

# Producing Publishable Research Papers: Challenges and Strategies among Tertiary EFL Students

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## Abstract

Student-generated research papers, modeled on journal articles, are a relatively recent development at the tertiary EFL context in Bangladesh. The study identifies challenges encountered by student researchers and derives expert insights from experienced researchers on generating internationally publishable papers by EFL students. Consequently, the study employs a mixed method approach by merging quantitative data obtained through online survey forms from 640 students, and qualitative data collected through interviews with five tertiary level teachers and a focus group discussion with ten student researchers. The study exhibits the most problematic areas, including topic selection, research gap, literature review, data collection, analysis, and methodology; contrarily, the least problematic areas including discussion, conclusion, and following grammar and mechanics. However, the study reveals discrepancies in what students think to be the most difficult and where they have issues writing in reality. Furthermore, to ensure student-generated papers are more polished and suitable for publication internationally, certain steps have been identified for self-enhancement of students as researchers as well as systemic development at a broader level.

**Keywords:** research paper, EFL students, student-generated research, internationally publishable papers, tertiary level

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Conducting research, in and of itself, works as a major learning curve for tertiary level students (Elkut, 2025), which is true for undergraduate or graduate students residing in Bangladesh as well. At the very outset, it should be clarified that the term ‘research paper’ in this study does not refer to theses or dissertations; rather, ‘research paper’, in this case, has been used to indicate shorter empirical research modeled after journal articles. These papers are usually required to be submitted by the tertiary level students within the course of a single semester, as directed by their respective instructors. Thus, this relatively newfangled domain of curriculum at the tertiary EFL context in Bangladesh merits further investigation. With regard to higher education, when the question of conducting research is raised, it generally entails the associated activities of coming up with an appropriate topic, finding relevant past literature (Tiwari, 2019), detecting a research problem (Hamzaoui, 2021), creating survey questionnaire(s), conducting in-person interview(s), analyzing the collected data (Sitompul & Anditasari, 2022), constructing a research proposal, finding relevant resources, and finally formatting the research paper according to a given standard referencing style, i.e. APA, MLA, Chicago (Altikriti, 2022). Oftentimes, Bangladesh tertiary EFL learners struggle with the aforementioned steps while working on a research project (Ferdoush et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020). Subsequently, some strategies for mitigating the challenges of conducting research and publishing papers include additional training for generating more student researchers (Andersson, Barry, Hamblin, & Buhs, 2022), elucidating the structure of research (Ersyad & Cahyono, 2025), choosing journals for publication appropriately (Remya, Pai, Nayak, & Noronha, 2024), and utilizing the feedback from editors and/or reviewers (Wu, Sanchez-Diaz, Yang, & Qu, 2024).

Set in the Bangladesh EFL context, the chief objective of the study is to improve the overall quality of student-generated research papers to meet international journal standards by pinpointing specific areas as they relate to students’ difficulties during the course of completing a research project. Moreover, expert insights would be collected to clarify which particular skills students need to hone in order to make their research papers more publishable internationally. As a result, it would further help to make the process of research publication explicit for students. Subsequently, the study attempts to extract probable academic implications and recommendations depending on the data collected using a mixed method approach from both experienced researchers as well as student participants.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions have been set to bring forth results exclusively relevant to the goal of the study-

- 1) Which aspects of a research project do Bangladesh tertiary EFL students find most problematic?
- 2) How can students come up with more publishable research papers according to experienced researchers?

### 1.3 Research Framework

As the conceptual framework for this study, Alsied and Ibrahim's (2017) work has been selected, considering it investigates tertiary EFL students' difficulties while completing a research project. Moreover, Alsied and Ibrahim's (2017) questionnaire has been used as a preliminary guide for the research instruments; it was used as an inspiration to design part of the questionnaire for the study. Multiple other studies directly connect their work with that of Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) where they also found student researchers facing significant difficulties in choosing a research topic, writing literature review (Mali, 2023), and supervisors' lack of support as a prominent issue related to student research (Boufeldja & Bouhania, 2020).

