is crucial for maximizing outcomes. Pan et al. (2020) provide insights on the importance of strategic framework adaptations that help streamline partnerships within university settings, indicating that value propositions for each party should be clearly outlined. This strategic alignment is pivotal for ensuring that collaborative efforts yield tangible benefits, such as accessing cutting-edge technologies or obtaining industry-specific feedback that can inform research directions.

In the context of Nepal, research and development (R&D) in higher education, Pokharel et al. (2025; Oli et al., 2021) conducted a qualitative study, deriving information from the students and guardians of the community schools of Nepal, and found that there needs to be a revision in the school management formation policies and institutional practices to make education address the demand of the society. Then, revision of the local curriculum and national curriculum is their immediate demand. The policy-level lapses need to be addressed to develop quality education in Nepal. Pokharel et al. (2025) studied the relationship between professional development and academic achievement, showing that professional development is related to academic achievement of the learners. Training for the teachers gears up the academic achievement level. Without updating, the people were updated with the instructional and content-level familiarity. Pokharel et al. (2025) reason through their research that higher education needs to address the national development goals and the global sustainable goals. The success of the nation depends on the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Nepal's higher education system, primarily led by Tribhuvan University, faces substantial challenges, particularly in cultivating a robust research culture. Adhikari et al. point out that when staff frequently leave their jobs, it disrupts ongoing research and makes it harder to build skills, and the way pay is structured discourages people from being dedicated to research work (Adhikari et al., 2023). Oli et al. (2021) stress the importance of actively improving research skills in non-communicable diseases, showing that there is an urgent need for skilled workers.

The issue of research ethics is highlighted as a significant aspect of R&D in Nepal. Institutions must comply with ethical standards to foster responsible research practices. Rijal and Dahal argue for the need to develop student-centered curricula that incorporate ethics education, thereby fostering a culture of accountability and responsible research (Rijal & Dahal, 2022). Moreover, the establishment of ethical guidelines by the Nepal Health Research Council signifies an institutional acknowledgment of these needs, although challenges remain in monitoring compliance (Khanal et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2016).

Despite these hurdles, some initiatives seek to enhance institutional capacities. Acharya et al. note that the plethora of higher education institutions—11 universities, four health academies, and numerous affiliated institutions—are vital for amplifying research output and quality (Acharya et al., 2022). However, Bajracharya points out that Nepal has yet to fully realize the potential benefits of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), which could significantly broaden access to education and research opportunities (Bajracharya, 2014).

On the support front, international collaboration is essential to fortify Nepal's research capabilities. Partnerships with foreign universities have been reported to enhance local research output, as seen in the experiences shared by Palaian et al., who discuss collaboration with Malaysian and Thai institutions to boost social pharmacy research (Palaian et al., 2011). Furthermore, the influx of foreign aid contributes to building the infrastructure necessary for effective research, as noted by Mishra and Aithal (2021). International collaboration in research and development augments innovation and contributes to national growth.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the levels and disparities of institutional support for research and development across Nepalese universities. The design allowed for both numerical analysis of survey results and examination of how institutional support relates to different demographic and professional factors.

3.2. Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of faculty members, administrative staff, and researchers from universities across Nepal, representing a range of academic disciplines and geographic regions. A total of 385 respondents participated in the study. Participants have been drawn from seven provinces, including central, peripheral, and remote areas such as Karnali and Sudur Paschim, to ensure geographical representativeness. A stratified random sampling technique has been employed to select respondents proportionally across disciplines (STEM and humanities), job titles (senior and junior faculty, administrative staff), gender, and regions. This approach aimed to reduce sampling bias and provide a balanced overview of institutional support disparities.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

We collected primary data specifically for this research using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included both closed and Likert-scale items designed to measure access to research training, grant opportunities, publication support, seminar incentives, and other forms of institutional

backing. Key sections included: Demographic and professional background (e.g., gender, job title, field of study, region). The study also examined the availability and adequacy of institutional support, including training, funding, and publication assistance. Perceived challenges and barriers to accessing research resources

3.4. Instrument Development

We developed the questionnaire through a thorough review of existing literature and consultation with academic experts in higher education research. It was initially drafted in English and then translated into Nepali to ensure clarity and accessibility.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

A panel of three experts in education research and institutional policy reviewed the questionnaire to establish its content validity. Their feedback ensured that the instrument adequately covered all relevant dimensions of institutional support. The reliability of the survey instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha for the Likert-scale items, resulting in an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating excellent internal consistency.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Data has been collected through face-to-face surveys over a two-month period. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was assured.

