

**Motivation and Perceptions of Research and Publication  
in Higher Education Faculty: A Phenomenological Study**

*Billie Myers, Erik Braun, Keicia Hawkins, Patrice Moulton,  
Michael Moulton, Terrie Poehl, and Michelle Morris  
Northwestern State University*

**Abstract**

Faculty members at a Carnegie-ranked Master's University of higher education want to be productive and engage in scholarly endeavors. In the process of their scholarly pursuits, the authors found a number of institutional barriers and supports for conducting research along with motivators for doing research. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore experiences of faculty conducting research at a Master's University of higher education. More specifically, the investigative pursuits aimed to identify benefits, barriers, and supports for conducting research as well as motivational factors and expectations for engaging in research. This study includes data from eight interviewed participants at a rural university who were tenured or tenure-track faculty members. The results revealed numerous sub-categories within the themes of supports, barriers, motivation factors, and expectations. These findings provide implications for supporting the research activities of faculty members at Carnegie-ranked Master's Colleges and Universities.

*Keywords:* faculty research, collaboration, motivation, support, barriers

**Introduction**

Faculty members at a Carnegie-ranked Master's University want to be productive and engage in scholarly endeavors. Universities across the globe have faculty members who are involved in the publication of scholarly research, in spite of individuals who teach in higher education coming from numerous disciplines (Denial & Hoppe, 2012). Each discipline theoretically has been perceived as research-focused to some extent. In truth, however, virtually all or most disciplines in higher education require the inclusion of research as an important aspect of their discipline and as a requirement for tenure and promotion. In spite of this, perceptions of

various disciplines' research focus likely vary; moreover, individuals within their own discipline likely have different overall perceptions of research. For instance, within any given discipline, the perception may be that some subspecialties do research; other subspecialties are practitioners who do not do research. In truth though, evidence-based practice and learning are highly regarded and determine best practices. Consequently, the base of our applications of knowledge entails a sound understanding of research and an expectation within institutions of higher education to make discoveries and gain new knowledge. Therefore, the primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the motivation and perceptions of research and publication in higher education among faculty in a rural, Carnegie-ranked Master's University.

### **Necessity of Research in Higher Education**

Dichotomous views about doing research not only seem evident within disciplines, but also across universities, depending on whether universities identify as research-oriented or teacher-oriented based on the Carnegie system. This wider seemingly dichotomous view may likely shape academics in terms of goals, expectations, motivations, and sense of self-efficacy, which in turn may influence research performance. In spite of differences across universities in terms of how much focus is on research and teaching, nearly all universities emphasize the importance of seeking new knowledge (Denial & Hoppe, 2012), and an avenue for gaining new knowledge has been to engage in original research. In the midst of seeking new knowledge by doing scholarly research to a lesser or greater extent, faculty fulfill multiple roles that fit within Boyer's model of scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application, and scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1996). The roles of faculty include not only the role of teacher, but also the role of researcher, supervisor, clinician, and/or learner.

### **The Success of Research in Higher Education**

According to Denial and Hoppe (2012), lack of research creates the risk of stagnation within the discipline. Therefore, it seems apparent that without research, practitioners are left relying on knowledge already gained and theories already formulated that may or may not be the best and most innovative theories as changes in globalization, technology, ways of living, and cultures have occurred. Denial and Hoppe (2012) explored faculty members' perceptions of their institutions' expectations of scholarships, perceptions of their own scholarship, and barriers and supports of scholarship. Moreover, they compared participants' own perceptions to their institutions' values of scholarship. Their results showed that the majority of faculty members

across universities were required to produce scholarly work, especially to publish original research in peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, they found the majority of faculty members believed it was important to conduct research and to publish. They reported that they worked at least four hours per week doing scholarly work, and they believed that work was valued by their institution. In line with Albert Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, they thus appeared to possess high self-efficacy with positive outcome expectations within a supportive environment for doing research as they actively engaged in doing research.

### **Barriers of Research in Higher Education**

While much support has been available for engaging in research in institutions of higher education, Stupnisky, Hall, Daniels, and Mensah (2017) noted pre-tenure or junior faculty often report social and environmental factors that may hinder their success. Stupnisky, Weaver-Hightower, and Kartoshkina (2015) interviewed faculty members in their first to third year who reported significant difficulty in finding a balance between teaching, research, and service responsibilities. Austin (2010) also found early career faculty and tenured faculty experienced similar barriers. Additional barriers to research were clinical schedules, class or lab teaching schedule, time allotted to do research, financial support for doing research, and lack of mentorship during the research process (Denial & Hoppe, 2012).

