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Strengthening Research for the Development of Educational Institutions in Kandahar

By

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Abstract

This research explores the significance of academic research in the development of higher education institutions in Kandahar, Afghanistan, focusing on its current status, key challenges, and potential solutions. Using a descriptive cross-sectional methodology, data were collected over a two-month period in the year 1403 (Solar Hijri Calendar) through structured questionnaires completed by 385 students and 218 faculty members across seven universities. The analysis reveals a strong consensus regarding the importance of research, with 86.3% of faculty and 69.6% of students acknowledging its essential role in institutional growth. However, several challenges persist, including insufficient funding (60.3% faculty, 47.3% students), a lack of proper research facilities (69.4% faculty, 53.8% students), and a weak research environment (50.2% faculty, 37.4% students). Despite these issues, opportunities for improvement exist—such as increasing financial support, offering faculty development programs, and encouraging collaborative research. These findings provide practical guidance for policymakers and academic leaders aiming to enhance research capacity and foster institutional advancement in Kandahar.

Keywords: research development, higher education, Kandahar, institutional capacity.

1. Introduction

Research plays a crucial role in the development of educational institutions, particularly in higher education. It enhances teaching quality, improves student learning outcomes, and boosts institutional innovation and credibility. Global studies indicate that research and development (R&D) activities in educational systems strengthen evidence-based teaching methods, elevate academic standards, and contribute fundamentally to the advancement of educational institutions. However, in developing countries like Afghanistan, particularly in Kandahar, educational institutions face serious challenges in strengthening research activities. These challenges include limited financial resources, lack of research facilities, absence of skilled researchers, and a weak research culture. These barriers underscore the urgent need to strengthen research for the development of educational institutions, making this topic essential for academic discussion. This research, initiated by Malalay Institute of Higher Education, aims to highlight the importance of strengthening research for the development of educational institutions in Kandahar. The primary objective is to evaluate the impact of research, identify existing challenges, and propose effective solutions to enhance research capabilities. By doing so, this study seeks to present practical strategies for improving teaching quality, student learning, and institutional development, aligned with international and regional research standards and addressing the specific needs of Kandahar's educational system. The scope of this research is limited to higher education institutions in Kandahar, including universities and other tertiary institutions, with a focus on their resources, facilities, and research culture. Previous studies have assessed the relationship between teaching and research globally, as well as research challenges in developing countries. However, specific research on Kandahar is still needed. The findings of this study will be valuable for policymakers, educational leaders, and key stakeholders in Kandahar's educational system, offering practical solutions for strengthening research to promote institutional growth and create new opportunities for academic advancement.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the acknowledged importance of research, many educational institutions lack systematic frameworks, sufficient financial resources, and specialized researchers. These deficiencies hinder evidence-based policymaking, curriculum development, and institutional progress. Additionally, the absence of a research

culture leads to outdated teaching methods, administrative inefficiencies, and limited academic discourse. This study explores ways to strengthen research and enhance the development of educational institutions.

3. Significance and Need for the Study

Strengthening research is critical for the progress of educational institutions. Expanding research activities improves teaching quality, enhances student learning, and optimizes administrative practices. According to Cabral (2011), institutions with active and systematic research initiatives achieve higher teaching quality and better student learning outcomes. This indicates that research is not only essential for academic growth but also for institutional progress. Additionally, research facilitates professional development among faculty members and contributes to the economic and social development of society, particularly in developing countries (Shukili, 2020). Thus, research enhancement is not just beneficial for educational institutions but is also essential for broader educational and administrative functions.

4. Research Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

Objectives:

- Assess the current state of research in educational institutions.
- Identify effective strategies to strengthen research.
- Evaluate the impact of research on institutional development.
- Identify opportunities and challenges related to research enhancement.

Research Questions:

- What is the current state of research in educational institutions, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the most effective strategies for strengthening research in educational institutions?
- How does research contribute to the growth and development of educational institutions?

5. Literature Review

The pivotal role of research in advancing educational institutions—especially in higher education—is widely recognized for its capacity to enhance teaching quality, stimulate innovation, and foster institutional growth. This literature review synthesizes existing scholarship on the imperative to strengthen research in educational settings, examining its impacts, associated challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. Drawing on 31 sources spanning from 1974 to 2024, it presents both global and regional perspectives, identifies key gaps, and underscores the urgency of addressing these issues, particularly in developing contexts such as Afghanistan, as reflected in the research focus of the Malalay Institute.

5.1 The Role and Significance of Research in Educational Institutions

Extensive literature supports the notion that research serves as a cornerstone for institutional development. Donovan (2013) contends that research and development (R&D) in education systems lead to advancements through evidence-based practices (Science, pp. 317–319). In a similar vein, Quimbo and Sulabo (2014) find that research productivity enhances policy-making, academic excellence, and institutional reputation (Studies in Higher Education, pp. 1955–1971). Cheng (2024) emphasizes that educational research fuels high-quality development by promoting innovation and aligning pedagogy with contemporary demands (Science Insights Education Frontiers).

These perspectives underscore that research extends beyond academic boundaries, contributing to societal development, especially in under-resourced regions. Vessuri (2008), as cited in the Malalay document, stresses this point in the context of developing nations. Atuhaire et al. (2022) highlight the evolving role of higher education institutions in Africa, where research and innovation are key to solving local challenges (International Journal for Innovation Education and Research). Betru and Hamdar (1997) make a similar case for agricultural education, advocating stronger integration between research and extension services to build institutional capacity in developing countries (International Journal of Educational Development, pp. 303–311). Collectively, these studies affirm that research strengthens teaching practices, improves student outcomes, and enhances institutional relevance, especially in settings with limited resources.