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

For the analysis, the study has employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages have been used to summarize the demographic characteristics and key patterns within the data. Depending on the nature of the dependent variables, we applied inferential statistics, logistic regression, and ordered logistic regression to test relationships and differences. For deeper econometric analysis, logistic regression has been used to model binary outcomes (such as yes/no responses), while ordered logistic regression has been used to analyze ordinal outcomes (such as Likert scale ratings). In cases where responses fall into multiple, non-ordered categories, multinomial logistic regression has been employed. Additionally, probit models have been considered as alternatives to logistic regression when the assumption of normality is preferable for binary dependent variables.

4. Results

The demographic analysis reveals significant disparities in representation and access to resources. People from provinces like Lumbini (99) and Bagmati (87) tend to feel more satisfied and have better access to resources than those from Karnali (16) or Sudur Paschim (28), probably because of how resources are distributed based on location and institutions. Gender disparities are evident, with males (284) more likely to receive funding and incentives than females (101), pointing to potential systemic biases. Designation also plays a critical role, as faculty members (311) are more likely to apply for grants and receive conference support compared to research scholars (55) or administrative staff (14). Additionally, senior respondents (>10 years of affiliation, 210) are more likely to perceive the university as effective in linking education with industry, suggesting that institutional trust and engagement grow over time.

Professional Development Support Fund

1. Support for Attending Training and Seminars: The multinomial logistic regression results indicate that respondents in Science and Technology (OR = 2.3, $p < 0.05$) and Medical Sciences (OR = 1.8, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to receive full funding for training and seminars compared to those in

Humanities. Faculty members (OR = 1.6, $p < 0.05$) and those affiliated for more than 10 years (OR = 1.5, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to receive partial funding. However, females (OR = 1.4, $p < 0.05$) and respondents from Karnali (OR = 2.1, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to report no support, highlighting gender and geographic inequities in professional development opportunities.

2. Financial Incentives for Participating in Seminars: Ordered logistic regression indicates that senior faculty members (>10 years, OR = 2.7, $p < 0.01$) and those in engineering (OR = 1.9, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to consistently receive financial incentives for seminar participation. Conversely, administrative staff (OR = 3.2, $p < 0.01$) and respondents from Sudur Paschim (OR = 2.4, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to report rare or no incentives. These findings underscore the need to address disparities in incentive distribution, particularly for junior researchers and staff in underrepresented regions.

3. Satisfaction with University Support for Digital Devices and Publications: Respondents receiving full funding (OR = 3.1, $p < 0.01$) and those in science and technology (OR = 1.7, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to report higher satisfaction with digital device and publication support. However, those reporting no publication support (OR = 4.5, $p < 0.01$) and females (OR = 1.6, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to express dissatisfaction. This finding suggests that inadequate funding and gender biases significantly impact satisfaction levels, particularly for underfunded fields and marginalized groups.

Research Grants

1. Application for University Grant for Paper Publication: Binary logistic regression shows that researchers in science and technology (OR = 2.8, $p < 0.01$) and engineering (OR = 2.2, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to apply for grants, likely due to the high costs associated with research in these fields. On the other hand, junior researchers (<2 years, OR = 3.4, $p < 0.01$) and administrative staff (OR = 4.1, $p < 0.01$) are less likely to apply, indicating barriers such as lack of awareness or perceived inaccessibility.

2. Ordered Logistic Regression shows that people in Lumbini (OR = 2.1, $p < 0.05$) and Bagmati (OR = 1.8, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to think research grants are easy to access, while those in Karnali (OR = 3.7, $p < 0.01$) and Humanities (OR = 2.5, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to think they are hard to access. Geographic isolation and field-specific funding priorities appear to be key factors influencing grant accessibility.

