An Analysis of the Importance of Scholarly Research in Indian Hospitality and Tourism Education

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Abstract-Academic scholarship in academic life is the cornerstone of academic excellence, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making in higher education. In hospitality and tourism education in India, research is not only necessary for pedagogic content development and curriculum design but also for making academic work relevant to the changing needs of the global industry. The present study examines the Indian hospitality and tourism school postgraduate students and faculties' perceived importance, current level of involvement, and institutional issues. Under a mixed-methods design, 120 participants were interviewed across India. The study acknowledges a high appreciation of research as an important factor for scholarship but acknowledges active participation to be hindered by the likes of inadequate funding, limited access to scholarly literature, inadequate research training, and inadequate institutional support facilities. The study promotes the role of well-defined research policies, improved academic infrastructure, and collaborative inter-institutional research. To enhance hospitality and tourism education in India to be more innovative, academically robust, and globally competitive, the research-based scholarship culture has to be nurtured.

Keywords- Hospitality education, Tourism education, scholars' research, Higher education in India, Academic engagement, and Research challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism sector is one of the most dynamic and rapidly changing sectors in the world, which has contributed immensely to the national economy, employment, and cultural exchange. The sector, in India, belongs to the services sector, for which greater demands are being enrolled for professionally qualified personnel and academic qualifications (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2021). As a result of greater competition and the globalization of the sector, there is a greater need for a solid academic foundation that facilitates theoretical research along with practice. Scholarly research is at the core of developing any academic field. It fosters thinking, informs curriculum development, promotes innovation, and enables evidence-based decision-making. In fields like hospitality and tourism—where trends, consumer trends, and service standards keep altering—research becomes indispensable to institutions that need to stay connected and up-to-date (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2016). Research activity also enhances institutional prestige, enables policymaking, and bridges academia and industry.

Although such identified benefits have been found, research study integration into Indian hospitality and tourism education remains uneven. Indian educational institutions are predominantly aimed at operational learning and skill development, frequently at the expense of research-based learning and interrogation (Sharma, 2020). Students and faculty are generally faced with challenges such as non-availability of research funding, absence of reading scholarly papers, absence of training in research methodologies, and absence of institutional support. In doing so, one needs to explore the research environment in hospitality and tourism education in India, identify the opinions of stakeholders, and uncover the structural and academic issues constraining research participation. Following such an approach, this research seeks to enhance the importance of fostering appropriate research culture in schools of hospitality and tourism in ensuring sustainable long-term academic and professional existence.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to explore the relevance and role of academic research in the perspective of Indian hospitality and tourism education. With regard to the changing needs of the industry and increasing value of academic

achievement, the following specific aims are established by this research:

➢ To evaluate perceptions of teachers and postgraduate students regarding academic research in Indian hospitality and tourism institutes.
➢ To quantify the level of research participation by such institutions.
➢ To determine the major stumbling blocks that discourage research involvement and productivity among students and instructors.
➢ To analyze the level of support generated towards research activities, e.g., resource allocation, training, and rewards.
➢ To determine the linkage between research involvement and curriculum quality, academic development, and industry relevance.
➢ To advise on actions that would improve the research culture and scholarly output in Indian hospitality and tourism training.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholarly research plays a very significant role in enhancing learners' quality and validity in academic domains, especially in professional education disciplines like tourism and hospitality. Research supports curriculum development, pedagogy, policy-making, and industry association. The following literature presents a general overview of international and Indian perceptions towards the contribution of research in tourism and hospitality education.

1. Global Perspectives on Research in Hospitality and Tourism

At the international level, tourism and hospitality have evolved from vocationally focused to entrench academically. According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2016), academic study plays a significant role in closing the gap between concepts in theory and real-world applications within the industry. They argue that research is beneficial in coming up with new tourist behavior models, improving service quality, and guiding sustainable tourism policy.

Tribe (2002) coined the phrase "philosophic practitioner" to emphasize the fact that tourism studies need critical and research-based education and insisted on achieving equilibrium between vocational training and academic pursuit. His work assumes that tourism education must be producing workers as well as thinkers and producers.