5.2 Barriers to Strengthening Research in Educational Institutions

Despite its critical role, multiple barriers inhibit the development of research capacity, particularly in developing contexts. Farley-Ripple et al. (2018) outline a conceptual framework that identifies key challenges such as insufficient funding, a shortage of skilled researchers, and weak institutional policies (Educational Researcher, pp. 235–245). These challenges are echoed by Quimbo and Sulabo (2014) and Shukaili (2020, cited in the Malalay document), who emphasize financial constraints and low research productivity in higher education.

Historical underinvestment is also a concern. Sieber (1974) discusses chronic underfunding of educational R&D in the U.S., an issue likely exacerbated in less developed countries (Teachers College Record, pp. 478–502). On a regional level, Filatov et al. (2023) document inefficiencies in research implementation in Russian universities, pointing to poor infrastructure and inadequate resource allocation (TIRVED, pp. 1–4). Additionally, Defensor (2008) and García (2018) highlight the lack of a research-oriented culture and limited faculty capabilities in regions such as the Philippines, a situation that may parallel conditions in Afghanistan (The Normal Lights; unpublished work). These findings align with the Malalay Institute's observations of similar barriers in Kandahar, such as a dearth of skilled researchers and scarce institutional support.

5.3 Strategies and Opportunities for Enhancing Research

To address these barriers, several studies propose actionable strategies for strengthening research within educational institutions. Burkhardt and Schoenfeld (2003) advocate for improved funding, policy support, and researcher training to make educational research more impactful (Educational Researcher, pp. 3–14). Elsen et al. (2009) propose strengthening the link between research and teaching through integrated institutional policies and faculty development initiatives (Higher Education Quarterly, pp. 64–85). White et al. (2020) support this approach through their work on fostering research-rich teaching environments in Australia (Teaching Education, pp. 338–352).

Further, Coburn and Penuel (2016) recommend building research-practice partnerships to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world application, thereby enhancing institutional performance (Educational Researcher, pp. 48–54). Jones (2014) highlights the importance of developing policy research capacity through institutional reforms and international collaborations (Studies in Higher Education, pp. 1332–1342). For developing countries, Aziz et al. (1991) and the 2016 seminar report suggest capacity building, better resource distribution, and global partnerships, though their implementation strategies remain underexplored. Recent studies by Duyen (2024) and Barghot et al. (2024) also emphasize integrating faculty research into teaching and policy-making to drive institutional improvement (Vinh University Journal of Science; An-Najah University Journal for Research - B).

5.4 Gaps in the Literature

While these studies provide meaningful insights, significant gaps remain—especially concerning developing countries like Afghanistan. The Malalay Institute's report (Section 5) highlights the absence of context-specific research focused on strengthening academic research in Kandahar's institutions, a deficiency echoed in global literature. Though Sinuany-Stern (1991) and Misra & Bisaria (2011) call for localized institutional research, few studies address the realities of under-resourced settings like Afghanistan (Higher Education Policy, pp. 57–60; Indian Journal of Applied Research, pp. 300–302).

Moreover, there is a scarcity of longitudinal data assessing the long-term effectiveness of research-strengthening initiatives. Bartosh et al. (2023) and Yue (2023) touch upon this in their discussions on research-based learning and science-education integration (Revista Amazonia Investiga; Frontiers in Educational Research). Other underexplored themes include the role of infrastructure, cultural dynamics, and supportive policy environments in facilitating educational research in developing contexts. Anonymous reports such as the 2022 study on Risaralda and broader works like Ming (2000) on graduate education offer limited regional applicability. Additionally, while global research by Drew and Buchanan (1979) and Tellmann et al. (2020) examines teacher education and institutional challenges, these insights are rarely tailored to non-Western or resource-limited contexts (Teacher Education and Special Education, pp. 50–55; Studies in Higher Education, pp. 1839–1849).

The literature clearly affirms the need to bolster research within educational institutions, highlighting its integral role in fostering teaching excellence, innovation, and overall institutional advancement (Donovan, 2013; Cheng, 2024). However, recurring challenges—such as limited funding, poor infrastructure, and inadequate researcher capacity—continue to obstruct progress, particularly in developing nations (Farley-Ripple et al., 2018; Filatov et al., 2023). While various strategies, including increased investment, policy reform, and collaborative research models, show promise (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Coburn & Penuel, 2016), their practical application in regions like Kandahar remains largely unexplored. This literature review identifies a critical need for region-specific research, reinforcing the rationale behind the Malalay Institute's initiative to investigate strategies for enhancing research capacity in Afghanistan's educational institutions.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 **Research Design** :This is a cross-sectional study conducted using a descriptive method to assess the need for curriculum reform in Afghanistan's higher education system.

6.2 **Research Location and Duration** :The study was conducted over a period of two months, from the month of Hoot to Hamal in the year 1403 (Solar Hijri Calendar), focusing on identifying the need for curriculum reform in Afghanistan's higher education sector.

6.3 **Population Identification :**The study population includes students and faculty members from higher education institutions and universities in Kandahar province. The total number of students is approximately 12,450, while faculty members number around 650. Additionally, around 12 sectoral stakeholders are considered.

6.4 **Sampling Method and Sample Size** :As the total population was known, the Slovin formula was used to determine an appropriate sample size, ensuring a suitable margin of error and confidence level.