3. University Incentives for Conference Participation: Multinomial logistic regression indicates that senior faculty members (>10 years, OR = 3.3, $p < 0.01$) and those in engineering (OR = 2.6, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to receive generous incentives for conference participation. Administrative staff (OR = 4.2, $p < 0.01$) and junior researchers (<2 years, OR = 3.8, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to report no incentives, highlighting disparities in institutional support based on seniority and designation.

Publications

1. Type of Publication Support Received from the University: Researchers in Science and Technology (OR = 2.9, $p < 0.01$) and Engineering (OR = 2.3, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to receive international journal support, while those in Humanities (OR = 4.7, $p < 0.01$) and administrative staff (OR = 3.8, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to report no support. These findings reflect the prioritization of STEM fields over the humanities in terms of publication funding.

2. University's Role in Publishing Research Books: Senior faculty members (>10 years, OR = 2.1, $p < 0.05$) and those in education and law (OR = 2.4, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to strongly agree that the university supports publishing research books. Conversely, researchers in science and technology (OR = 1.8, $p < 0.05$) and those reporting no publication support (OR = 2.5, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to disagree, indicating dissatisfaction among underfunded fields.

Research Citation

1. University's Role in Authenticating Journal Rankings: Researchers in Science and Technology (OR = 1.9, $p < 0.05$) and Medical Sciences (OR = 1.7, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to rate the university's role in authenticating journal rankings as excellent or good. However, respondents in Humanities (OR = 2.6, $p < 0.01$) and Karnali (OR = 2.3, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to rate it as poor, underscoring field-specific and geographic disparities in perception.

2. Direct Funding for Research Publications and Citation Quality: Respondents receiving full funding (OR = 3.5, $p < 0.01$) and those in engineering (OR = 2.2, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to agree that direct funding improves citation quality. Those reporting no funding (OR = 4.1, $p < 0.01$) and junior researchers (<2 years, OR = 2.8, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to disagree, highlighting the critical role of funding in enhancing research visibility and impact.

International Students' Intake

1. Should the University Introduce New Domains? Respondents in medical sciences (OR = 2.8, $p < 0.01$) and engineering (OR = 2.3, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to support introducing new domains to attract international students. Administrative staff (OR = 1.5, $p < 0.05$) and those in humanities (OR = 1.3, $p < 0.05$) are less likely to support this idea, possibly due to perceived irrelevance to their fields.

2. Domains to Be Prioritized: Respondents in Medical Sciences (OR = 4.2, $p < 0.01$) and Lumbini (OR = 2.5, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to prioritize medical education, while researchers in Engineering (OR = 3.1, $p < 0.01$) and Bagmati (OR = 2.3, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to prioritize engineering. These preferences align with the strengths and resource availability in specific fields and regions.

Industrial Income

1. Effectiveness of University in Linking Education with Industry: Senior faculty members (>10 years, OR = 2.1, $p < 0.05$) and those in engineering (OR = 2.6, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to perceive the university as effective in linking education with industry. Administrative staff (OR = 3.4, $p < 0.01$) and those in humanities (OR = 2.8, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to perceive ineffectiveness, reflecting disparities in industry collaboration across fields.

2. University Support for Empowering Local Production: Researchers in Science and Technology (OR = 2.4, $p < 0.01$) and Lumbini (OR = 2.1, $p < 0.05$) are more likely to perceive significant support for empowering local production through research and innovation. Respondents in Karnali (OR = 4.1, $p < 0.01$) and administrative staff (OR = 3.7, $p < 0.01$) are more likely to perceive no support, signaling geographic and institutional gaps in fostering local economic development.

The regression results highlight systemic disparities in university support, particularly for junior researchers, administrative staff, and underrepresented provinces like Karnali and Sudur Paschim. Fields like science, technology, and medical sciences receive more attention, while the humanities and social sciences lag behind. Gender imbalances further exacerbate inequities, with females less likely to receive funding and incentives. Addressing these gaps—through targeted funding, inclusive policies, and regional outreach—could enhance institutional effectiveness and researcher satisfaction.