2. The Role of Research in Higher Education

Research is well known as a critical component of quality assurance in higher education. Altbach and Salmi (2011) argue that institutions that focus on research are likely to achieve higher rankings worldwide and enjoy a better academic reputation. In professional fields such as hospitality, research in education helps in the development of industry-specific skills, improves decision-making, and enhances lifelong learning.

In addition, the UNESCO Global Report (2016) stressed that hospitality education development should be research-oriented in order to be competitive and responsive to global trends.

3. Indian Context: Challenges and Progress

In India, hospitality and tourism education have increased immensely in the last twenty years. Emphasis on research continues to be low. In a research paper conducted by Sharma (2020), it was found that Indian institutions focus mainly on operational and skill-based training and hardly give any importance to scholarly work. Teachers have too little time, institutional backing, money, and access to quality journals to overcome their hurdles.

Rajan and Mathew (2019) were of the view that Indian hospitality research has limited representation in international journals, hence limiting its global applicability and reach. They argue that there is a need for systematic faculty development, access to electronic resources, and international collaborations for enhancing the quality of research in Indian hospitality schools.

4. Challenges in Research Participation

There are also some research works that have set forth common barriers to hospitality research education globally. These include inadequate training in research (Zhang et al., 2017), inadequate institutional incentives, unstable research infrastructure, and minimal industry involvement. Such barriers are even more vital when dealing with developing economies where research remains an emerging area of study.

4. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

Descriptive research design with a mixed method is the type of research employed in this study when investigating perceptions, participation, problems, and institutional support of academic research among Indian hospitality and tourism education stakeholders. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered so as to provide a clear understanding of the research issue.

2. Population and Sample

Target population was postgraduate students and faculty of hospitality and tourism colleges and universities in India. Direct academic involvement in the field formed the premise for selecting participants through a purposive sampling approach.

Sample size: 120 respondents

- ✓ 60 Faculty members
- ✓ 60 Postgraduate students

Institutions included 15 colleges and universities situated in North, South, East, and West India to ensure diversity at the regional level.

3. Data Collection Tools

A standardized questionnaire was developed as the main instrument for data collection. It had four sections:

- ✓ Demographic Details
- ✓ Perception and Research Significance
- ✓ Institutional Support and Research Participation
- ✓ Barriers and Open-Ended Comments

The questionnaire was filled with Likert-scale items, multiple-choice items, and a few open-ended questions to capture qualitative data.

4. Data Collection Method

- ➢ The questionnaire was distributed online (through Google Forms) and offline for four weeks.
- ➢ Informed consent before the study was achieved from all the participants.

5. Data Analysis Strategies

- ✓ Descriptive Statistics (percentage, frequency, and mean) classified demographic information and attitudes.
- ✓ Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to examine the correlation between participating in research and institutional aspects like support, training, and accessibility of resources.
- ✓ Qualitative data of open-ended responses were coded with thematic coding to determine the recurring themes and patterns.

6. Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical research practices. It was voluntary, and no personally related information was gathered. The data were only academic in nature.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Respondent Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	70	58.3%
	Female	50	41.7%
Role	Faculty	60	50.0%
	Postgraduate Students	60	50.0%
Region	North India	30	25.0%
	South India	35	29.2%
	East India	25	20.8%
	West India	30	25.0%
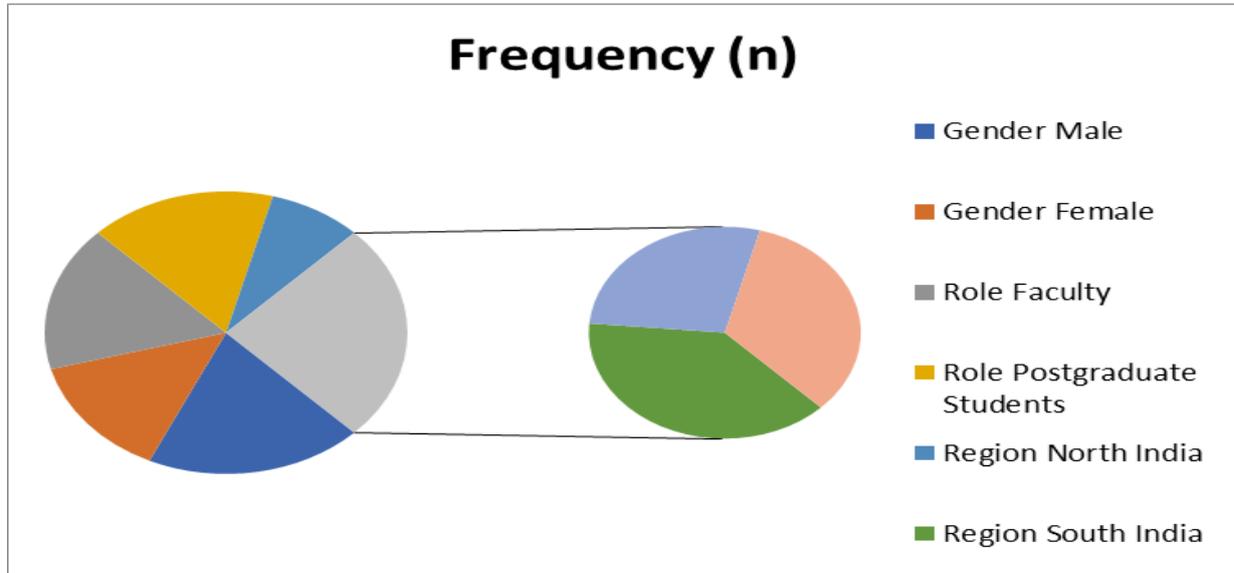
1. Gender Division