The formula is:

$$n = \frac{Z^2.p.(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- Z = Z-value for confidence level (1.96 for 95%)
- p = estimated proportion of the population (assumed 0.5)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

1. Student Sample Size Calculation:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2.0.5.(1-0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$Z^2 = 1.96^2 = 3.8416 \quad p.(1-p) = 0{,}5.0{,}5 = 0{,}25 \quad e^2 = 0.05^2 = 0.0025$$

2. $n = \frac{3{,}8416.0{,}25}{0{,}0025} = \frac{0{,}9604}{0{,}0025} = \mathbf{384.16}$

2. Faculty Sample Size Calculation:
Using simplified Slovin:

$$\frac{500}{(0.05)^2 \times 500 + 1} = n \qquad \frac{500}{2.25} = \mathbf{218}$$

6.5 **Data Collection** :Based on the above calculations, a total of 603 individuals were selected as the study sample: 385 students and 218 faculty members. Data was collected using the systematic sampling method.

6.6 **Questionnaire Overview** :A standardized questionnaire was developed for this research to evaluate the effectiveness, shortcomings, and reform Strengthening Research for the Development of Educational Institutions in Kandahar

— The questionnaire was designed for a quantitative study, incorporating inputs from both students and faculty. It consisted of three main parts:

— Demographic Information: This section collected personal and social background data of the participants.

— Likert Scale Questions: This section included 5-point Likert scale questions (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree).

— Multiple Response Questions: Participants were allowed to choose one or more appropriate answers in this section.

Validity and Reliability: The initial version of the questionnaire was shared with research experts for content validation. To test reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and found to be approximately 0.74, indicating acceptable reliability.

Data Analysis :The data collected was analyzed using quantitative analysis methods. Two main data sources were used: Student responses (Sample: 385) Faculty responses (Sample: 218)

Tools for Data Analysis: After collection, the data was entered and analyzed using IBM SPSS version 16, and results were presented in tabular format.

7. Result

This study was conducted to contribute to the development of academic institutions in Kandahar by identifying the current state of research, the obstacles it faces, its shortcomings, and available opportunities. To achieve this, structured questionnaires were distributed and completed by a total of 385 students from existing higher education institutions and universities in Kandahar. Among these participants, 71.4% were students from private higher education institutions, while 28.6% were from public universities. In addition, 218 university lecturers participated in the survey, of whom 57.8% were faculty members from public universities and 42.2% from private universities. The collected data has been analyzed analytically, and the results are presented based on the study's objectives and research questions.

7.1 Part:1 Lecturers Data Analysis

Demographic Summary Table:1

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	26–35	174	79.5%
	36–45	31	14.2%
	46–55	11	5.0%
	56–65	2	0.9%
	66 and above	1	0.5%
University Name	Kandahar University	77	35.2%
	Malalay University	25	11.4%
	Saba University	14	6.4%
	Benawa University	17	7.8%
	Lemar University	9	4.1%
	ANASTU University	50	22.8%
	Mirwais Nika Univ.	27	12.3%
Experience (Years)	1–5	130	59.4%
	6–10	53	24.2%
	11–15	24	11.0%
	16–20	3	1.4%
	21–25	5	2.3%
	Other	4	1.8%
Education	Bachelor	128	58.4%
	Master Degree	79	36.1%
	PhD	12	5.5%
Age	26–35	174	79.5%
	36–45	31	14.2%
	46–55	11	5.0%
	56–65	2	0.9%

66 and above	1	0.5%

The age breakdown reveals that a large portion of respondents (79.5%) fall within the 26–35 age range, suggesting that the academic and research community is predominantly composed of younger individuals. Those aged over 56 make up less than 1% of the total. In terms of university affiliation, Kandahar University accounts for the largest group (35.2%), followed by ANASTU with 22.8%, while Lemar and Saba Universities had fewer participants. Regarding professional experience, a majority (59.4%) have worked between 1 to 5 years, highlighting that most are in the early stages of their careers, with very few having more than 15 years of experience. Educationally, over half (58.4%) possess a Bachelor's degree, 36.1% have completed a Master's, and only 5.5% hold a PhD, pointing to a relatively low number of respondents with advanced academic qualifications.

7.1.1: Assessment of the Current Situation

Respondents: 218

Table:2

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Research is beneficial for academic advancement	2.3% (5)	5.9% (13)	5.5% (12)	26.0% (57)
University has sufficient research resources	8.2% (18)	14.2% (31)	16.9% (37)	45.2% (99)
Professors participate in research conferences	3.7% (8)	11.0% (24)	19.6% (43)	47.9% (105)
Research informs admin & academic decisions	10.0% (22)	15.1% (33)	19.2% (42)	39.7% (87)
. Students encouraged to do research	8.7% (19)	12.3% (27)	12.3% (27)	44.3% (97)

A significant majority (86.3%) of respondents believe that research plays a crucial role in academic progress, with 60.3% strongly supporting this view—demonstrating a highly positive perception of research's contribution to institutional development. Regarding available research resources, 60.7% feel the university is adequately equipped; however, 22.4% express dissatisfaction and 16.9% remain unsure, suggesting that improvements in infrastructure and support systems are still needed. When it comes to faculty participation in research conferences, responses are generally favorable, with 65.7% in agreement, though 19.6% are neutral and 14.7% disagree, indicating room to enhance engagement. As for the influence of research on academic and administrative decisions, only 55.7% believe it has a meaningful impact, while a combined 44.3% either disagree or remain neutral—highlighting a disconnect between research findings and decision-making. Finally, 66.7% agree that students are encouraged to engage in research, yet around a quarter express disagreement and 12.3% are neutral, pointing to the need for more robust strategies to motivate and support student research involvement.

