

Research Skills of Students in Graduate Studies Program of Tomas Claudio Colleges

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Publication history: Received: January 5, 2026; Revised: January 15, 2026 ; Accepted: January 28, 2026
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Abstract

This study determined the level of research skills of graduate students at Tomas Claudio Colleges during the Academic Year 2024–2025. Using a descriptive research design, the study involved 178 graduate students, representing fifty percent (50%) of the graduate studies population. The respondents were described in terms of age, sex, civil status, position title, course, years of teaching experience, research-related trainings attended, and number of researches conducted and published. Data were gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire checklist assessing research skills in problem identification and conceptualization, information and evidence seeking, research methodology, statistics, analysis and evaluation, and communication and language, as well as challenges encountered in research. Findings revealed that most respondents were aged 25–34, female, single, and held the position of Teacher I, with less than five years of teaching experience. The majority had attended research trainings at the school level and had limited research experience and publication output. Despite this, the respondents demonstrated a high level of research skills across all dimensions. Further analysis showed that demographic and professional variables were not significant determinants of the respondents' research skill levels. The study highlights the importance of continuous research capability-building programs to enhance graduate students' research productivity.

Keywords: Research Skills, Graduate Students, Descriptive Research, Research Capability, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Research is a vital instrument in the advancement of knowledge and societal development. The absence of research in any discipline may lead to stagnation or eventual obsolescence, as research serves as the foundation for innovation, problem-solving, and informed decision-making. In an era characterized by rapid technological, social, and educational changes, research enables individuals to remain relevant, productive, and responsive to emerging challenges. Through systematic inquiry, individuals gain deeper understanding, enhance critical thinking, and contribute meaningfully to community and national development.

In the Philippine context, the importance of research is explicitly enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Article XIV, Section 10 mandates that “the State shall give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and their utilization,” underscoring research as a cornerstone of national progress. In support of this mandate, research has been embedded across all levels of the educational system—from basic education to graduate and postgraduate studies. Moreover, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through Memorandum Order No. 15, s. 2019, emphasizes that graduates of master's programs are expected to demonstrate advanced knowledge, self-directed research skills, lifelong learning, and the ability to apply research competencies in professional and scholarly work. These outcomes highlight that research competence is not optional but integral to graduate education. Despite institutional emphasis, several studies reveal persistent challenges in developing research skills among students. Foreign literature indicates that while research skills are transferable and essential across disciplines, learners often exhibit gaps in problem identification, methodological rigor, statistical analysis, and information literacy (Banu et al., 2022; Vieno et al., 2022). Similar findings were reported among undergraduate and graduate students in various international contexts, where limited exposure, insufficient training, and low confidence hinder effective research engagement (Lachance et al., 2020; Ipanaqué-Zapata et al., 2023). Even when students perceive themselves as skilled, weaknesses in quantitative analysis and research evaluation remain evident (Awodoyin et al., 2020).

Local evidence consistently shows only moderate research competence among graduate students and faculty in Philippine higher education most notably in research design, methodology, and data analysis (Villalobos et al., 2020; Gacrama et al., 2019; Magnaye et al., 2022). Reported constraints converge around limited training access, heavy teaching workloads, time scarcity, and difficulty identifying researchable problems (Diocos, 2022; Rosario et al., 2023). Importantly, several studies indicate that age, sex, position, and years of teaching are weak or non-significant predictors of research competence, pointing instead to the primacy of institutional systems structured capacity-building, governance support, and quality assurance mechanisms as the more decisive drivers of research performance (Rodriguez et al., 2021; Bitera et al., 2022; De Lara & Santos, 2024; Hipolito & Santos, 2025; Jacoba et al., 2024). This aligns with evidence that organization-level practices (e.g., formal standards, documentation discipline, performance monitoring, and enabling work conditions) strengthen staff capability and sustained output more effectively than individual demographics alone (Santos, 2023; Gamit et al., 2024; Yu & Santos, 2025).