Table 1. Summary Table of Econometric Results

Section/Variable	Key Finding	Odds Ratio (OR)	p-value	Interpretation
Professional Development Support Fund				
1. Support for Attending Training and Seminars	Respondents in Science and Technology are more likely to receive full funding compared to Humanities.	OR = 2.3	p < 0.05	Researchers in STEM fields benefit more from professional development funding. Females and respondents from Karnali are less likely to receive support, highlighting gender and geographic disparities.
	Faculty members and those with >10 years of affiliation are more likely to receive partial funding.	OR = 1.6, OR = 1.5	p < 0.05	Seniority and faculty designation increase the likelihood of receiving partial funding, but junior researchers and underrepresented groups face barriers.
2. Financial Incentives for Participating in Seminars	Senior faculty members (>10 years) are more likely to consistently receive financial incentives.	OR = 2.7	p < 0.01	Senior faculty members benefit disproportionately from financial incentives, while administrative staff and respondents from Sudur Paschim report rare or no incentives.
	Administrative staff and respondents from Sudur Paschim are less likely to receive incentives.	OR = 3.2, OR = 2.4	p < 0.01	Geographic isolation and designation-based inequities contribute to disparities in seminar participation incentives.
3. Satisfaction with University Support (Digital/Pubs)	Respondents receiving full funding are more satisfied with digital device and publication support.	OR = 3.1	p < 0.01	Adequate funding improves satisfaction levels, particularly for researchers in Science and Technology. Females and those without publication support express higher dissatisfaction.
	Females and those reporting no publication support are more likely to be dissatisfied.	OR = 4.5, OR = 1.6	p < 0.01	Gender biases and lack of funding significantly impact satisfaction, especially for underfunded fields like the Humanities.
Research Grants				
1. Application for University Grant	Researchers in Science, Technology, and Engineering are more likely to apply for grants.	OR = 2.8, OR = 2.2	p < 0.01	High research costs in STEM fields drive grant applications. Junior researchers and administrative staff are less likely to apply, indicating awareness or accessibility barriers.
	Junior researchers (<2 years) and administrative staff are less likely to apply for grants.	OR = 3.4, OR = 4.1	p < 0.01	Lack of institutional support and mentorship may deter junior researchers and non-faculty staff from applying for grants.
2. Accessibility of Research Grants	Respondents in Lumbini and Bagmati find grants more accessible.	OR = 2.1, OR = 1.8	p < 0.05	Proximity to resource-rich regions enhances grant accessibility. Researchers in Karnali and Humanities face significant challenges in accessing grants.

	Respondents in Karnali and Humanities find grants less accessible.	OR = 3.7, OR = 2.5	p < 0.01	Geographic isolation and field-specific priorities limit grant accessibility for marginalized groups.
3. University Incentives for Conference Participation	Senior faculty members (>10 years) and those in Engineering receive generous incentives.	OR = 3.3, OR = 2.6	p < 0.01	Institutional support for conference participation favors senior faculty and STEM researchers, leaving junior researchers and administrative staff underserved.
	Administrative staff and junior researchers (<2 years) are less likely to receive incentives.	OR = 4.2, OR = 3.8	p < 0.01	Designation-based disparities highlight gaps in supporting early-career researchers and non-faculty staff.
Publications				
1. Type of Publication Support	Researchers in Science, Technology, and Engineering receive international journal support.	OR = 2.9, OR = 2.3	p < 0.01	STEM fields are prioritized for publication funding, leaving Humanities and administrative staff without adequate support.
	Researchers in Humanities and administrative staff report no support.	OR = 4.7, OR = 3.8	p < 0.01	Field-specific funding gaps disadvantage non-STEM researchers and administrative staff, limiting their ability to publish internationally.
2. University's Role in Publishing Research Books	Senior faculty members (>10 years) and those in Education and Law strongly agree on university support.	OR = 2.1, OR = 2.4	p < 0.05	Senior faculty and researchers in Education and Law perceive strong institutional support for book publishing, while STEM researchers and those without funding express dissatisfaction.
	Researchers in Science and Technology and those without publication support disagree.	OR = 1.8, OR = 2.5	p < 0.05	Funding disparities and field-specific priorities lead to dissatisfaction among underfunded groups.
Research Citation				
1. University's Role in Authenticating Journal Rankings	Researchers in Science and Technology rate the university's role as excellent/good.	OR = 1.9, OR = 1.7	p < 0.05	STEM researchers perceive higher quality in journal ranking authentication, while Humanities and Karnali respondents rate it poorly, reflecting field-specific and geographic disparities.
	Respondents in Humanities and Karnali rate the university's role as poor.	OR = 2.6, OR = 2.3	p < 0.01	Lack of institutional engagement with underfunded fields and remote provinces contributes to dissatisfaction.
2. Direct Funding for Research Publications	Respondents receiving full funding agree that direct funding improves citation quality.	OR = 3.5	p < 0.01	Adequate funding enhances research visibility and citation quality, benefiting STEM researchers. Junior researchers and those without funding express disagreement.
	Junior researchers (<2 years) and those without funding disagree.	OR = 4.1, OR = 2.8	p < 0.01	Funding inequities hinder research visibility and impact, particularly for early-career researchers and underfunded fields.