7.1.2: Identifying Effective Ways for Strengthening

Respondents: 218

Table:3

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Financial support is important for expanding research	1.8% (4)	1.8% (4)	5.5% (12)	30.6 % (67)	60.3% (132)
Collaboration with other institutions expands research opportunities	_	2.7% (6)	6.4% (14)	45.7 % (100)	45.2% (99)
Training faculty on research improves quality	0.5% (1)	1.8% (4)	6.4% (14)	35.6 % (78)	55.7% (122)
Joint faculty-student research yields better outcomes	1.8% (4)	1.8% (4)	6.4% (14)	46.1 % (101)	43.8% (96)
If university prioritizes research, academic success increases	2.7% (6)*	2.3% (5)	5.9% (13)	31.5 % (69)	57.1% (125)

There is widespread agreement among respondents that financial backing is essential for research growth, with 90.9% supporting this view and 60.3% strongly agreeing—emphasizing the need for financial investment as a top priority. Equally, collaboration with other academic institutions is seen as vital for expanding research opportunities, also receiving 90.9% approval, split nearly evenly between agreement and strong agreement. Faculty training in research skills is similarly valued, with 91.3% in favor and over

half strongly agreeing, indicating a strong belief that building research capacity enhances quality. Joint research between faculty and students is also well-received, with 89.9% endorsing this collaborative model, suggesting that teamwork is seen as a key to more effective research. Lastly, 88.6% believe that when a university emphasizes research, its academic performance improves—underscoring the perceived link between research prioritization and institutional success.

Question 1: What are the main sources of funding for research activities at your university?
Respondents: 218
Table:4

Funding Source	Yes (n, %)	No (n, %)
Government Budget	105 (47.9%)	113 (51.6%)
University Expenses	105 (47.9%)	114 (52.1%)
Private Funding	47 (21.5%)	172 (78.5%)
International Funding	20 (9.1%)	199 (90.9%)

Most research funding comes from the government and universities, with about 48% of people saying these are the main sources. Only a small number said research is funded by private organizations (21.5%) or international groups (9.1%). Around one-third (33.3%) said students pay for research themselves, which shows that research can be a financial burden for students.

Question 2: How often does your university organize research-related workshops and training sessions?
Respondents: 218
Table:5

Disbursement Pattern	Yes	Yes (%)	No	No (%)
Monthly	80	36.5%	139	63.5%
Quarterly	75	34.2%	144	65.8%
Annually	54	24.7%	164	74.9%
Very Low Frequency	52	23.7%	167	76.3%
Only When needed	89	40.6%	130	59.4%

Only about a third of lecturers (36.5%) said they get research money every month, meaning monthly payments are not common. A similar number (34.2%) said they receive funds every three months, showing that quarterly payments are also not usual. Even fewer (24.7%) get research money once a year, which makes it hard to plan long-term projects. About 23.7% said they rarely receive any funding at all. The most common response (40.6%) was that money is only given when it's needed, showing that funding is often unplanned and not given regularly.

Question:3 What type of research is conducted most frequently at your university?
Respondents: 218
Table:6

Type of Research Activity	Yes (Frequency)	Yes (%)	No (Frequency)	No (%)
Research Articles	131	59.8%	87	39.7%
Applied Research	42	19.2%	177	80.8%
Experimental Research	60	27.4%	159	72.6%
Policy-Making Research	57	26.0%	162	74.0%
Students' Research Projects	99	45.2%	120	54.8%
Surveys	70	32.0%	149	68.0%

Most respondents (59.8%) said they mostly work on writing research articles, showing that publishing papers is a big focus. About 45.2% are involved in student research projects, which means there is some support for getting students involved. However, fewer people are doing applied research (19.2%), experimental research (27.4%), policy-related studies (26.0%), or surveys (32.0%). This shows that research activities are not very diverse and are more focused on theory than on solving real-world problems. To have more impact on society, universities might need to encourage more practical and policy-focused research.

Question:4 How do you evaluate the level of research culture at your university?
Respondents: 218
Table:7

Strength Level	Yes (%)	No (%)
Very Strong	19.6%	80.4%
Strong	58.9%	41.1%
Weak	27.4%	72.6%
Very Weak	12.8%	87.2%

Only 19.6% of respondents consider the strength level to be very strong, while a large majority (80.4%) do not, indicating that "very strong" conditions are rare or not widely recognized at the university. Most respondents (58.9%) think the strength level is strong, though 41.1% disagree, suggesting that there is room for improvement. Around 27.4% view the strength as weak, pointing to some areas needing attention. While 72.6% think the strength is either non-weak or strong, it's concerning that about a quarter of respondents feel the strength is weak. A significant majority

(87.2%) consider the strength level to be "very weak," with only 12.8% disagreeing, highlighting the need for improvement in several key areas.

Question 5: What are the key opportunities for the development of research?
Respondents: 218
Table:8

Improvement Area	Yes (%)	No (%)
Increasing financial support for research	77.6%	22.4%
Facilitating access to research materials	60.7%	39.3%
Reducing teaching load of professors	32.4%	67.6%
Promoting interdisciplinary collaborative research	35.6%	64.4%
Developing policies to encourage research activities	37.4%	62.6%
Providing facilities for publishing research results	49.8%	50.2%
Expanding collaboration with national and international research institutions	48.4%	51.6%
Organizing research training programs for students	48.9%	51.1%
Creating incentive programs to reward research efforts of professors and students	63.9%	36.1%

The majority of respondents (77.6%) strongly agree on the need for increased financial support to expand research activities, emphasizing its importance. A significant number (60.7%) also believe improving access to research materials is key to enhancing research quality. However, only 32.4% feel reducing teaching loads would help improve research, with 67.6% disagreeing. About 35.6% support promoting interdisciplinary research collaboration, while 64.4% think it's less important. Around 37.4% back the idea of developing policies to encourage research, but 62.6% do not consider it a priority. Responses are more divided regarding providing facilities for publishing research, with 49.8% in favor. Collaboration with other institutions is seen as important by 48.4%, though 51.6% disagree. Nearly half (48.9%) agree on the need for research training programs for students, indicating a desire for better research education. Lastly, 63.9% believe that creating incentives for research efforts would motivate professors and students, showing strong support for reward and recognition systems.