Among the barriers to conducting interdisciplinary research discussed were lack of adequate incentives, such as funding (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). Funding limitations along with the perception that the social context is not conducive for doing interdisciplinary research in that manner may discourage faculty (Lawrence, 2011). Moreover, time constraints were apparent along with defensiveness about and intolerance for doing interdisciplinary research (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). Other perceived barriers were differences in disciplinary traditions, including decisions about methods, patenting, authorship, and so forth (Siedlok & Hibbert). Colleges of Education mostly emphasized teaching; however, research reportedly was also rewarded (Kataeva & DeYoung, 2018). The current study examines the perceptions of faculty members in a College of Education where teaching and preparing undergraduate and master's level graduate students for work as practitioners is most important. Because the essence of their academic work is teaching, research expectations are not always clear (Stupnisky et al., 2017). These findings when combined appear to suggest that individuals' beliefs about their abilities to do research and to work

collaboratively with others across disciplines influence their pursuits of conducting research and doing interdisciplinary research.

### ***Overcoming Research Barriers***

One strategy for overcoming barriers to conducting research may be writers' retreats. According to Murray and Cunningham (2011), faculty at primarily teaching-focused institutions are not as likely to do research; however, academics, in most institutions are expected to write for publication and meet publication targets in research assessments. In their study, Murray and Cunningham (2011) studied writers' retreats, an intervention designed to address the issue of publication by providing academics with an opportunity to engage simultaneously in research assessment and writing projects that aligned institutional targets with individual goals. The writers' retreat provided time and space for faculty to focus and engage in research and writing. Faculty participants were able to spend a dedicated amount of time on research and writing specifically for a short period of time, for example, one weekend per month. Their study included 23 participants in the early stage of their career who were in primarily teaching-only institutions of higher education. The findings demonstrated the advantages of collegiality, peer discussion, and writing time. It allowed writers to articulate and develop their writing aspirations, align their writing goals with research assessment, and create research-oriented relationships. For those who think of writing as a solitary act, a retreat may seem counter-intuitive, yet the benefits from what Gardner (2008) called a *cohort model* was effective in researcher development (Murray & Cunningham, 2011). Study participants reported the writing retreat not only helped them to develop writing habits and rediscover their roles as academic writers, but also helped them to change their dispositions toward and motivation for writing for publication.

### **Motivation to Engage in Research**

Motivational factors are also apparent when conducting interdisciplinary research. These factors include social relations, compatibility with colleagues, intellectual stimulation, and personal development (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). There is both a drive for novelty and a push of frustration that drive interdisciplinary research. Moreover, interdisciplinary teams appear to have creative potential (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). Nguyen, Klopfer, and Smith (2016), conducted an international study and concluded engagement in research as an effective means to increase a university's profile. In their study, they found collaboration, policy settings, and institutional practices motivated academics to engage in research. Findings further revealed that assisting

leaders to understand the research motivations of academics helps in the creation of the policy for research across the university that supports the quantity and quality of research produced.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

#### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura's social cognitive theory (2001) provides the theoretical framework for this study of faculty members' perceptions of research productivity. Social Cognitive Theory was developed to account for aspects of cognition that influence the environment and are influenced by the environment. As discussed below, Albert Bandura included in his theory concepts such as motivation and agency, reciprocal determinism, forethought, metacognition, and self-efficacy. These concepts provide an appropriate framework to inform an understanding of how faculty perceive and engage in scholarship and research in higher education.

#### **Motivation**

Motivation refers to "processes that instigate and sustain goal-oriented activities" (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020, p.5). Motivational processes include personal/internal influences that lead to productivity and outcomes such as choice, effort, persistence, and achievement. Faculty members must establish clear goals to guide their activities for each year. Motivation has been a prominent feature of social cognitive theory from the early modeling research to the current conception involving agency (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) report a central premise of Bandura's theory is that individuals strive for a sense of agency, or the belief that they can exert a large degree of influence over important events in their lives. According to Albert Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, humans are active agents who possess the ability to shape their environment; while their environment also shapes them. Humans thus not only engage in behavior elicited or evoked by stimuli in the environment, they also possess cognition. Humans possess the ability to learn new behaviors by observing others. They have internal thoughts, such as goals and expectations, that play a role in behavior as they interact with the environment. From those interaction, they develop a sense of self-efficacy. Consequently, while similar to traditional behaviorism in its recognition of the role of the environment; it emerged from behaviorism, but instead of considering humans as passive recipients of their experiences, social cognitive theory considers human as active agents of change.