✓ 70 male respondents (58.3%),
✓ 50 female respondents (41.7%),

Female respondents comprise 50 individuals (41.7%).

The sample is reasonably evenly spread in terms of gender, with an even slighter dominance of males compared to females. Both are well-covered to enable varied perspectives when taking into account attitudes and interactions with research scholarship.

2. Role in Institution

✓ Staff: 60 respondents (50%)
✓ Postgraduate students: 60 respondents (50%)

The sample is half each from the faculty and postgraduate students in order to give a balanced observation by both the teachers and the students. This balance will yield both academic perspectives and student comments for research accurately reflected.

3. Regional Representation

✓ North India: 30 respondents (25.0%)
✓ South India: 35 respondents (29.2%)
✓ East India: 25 respondents (20.8%)
✓ West India: 30 respondents (25.0%)

The survey sample is taken from each of the four large regions of India for geographical representation. The active participation is the maximum from South India (29.2%), reflecting a strong institutional presence in the region. Participation from the rest of the regions is, however, reasonably balanced, permitting generalization of results across the country's various segments.

The population description is perfectly balanced and a representative sample in geography, professional role, and gender. The diversity ensures that the study is more valid and reliable such that the findings regarding the significance of scholarly research in Indian hospitality and tourism education are representative of diversified institutional and regional settings.

