



# Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang Social Science Lecturers' Involvement in Research

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## ABSTRACT

*This study was undertaken to identify the factors that contribute to the low involvement in research among lecturers in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pahang. The factors that were investigated in this study were: time, resources, knowledge and interest. The sample size of the study is 75 lecturers from a total of 150 social sciences lecturers at UiTM Pahang. The data were collected through questionnaire distribution and were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result shows that fund was the highest factor that contributed to low involvement in research, while resources was the lowest contributing factor to low involvement in research among UiTM Pahang social sciences lecturers. The findings also show that funding was the main factor for low involvement in research for Business Management, Office Management & Technology, Centre for Islamic Thought & Understanding and Accountancy lecturers. However, lecturers from the Academy of Language Studies agreed that lack of interest was the main factors for their low involvement.*

**Keywords:** *research, social science, time, resource, knowledge, interest*

## Introduction

University is the centre of knowledge creation, where the lecturers are actively seeking answers to every question, problem or situation relating to individual, group, organizations, nation or even state. It was stated by Mats & Ulf (2000) that since the late 19th century, and especially since World War II, university research has been regulated by a norms system emphasizing disciplinary knowledge production. This is also supported by Muhammad & Azhar (2011) who said that research is vital and a necessary part of modern university education.

Research is part of the work done by lecturers in universities along with teaching and learning. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is well known as a 'Teaching University', (Nik & Ainul, 2005) where the focus is on teaching and learning. However, changes are happening as faculty members are expected to focus not only on teaching but also research. It is in line with the evolution of Universiti Teknologi MARA, where research has become one of the most important assets that need to be improved and developed. In order to emphasize the importance of the research element to UiTM, the university has included in its mission statement the need to enhance the knowledge and expertise of Bumiputeras in all fields of study through research work. In order to realize this, the Research Management Institution (RMI) was developed as an institution within UiTM that initiates new research and innovation activities.

In line with the objective of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to become a Research University (RU) in the future, we conducted this research to study on the factors that contribute to the low involvement in research writing among lecturers in UiTM Pahang. In a preliminary finding, it was discovered that the social science faculties were less involved in research compared to the science and technology faculties. (Refer to figure 1).

YEAR	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY		SOCIAL SCIENCE	
	RESEARCH GRANT	w/out RESEARCH GRANT	RESEARCH GRANT	w/out RESEARCH GRANT
2007	6	7	0	9
2008	13	6	12	7
2009	2	3	4	5
2010	12	-	7	-
2011	37	-	21	-

**Figure 1:** Statistics on research conducted in UiTM Pahang (Source: IRES)

The objective of this study is to identify which factors contributed to the low involvement in research among social sciences lecturers in UiTM Pahang. In this study, five factors were examined, namely: a) *time*, b) *resource*, c) *fund*, d) *interest* and e) *knowledge*. The results from this study will help the university to take necessary action to encourage social science lecturers to be actively involved in research.

## Research in Universities

Ariffin (2006) explained that research is a survey or controlled observation that is done in a systematically, structured, scientific, critical way and involves data collection for a problem with specific objectives to find answers or solutions. Adanan, Mohd, Mohamad & Zainudin (2009) revealed that higher education institution through Higher Education Ministry underlined the new policy that 70% of all lecturers needed to have Phd. qualification before the year 2020. It is an effort and plan to put local universities on the world map. Iqbal and Mahmood (2011) explained the duties of university lecturers are teaching, research and providing services. In order to become a prestigious university and highly recognized, research takes precedence. Besides, research is also important because new knowledge is derived from this activity.

The function of universities is also to make sure every research will produce new competitive advantage, develop new product, creating new process and discover new knowledge that can be used and can influence the economic sector of a nation (Morshidi & Ibrahim, 2008). It should serve idea creators for the development of the nation (Hussain, Kamarulafizam & Mohd, 2004).

Mariati (2007) identified some of the characteristics of a scholar which are putting effort towards academic research, identifying the root of problems and sharing the findings of the research with others for improvement. This is supported by Brew (2003) who reported that the characteristics of a scholar is learning through inquiry, problem solving and being involved in free learning through supervising students' thesis and research project.

Through research, the government can improve the ranking of the local higher institutions to be at par with other popular universities in the world such as Harvard University and Yale (Mariati, 2007). It can be seen through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Science & Technology Policy that highlighted the specific objective to produce competent workforce of 60 researchers/engineers/scientists among 10,000 citizens in Malaysia. (Kementerian Sains, Teknologi & Alam Sekitar, 2003)

Besides giving the final report of their research, the researchers are also encouraged to publish their findings. From 1981 until 2002, American researchers had published the most with 4.9 million publications or 37.64%, followed by the United Kingdom with 9.06% and Japan with 8.13%. Malaysia had produced 10,583 publications or 0.08% of the worldwide publications. (Szarina, 2004)

However, there are barriers that limit lecturers to be actively involved in research activities (Lucas and Tuner, 2007) such as weighty teaching loads and close surveillance by their senior colleagues (Baron, 2000), own high expectation (Bellas and Toutkoushian, 1999), and may have restricted access to resources (Bazeley, 2003). Muhammad & Azhar (2011) also supported this by identifying that extra teaching load, performance of administrative duties along with academic duties, lack of funds, nonexistence of research leave, negative attitude of the faculty towards research, lack of research skills, non availability of latest books, absence of professional journals, less number of university own journals, are the major causes of low productivity and reduced the research productivity of university faculty members.