#### ***Reciprocal Determinism***

Reciprocal determinism refers to interaction between the person, behavior, and the environment (Bandura, 2001). Our actions, goals, and expectations interact with the environment to produce behavior (Bandura, 2001). Based on the concept of reciprocal determination, one may conclude that faculty members thus conduct research and have research goals and expectations that interact with the larger social context of the university along with other even larger social contexts, such as government funding agencies.

### ***Forethought***

Cognition mediates the relationship between learning and the environment (Bandura, 2001). Humans create events by intentionally performing actions. Humans are not merely passive recipients of ‘whatever the environment throws at them’. Instead, they possess forethought. They want to produce desired outcomes. Consequently, they act in ways that they think will produce the desired outcomes. Based on Bandura’s explanations of forethought, one can conclude, faculty members thus are capable of anticipating barriers and supports, and they can act and plan accordingly.

### ***Metacognition***

Humans possess a language that is systematic, organized, and symbolic; therefore, they have the capacity to organize their thoughts and think about their thinking. In relation to research, faculty members not only have the capacity to think about producing scholarly research, but they also about the capacity to think about how they are thinking about the process of doing scholarly work. This relates to what Schraw and Moshman (1995) noted about metacognition. They stated that metacognition includes knowledge about cognition as well as how individuals use that knowledge to regulate their own cognition. Faculty members thus are capable of metacognition. Faculty members thus are capable of not only thinking about their research, but they also can think about the process of research.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Humans also possess self-efficacy. In other words, they can believe they have the ability to produce desired outcomes. They possess the ability to believe they have some degree of control over their environment (Bandura, 2001). Faculty members thus have the ability to believe that they have the ability to produce original research that will provide new knowledge and contribute to the scientific and educational community. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy has been applied across all areas of education. Researchers in university settings examined academic self-efficacy,

an estimate of confidence in one's ability to perform various tasks classified as research, service, and teaching (Landino & Owen, 1988). Researchers found teaching self-efficacy and perceived autonomy-support were related to engagement (Fong, et al., 2019). Additional contextual factors such as university climate and peer collegiality also influenced self-efficacy (Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). Jian and colleagues (2019) also found that self-efficacy beliefs predicted intrinsic and extrinsic research motivation, and mastery goal-orientation mediated the relationship between self-efficacy and research motivation. In addition, a strong positive relationship existed between doctoral research training and faculty members' research interest and research self-efficacy (Wester et al., 2019). Hence, self-efficacy is believed to impact faculty research and publication productivity to some degree.

### **Method**

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the literature on research and publishing from the perspective of faculty members at a rural, Carnegie-ranked Master's University. More specifically, we explored the benefits of research and publishing. We also explored barriers and supports for conducting research as well as motivational factors and expectations for engaging in research. We were interested in the following research questions:

1. What are faculty perceptions of the overall benefits of research and publishing?
2. What are the challenges to motivation in research for higher education faculty at a rural, Carnegie-ranked Master's University?
3. What factors increase, decrease, or maintain motivation for faculty?
4. What supports would increase motivation to continue research and publishing?
5. Moreover, what happens to motivation across the research process or time span in academia?

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to examine motivation and perceptions of research and publication in higher education faculty at a rural, Carnegie-ranked Master's University. A phenomenological approach allowed researchers to describe the meaning of lived experiences of individuals (Hall, Chai, & Albrecht, 2016), in this case the experience of tenured and tenure-track faculty representing each department within the College of Education.

### **Participants**

The researchers interviewed eight university faculty members, four males and four females, who are employed within a College of Education in the southeastern United States. The

participants were solicited via email through their university email accounts. The email list used for sampling was comprised of approximately 50 faculty members who were in the process of obtaining tenure or have obtained tenure in the College of Education. The researchers received informed consent from 13 participants. Eight participants were randomly selected to ensure willingness to participate and schedule an interview time. Participants included in the research investigation held the following ranks: one full professor, three associate professors, and four assistant professors. Seven held doctoral degrees and one held a master's degree. The faculty participants averaged 20.5 years of teaching. Each of the faculty participants were given a \$5 gift card at the conclusion of their interview. Table 1 provides complete demographic information on each of the eight participants. Pseudonyms were used in the study to preserve the anonymity of participants.