### 1.4 Research Gap

With regard to the gap in the existing literature regarding what makes an EFL student-generated research paper publishable on an international level, Dehghan (2018) stated, "literature is poor regarding an evaluation of graduate programs offered in EFL universities to examine their efficiency in helping their postgraduate students develop this particular competence" (p.90). This statement depicts the insufficiency of studies to determine the extent to which grooming students in terms of research competence has been effective in the EFL context. Smith (2009), specifically, pointed out Bangladesh researchers' lack of knowledge regarding the research publication process, discouraging them from submitting their manuscripts to international journals. Although this study (Smith, 2009) does hint at the overall knowledge gap with regard to publication; however, it does not look into precisely, how Bangladesh EFL students can tailor their papers according to the given international publishing standards. Consequently, the study attempts to look into this void by investigating whether the pedagogical practices dealing with research publication in the Bangladesh EFL context are sufficient or at all existent and if they fall in line with the requirements of the international publishers.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Challenges While Conducting Research

Writing research papers has been recognized as one of the more challenging segments of an EFL student's academic life (Al-Marwani, 2020; Elkut, 2025). Numerous scholars have conducted studies on EFL learners previously, where students were reported to find it arduous to detect an arena of investigation (Tiwari, 2019), choose an apt topic, construct research questions (Du Du, Dung, Triet, & Huong 2025), identify research gaps (Truong, Tran, & Thi, 2023), write literature review, and research methodology (Hamzaoui, 2021). Oaxaca (2025), with regard to students reading and analyzing multiple research articles, e. g. writing literature review or discussion, reported that students do not put much effort in consolidating the scholarly texts. Similarly, Kruse (2024) stated, "previous knowledge and, when permitted, also its synthesis with information from sources that help to complement" the writing process (p.129). Moreover, Yulandari and Suryadi (2025) reported, "students faced difficulties in organizing texts, using academic language, integrating sources, and managing writing anxiety" (p. 4909). Likewise, Altikriti (2022) remarked that student researchers undergo a state of disarray during the process of writing review of literature, citing the relevant information, and outlining a satisfactory methodology, given that they are devoid of knowledge regarding the dissimilarities among the styles of formatting a research paper. It is evident based on the preexistent studies that student or novice researchers' face difficulties with conducting research range from the very beginning to the very end, for instance starting with deciding a research topic to formatting the paper according to a given referencing style.

Furthermore, Tiwari (2019) mentioned data collection as yet another problem that EFL students have to cope with during their research. However, Sitompul and Anditasari (2022) claimed that students found data collection to be less problematic as opposed to the other sections of research. The preexisting studies presented in this section primarily deal with the issues or challenges that tertiary EFL students face while conducting investigation, which is directly connected to the first research question of this particular study. Although the aforementioned studies mention particular challenges student researchers face, they do not explicitly investigate potential solutions to alleviate these issues; hence, the current study would be investigating this gap.

### 2.2 Significance of Instructor/Supervisor Feedback

Previous studies unveiled that students view individual and/or general feedback provided by teachers as essential (Al-Marwani, 2020) and to be among the most useful approaches to alleviate their difficulties (Mustafa, Arbab, & El Sayed, 2022), which assists students in better perceiving the mistakes and becoming conscious of improving their writing (Hasan & Karim, 2019). However, Shah, Zeeshan, and Palwasha (2025) found that certain issues related to supervisors affect students' research significantly, namely their lack of availability as well as guidance. Additionally, Ferdoush et al. (2020) observed that 87% of the Bangladesh undergraduate students reported lack of mentoring and poor guidance being negatively impacting research. Cahyono, Irawati, Amalia, and Hidayat (2024), while performing an investigative study on EFL/ESL students, emphasized students' need to, "receive feedback on their skills" (p.118). According to Razmi and Ghane (2024), feedback provided in the form of written corrective feedback relayed constructive influence in terms of writing execution, confidence as well as apprehension for EFL students. Similarly, Bahtilla (2022) performed an in-depth study on supervisors' inability in providing well-timed feedback and attributed this to, "heavy workload, poor quality of the dissertation, lack of engagement with the supervisory feedback, late submissions by students, the disparity in research interest, lack of reward and recognition" (p.19). The past studies explore the important role that supervisor/instructor feedback plays and the issues that the lack of it causes; however, how to deal with insufficient feedback has not been a primary focus of these studies, which the current study would attempt to address.