2. Perception of Research Importance

Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Research is vital for academic development	4.65	Strongly Agree
Scholarly research improves curriculum relevance	4.42	Agree
Research is essential for improving the quality of education	4.55	Strongly Agree
Institutions encourage faculty and students to engage in research	3.20	Neutral
Research contributes to industry innovations and practical solutions	4.38	Agree
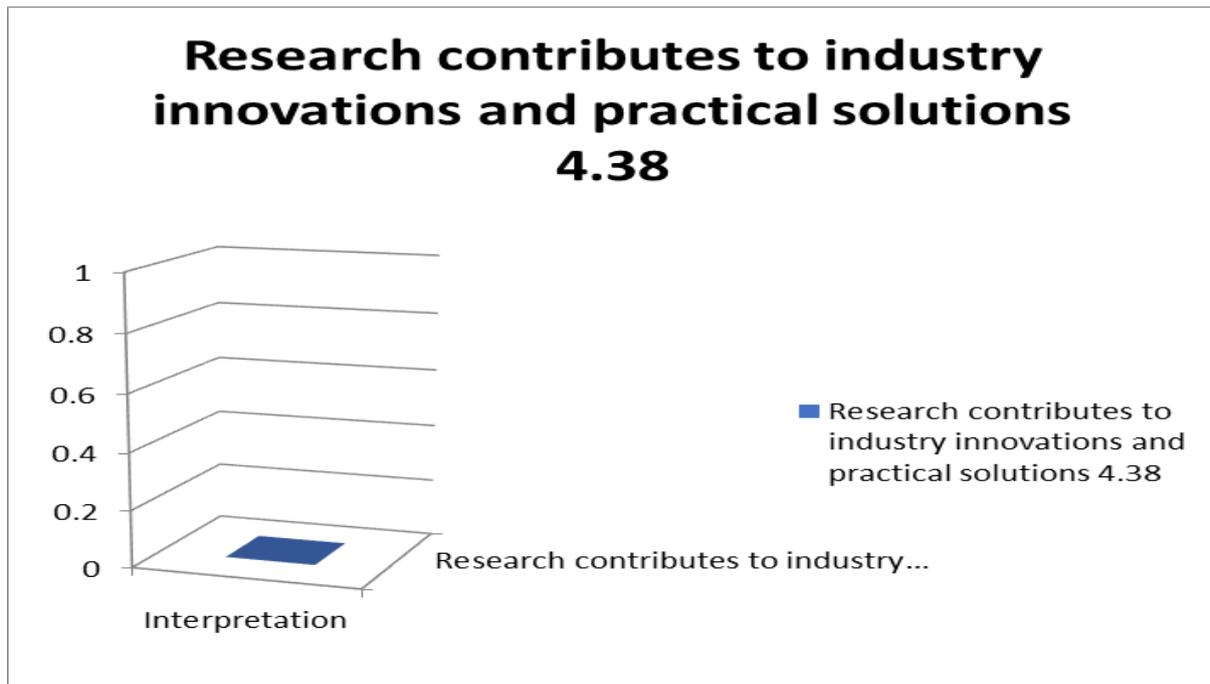
The subjects were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree

(1) To Strongly Agree (5).

1. Intellectual development requires research. (Mean = 4.65; Strongly Agree) no

With a mean response way down the line for a score of 5, the respondents unmistakably feel that research is the cornerstone of intellectual development. So unanimous is this consensus that it warrants the contention that without continuous research, curriculum and pedagogical improvement would become impossible.

2. "Research keeps the curriculum current." (Mean = 4.42; Agree)

A score above 4 guarantees extremely high levels of agreement that course material keeps pace with new theory developments and industry trends through the implementation of research findings. As marginally below statement one, it proves high levels of faith in curriculum planning by research.

3. "Research is important in improving the quality of teaching." (Mean = 4.55; Strongly Agree)
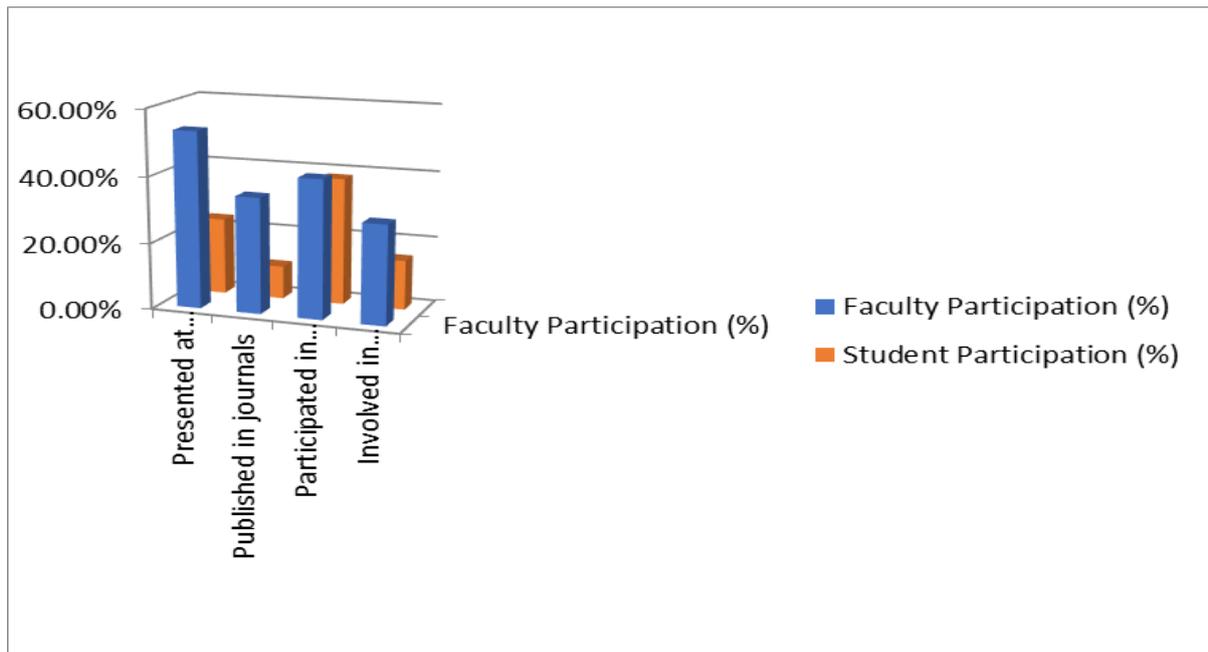
Easiest to the initial statement, this high score signifies that respondents hold research in esteem not just as an afterthought but as essential to educational quality enhancement—magnifying teaching activity, results of learning, and institution reputation.