Given these findings, it is evident that while research is highly valued in policy and curriculum, gaps persist between expectations and actual research skill development among graduate students. Observations indicate that many graduate students still perceive research as difficult and uninteresting, often producing incomplete or low-quality outputs due to challenges in problem formulation, data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. These realities underscore the need to systematically assess the level of research skills of graduate students. Anchored on these premises, the present study seeks to determine the level of research skills of graduate students at Tomas Claudio Colleges. By identifying their strengths and weaknesses, the study aims to provide empirical inputs for the development of targeted strategies and interventions to enhance research skills, foster a strong research culture, and improve research productivity among graduate students.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research to assess the research skills of students in the graduate studies program of Tomas Claudio Colleges

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in Tomas Claudio Colleges located at Sitio Taghangin, Morong Rizal. The school offers graduate programs such as Master of Arts in Education (MAEd), Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC), Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master in Public Administration (MPA)

2.3 Respondents

The respondents of the study consisted of fifty percent (50%) of the graduate studies students enrolled at Tomas Claudio Colleges during the School Year 2024–2025, totaling 178 respondents from a population of 353 students. They were selected to determine the level of research skills among graduate students across different programs. The respondents were described in terms of age, sex, civil status, position title, course enrolled, number of years of teaching experience, research-related seminars and trainings attended, number of researches conducted, and number of researches published. The sample included 156 students from the Master of Arts in Education (MAEd), 6 from Master of Arts in Criminology (MAC), 13 from Master of Business Administration (MBA), and 3 from Master in Public Administration (MPA), ensuring proportional representation of the graduate studies population.

2.4 Research Instruments

A researcher-made questionnaire checklist was utilized as the primary instrument for data gathering. The instrument consisted of three parts: Part I gathered the respondents' profile information, including age, sex, civil status, position title, course enrolled, number of years of teaching experience, research-related seminars and trainings attended, number of researches conducted, and number of researches published; Part II assessed the level of research skills of the graduate students, wherein respondents rated each item using a five-point Likert scale with corresponding verbal interpretations ranging from Very Much Skilled (4.50–5.00) to Less Skilled (1.00–1.49); and Part III identified the challenges encountered by graduate students in conducting research, also using a five-point scale with verbal interpretations from Always (4.50–5.00) to Not at All (1.00–1.49). The questionnaire checklist was content-validated by experts knowledgeable in research, and their suggestions and comments were incorporated to improve the instrument before its final administration to the respondents.

2.5 Data Collection

The researcher followed the Gantt Chart of Activities in the conduct of the study. This includes the formulation of the research problem up to the revision of the manuscript and submission of the final copy. After the validation of the instrument, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities. The questionnaire-checklist was administered to the respondents through the Google survey form considering the guidelines in the Data Privacy Act of

2012. Retrieved data were encoded and processed utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Based from the interpreted data, summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.6 Data Analysis

For the analysis and interpretation of the data, appropriate statistical tools were employed. Frequency, percentage, and rank distribution were used to describe the profile of the respondents. The same statistical measures were applied to determine the level of research skills of the graduate students in terms of problem identification and conceptualization, information and evidence seeking, research methodology, statistics, analysis and evaluation, and communication and language. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to determine whether there were significant differences in the level of research skills of the graduate students when grouped according to their profile variables. Lastly, the weighted mean was used to determine the extent of the challenges encountered by the graduate students in conducting research.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided were strictly maintained, and data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the respondents were treated with respect and that no harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, would result from their participation in the study..

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents in Selected Variables

Table 1 presents the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, position title, course enrolled, teaching or working experience, research-related trainings attended, number of conducted researches, and number of published researches. Most respondents were aged 25–34 years old (57.5%), female (77.1%), and single (50.8%). The majority held the position of Teacher I (67.0%) and were enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education (87.2%). More than half had less than five years of teaching or work experience (52.0%). Most research-related seminars and trainings attended were conducted at the school level (72.1%), with minimal participation at higher levels. In terms of research output, a large proportion had conducted only one or no research (85.5%) and had published none or only one study (95.0%). These findings indicate that the respondents are mostly young, early-career professionals with limited research exposure, highlighting the need for strengthened research training and publication support in graduate programs.