### 2.3 Conducting Research in EFL Context

As for the state of research specifically relating to Bangladesh, Hossain (2018) opined that the quality of research writing is certainly not adequate, which the researcher primarily blamed on the education system of the country. Subsequently, Matin and Khan (2017) mentioned some issues related to institutions, such as “inadequate guidance and resources of the institute” and “absence of research cell” (p.22). Mithila (2024) reported that in Bangladesh, tertiary level students are neither well-versed in research possibilities nor in the process of research, which according to other researchers work as a significant problem while conducting research (Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017; Boufeldja & Bouhania, 2020). Altikriti (2022) reported this issue to stem from the nonexistence of a course required for learning the overall process of composing a research paper. The studies point out major limitations interfering with of Bangladesh students’ research skill development in terms of pedagogical flaws, insufficient resources, and students lack of background knowledge on research. The current study would try to confirm whether Bangladesh EFL students’ knowledge gap with regard to the potential benefits of research and the systematic issues have an adverse effect while conducting research.

### 2.4 Sociocultural Factors Interfering with Research

Boufeldja and Bouhania (2020) reported some “sociocultural challenges” for EFL student researchers, such as insufficiency of cooperation along with a lack of support. Moreover, Truong et al. (2023) found that tertiary level students struggle with conducting research in a non-native language, they lack enough training, and there is a dearth of resources; hence, student researchers feel poorly equipped to conduct research and require much more constructive training to develop research skills. The aforementioned studies line up with the current study’s first research question, which aims to explore the difficulties Bangladesh tertiary EFL students face while conducting research, including the sociocultural challenges, such as lack of cooperation from the research participants/subjects, limited support from institutions, and lack of instructor assistance.

Likewise, Sarkar (2014) performed an autoethnographic study based on the experience of conducting educational research in Bangladesh as a student researcher. The researcher divulged that during their PhD fieldwork they had problems in 3 specific areas; 1) issues with obtaining authorization; 2) difficulties getting participants with mixed proficiency given that the principals/headmasters are trying to portray a “desirable picture” stemming from their experience with school inspections; and 3) participants’ leaning more towards providing “the correct answer” than authentic answers. Given that Sarkar’s (2014) study context was different considering it was a PhD fieldwork, the study would examine whether the reported findings are reproducible for the graduate/undergraduate student researchers in Bangladesh as well.

### 2.5 Institutional Challenges

Mathur (2019) pointed out that research methodology teachers are often themselves oblivious to the contemporary advances in the relevant pedagogical field, which undoubtedly impact their teaching, considering they are unable to teach the students the practices relevant to the contemporary setting. Consequently, past studies reported inexperienced supervisors as a dominant challenge when it comes to EFL student research (Elmabruk & Bishti, 2020), emphasized the need for teacher training (Perines, 2021), and advocated allocation of research experts to teach research methodology courses (Rahman et al., 2020). Similarly, Hossain (2018) called for internationally trained scholars to work as the primary source from where research knowledge would be dispersed. The past studies emphasize the importance of assigning experts in the field of research to teach students regarding this knowledge and further training for continuous development of instructors to help keep them aware of the recent practices.

### 2.6 A Lack of Resources Impacting Research

Rahman et al. (2020) performed a study on 30 tertiary level students and 10 instructors from 5 different universities in Bangladesh and highlighted the requirement for an increment in resources for research students in this regard. Likewise, Aldabbus and Almansouri (2022) claimed that the predicaments students encounter with research stem from a series of issues, of which a dearth of resources “ranked first at a very high level” (p.7). This finding is reflected in other studies as well (Altikriti, 2022). However, Ramzan et al. (2021) stated that, although in the libraries of particular universities resources were obtainable, these were not appropriately accessed, given students lacked the skill regarding information literacy. Similarly, Asnas et al. (2022) found that students reportedly struggled with locating the appropriate sources for their research papers due to their failure in detecting the pertinent references for the study. The scholars attributed not only the insufficient resources at universities but also students’ lack of information literacy working against them while conducting research, demonstrating that unless both of these issues are resolved, it would not be of much benefit.

### 2.7 Students’ Perspective Towards Research

Truong et al. (2023) conducted a study on 200 EFL undergraduate students from central Vietnam, Perines (2021) investigated the views of 72 research participants of a Chilean public university, and Knight et al. (2021) performed an investigative study on 159 undergraduate students from America. The results for all these studies showed that the learners were highly aware of the significance of conducting research, hence, had a welcoming outlook towards contributing as researchers. This optimistic attitude of students stems from their awareness of the value of research; hence, the current study would attempt to investigate whether the lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of research or research culture contributes to tertiary EFL students’ challenges.