**Table 1*****Demographic Information of Participants***

Participant Pseudonyms	Self-Ranking	Dept .	Gender	Race	Rank	Degree	Years at Current Institution	Total Years	Total Mo. Contract
John Jones	3	HHP	M	A	Assistant	D	4	4	9
Florence Oliver	3	SOE	F	W	Assistant	D	2	22	9
Warren Caldwell	2	SW	M	W	Associate	M	12	17.5	9
Kay Stuart	3	SW	F	W	Professor	D	13	27	12
Rachel Ferguson	6	SW	F	W	Assistant	D	0.5	21.5	9
Lawrence Hubbard	6	PSY C	M	B	Assistant	D	2	18	9
Rhonda Porter	5	PSY C	F	W	Associate	D	24.5	24.5	12
Jake Woods	3	SOE	M	W	Associate	D	4.5	27.5	9

**Data Collection**

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board the individual interviews of each faculty member were initiated. The interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. During the interview demographic information was collected, the faculty members were asked 11 open-ended questions pertaining to their experience with research, barriers they experienced, motivators, types



of support needed and publication. Then, follow-up clarifying questions were used to facilitate further understanding of their responses.

The interviewer in this study followed a strict process of protocol ensuring that each participant was asked all the same questions in the same order. The semi-structured interview script included the following questions:

1. What has your experience with research and publication been like for you up to this point?
2. Where do you see yourself in the process of research and publication?
3. What do you view as the overall benefit of research and publication?
4. What do you see as the barriers for you to research and publication?
5. How do you perceive the clarity of the expectation that you been given?
6. What kinds of things motivate you toward research and publication?
7. What kinds of things stifle your motivation toward research and publication?
8. What keeps you going in your research and publication activity? What keeps you moving forward?
9. How has your motivation stayed the same or changed over time and what has contributed it to that?
10. How would you define your success in research and publication? On a scale of 1-10 how well do you think you're doing?
11. What types of support would increase your productivity in research and publication?

All interviews were audio-recorded using two devices and transcribed verbatim. A debriefing form was given to the faculty member at the completion of the study. The debriefing form was provided to give participants additional information about the study.

### **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the researchers participated in a systematic process of data analysis that involved: (1) review of interviews by reading and re-reading to gain familiarity with the data, (3) coding of the interviews using the theoretical foundation of motivation within the social cognitive theory. A number was coded at each identifying fragments of relevant information that related to one of the four themes, (4) random coding was completed by other researchers to check inter-observer agreement of at least 80%, (5) chart data into framework matrix, (6) identify statements from each of the four themes that were throughout the interviews. Place and organize the statements in each of the four themes for the purpose of data analysis.

During this process exact quotes were used to clarify and give examples of the responses associated with given themes. The review and selection of these quotes is referred to as an interview autopsy (Brewer, 2001).

An inter-observer agreement (IOA) of 80% or higher was set as the goal for the coding process to ensure confidence in the findings (Groenewald, 2004). Researchers were randomly assigned sections throughout the transcripts and compared their coding to the original coder's data. The average IOA of 92.5% was obtained.

### Results

When analyzing the data, the researchers looked for initial themes based on Bandura's (1997) model which was used as the theoretical foundation. Out of each of these initial themes, subthemes emerged. The four initial themes were: Motivation; Expectation; Success/Support; and Challenges/Barriers. According to Bandura (1997) these function together as a cyclical system. An individual begins with a motivation, which is a reason for why they would pursue a given goal. Next the individual considers their expectations, or the perceived outcome of what might happen if they reach their goal or if they fail. Finally, the individual either succeeds or fails to reach the goal and considers which supportive factors contributed to success and/or which barriers/challenges contributed to their failure. Next the cycle starts all over again with new, reconsidered motivations. For the purposes of analysis, the criteria used for recognizing each of these themes were:

1. **Motivation:** Statements participants made about their reasons for engaging in research were coded within the Motivation theme.
2. **Expectation:** Statements participants made about their feelings about completing projects related to research and publication were coded within the Expectation theme. This included how competent they felt they were and what they thought they would gain from engaging in scholarship or research.
3. **Success/Support:** Any statements participants made about what they believed encouraged them to continue to engage in research and publication or statements about what they believed contributed to success in research and publication were categorized within the Success/Support initial theme.
4. **Challenges/Barriers:** Any statements participants made about what they believed discouraged them from engaging in research and publication or statements about what they

believed acted as barriers to success in research and publication were categorized within the Challenges/Barriers initial theme.

The participants voiced various motivations for doing research and expectations about research along with supports and barriers when conducting research in higher education. These findings appeared to support past research that explored motivators for participating in research as well as the supports and barriers to conducting research in higher education (Denial & Hoppe, 2012; Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). Each of the themes that emerged from this research appeared to be aspects of research that were important in faculty members' experiences. Past research revealed a number of barriers and supports to conducting research in general (Denial & Hoppe, 2012) as well as conducting research within interdisciplinary teams (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014).