International Students' Intake					
1. Should the University Introduce New Domains?	Researchers in Medical Sciences and Engineering support introducing new domains.	OR = 2.8, OR = 2.3	p < 0.01	STEM fields align with the idea of attracting international students, while administrative staff and Humanities researchers show less enthusiasm, possibly due to perceived irrelevance.	
	Administrative staff and Humanities researchers are less supportive.	OR = 1.5, OR = 1.3	p < 0.05	Perceived irrelevance to their fields limits support from non-STEM researchers and administrative staff.	
2. Domains to Be Prioritized	Medical Education is prioritized by Medical Sciences researchers and those in Lumbini.	OR = 4.2, OR = 2.5	p < 0.01	Preferences align with regional strengths and field-specific expertise.	
	Engineering is prioritized by Engineering researchers and those in Bagmati.	OR = 3.1, OR = 2.3	p < 0.01	Regional and field-specific resource availability drives domain prioritization.	
Industrial Income					
1. Effectiveness in Linking Education with Industry	Senior faculty members (>10 years) and those in Engineering perceive effectiveness.	OR = 2.1, OR = 2.6	p < 0.05	STEM researchers and senior faculty perceive stronger industry collaboration, while administrative staff and Humanities researchers feel disconnected.	
	Administrative staff and Humanities researchers perceive ineffectiveness.	OR = 3.4, OR = 2.8	p < 0.01	Designation-based and field-specific disparities reflect uneven industry engagement across disciplines.	
2. Support for Empowering Local Production	Researchers in Science and Technology and those in Lumbini perceive significant support.	OR = 2.4, OR = 2.1	p < 0.01	STEM researchers and respondents from resource-rich regions benefit from institutional support for local production.	
	Respondents in Karnali and the administrative staff perceive no support.				

5. Findings

Geographic Disparities: Lumbini (25.71%) and Bagmati (22.60%) dominate in terms of perceived access, funding, and satisfaction, reflecting their proximity to institutional hubs and stronger infrastructure. Karnali (4.16%) and Sudur Paschim (7.27%) consistently report the lowest support and satisfaction across all metrics, suggesting systemic neglect of peripheral provinces. Respondents from these regions are more likely to receive no funding, face grant inaccessibility, and report dissatisfaction with university support systems.

Gender-Based Inequities: Males are significantly more likely to receive funding, incentives, and institutional support than females. Female respondents are more likely to express dissatisfaction with publication and digital support and are overrepresented in the group receiving no assistance. The odds ratios indicate that being female correlates with higher odds of exclusion from both funding and professional development resources (e.g., OR = 1.6 for dissatisfaction, OR = 1.4 for no training/seminar support).