Contrarily, Elmabruk and Bishti (2020) discovered that around 50% of the learners hold an indecisive attitude towards research given a shortage of resources, inadequate research skills, supervisory concerns, time-constraint, anxiety related to oral presentation, and trouble

finding topic of research. The current study would attempt to verify if these findings are reproducible in the context of Bangladesh by investigating whether inadequate research skills and a lack of supervisor support might affect student-generated papers' publishability. Regarding how universities can actively support students in overcoming these barriers, Alahi and Yesmin (2024) recommended that a focused training be designed to teach research skills and information literacy to Bangladesh tertiary students.

### *2.8 Significance of Student Research*

Rahmawati et al. (2024) has pointed out the growing publication interest toward student-generated research papers in the EFL academic context. Appertaining to this, past studies advocated the need to incorporate research, considering that conducting research enhances students' critical thinking (Rahman et al., 2020), and problem-solving skills which come in handy for their future career as well as improve their speaking and writing skills (Adebisi, 2022). Hossain (2018) specifically mentioned the importance of research in Bangladesh, stating, "without research writing the potentiality as well as development of Bangladesh Educational Institutions cannot be expected, especially for the Undergraduate and Graduate Level" (p. 1). Although the studies mentioned above indicate the academic society recognizing the value of student research, the current groundwork would investigate whether the general population of Bangladesh as well as the students themselves recognizes this value.

### *2.9 Lack of Funding as a Barrier*

Kumar et al. (2019) performed a quantitative study on 687 university students and found that 83.26% students thought a deficiency of finance works as an impediment for their research. In the same way, Assar et al. (2022) conducted a study on graduates, where the researchers stated that financing or a lack of it was identified as a barrier by 62% of the total student researchers. Considering the study of Kumar et al. (2019) was conducted on students from Pakistan and the study of Assar et al. (2022) was conducted on students from the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, the difference in the percentage of students can be explained by these regions' higher education funding. For example, for Pakistan, 1.7% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was allocated for education (Abbasi, 2023), whereas it is 4-6% for the MENA countries (Abdallah & Taha, 2024). One of the study's focuses is to identify if the percentage of private university students, recognizing absence of funding as an impediment for research work, is closer to the percentage of such students in South Asian countries or MENA countries.

### *2.10 Features of a Publishable Research Paper*

Ganji and Derakhshan (2020) identified the significant features that research should contain, such as- objectives and research problems should be explicit, the research should adhere to a specific methodology, the line of reasoning should be grounded on preceding studies, and the research should be beneficial for the academic realm as well as the society. Bredan (2020) stated that the strength of a research paper predominantly rests on the standard of the research question and relevance of the research strategy and, oftentimes, researchers struggle with and even find it impossible to have their papers published in reputed journals owing to errors in these two areas.

In this regard, Ganji and Derakhshan (2020) contended that researchers can succeed in convincing the journal editors effectively given that the content of their papers is demonstrated in a precise, pristine, and systematized language. Furthermore, Edmans (2023) concluded that the editors of journals were not likely to accept a research paper for publication considering the findings of that particular paper was the same as the previously published papers and had no real contribution to the field. On the contrary, Prathap et al. (2019) stated that rejection was a usual occurrence and that often journal publishers declined a manuscript merely owing to space constrictions or some other reason although the paper was of superior quality. Furthermore, Wu et al. (2024), based on the review of 5000 rejected manuscripts, stated that rejection was accompanied by some recommendations or pointers from the reviewer(s), which assisted in refining the paper and further enhancement. Hence, Andersson et al. (2022) and Paltridge (2017) highlighted the aspect of necessary training with regard to peer-review to be an imperative fragment for generating researchers. The aforementioned studies primarily explore the strategies that student researchers can follow to make their research papers more publishable by pinpointing what criteria international journal publishers consider while selecting papers. The current study would try to figure out, through expert researcher interviews, what specific problems Bangladesh EFL student-generated papers might have deeming their papers as not publishable.