Question 6: What are the major challenges and obstacles to strengthening research?
Respondents: 218
Table:9

Factor	Yes (%)	No (%)
Creating incentive programs to reward research efforts	63.9%	36.1%
Resistance to change	19.2%	80.8%
Lack of research facilities	69.4%	30.6%
Lack of skills for research	53.9%	46.1%
Weak administrative and financial support	58.4%	41.1%
Lack of application of research findings	47.0%	53.0%
Absence of evaluation for research outcomes	32.0%	68.0%
Financial limitations	60.3%	39.7%
Increased teaching workload	28.3%	71.7%
Lack of public awareness about research	48.4%	51.6%
Absence of a research culture	50.2%	49.8%

A significant majority (63.9%) believes that implementing incentive programs would be beneficial in recognizing and rewarding the research efforts of professors and students, highlighting the importance of motivation and recognition within the academic community. However, 80.8% feel that resistance to change is a major challenge, suggesting that efforts to improve research practices may face internal opposition. Additionally, 69.4% identify the lack of research facilities as a major barrier, emphasizing the need for better infrastructure to support academic research. More than half of the respondents (53.9%) acknowledge a lack of research skills, signaling the importance of training and skill development for both faculty and students. Over half (58.4%) also point to weak administrative and financial support as a significant obstacle, indicating a need for stronger institutional backing for research activities. Nearly half (47.0%) believe that there is insufficient application of research findings, highlighting a disconnect between research production and its practical impact. A large majority (68.0%) think that research outcomes are not properly evaluated, suggesting a gap in assessment mechanisms.

Financial limitations are identified by 60.3% of respondents as a major constraint, stressing the need for better funding strategies to support research. A substantial 71.7% feel that increased teaching workload negatively impacts research, indicating the need for a more balanced allocation of faculty responsibilities. About 51.6% express concern over the lack of public awareness of research, suggesting a need for greater efforts to disseminate findings and raise public interest. Finally, responses are divided on whether a

research culture exists, with 50.2% agreeing that it is absent, highlighting the need to develop a stronger, research-focused academic environment.

Question 7: How can universities encourage students to engage in research activities?

Respondents: 218

Table:10

Encouragement Strategy	Yes (Freq / %)	No (Freq / %)
Offering research-based academic courses	144 (65.8%)	75 (34.2%)
Providing research internships	128 (58.4%)	91 (41.6%)
Establishing research scholarships for students	95 (43.4%)	124 (56.6%)
Giving academic credit for students' research	120 (54.8%)	99 (45.2%)
Organizing exhibitions to showcase research outcomes	102 (46.6%)	115 (52.5%)
Awarding financial prizes for research activities	143 (65.3%)	74 (33.8%)

The data highlights a positive trend in universities' efforts to involve students in research. The most popular strategies are offering research-based academic courses (65.8%) and awarding financial prizes (65.3%), indicating that integrating research into academics and providing incentives are seen as effective motivators. Research internships also receive strong support (58.4%), emphasizing the value of practical experience. Giving academic credit for research (54.8%) is also fairly popular, showing that formal recognition of research work is important.

However, establishing scholarships (43.4%) and organizing exhibitions (46.6%) are less commonly practiced, suggesting areas for improvement. While many universities are successfully implementing strategies like financial rewards and integrating research into courses, there is a noticeable gap in providing scholarships and public platforms such as exhibitions, which could help strengthen the research culture further.

7.2 Part:2 Student Data analysis

Demographic Summary

Respondents: 385

Table: 1

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	20-25	337	87.5%
	26-30	44	11.4%
	31-35	4	1.0%
University Name	Kandahar University	55	14.3%
	Malalay University	55	14.3%
	Saba University	55	14.3%
	Benawa University	55	14.3%
	Lemar University	55	14.3%
	ANASTU University	55	14.3%
	Mirwais Nika University	55	14.3%

The majority of respondents (87.5%) are aged between 20 and 25, indicating that the academic and research group is predominantly young. Only a small percentage (12.4%) are older, with very few (1%) in the 31–35 age range. Each of the seven universities represented in the dataset contributes equally, with 14.3% of total respondents from each. This suggests a balanced representation across the institutions. Overall, the data highlights a trend of younger participants with an even distribution across the universities in this sample.

7.2.1: Assessment of the Current Situation

Respondents: 385

Table:2

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Cumulative Percent
Increasing financial support	58 (15.1%)	53 (13.8%)	44 (11.4%)	114 (29.6%)	114 (29.6%)	383 (99.5%)	100%

Collaboration with other academic institutions	34 (8.8%)	73 (19.0%)	66 (17.1%)	109 (28.3%)	103 (26.8%)	385 (100%)	100%
Training programs for faculty on research skills	28 (7.3%)	59 (15.3%)	62 (16.1%)	122 (31.7%)	114 (29.6%)	385 (100%)	100%
Joint research projects between faculty and students	30 (7.8%)	53 (13.8%)	38 (9.9%)	126 (32.7%)	138 (35.8%)	385 (100%)	100%
If the university prioritizes research, its academic achievements will increase.	34 (8.8%)	43 (11.2%)	40 (10.4%)	122 (31.7%)	146 (37.9%)	385 (100%)	100%

A large portion of respondents (59.2%) agree or strongly agree that increasing financial support is crucial for expanding research activities, while only 28.9% disagree or remain neutral, highlighting the importance of financial investment for research growth. The majority (55.1%) also believe that collaborating with other institutions enhances research opportunities, with 27.8% either disagreeing or neutral. This indicates strong backing for fostering external academic partnerships. Additionally, 61.3% agree or strongly agree that training programs for faculty would improve research quality, while only 22.6% disagree or are neutral, suggesting support for professional development for faculty members. A significant 68.5% of respondents also feel that joint research projects between faculty and students lead to better outcomes, while only 21.6% disagree or remain neutral. This reflects the high value placed on collaborative research efforts.