Disparities by Designation and Experience: Faculty members and senior staff (>10 years) enjoy significant advantages across all categories: training support, grant access, conference incentives, publication backing, and perceptions of institutional effectiveness. Junior researchers and administrative staff are under-supported, often receiving no incentives (e.g., OR = 4.2 and OR = 3.8 for no conference support), are less likely to apply for grants, and are dissatisfied with the university's support.

Disciplinary Inequities: STEM fields (science & technology, engineering, and medical sciences) receive the majority of support—training funding, publication grants, and institutional prioritization (e.g., OR = 2.9 for international journal support). Humanities and administrative roles are deprioritized, reflected in limited access to resources, dissatisfaction with institutional roles, and low visibility in research and citation quality.

Structural Gaps in University Policy and Support: There is a clear link between resource allocation and perceived institutional effectiveness, particularly in linking education to industry and supporting local innovation. Senior and STEM respondents view the university favorably, while marginalized groups do not. The uneven distribution of professional development resources, grant accessibility, and publication support suggests the need for reforms targeting inclusivity and equity.

To promote a fair and inclusive academic environment, the institution must urgently revise its policies and outreach strategies to address existing disparities. This includes providing equitable support to historically underserved groups—such as researchers in peripheral provinces like Karnali and Sudur Paschim, female academics, junior faculty and administrative staff, and those working in underfunded disciplines like the humanities.

Concrete and targeted interventions are necessary to correct these imbalances. These should include region-specific research grants, mentorship programs tailored for early-career researchers, gender-responsive institutional policies, and equitable funding across all academic fields, not just STEM. Without such intentional reforms, the institution risks perpetuating systemic inequities that undermine research quality, staff morale, and long-term academic development.

6. Discussion

Alignment with the Theoretical Foundations: The Triple Helix Theory (Chumba, 2020) emphasizes that it requires strategic institutional reform and stronger linkages between academia, government, and industry. The review notes that universities should function as hybrid organizations involved in both teaching and innovation (Jongbloed, 2015; Brown, 2016), and findings point out a fragmented support system that limits this integration—especially for marginalized groups and disciplines. This study directly supports Hadidi and Kirby's (2015) observation that a lack of strategic coherence weakens institutional innovation capacity.

Regional Disparities and Institutional Marginalization: The results about geographic differences, particularly how Karnali and Sudur Paschim provinces are at a disadvantage, clearly support the worries expressed by Litardi et al. (2020) and Temel et al. (2013), who say that universities in less developed areas need to take specific actions to boost local economic growth and innovation. Region-specific research initiatives mirror their recommendations for place-based policies and institutional inclusivity.

Gender Inequity and Institutional Responsiveness: The results emphasize the gender-based exclusion in research funding and training; the review only briefly addresses gender issues, especially in South Asian contexts. This empirical gap contributes new insights that support the global call for inclusive university structures (Karakaş Kurt & Güneyli, 2023; Awad & Salaimeh, 2023), although the authors did not specifically examine gender disparities.

Professional Hierarchies and Disciplinary Favoritism: Senior faculty and STEM dominance over junior and humanities/administrative staff support the entrepreneurial university model (Awad & Salaimeh, 2023), but with a critical lens. While the literature praises STEM-linked entrepreneurial ecosystems, findings suggest this prioritization creates structural inequities. This critical insight nuances the optimistic claims made by Schlegel et al. (2021) and Schiuma and Carlucci (2018) by pointing out that STEM-centric funding can marginalize other essential academic disciplines.

Institutional Capacity and Research Support: The concerns raised by Adhikari et al. (2023) and Hussain and Rafiq (2023) are about insufficient research support infrastructure, especially for marginalized groups. The study supports their view that without adequate systems—like digital support, funding distribution, and publication infrastructure—research ecosystems become exclusionary and ineffective. Moreover, the absence of librarian-integrated services and the lack of publication assistance mentioned in your discussion add empirical weight to the critiques raised by Tang and Zhang (2019).

Gaps Identify: The issues highlight the unique contribution of research. The findings specific to Nepal, like the concentration of institutional access in areas focused on Kathmandu, are only briefly mentioned in Pokharel et al. (2025), but your study provides strong statistical evidence to support these problems.