### *2.11 Genre-Based Teaching*

Ghane, Mazdayasna, and Jabbari (2021) conducted a study on 22 graduate level EFL students from Iran, and the researchers emphasized the importance of teaching individual sections of a research paper concurrently through an overt genre-based teaching. The researcher further insisted that these sections be interpreted as independent genres in this case. In this regard, Mitchell et al.'s (2021) comment explicitly stated that a writer is incapable of generating an efficacious piece of writing unless they have an understanding of the conventions and the standards of the framework within the confines of which they produce the desired text. Ghane et al.'s (2021) study demonstrated that the instructor held dialogues with regard to students' problems with writing during every feedback session, which primarily focused on generic configurations and research-related competencies particular to each learner's research proposal. This result corresponded to Böhme et al.'s study (2021), which concluded that this form of significant discussion-based discourse improved learners' enthusiasm in getting involved in raising queries. Similar to the Iranian EFL context in Ghane et al.'s (2021) study, Bangladesh EFL students, too, can benefit from feedback that would help them to enhance research-based writing and hone research-related skills.

### *2.12 English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP)*

Ganji and Derakhshan (2020) stated that the harsh reality is that although research literacy is vital in the context of academia, recurrently,

master's programs are unsuccessful in adequately familiarizing learners as to how research studies can be executed objectively, scientifically, and all the while maintaining quality. Regarding this, Li and Flowerdew (2020) commented that the role English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) plays, in terms of didactic substructure, has received extensive recognition, which is likely to be critical for fortuitous publication, especially for student researchers and scholars located in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) context. Similarly, Flowerdew (2022) observed that this specialized field has been growing promptly, which is now considered a branch of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and a cross-disciplinary sector rooted in theory as well as based in science/research taking from wide-ranging specialties.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

For this study, a mixed method approach, more specifically explanatory sequential design, has been implemented for data collection in order to demonstrate precise and reliable information. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which enabled the collection of a broader range of data from the target participants. As for research instruments, survey questionnaire (see Table 1), focus group discussion (see Appendix A), and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) were employed. With the aim of certifying triangulation as well as enhancing accuracy, reliability, integrity, and validity, the data was collected and analyzed accordingly. For instance, data triangulation was applied by collecting data from multiple sources (e.g., teachers and students, male and female participants, undergraduate and graduate levels, diverse disciplines) to ensure validity in that the study does not lean toward the perspective of one specific group.

#### *3.2 Data Collection Instruments*

##### *3.2.1 Survey Questionnaire*

The survey questionnaire (see Table 1) was developed in the form of online survey forms. The online survey questionnaire was chosen as a research instrument given that distribution of online surveys and collection of data are both time-saving and cost-efficient. The survey questionnaire was created partially based on the questionnaire used by Alsied and Ibrahim (2017). Considering this questionnaire had been tested and verified in Alsied and Ibrahim's (2017) study, it strengthened the reliability of the current study as well, including instrumental constancy and stability. Moreover, the survey was cautiously crafted focusing on the central research questions and research objectives, ensuring construct validity. The questionnaire was further reviewed by an expert and modified according to their feedback, improving its overall face and content validity. The limitations of online survey (e.g., non-response bias, limited depth of responses) were considered; hence, a mixed method approach was adopted given that the findings did not have to rely solely on quantitative data rather qualitative data, which assisted in mitigating these limitations. The survey questionnaire consisted of 16 questions in total, including Question 1 for demographic data, Question 2-12 for challenges while conducting research, Question 13-15 for knowledge regarding publication process, Question 16 for further explanations regarding the challenges, which was an open-ended question. The survey questionnaire used MCQs and Likert 5 scales to measure the responses of the close-ended questions.

##### *3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview*

Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) were conducted in-person with 5 research scholars to assist with the qualitative segment of the study. Subsequently, 5 open-ended questions were designed as a preliminary guide for the interviews, and follow-up questions were added as required based on the responses. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a research instrument instead of structured interviews provided that semi-structured interviews allow more space for exploration and in-depth insights as opposed to strictly structured interviews. An informed consent form was signed by the teacher participants prior to the interviews. Additionally, potential interviewer bias was mitigated by presenting the interviewees with unbiased and open-ended questions, and potential inconsistencies in responses across participants were minimized by setting 5 pre-determined central questions to help maintain consistency. As for the analysis of the qualitative data, the interviews were initially transcribed using an online transcription software, i.e., Transkriptor. A manual thematic analysis was then performed and as the study's thematic analysis framework, Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, and Ranfagni's (2023) systemic thematic analysis model was implemented.