Most respondents (69.6%) agree or strongly agree that prioritizing research will enhance academic achievements, with only 20% disagreeing or neutral. Overall, the data shows strong consensus on the importance of financial support, academic collaboration, faculty training, joint research projects, and prioritizing research to improve academic success.

7.2.2: Identifying Effective Ways for Strengthening

Respondents: 385

Table:3

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Increasing financial support is important for the expansion of research activities.	15.1%	13.8%	11.5%	29.8%	29.8%
Collaboration with other academic institutions expands research opportunities.	8.8%	19.0%	17.1%	28.3%	26.8%
Training programs for faculty on research skills will enhance the quality of research.	7.3%	15.3%	16.1%	31.7%	29.6%
Joint research projects between faculty and students lead to better outcomes.	7.8%	13.8%	9.9%	32.7%	35.8%
If the university prioritizes research, its academic achievements will increase.	8.8%	11.2%	10.4%	31.7%	37.9%

The results reveal strong backing for factors that can enhance research in universities. Nearly 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree that increasing financial support is crucial for expanding research. There is widespread belief that collaboration, faculty training, and student-faculty research projects positively impact research quality and outcomes. Over 69% agree that prioritizing research will lead to increased academic achievements. These findings reflect a positive outlook toward structural and collaborative reforms in research, with investments in funding, skills development, and partnerships viewed as essential drivers of progress.

Question 1: What are the main sources of funding for research activities at your university?

Respondents: 385

Table:4

Statement	No	Yes	Total	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Government Budget	253 (65.7%)	132 (34.3%)	385 (100%)	100 %	100%
University Expenses	173 (44.9%)	210 (54.5%)	385 (100%)	99.5 %	99.5%
Private Funding	323 (83.9%)	62 (16.1%)	385 (100%)	100 %	100%
International Funding	358 (93.0%)	27 (7.0%)	385 (100%)	100 %	100%
Students' Personal Expenses	250 (64.9%)	135 (35.1%)	385 (100%)	100 %	100%

The data reveals that a large majority (65.7%) of respondents believe there is no government budget allocated, with only 34.3% confirming government funding. This suggests that the university doesn't heavily rely on government support. A slight majority (54.5%) reports that the university incurs expenses, while 44.9% disagree, indicating that the university does face financial expenditures. The vast majority (83.9%) say the university doesn't receive private funding, and 93.0% report no international funding, indicating minimal reliance on these sources. Additionally, 35.1% of respondents acknowledge that students incur personal expenses, suggesting a financial burden on students. Overall, the data indicates a reliance on internal funding sources and highlights financial challenges for both the institution and students.

Question: 2 How often does your university organize research-related workshops and training sessions?
Respondents: 385
Table:5

Funding Frequency	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**Valid Percent**
Monthly	244 (63.4%)	141 (36.6%)	385 (100%)	100%
Quarterly	294 (76.4%)	91 (23.6%)	385 (100%)	100%
Annually	327 (84.9%)	58 (15.1%)	385 (100%)	100%
Very Low	285 (74.0%)	100 (26.0%)	385 (100%)	100%
Only When needed	247 (64.2%)	138 (35.8%)	385 (100%)	100%

The data shows that regular research funding is largely absent, with most respondents reporting no monthly (63.4%), quarterly (76.4%), or annual (84.9%) funding. Instead, funding is often provided on an as-needed basis (35.8%) or is described as very low (26.0%). This suggests that there is a lack of consistent and adequate financial support for research activities.

Question:3 What type of research is conducted most frequently at your university?
Respondents: 385
Table:6

Type of Research Activity	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**Valid Percent**
Research Articles	229 (59.5%)	156 (40.5%)	385 (100%)	100%
Applied Research	331 (86.0%)	54 (14.0%)	385 (100%)	100%
Experimental Research	261 (67.8%)	124 (32.2%)	385 (100%)	100%
Policy-Making Research	308 (80.0%)	77 (20.0%)	385 (100%)	100%
Students' Research Projects	234 (60.8%)	151 (39.2%)	385 (100%)	100%
Survey	297 (77.1%)	88 (22.9%)	385 (100%)	100%

The results reveal that participation in various research activities is generally low. While 40.5% have authored research articles and 39.2% have been involved in student research projects, other types of research, such as applied research (14.0%), policy-making (20.0%), and surveys (22.9%), are much less common. This suggests a need to encourage more diverse involvement in different forms of research beyond just academic publishing.

Question:4 How do you evaluate the level of research culture at your university?
Respondents: 385
Table:7

Perception of Research Environment	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**	**Valid Percent**
Very Strong	313 (81.3%)	72 (18.7%)	385 (100%)	100%
Strong	178 (46.2%)	207 (53.8%)	385 (100%)	100%
Weak	292 (75.8%)	92 (23.9%)	385 (100%)	99.7%
Very Weak	335 (87.0%)	50 (13.0%)	385 (100%)	100%

The data shows that while most respondents (53.8%) view the research environment as strong, only 18.7% consider it very strong. In contrast, 23.9% rate it as weak, and 13.0% as very weak. This indicates a generally positive but mixed perception, suggesting moderate satisfaction with the current environment while emphasizing the need for substantial improvements in research infrastructure and support.