### **Motivation**

When exploring the motivation of faculty towards pursuing research, investigators were interested in which factors, either *internal* or *external*, affected productivity behaviors. The *external motivations* (or the professional motivations) included anything related to the job itself such as the need to produce enough publications for tenure. The *internal motivations* (or personal motivations) included anything that was not directly a part of professional expectations. For example, factors related to personal satisfaction and meaning-making fell into this subtheme. Overall, the frequency of responses for *internal motivation* and *external motivation* proved to be important to faculty. Interestingly, the *internal motivation* factors were self-reported slightly higher ( $n = 115$ ) than those of *external motivation* factors ( $n = 103$ ). The highest response frequencies for motivation reported by faculty all fell into the *internal motivation* cluster and included "being noted in their profession" ( $n = 16$ ), collaboration ( $n = 14$ ), and the search for knowledge ( $n = 14$ ). Faculty reported notable specifics in these motivators as:

"When you complete research and publish, you are seen as a visionary, you can share that vision with your junior faculty members, your graduates, and your undergraduate students." (R. Porter, personal communication, February 11, 2020)

"Research can be eye-opening and transformative; it gets at the heart of the message you want to share." (F. Oliver, personal communication, February 11, 2020)

“One of my overall motivators to conduct research is getting to know other faculty members, other disciplines, learn our differences, our strengths, and how we can come together.” (J. Woods, personal communication, February 11, 2020)

The lowest response frequencies for motivation was money ( $n = 1$ ), followed by resources ( $n = 1$ ), and time ( $n = 7$ ).

Each of the themes that emerged from the current investigation of **Motivation** for research in higher education, which were *internal motivation, external motivation, being noted in the profession, collaboration, the search for knowledge* and least commonly *money, resources, and time*, appeared to support past research that found that motivators for participating in interdisciplinary research included social relations, compatibility with colleagues, intellectual stimulation, and personal development (Siedlok & Hibbert, 2014). This past research also tended to highlight internal motivators more than external motivators for conducting research in higher education.

### **Self- Reported Success Rating**

When faculty members were asked to “define their success in research and publication” on a scale of 1-10 it is notable that the highest score reported was a 6 with 75% of the faculty scoring themselves at 3 or below. Faculty shared vulnerabilities to feeling a sense of self efficacy in conducting and completing the research process to include:

“I’m not doing the research I need to do, I feel like I fall down on that part.” (L. Hubbard, personal communication, February 11, 2020)

“To have good research you have to have stats, I was never good at stats.” (W. Caldwell, personal communication, February 10, 2020)

“I wonder, is it lack of motivation, lack of knowledge, feeling under prepared, incompetent?” (K. Stuart, personal communication, February 11, 2020)

This sense of struggle amongst faculty to conduct scholarly research and to publish may resonate with some pre-tenure faculty members who may be feeling the pressures of academia.

### **Expectations**

In the coding category **Expectations**, three subthemes emerged. The primary themes were: *enjoyment, self-efficacy, and development*. *Enjoyment* is a theme in which participants speak to how enthusiastic or stressed they believe their work related to research will be. In *self-efficacy*,

participants discussed the way they view themselves regarding their competency and ability to be successful in research. Finally, in *development*, participants discuss how they expect engaging in research will contribute to their personal and professional development.

### ***Enjoyment***

The subtheme of *enjoyment* contains positive factors (excitement/fun) and negative factors (difficult/stressful). In this subtheme, participants discussed how they felt about research and how research has made them feel. For example, one participant said that research is “way too much fun,” (R. Ferguson, personal communication, February 11, 2020) and others mentioned that they “enjoy” it and even “love” it and that they wish they could do more (positive). Within the positive factors, some discussed their “passion” for research, one participant even described herself as becoming “obsessed” when she gets involved in a research project (F. Oliver, personal communication, February 11, 2020). Within the negative factors, one participant said that years ago she was “scared to death” of research and publication (R. Porter, personal communication, February 11, 2020), while others described research and publication as stressful, difficult, challenging, frustrating and consuming.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

*Self-efficacy*, another subtheme of **Expectations**, also contained positive factors (high self-efficacy) and negative factors (low self-efficacy). In *self-efficacy*, participants spoke to the belief they had in themselves in the context of research competency and productivity. This subtheme could be conceptualized as a qualitative representation of the quantitative score each participant gave him or herself in the self-reported success-rating. *Self-efficacy* in this context refers to participant’s thoughts, feelings, and beliefs related to the expectations they have for themselves in terms of how competent they are as researchers, the expected outcomes of a given project, and how successful they believe they can be in performing research. An example of the positive factors within this subtheme was the statement that “I am capable.” Negative factors were much more prevalent. For example, one participant asked the rhetorical question “Who would want to read anything by this little professor in this small southern university? ... What could I tell the educated community?” (R. Ferguson, personal communication, February 11, 2020). Another participant, when asked about his level of research competence, even said “I stink at it.” (W. Caldwell, personal communication, February 10, 2020).