4. Institutions support faculty and student research activity." (Mean = 3.20; Neutral)

Near-the-middle mean is a measure of ambivalence: the respondents are neither agreeing nor disagreeing that their institutions actually support research. Lack of effective or non-existent institutional policies and research incentives to engage are substantiated by this.

5. "Research contributes to industry innovations and practical solutions." (Mean = 4.38; Agree)

With very high agreement, the respondents agree that research studies by scholars provide the hospitality and tourism sector with real worth—mapping newer service ideas, operation effectiveness, and strategic options.

3. Engagement in Research Activities

Activity	Faculty Participation (%)	Student Participation (%)
Presented at academic conferences	53.3%	23.3%
Published in journals	35.0%	10.0%
Participated in research methodology workshops	41.7%	38.3%
Involved in collaborative research projects	30.0%	15.0%

Interpretation of Research Engagement Activities

1. Delivered at Academic Conferences

✓ Participation of Faculty: 53.3%
✓ Participation of Students: 23.3%

More than half of the faculty have presented at academic conferences, which is a moderate level of scholarly dissemination. Student participation, in contrast, is comparatively less, which shows minimal exposure or scope for student presentation of work to the public. This difference shows that there is a requirement for institutions to motivate and mentor students to participate more in academic platforms.

2. Published in Journals

✓ Faculty Participation: 35.0%
✓ Student Participation: 10.0%

It is merely a third of the professors and a minority of the students who had been published in research journals. This indicates that research publishing remains comparatively underdeveloped, particularly among students. The low rate could be attributed to minimal training in publications, composition, or institutional incentives. Faculty mentoring programs could assist in enhancing the publishing rate among the students.

3. Participated in Research Methodology Workshops

✓ Faculty Participation: 41.7%
✓ Student Participation: 38.3%

Student and faculty attendance for research methodology workshops is fairly balanced and moderate. It reflects increasing enthusiasm for the learning of research skills, although it is still far from becoming universal. More systematic and easy-to-reach training programs would help greatly to enhance participation as well as research competency in both groups.

4. Took Part in Collaborative Research Projects

✓ Faculty Participation: 30.0%
✓ Student Participation: 15.0%

Staff has low levels of participation in collaborative research work, and student participation is lower. This indicates poor institutional or inter-institutional collaborative research mechanisms. Facilitating joint research among students and academics, and among institutions, would help in supporting a higher research culture.

As compared to the students, the teachers are relatively more engaged in research work. Overall participation, however, is low, particularly in

publishing and collaborations. This clearly indicates a necessity for institutional support, counseling, training, and incentives towards promoting research participation at all levels of Indian hospitality and tourism academics.

4. Major Barriers to Research Participation

Respondents were asked to rate common barriers on a scale from 1 (*Not a Barrier*) to 5 (*Major Barrier*). The mean scores and rankings are presented below:

Barrier	Mean Score	Rank
Lack of research funding	4.45	1
Limited access to academic journals	4.20	2
Lack of training in research methods	4.05	3
Time constraints	3.90	4
Weak institutional support	3.75	5
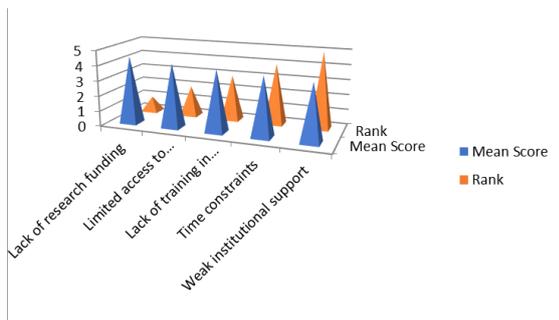
Interpretation of Research Barriers