Question 5: What are the key opportunities for the development of research?
Respondents: 385
Table:8

Suggested Improvement	No	Yes	Total	Valid Percent
Increasing financial support for research	134 (35.0%)	249 (65.0%)	383	100%
Facilitating access to research materials	137 (35.6%)	248 (64.4%)	385	100%
Reducing teaching load of professors	245 (63.6%)	140 (36.4%)	385	100%
Promoting interdisciplinary collaborative research	235 (61.0%)	150 (39.0%)	385	100%
Developing policies to encourage research activities	252 (65.5%)	133 (34.5%)	385	100%
Providing facilities for publishing research results	268 (69.6%)	116 (30.1%)	385	99.7%
Expanding collaboration with national and international research institutions	235 (61.0%)	150 (39.0%)	385	100%
Organizing research training programs for students	214 (55.6%)	171 (44.4%)	385	100%
Creating incentive programs to reward research efforts of professors and students	212 (55.1%)	173 (44.9%)	385	100%

The data shows that the most widely supported initiatives to enhance research are increasing financial support (65.0%) and improving access to research materials (64.4%), indicating that funding and availability of resources are seen as essential for research growth. However, there was less support for providing publishing facilities (30.1%), developing policies to encourage research (34.5%), and reducing teaching loads (36.4%). This may reflect either a lack of awareness of the potential impact of these strategies or limitations within the institution. Overall, while funding and resource access are seen as top priorities, there is also moderate support for training, collaboration, and incentives, indicating a need for a more comprehensive approach to improving research infrastructure and motivation in academic settings.

Question 6: What are the major challenges and obstacles to strengthening research?
Respondents: 385
Table:9

Challenge	No	Yes	Total	Valid Percent (Yes)
Resistance to change	277 (71.9%)	108 (28.1%)	385	28.1%
Lack of research facilities	178 (46.2%)	207 (53.8%)	385	53.8%
Lack of skills for research	175 (45.5%)	210 (54.5%)	385	54.5%
Weak administrative and financial support	203 (52.7%)	180 (47.0%)	383	47.0%
Lack of application of research findings	235 (61.0%)	150 (39.0%)	385	39.0%
Absence of evaluation for research outcomes	262 (68.1%)	123 (31.9%)	385	31.9%
Financial limitations	203 (52.7%)	182 (47.3%)	385	47.3%
Increased teaching workload	256 (66.5%)	129 (33.5%)	385	33.5%
Lack of public awareness about research	237 (61.6%)	148 (38.4%)	385	38.4%
Absence of a research culture	241 (62.6%)	144 (37.4%)	385	37.4%

The findings indicate that the main obstacles to research development are the lack of research skills (54.5%), insufficient research facilities (53.8%), financial constraints (47.3%), and weak administrative and financial support (47.0%). These challenges point to the need for capacity-building in both skills and infrastructure, as well as better allocation of resources. Other, less

frequently mentioned challenges include the absence of a research culture (37.4%), lack of public awareness (38.4%), and increased teaching workloads (33.5%). Interestingly, resistance to change was the least cited barrier (28.1%), suggesting that the academic community is generally open to improving research efforts if given adequate support. Focusing on skill development, improving facilities, and securing reliable funding would likely be the most effective strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Question 7: How can universities encourage students to engage in research activities?
Respondents: 285
Table:10

Strategy	No	Yes	Total	Valid Percent (Yes)
Offering research-based academic courses	203 (52.7%)	181 (47.1%)	384	47.1%
Providing research internships	190 (49.4%)	194 (50.4%)	385	50.4%
Establishing research scholarships for students	195 (50.6%)	190 (49.4%)	385	49.4%
Giving academic credit for students' research	183 (47.5%)	200 (51.9%)	385	51.9%
Organizing exhibitions to showcase research outcomes	201 (52.2%)	184 (47.8%)	385	47.8%
Awarding financial prizes for research activities	165 (42.9%)	220 (57.1%)	385	57.1%

The results show balanced support for involving students more in research, with most strategies receiving close to 50% approval. The top initiatives are offering financial prizes (57.1%), awarding academic credit (51.9%), and providing internships (50.4%), indicating that incentives and formal recognition are strong motivators for student involvement. However, slightly fewer respondents supported research-based courses (47.1%) and research exhibitions (47.8%), suggesting that while structural changes are welcome, there's a greater emphasis on direct rewards, practical experience, and acknowledgment. In short, students are more likely to engage in research when there are tangible rewards, recognition, and real-world opportunities.

8. Discussion

The results of this study, carried out by the Malalay Institute of Higher Education, emphasize the fundamental role research plays in enhancing the quality and performance of higher education institutions in Kandahar. This finding aligns with international studies that position research as central to academic excellence and institutional progress (Donovan, 2013; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). With 86.3% of faculty and 69.6% of students recognizing research as essential to academic development, the evidence supports the alternative hypothesis that a strong relationship exists between research development and institutional success.

The responses from 603 participants (385 students and 218 faculty) paint a detailed picture of research engagement in Kandahar. Faculty are generally early-career professionals (79.5% aged 26–35; 59.4% with less than five years of experience), and show a high level of support for research. Most students are also young (87.5% aged 20–25) and acknowledge the value of research. However, the stronger endorsement from faculty may reflect their more direct involvement in academic inquiry, while students are typically engaged in coursework rather than independent research (45.2% faculty vs. 39.2% student involvement). Despite the positive outlook, several obstacles remain, mirroring challenges faced in other developing countries (Farley-Ripple et al., 2018; Shukili, 2020). A majority of respondents identified financial constraints, lack of access to resources, and low institutional support as key barriers. Government or university funding is limited (only 47.9% of faculty confirmed receiving such support), and international funding is nearly absent (9.1% faculty, 7.0% students). Additionally, more than one-third of both groups rely on students' personal contributions to fund research—raising concerns about equity and access.