### ***Development***

The third subtheme within this coding category is *development*. In *development*, participants discussed a desire to better themselves and others through research and the process of research. Two factors emerged: self-development and other-development. Under self-development, participants discussed a desire to learn and push oneself. Some participants described seeing research as an opportunity to learn and grow professionally. One participant noted that he was interested in “growing,” and “gaining more knowledge germane” to research and publication. Under other-development, participants described a desire to better the field, the university, and the students. One participant said that research “drives our practice,” and numerous participants noted the desire to do pragmatic research that could be used to directly improve their students’ learning. Another participant noted that research benefits the university by increasing the attention paid to the university’s name.

### **Support**

In the coding category **Support**, four subthemes emerged: *collaboration*, *supports related to working conditions*, *supports from other people* and *university provided research support*. *Collaboration* was a subtheme in which participants expressed excitement and enthusiasm about working with and helping others. For example, participants believe that collaboration with other colleagues would be a way to conduct more research. *Supports related to working conditions* was a subtheme that emerged as most of the participants discussed heavy advising loads, heavy course loads/teaching schedules, a desire for reduced teaching schedules to allow them to engage in research, and a reduction in the number of recruiting and outside events they were required to participate in each semester. In the subtheme *supports from other people*, participants discussed their feelings about a lack of support from department chairs. Finally, *university provided research support* was the subtheme where funding and financial support for research and travel to present research was consistently expressed by participants.

### ***Collaboration***

The subtheme of *collaboration* includes subthemes focused on the concepts of working together and support. In this subtheme, all participants discussed how they enjoyed a team approach to collaboration as well as having co-researchers and getting help and helping others. Various participants indicated the importance of factors such as accountability, peer support,

mentoring, support, and supportive colleagues. Communication and discussion about research were also reported among participants.

### ***Supports Related to Working Conditions***

*Supports related to working conditions* was a subtheme that included several factors such as the desire for course load reduction, workload reduction and limited advisees. One participant said, “I typically have 90 something advisees. I’m still reaching out to them even though they are not showing up and doing things” (R. Ferguson, personal communication, February 11, 2020). Time was also mentioned by participants. Participants consistently stated they did not have time to conduct research within the workday. One participant discussed endowed professorships, intentional efforts, publications, and sabbaticals as supports related to working conditions. Endowed professorships provided funds to support research and publication fees. The participants also spoke about being able to use endowed professorship funds for travel to present research. Sabbaticals were also mentioned as allowing time away from the classroom and other university responsibilities to focus on research.

### ***Supports from Other People***

Another subtheme *supports from other people* emerged within the theme of **Support**. Within this subtheme, participants spoke of a supportive Department Head or Director and a statistician most often. Tech support was also mentioned. One participant used an interesting comment “network to my future.” This statement was notable because the participant indicated that being able to network with other people could create future opportunities within the university or even the university system. The participant stated, “I could be the co-author and also through that process I can get my network to my future, so that I can be there more and then I can evolve” (J. Jones, personal communication, February 27, 2020). Still another participant indicated the importance of working with better writers when they stated, “I try to associate myself around people who are better writers than I am, and that’s not difficult to do” (J. Wilmington, personal communication, February 19, 2020).

### ***University Provided Research Support***

The final subtheme within **Support** was *university provided research support*. Participants discussed factors such as professional development, presentations, and a research center most often. One participant discussed writing workshops. “You know writing workshops would be interesting” (J. Wilmington, personal communication, February 19, 2020). That same participant

also stated “You know communication and discussion builds a culture, builds expectations, I think. I think that’s a culture-building exercise as much as it is a discrete exercise for your portfolio or whatever serves those purposes” (J. Wilmington, personal communication, February 19, 2020). Hence, this participant expressed a desire for culture building exercise. Other participants discussed available resources and a free database/secondary data.