1. Lack of Research Funds (Mean = 4.45; Rank 1)

The biggest constraint listed is a shortage of money for research. The very high mean score of 4.45 indicates that both students and faculty view the lack of funding as the biggest constraint to beginning or resuming scholarly work. It indicates that the biggest need is for more research grants, travel awards, and incentive funding at the institutional and government levels.

2. Access to Good-Quality, Peer-Reviewed Academic Journals is Poor (Mean = 4.20; Rank 2)

They all emphatically concur that access to good-quality, peer-reviewed academic journals is poor. It
5. Correlation Analysis

affects literature reviews, accuracy of citations, and quality of research as a whole. Once more, it could be the exorbitant subscription fee or poorly developed digital libraries in most institutions. Quality upgradation into online databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, or UGC-CARE will directly enhance research capabilities.

3. Insufficiency of Training in Research Techniques (Mean = 4.05; Rank 3)

The majority of respondents indicated that they lacked proper training in research writing, analysis, and design. This is a reflection of the skills deficit, largely among students and junior academics. The deficit can be addressed through frequent training workshops, research boot camps, and mentorship schemes, which can improve research quality and confidence.

4. Time Constraints (Mean = 3.90; Rank 4)

Time constraints—because of large teaching loads or administrative responsibilities—also deter research participation. Although not the highest, the fairly high mean indicates that absent special research sessions or changes in teaching loads, faculty will tend to continue downplaying research activities.

5. Inadequate Institutional Support (Mean = 3.75; Rank 5)

Although it is the last barrier on the list, weak institutional support is still a powerful barrier. This may be in the form of no incentives at all, little or no research culture, or inappropriate infrastructure. Renovating research offices, providing rewards and status, and incorporating research into institutional agendas can facilitate the creation of a more supportive environment. The results indicate that structural and resource-related challenges—funds and scholarly literature access being the strongest—are the most critical facing hospitality and tourism researchers in India. For such types of obstacles, the need is policy-level intervention along with better infrastructure at the institutional level, clubbed with a dynamic research climate through institution-level capacity-building programs.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between key variables.

Variables Compared	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Institutional support vs Faculty research participation	0.68	0.001
Access to journals vs Research publication frequency	0.52	0.012
Research training vs Student research engagement	0.60	0.004

Correlation Coefficient (r)
- Institutional support vs Faculty research participation
- Access to journals vs Research publication frequency
- Research training vs Student research engagement
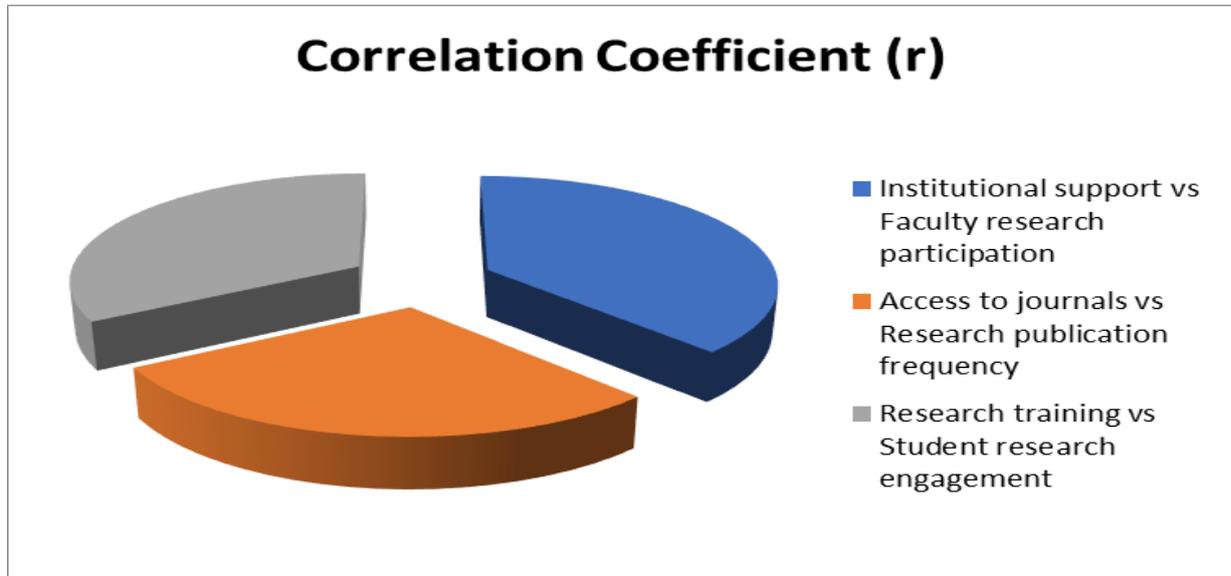
1. Research and Institutional Support Faculty Engagement