## Methodology

The population of this study consists of Social Science lecturers in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pahang. There are five social science faculties in UiTM Pahang which are Business Management, Office Management & Technology, Accountancy, Centre for Islamic Thought and Understanding; and Academy of Language Studies. Population of the study comprised the 150 social sciences faculty members working at UiTM Pahang on permanent and contract basis. According to Kreycie and Morgan in Gray and Airasian (2003), the ratio of 20000 respondents is 377 respondents (20000:377). Thus, the ratio of 150 respondents is represented by 30 respondents (150:30).

A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted using a structured self-administered questionnaire designed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, which is section A for demographic, section B for number of researches produced by the researchers and section C for the factors that will be investigated in this study such as time, resources, knowledge, interest and funds. Section A and B were designed in closed ended structure, while Section C consisted of four-point Likert Scale items which require the respondents to rate each statement as 1 - 'Strongly Disagree' to 4 - 'Strongly Agree'. The positive and negative statements were mixed. However, the negative statements were reversed into positive statements during the data entry process.

The questionnaires were distributed to 150 respondents and 75 questionnaires were returned which satisfactorily exceeded the minimum number of samples of 30 respondents.

## Findings

**Table 1:** Mean Value of Factors That Contribute to the Low Involvement of Research Publication

Factors	Mean
Time	2.92
Resources	2.48
Knowledge	2.50
Interest	2.92
Funds	3.04

Table 1 illustrates that the mean score of Funds; 3.04 make it the main factor that contributes to low involvement in research publication among UiTM Pahang Social Science lecturers'. It means that the lecturers were reluctant to produce research due to this cause. They felt that the procedures involved in securing funds were too complicated. The second and third factors that led to the low involvement in research publication were interest and time, followed by knowledge at 2.92 and 2.50 respectively. The lowest mean score was the factor of resource in producing research and it shows that UiTM Pahang had provides enough resources to support its lecturers in doing research.

**Table 2:** Mean Value of Factors That Contribute to the Low Involvement of Research Publication for each Faculty

Faculty / Factors	BM	OM	CITU	ACC	APB
Time	2.27	2.26	2.26	2.12	2.53
Resources	2.52	2.35	2.74	2.46	2.23
Knowledge	2.56	2.33	2.60	2.59	2.47
Interest	3.09	2.75	2.96	2.88	<b>2.98</b>
Funds	<b>3.22</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>3.12</b>	2.80

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents from the namely Social Science Faculties; which consist of Business Management (BM), Office Management & Technology (OM), Centre for Islamic Thought & Understanding (CITU) and Accountancy (ACC) indicated that fund was the main factor that contributed to low research publication in UiTM Pahang. However, the Academy of Language Studies lecturers agreed that interest was the main factor for their low involvement in research publication. In finding, the reason of APB's low interest in research publication was because they receive less support from other APB colleagues to do research.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the university lecturers should be granted funds to encourage them to produce research as the university is required to provide funds to its faculty members to conduct research (Iqbal, 2011). Besides that, the procedures involving research grants should be revised to make it easier for the researchers to apply. Complicated procedures will demotivate future researchers from being actively involved in research writing. The criteria in granting research funds should be made clear to avoid rejection by the Research Management Institute (RMI). The respondents agreed that they had interest in research writing and not only teaching. However, the interest had been affected by tight procedures on research application and had forced them to use their own funds. Teaching and research are interlinked so faculty members are required to develop their interest to conduct research studies. University academicians are required to adopt positive attitude regarding research (Iqbal; 2011). UiTM Pahang as whole needs to develop research as a culture by giving encouragement to faculty members. The senior lecturers should encourage and guide new lecturers to join them in their research project. Top management also needs to reduce the teaching workload of lecturers. It can help lecturers to manage their time effectively. Thus, the faculty members can balance both tasks of teaching and doing research effectively.

## Conclusion

Research is an important part of their duties that needs to be paid close attention to by social science lecturers. It is an individual carrier development in academic field and also increase the image of the faculty itself. Improving the current situation by tackling the roots of the problems can also assist in creating new environment within the university that supports research activities. More training and research promotion activities need to be structured to create awareness, interest, and positive competition among the lecturers. Seniors lecturers also need to take part in the university mission in guiding new lecturers not only in teaching but also in research work.

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