Table 1: *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of the Selected Variables*

Age	f	%	R
25-34 years old	103	57.5	1
35 - 44 years old	61	34.1	2
45 - 49 years old	12	6.7	3
50 - 55 years old	2	1.1	4
56 years old and above	1	0.6	5
Total	179	100.0	
Sex	f	%	R
Male	41	22.9	2
Female	138	77.1	1
Total	179	100.0	
Civil Status	f	%	R
Single	91	50.8	1
Married	88	49.2	2
Total	179	100.0	
Position Title	f	%	R
Teacher II	11	6.1	3
Teacher I	120	67.0	1
Others	48	26.8	2
Total	179	100.0	
Course	f	%	R
MAC	6	3.4	3
MAED	156	87.2	1
MBA	13	7.3	2
MPA	4	2.2	4

Total	179	100.0	
Number of Teaching/Working Experience	f	%	R
20 years and more	3	1.7	5
15 - 19 years	10	5.6	4
10 - 14 years	14	7.8	3
5 - 9 years	59	33.0	2
below 5 years	93	52.0	1
Total	179	100.0	
Seminars and Trainings Attended Related to Research	f	%	R
International Level	3	1.7	5.5
National Level	13	7.3	3
Regional Level	3	1.7	5.5
Division Level	11	6.1	4
District Level	20	11.2	2
School Level	129	72.1	1
Total	179	100.0	
Number of Conducted Researches	f	%	R
0 – 1	153	85.5	1
2 – 3	24	13.4	2
4 – 5	1	0.6	3.5
6 and above	1	0.6	3.5
Total	179	100.0	
Number of Published Researches.	f	%	R
0 – 1	170	95.0	1
2 – 3	8	4.5	2
6 and above	1	0.6	3
Total	179	100.0	

3.1. Level of Research Skills of the Graduate Students With Respect to Problem Identification and Conceptualization, Information and Evidence Seeking, Research Methodology, Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation, and Communication and Language

Table 2 presents the level of research skills of the graduate students in terms of problem identification and conceptualization, information and evidence seeking, research methodology, statistics, analysis and evaluation, and communication and language. The results show a composite mean of 4.04, interpreted as Much Skilled, indicating that the graduate students demonstrate a high level of research skills across all assessed aspects. Among the indicators, communication and language ranked highest ($\bar{x} = 4.11$), while statistics, analysis, and evaluation ranked lowest ($\bar{x} = 3.99$), although still within the Much Skilled category. The relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 0.81$) suggests consistency in the respondents' perceptions of their research skills. These findings imply that the graduate programs of Tomas Claudio Colleges provide sufficient training and exposure that enable students to perform essential research tasks with confidence and competence. However, while students exhibit strong foundational research skills, there remains a need for further enrichment in advanced analytical, methodological, and publication-related competencies to attain higher levels of research expertise. This result is consistent with the study of Ikiroma (2024), which reported a high level of research skill application among graduate students and emphasized the importance of continuous retraining and institutional support to further enhance research performance.

Table 2: Level of Research Skills of the Graduate Students With Respect to Problem Identification and Conceptualization, Information and Evidence Seeking, Research Methodology, Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation, and Communication and Language

Aspects	Overall $\bar{W}\bar{X}$	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	4.01	0.83	Much Skilled	4
Information and Evidence Seeking	4.06	0.79	Much Skilled	2
Research Methodology	4.04	0.82	Much Skilled	3
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	3.99	0.81	Much Skilled	5
Communication and Language	4.11	0.82	Much Skilled	1
Composite $\bar{W}\bar{X}$	4.04	0.81	Much Skilled	

Significant Difference on the Level of Research Skills of the Graduate Students with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile

Table 3 shows the results of the F-test on the level of research skills of graduate students across different demographic profiles. The results reveal that there is no significant difference in research skills when students are grouped by age, sex, civil status, position title, course, years of teaching experience, number of conducted researches, or number of published researches, as all p-values exceed 0.05. This indicates that, regardless of background, students generally demonstrate similar research competence across problem identification, information seeking, methodology, statistics, analysis, and communication. However, a significant difference was observed in statistics, analysis, and evaluation when grouped according to seminars and trainings attended related to research ($p = 0.032$), suggesting that students who participate in more research-related professional development exhibit stronger analytical and statistical skills. These findings imply that the graduate program provides equitable research training while highlighting the importance of seminars and continuous professional development in enhancing methodological and analytical abilities. This aligns with Servado (2024), who emphasized that structured workshops and capability-building programs are essential for strengthening students' research skills.