✓ P-value (Significance): 0.001
✓ Correlation Coefficient (r): 0.68

There exists an extremely robust positive association between research participation by the faculty and institutional support, and it is extremely statistically significant (p < 0.01). It signifies that when institutional support is high, for instance, through funding, incentives, or infrastructure, research participation by the faculty is significantly high. Institutional support leads to teaching staff engaging more intensively in scholarly activity.

2. Journal Accessibility vs. Research Publication Frequency

✓ Correlation Coefficient (r): 0.52
✓ Significance (p-value): 0.012

Moderate positive statistical correlation (p < 0.05) exists between publishing frequency and access to scholarly journals. This means higher access to academic literature leads to more frequent publishing due to enhanced quality of literature review, sensitivity to existing trends, and citation strength. Lousy access will discourage or hinder faculty and student publication.

3. Research Training vs. Student Research Engagement

✓ Correlation Coefficient (r): 0.60
✓ Significance (p-value): 0.004

A strong and significant association exists between research training and research student involvement (p < 0.01). This means that well-trained research students take part in research activities such as writing papers, presenting, or conducting projects. Spending on training clearly enhances student readiness and interest.

All three are statistically significant and positive, and they indicate that structural support systems such as institutional support, access to scholastic resources, and development of research skills are significant in fostering scholarly activity and performance among hospitality and tourism students and faculty members in India.

6. DISCUSSION

The study recognizes the importance of work done by researcher's and scholars to maintain the quality and volume of tourism and hospitality learning in India. Postgraduate students and teachers strongly indicate through the findings that research has been viewed as core by them for research development, course planning, and industry concentration.

1. Positive Attitude toward Research

The large mean scores for items like "Research is crucial for academic growth" (Mean = 4.65) and "Research is necessary for enhancing the quality of education" (Mean = 4.55) signify a huge consensus about research being crucial to academic value. Participants also concurred that academic research leads to innovation in business (Mean = 4.38), showing widespread belief in its functional use.

2. Institutional Support Is Insufficient

Though value for research is greatly cherished by all, a neutral rating only can be given for institutional support (Mean = 3.20). This is a gap between idealism at the faculty level and institutional behaviour. Lack of funds, paucity of access to journals, and lack of formal rewards to researchers may be explanations to fill the gap.

3. Faculty Drive Research Activities

Facts show a massive divide in research activity between students and staff:

- ✓ This is 53.3% of staff who have delivered conference papers versus only 23.3% of students.
- ✓ The staffs are more likely to be writing academic journal articles and engaging in team-working projects.

This can be seen as an indicator that students require more provision, encouragement, and support for engaging in academic research.

4. Barriers to Research Output

The research recognizes various barriers such as

- ✓ Lack of research funds (Mean = 4.45)
- ✓ Restricted access to academic journals (Mean = 4.20)
- ✓ Inadequate training in research methods (Mean = 4.05)

The entire above are consistent with previous research (e.g., Sharma & Raj, 2021; Thomas, 2019), which reports systemic problems within Indian higher education requiring immediate policy and administrative action.

5. Institutional Support Affects Participation

- ✓ Correlation analysis reveals statistically significant correlations between
- ✓ Institutional support and faculty research engagement (r = 0.68, p = 0.001)
- ✓ Availability of publishing frequency and journals (r = 0.52, p = 0.012)
- ✓ Research training and student involvement (r = 0.60, p = 0.004)

All these authenticate that securing access to training and resources is a significant issue in research productivity, again confirming that investment in academic infrastructure is imperative.