Participants expressed the need for support through four themes, *collaboration*, *supports related to working conditions*, *supports from other people* and *university provided research support*. Collaboration was most often discussed. It is evident based on the 31 tallies, the highest number, that the ability to collaborate was extremely important to participants who wished to engage in research and publication.

### **Barriers**

The investigation of the **Barriers** theme revealed that faculty members grapple with both an interest in research as well as experiences with barriers to conducting research. Researchers identified four subthemes within the **Barriers** theme, which were *time availability due to professional responsibilities*, *time availability due to personal responsibilities*, *culture of the university*, and *research weaknesses and experiences*. *Time availability due to professional responsibilities* referred to the participants’ contentions that the other aspects of a career as a faculty member limit the amount of time one has to engage in research and publication. In *time availability due to personal responsibilities*, participants discussed the ways in which one’s personal life limited the amount of time they had to engage in research and publication. In the subtheme *culture of the university*, participants discussed barriers related to the university not placing enough value on research to make it worth doing. Finally, in the subtheme *research weaknesses and experiences*, participants discussed how a low self-efficacy, or a perceived low level of competency, discouraged the participant from engaging in research activities.

#### ***Time Availability Due to Professional Responsibilities***

In the grappling of time constraints, which was highly common, professional responsibilities were extensively discussed. Among those responsibilities were factors such as teaching and course load, advising students, helping students, providing community services, participating in committee and other meeting, and providing administrative work. *Time availability due to professional responsibilities* was emphasized repeatedly as a barrier to conducting research, which can be revealed by the following quote:



“For me, it’s time because I mean it may be um difficulty finding resources, but there are so many resources available now, but it still takes time to research the different resources to see” (Florence Oliver, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

### ***Time Availability due to Personal Responsibilities***

Another subtheme was *time availability due to personal responsibilities*. Faculty members commonly discussed their responsibilities outside of work, and most notably, their responsibilities related to their family, as can be demonstrated in the following quote,

“It’s like I just want my kids right now, so if there were times during the day that was not taken from my family, I would do it” (F. Oliver, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

Faculty members also mentioned the effect work load has on them and their additional need to take care of themselves, including their health, their need to not be alone in their research, their need for sleep, and their need for more energy. The effect on self could also be implied by their expressions of fear of failure and rejection, feeling guilty and intimidated, and thinking their work is not good enough.

### ***Culture of the University***

The *culture of the university* was reported as a barrier as the university in the current study has been perceived by many as primarily a teaching institution. One participant stated:

The culture of research because I think that’s what builds the momentum. That’s what builds a I mean once you get to a critical mass of people collaborating, working, and um producing good research um you know I think you will have been successful and I think you’ve created that culture. (J. Wilmington, personal communication, February 19, 2020)

In relation to this theme, it was frequently mentioned that lack of clarity about expectations for research exists. For instance, one individual noted that the expectations are “clear as mud” (W. Caldwell, personal communication, February 10, 2020). Some stressed the need to be enlightened and to have clear expectations about research and publication. Moreover, expectations for research and publication appeared to vary across departments with some departments requiring research and other departments requiring scholarly work.

### ***Research Weaknesses and Experiences***

In the subtheme *research weaknesses and experiences*, faculty members explained how negative self-efficacy translated into being discouraged from engaging in research and publication. Faculty members appeared to like the idea of doing collaborative research as a few of them

discussed their weaknesses in some aspect of research. Included among those weaknesses were factors such as skill in statistics, not wanting to make mistakes in reported unbiased research and in accuracy of reporting result, and needing knowledge about others doing research. One individual discussed the intensity and amount of work involved in doing dissertation and reported feeling scared to go back to that kind of experience again. Less common among the weaknesses was the need for accountability.

Some of the subthemes that emerged from the investigation of the theme of **Barriers**, which were *time constraints due to professional responsibilities*, *time constraints due to personal responsibilities*, *culture of the university*, and *research weaknesses and experiences*. Past research that supports these findings showed primary barriers to be limited availability, time constraints, limited financial support, lack of mentorship, and being in an environment not conducive to conducting research (Denial & Hoppe, 2012; Kataeva & DeYoung, 2018). Kuzhabekova and Ruby (2018) found similar barriers to research and publication including lack of funding, lack of time, poor access to materials and equipment necessary for research, and other findings similar to those in the current study. Time, similar to the responses of participants in the current study, was a barrier that was most often cited in open responses in Kuzhabekova and Ruby's 2018 study. They also found that research productivity increased in environments where there was a publication link to promotion and support structures in place for research and publication. The institution in this study does not have a published policy related to research and publication; however, in the College of Education a support structure that provides time and meeting space has been put in place recently by the newly appointed dean. This type of support may provide opportunities for mentorship and create a culture and an environment conducive to conducting research.