Table 3: 3.3. Result of the F-test in the Significant Difference on the Level of Research Skills of the Graduate Students with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile

Profile/ Aspect	F-value	p-value	Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Age				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	0.953	0.435	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	1.251	0.291	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	1.694	0.153	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	1.188	0.318	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	0.664	0.618	Accepted	Not Significant
Sex				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	0.002	0.965	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	0.035	0.852	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	0.023	0.880	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	0.005	0.943	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	0.188	0.665	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	0.263	0.609	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	0.238	0.626	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	0.448	0.504	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	0.987	0.322	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	0.556	0.457	Accepted	Not Significant
Position Title				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	1.093	0.337	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	1.851	0.160	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	2.015	0.136	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	0.709	0.494	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	1.218	0.298	Accepted	Not Significant
Course				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	0.487	0.692	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	0.322	0.809	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	0.447	0.720	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	0.389	0.761	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	0.493	0.688	Accepted	Not Significant
number of years teaching experience				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	1.033	0.392	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	1.082	0.367	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	2.01	0.095	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	1.35	0.254	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	0.980	0.420	Accepted	Not Significant
Seminars and Trainings Attended Related to Research				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	1.392	0.229	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	1.279	0.275	Accepted	Not Significant

Research Methodology	1.907	0.095	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	2.515	0.032	Rejected	Significant
Communication and Language	1.302	0.265	Accepted	Not Significant
Number of Conducted Researches				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	1.461	0.227	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	0.974	0.406	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	1.568	0.199	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	1.541	0.206	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	1.679	0.173	Accepted	Not Significant
Number of Published Researches				
Problem Identification and Conceptualization	1.321	0.270	Accepted	Not Significant
Information and Evidence Seeking	0.268	0.765	Accepted	Not Significant
Research Methodology	0.814	0.445	Accepted	Not Significant
Statistics, Analysis and Evaluation	1.893	0.154	Accepted	Not Significant
Communication and Language	1.550	0.215	Accepted	Not Significant

3.2. Challenges Encountered by the Graduate Students in Conducting Research

Table 4 presents the challenges faced by graduate students in conducting research. The overall mean of 3.49, interpreted as “Often,” indicates that students frequently encounter difficulties. The top three challenges include “Time constraints due to workloads and assignments” (3.68), “Insufficient financial support” (3.54), and “Struggles in formulating an appropriate research title” (3.51), all interpreted as often. Challenges such as “Insufficient knowledge in conducting research” (3.40) and “Writing a report” (3.41) were ranked lower, interpreted as sometimes. The consistent standard deviation (0.99) suggests these challenges are commonly experienced among respondents. These findings imply that graduate students’ research engagement is often hindered by competing responsibilities and limited resources. Institutional support through mentoring, training programs, and collaborative activities can help mitigate these challenges, enhance research competence, and build confidence, aligning with Mydin et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of continuous mentoring and supportive environments in improving researchers’ skills and motivation.

Table 4.: 3.4. Challenges Encountered by the Graduate Students in Conducting Research

Challenges Encountered	W $\bar{X}$	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Insufficient or minimal knowledge in conducting research.	3.40	1.09	Sometimes	10
2. Limited knowledge in applying statistical methods to analyze data	3.46	1.06	Sometimes	8
3. Time constraints due to work loads and assignments	3.68	1.06	Often	1
4. Struggles in formulating an appropriate research title	3.51	1.11	Often	3
5. Insufficient financial support.	3.54	1.11	Often	2
6. Lack of self-confidence to conduct the research	3.48	1.14	Sometimes	5.5
7. Limited access to resources and information required for specific research areas	3.48	1.11	Sometimes	5.5
8. Inadequate availability of current references in the college library	3.47	1.09	Sometimes	7
9. Challenges in understanding or applying research methodologies.	3.50	1.08	Often	4
10. Writing a report	3.41	1.13	Sometimes	9
Overall W$\bar{X}$	3.49	0.99	Sometimes	

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that graduate students of Tomas Claudio Colleges are generally skilled in research and show consistent performance across key research domains, including problem identification, information seeking, methodology, analysis, and communication. Their research skills are largely similar regardless of age, sex, civil status, position title, course, years of teaching experience, or number of conducted and published researches, with the exception of seminars and

trainings attended, which positively impacted statistical and analytical abilities. In view of these findings, it is recommended that the Graduate Studies Department enhance research capability programs through regular seminars and workshops on data analysis, research problem formulation, and academic writing for publication. Collaborative research between faculty and students should be encouraged to foster confidence, productivity, and engagement in scholarly work. Additionally, a periodic review of the research curriculum should be conducted to ensure alignment with current standards, methodologies, and best practices in research.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. This study was self-funded. The authors thank the participating university and the nursing students for their contributions

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