Policy Implications and Strategic Recommendations: The study emphasizes urgent structural reforms, such as equitable funding, regional outreach, and gender-responsive policies. These align with Pan et al. (2020), who call for strategic frameworks to streamline institutional partnerships, and with national-level concerns raised by Pokharel et al. (2025) about aligning higher education with national development goals. The findings reinforce these theoretical calls with concrete, grounded evidence.

7. Conclusion

This research infers that disparities in university support are extensive and multifaceted, affecting various dimensions such as professional development, research grants, publications, citation quality, internationalization efforts, and industry collaboration. These inequities are driven by geographic location, gender, designation, seniority, and field of study, with significant implications for institutional fairness and effectiveness.

Respondents from provinces like Lumbini and Bagmati report higher satisfaction and resource accessibility, while underserved regions like Karnali and Sudur Paschim face significant barriers. The result highlights a wide geographic disparity in resource allocation and institutional support. Gender biases are evident, with males receiving more funding and incentives than females. This disparity extends across multiple areas, including professional development, grants, and publication opportunities, limiting the advancement of female researchers. Designated faculty members and senior affiliates (>10 years) receive disproportionate support compared to junior researchers, administrative staff, and early-career affiliates. This hierarchical inequity creates a significant gap in trust and engagement among different groups within the university. STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and medical sciences) dominate access to funding, grants, and publication support, leaving the humanities and social sciences underfunded and marginalized. This imbalance extends to perceptions of institutional support, with non-STEM researchers expressing dissatisfaction.

Opportunities for training, seminars, and conference participation are unevenly distributed. Senior faculty and STEM researchers benefit disproportionately, while junior researchers, administrative staff, and respondents from remote provinces face significant barriers. Access to direct funding critically impacts research visibility and citation quality. Researchers without funding—

particularly junior researchers and those in underfunded fields—struggle to enhance their research impact, further widening the gap between well-funded and underfunded groups. Preferences for attracting international students and fostering industry partnerships align with regional strengths and field-specific expertise. However, administrative staff and humanities researchers feel disconnected, indicating limited inclusivity in these initiatives.

8. Suggestions

To address the multifaceted disparities identified in this study, a series of targeted and inclusive interventions is necessary. First, to mitigate geographic imbalances, the government and academic institutions should allocate more resources and capacity-building programs to underserved provinces such as Karnali and Sudur Paschim. Establishing regional research hubs, providing travel and grant incentives for researchers in remote areas, and deploying mobile training teams could help bridge the regional divide. Second, to address gender disparities, universities should implement gender-sensitive policies that promote equal access to research funding, mentoring, and leadership opportunities. Special grant schemes, professional development workshops, and networking platforms specifically tailored for women researchers could foster greater inclusivity. Third, to balance disciplinary inequalities, funding bodies should revise their criteria to ensure more equitable support for non-STEM fields, recognizing the value of the humanities and social sciences in addressing societal challenges. Dedicated interdisciplinary grant schemes and publication support for underrepresented disciplines promote a more holistic research ecosystem. Additionally, institutional policies must be restructured to ensure that junior faculty and administrative staff have equitable access to professional development and research opportunities. Mentorship programs, career progression tracks, and inclusion in collaborative projects can empower early-career and non-faculty researchers. Lastly, internationalization and industry collaboration efforts must be reimaged to be more inclusive, engaging not only STEM researchers but also those in the humanities and administrative roles. Tailored international exchange programs and inclusive innovation strategies aligned with regional strengths can broaden participation. Overall, a more balanced and inclusive research environment in Nepal can only be achieved through comprehensive reforms that recognize and address structural inequities across gender, geography, designation, and discipline.

9. Limitations

This study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data obtained from a cross-sectional survey, which may not fully reflect the evolving and nuanced experiences of university researchers across Nepal. Furthermore, the lack of qualitative data and the limited representation from remote institutions may impact the depth and generalizability of the findings.

Declarations

Author Contributions. Bishnu Prasad Pokharel and Yadav Mani Upadhyaya jointly contributed to conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, resource management, software, supervision, writing (original draft), and review & editing. Bishnu Prasad Pokharel led the funding acquisition.

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