Another pressing issue is the lack of physical infrastructure, such as well-equipped libraries and laboratories. Many also cited underdeveloped research skills, with just 5.5% of faculty holding doctoral degrees. This lack of expertise, coupled with a weak research culture, limits the impact of academic efforts. The research produced tends to be largely theoretical, with low participation in applied and policy-oriented projects—issues raised by Defensor (2008) and Betru & Hamdar (1997).

The findings also reveal a gap between research activities and institutional decision-making. Just over half of faculty believe that research influences administrative policies, and many reported that research findings are rarely evaluated or utilized effectively. This disconnect reduces the practical value of academic inquiry and reflects broader systemic issues in research management (Coburn & Penuel, 2016). Nonetheless, there are clear avenues for reform. Faculty and students overwhelmingly support increased training opportunities, more financial support, and stronger institutional collaborations. There is also strong endorsement for joint research initiatives and incentive programs to motivate both students and staff. While support for reducing teaching loads and implementing policy reforms was more moderate, the overall findings suggest that the academic community is open to change—especially if backed by strategic planning and adequate resources.

This study's comprehensive sample, methodological rigor, and inclusion of both student and faculty perspectives enhance its credibility and provide much-needed insight into the specific challenges and opportunities in Kandahar's academic landscape. However, limitations such as the use of cross-sectional data and the reliance on self-reported information suggest the need for further longitudinal and qualitative research.

9. Conclusion

This research, conducted under the leadership of the Malalay Institute of Higher Education, offers a critical assessment of the status of research in higher education institutions in Kandahar. It confirms that research is vital to improving teaching quality, encouraging innovation, and enhancing institutional performance. With strong endorsement from both faculty (86.3%) and students (69.6%), the findings reinforce global understandings that emphasize the benefits of research-rich environments, particularly in developing contexts like Afghanistan. While enthusiasm for research is high, the study identifies a series of challenges that must be addressed for these institutions to fully benefit from academic inquiry. Financial difficulties, limited infrastructure, and weak research capacities hinder progress. The fact that many students are personally financing research underscores the need for more equitable funding mechanisms. Additionally, low participation in applied and policy-related research reflects a gap between academia and real-world problem-solving.

Moreover, the limited use of research in administrative decision-making and the lack of formal evaluation frameworks point to systemic weaknesses that diminish the practical value of academic work. These issues are compounded by insufficient research training and a fragmented research culture. However, the widespread support for training programs, institutional partnerships, and faculty-student collaborations presents a clear path forward. To capitalize on these opportunities, the study recommends expanding funding through public-private partnerships and international collaborations. Building capacity through faculty development, creating incentives for research engagement, and embedding research into academic programs are also crucial steps. Policymakers should consider reallocating education budgets to strengthen research infrastructure, while university leaders should focus on integrating research opportunities into the student experience.

The strength of this study lies in its comprehensive coverage, balanced sample, and relevance to Afghanistan's unique educational landscape. However, future studies should consider longitudinal designs to track long-term progress and explore regional and cultural differences across Afghan provinces. Additionally, qualitative insights into institutional attitudes and administrative dynamics could help build a more complete picture of the research environment.

In conclusion, this study establishes a foundation for transformative change in Kandahar's higher education sector. Through a strategic commitment to research, educational institutions can elevate their academic standing, better address local needs, and align with global academic standards—ultimately contributing to the broader development of Afghan society.

10. Recommendations:

1. Boost Funding: Establish public-private partnerships and seek international grants to address financial constraints reported by 60.3% of faculty and 47.3% of students. Allocate 10–15% of education budgets to research and provide student micro-grants to reduce out-of-pocket expenses (noted by 33.3% of faculty and 35.1% of students).
2. Improve Infrastructure: Develop research infrastructure, including libraries and laboratories, and ensure access to digital databases to combat the lack of resources (reported by 69.4% of faculty and 53.8% of students). Establish university-based research centers to support applied research efforts (currently engaged by only 19.2% of faculty and 14.0% of students).
3. Enhance Research Skills: Organize monthly workshops on research methodology, supported by 91.3% of faculty and 61.3% of students. Fund faculty PhD programs (currently, only 5.5% hold a PhD) and incorporate research skill development into student curricula (endorsed by 65.8% of faculty).
4. Build a Research Culture: Provide incentives such as financial awards (supported by 65.3% of faculty and 57.1% of students) and academic credits (supported by 54.8% of faculty and 51.9% of students). Host annual research exhibitions (46.6% of faculty and 47.8% of students support this) and establish systems to evaluate research impact (currently lacking according to 47.0% of faculty).
5. Promote Collaboration: Encourage joint faculty-student research projects (backed by 89.9% of faculty and 68.5% of students) and interdisciplinary collaboration (supported by 35.6% of faculty and 39.0% of students). Form partnerships with national and international institutions (supported by 48.4% of faculty and 39.0% of students), and offer research internships (endorsed by 58.4% of faculty and 50.4% of students).
6. Integrate Research into Teaching and Policy: Embed research components into academic courses (as recommended by Bartosh et al., 2023) and promote policy-oriented research (currently pursued by only 26.0% of faculty and 20.0% of students). Establish a research advisory committee to connect research findings with institutional decision-making (only 44.3% of faculty believe such a link currently exists).
7. Address Systemic Barriers: Raise public awareness about the value and benefits of academic research (identified as lacking by 48.4% of faculty and 38.4% of students). Formulate and implement policies that prioritize research and establish mechanisms to monitor annual progress (supported by 37.4% of faculty and 34.5% of students).
8. Create a Long-Term Strategy: Develop a five-year

strategic plan aimed at increasing research output by 20% annually and aligning institutional goals with international standards (Earle et al., 2013). Focus research efforts on addressing local challenges (e.g., teacher training) and utilize digital technologies to enhance collaboration and dissemination.

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