6. Regional Representation and Balance

Demographically, the numbers also show a relatively balanced regional split, with all of India's four regions (North, South, East, and west) being represented. This suggests that the outcomes are representative at a national level and point towards the fact that the problem isn't region-specific but systemic in nature.

Summary of Key Insights:

- ➢ Appreciation for research but lacking in support systems.
- ➢ More research-active staff than students.
- ➢ Structural hindrances need to be overcome by institutional change.
- ➢ The key to heightened research culture is in distributing resources, training, and incentives.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create Specialized Research Cells

- ✓ Create specialized research cells for Indian institutions' hospitality and tourism departments.
- ✓ These cells would focus on applied research, industry interface, and faculty-student capacity building.

2. Compulsory Research in Curriculum

✓ Make research methodology, academic writing, and project-based learning compulsory components of undergraduate and postgraduate hospitality education.
✓ Make research output (papers, case studies, dissertations) a compulsory component of graduation.

3. Provide Research Grants and Funding Opportunities

✓ Regulatory bodies and institutions like AICTE, UGC, and ICSSR need to provide seed money and travel grants for research proposals, conference visits, and publication.

4. Boost Faculty Development Programs (FDPs)

✓ Regular FDPs need to be conducted on research methodology, data analysis, SPSS, qualitative instruments, and publishing in peer-reviewed journals.
✓ Faculty-industry immersion programs need to be encouraged to build practically applicable research areas relevant to the industry.

5. Industry–Academia Collaboration needs to be encouraged. Encourage collaborative research programs, sponsored fellowships, and live industry problem-solving between tour operators, hotels, policy makers, and academic institutions.

✓ Establish MOUs with industry associations like FHRAI, IATO, and tourist boards of different states.

6. Enhance Access to Research Material

✓ Simplify national digital library membership, such as INFLIBNET and Shodhganga, and subscription to high-priority journals and databases (such as Scopus, JSTOR, and Emerald).
✓ Encourage open-access publishing and institutional repositories.

7. Uncover and Reward Excellence in Research

✓ Include reward programs such as awards, promotions, publication incentives, and research scholarships to motivate scholars.

✓ Recognize student research at college-level conferences and journals.

8. Foster Interdisciplinary Research

✓ Encourage interdepartmental collaboration among management, environment, IT, and public health departments to research diversified subjects in sustainable tourism, digital hospitality, wellness tourism, etc

9. Create a National Research Index for Hospitality and Tourism

✓ There should be an organized Hospitality & Tourism Research Index to record Indian research output, themes, gaps, and impact.
✓ This database can guide future researchers and policymakers.

10. Foster Global Research Partnerships

✓ Connect with international universities and tourism think tanks for knowledge exchange, dual-degree research, and global benchmarking.
✓ Co-author and participate in UNWTO and ASEAN-led research networks.

8. CONCLUSION

The research keeps us mindful of the fact that research is at the heart of hospitality and tourism education innovation as well as Indian excellence. In a high-growth business sector with global competitiveness and evolving consumer aspirations, research establishes the pillars of curriculum innovation, policy sensitivity, and industry renewal.

Findings clearly identify that students and teachers alike both acknowledge research as vital to improving the quality of teaching, guiding practice, and facilitating innovation.

However, obstacles in terms of lack of funding, poor institutional support, poor training, and limited availability of journals undermine the progress. Statistical correlation in the research guarantees that intensive institutional support, availability of scholarly material, and training drive research activity significantly. This necessitates the imperative need for systemic change at the policy and institutional levels.

To continue being effective, Indian tourism and hospitality organizations must shift away from perceiving research as an add-on activity. They must integrate it as a strategic core function—financing it with dedicated infrastructure, collaborative platforms, and incentive-linked performance.

Finally, research assistance in academia is not an intellectual exercise in itself—it is a strategic necessity that will prepare tomorrow's professionals with the mindsets, problem-solving, and analytical thinking to articulate India's tourism and hospitality sector towards sustainable growth, international linking, and academic excellence.

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