### **Limitations**

The study used a small sample size, which is typical of qualitative study designs. Additionally, all the participants came from a single college within the university. The small number of participants and limited representation from diverse academic disciplines across the university reduces the study's ability to generalize the findings to a broader group of faculty members who conduct research. Therefore, the findings from the current study may be generalizable to faculty in mid-sized Carnegie-ranked Master's University where teaching is emphasized.

Another limitation involved the lack of anonymity of interview participants. While confidentiality was maintained among the research team, the identities of interviewees were known to the researchers. Participants were also recruited from within the same college as the researchers, resulting in researchers interviewing their colleagues. A potential limitation of the study is that participants might have withheld information related to their research experiences or provided biased answers based on what they thought the researchers were expecting to hear. To minimize this limitation, researchers tried to interview participants who they did know well.

A final limitation involved the quality of audio recordings of the interviews. Transcribers reported some challenges understanding some words and phrases spoken by the research participants. Transcribers addressed this limitation by using a software program to automatically transcribe the audio recordings. They cross-checked what they heard on the audio recordings with the software transcriptions.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The study included both 12-month, administrative faculty and 9-month, non-administrative faculty. It is possible that research expectations and time limitation vary for 12-month, administrative faculty. Future research could explore possible variations in the research experiences of the two groups. Findings from such a study might be useful in guiding promotion committees in understanding research expectations of each group and if they should be evaluated by the same or different criteria when considering promotions.

Future research should continue to explore the research experiences of faculty in various disciplines and across diverse higher education institutions. The current study captured a picture of faculty research experiences in one college within a mid-sized university, which considers itself to be primarily a teaching institution. It is likely that interview responses would vary greatly based on research in different disciplines and universities across America or throughout the world.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to describe research and publication from the perspective of faculty members in a rural Carnegie-ranked Master's University. The investigation sought to identify benefits, barriers, and supports for conducting research. The study also explored motivational factors and expectations for engaging in research. Eight participants, who were tenured or tenure-track faculty members, were interviewed from a rural university. Researchers

were asked about the overall benefits of research and publishing, challenges to motivation, and supports that would increase motivation to continue research and publishing.

The results revealed multiple sub-categories within the themes of supports, barriers, motivation factors, and expectations. Future research efforts could examine the sub-categories with the goal to support tenured or tenure-track faculty members in their research and publishing efforts. In addition to qualitative examinations of research experiences, future quantitative studies could compare the research expectations of 9-month versus 12-month faculty members or include more research participants to improve the generalizability of the findings. Overall, the findings from the current study provide research implications into the benefits of exploring the research experiences of faculty members in higher education.

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### **Author Biographies**

**Dr. Erik Braun** earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Bradley University in 2007, a Master of Arts degree in Mental Health Counseling from Bradley University in 2009, and a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from Old Dominion University in 2013. Currently, he is an Associate Professor at Northwestern State University of Louisiana where he has been working since Fall 2013.

**Dr. Keicia Hawkins** teaches graduate educational leadership and curriculum and instruction courses at Northwestern State University. She served in various capacities in P-12 education, classroom teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Her interests are varied and focus on improving educational access and attainment for minority and marginalized communities and educational leadership issues.

**Dr. Michelle Morris** teaches undergraduate and graduate Educational Psychology courses, including classroom assessment, child and adolescent development, statistics, research methods, psychological testing and measurement, and behavior management and modification. Her research interests involve the communication between students and their teacher's behavior management strategies and teachers' positive and negative behaviors that influence the learning environment.

**Dr. Michael Moulton** is the Graduate Coordinator & Professor in the Department of Health and Human Performance at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. His interest focuses on educational issues in sport, health, and international issues.

**Dr. Patrice Moulton** is a Fulbright Specialist, serves as a graduate professor of clinical Psychology at Northwestern State University. She is licensed as a psychologist, addiction therapist, marriage & family therapist and an LPC. She works as an international educator consultant, trainer, and author.

**Dr. Billie Myers** is an assistant professor at Northwestern State University, a licensed clinical psychologist, and licensed professional counselor. She has conducted a research on a variety of topics since 2005, including topics related to neuropsychology, shyness, and various other psychological issues. She is a professor, psychologist, counselor, and researcher.

**Dr. Terrie Poehl** is an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Northwestern State University. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses across several disciplines in education. Her research interests include statistics and educational issues that influence the learning environment.