##### *3.2.3 Student Focus Group Discussion*

A focus group discussion (FGD) was held with 10 tertiary students who were presented with 5 predetermined questions (see Appendix A) and follow-up questions as needed. After the informed consent form was signed by the student participants, the FGD commenced, which ran for the course of approximately 37 minutes. The session was then transcribed using Transkriptor, and a manual thematic analysis was performed on the transcription.

#### *3.3 Participant Selection Criteria*

The procedure of this study's investigation was purposive sampling, considering both the teacher participants (TPs) and the student participants (SPs) who were chosen have had experience with research.

##### *3.3.1 Student Participants*

The data has been collected from a well-known private university located in the urban area of Bangladesh, where research is carried out by the students fairly regularly as a part of coursework. A total of 640 students took the survey which was distributed via email by the

authority of the respective university after attaining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. 421 of these SPs were from the undergraduate level and 219 from the graduate level. An informed consent form was designed as a part of the IRB approval process, and anonymity and data protection were ensured considering the identities of the participants and the data were treated with strict confidentiality. Moreover, 10 students from the university were elected to be a part of the FGD. An eligibility criterion to partake in this case was that the SPs must have sufficient experience with research (i.e. completion of research methodology course and submission of a research paper), considering that SPs with no research experience would have put the validity of the study in question.

3.3.2 Teacher Participants

5 Teacher participants (TPs) or experienced researchers took part in this study; all of whom were teaching at the tertiary at the moment of the data collection. These TPs belonged to 3 different private universities located in the urban area of Bangladesh. The TPs or experienced researchers were chosen based on their expertise in the field of research considering that each of them has had research papers published in prominent international peer-reviewed journals, including high-impact Scopus indexed and Web of Science journals. Publication(s) in international peer-reviewed journals by the TPs was set as an eligibility criterion in this case.

3.4 Data Analysis Process

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

A general-purpose thematic analysis method was implemented while analyzing the qualitative data of the study, which has been described by scholars as “a qualitative research method commonly used with interview and focus group data to understand people's experiences, ideas and perceptions about a given topic” (Jowsey, Deng, & Weller, 2021, p. 472). To ensure participant confidentiality, participant names were replaced with codes, such as TP1, TP2, etc. for teacher participants and SP1, SP2, etc. for student participants. The thematic analysis segment of this study was modeled after the steps of systematic thematic analysis proposed by Naeem et al. (2023) presented as 6 individual steps by the researchers, such as- “transcription, familiarization with the data, and selection of quotations”, “selection of keywords”, “coding of the data”, “development of themes”, “conceptualization through interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes”, “development of a conceptual model.” Codes were developed based on the participant responses, as in selected quotations, during the FGD and interviews. The codes were reviewed and revised, following which a categorization of these codes took place in the form of subthemes. Major themes were then identified and established exclusively based on the subthemes.

Specifically, for the thematic analysis of the open-ended question from the student online survey, the method of credential counting was adopted for a more transparent data presentation and to add credibility to the data analysis process. Multifaceted responses were categorized by counting each of the facets individually. The responses were grouped manually, and the themes were emergent from the data. No qualitative software was used for coding.

3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis

The survey questionnaire was developed in the form of online survey forms, e.g., Google Forms; hence, quantitative data from the survey was analyzed automatically.

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 640 responses were collected from students using an online survey, interviews were conducted with 5 expert researchers, and a focus group discussion was held with 10 student researchers. A summary of the result, specifically for the 15 quantitative questions, is being presented below in the form of a table to demonstrate the frequency of responses.

Table 1. Challenges Faced by Student Researchers at the Tertiary Level

No.	Questions	Options	Result
1	Please state your current level of study	a) Graduate b) Undergraduate	65.8% 34.2%
2	Which aspects of academic/research writing do you find to be challenging? (Select all that apply)	a) Writing grammatically accurate sentences b) Using academic language as opposed to informal language c) Constructing a thesis statement d) Writing well-organized, structured paragraphs e) Following mechanics of writing (i.e. punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.)	25% 45.5% 54.5% 48.9% 23%
3	Which of the below mentioned areas do you struggle with while conducting research? (Select all that apply)	a) Choosing a research-worthy topic b) Framing research questions/problems c) Finding research gap d) Developing a research proposal e) Writing literature review	55.8% 32.8% 43.1% 34.1% 40.8%

	f)	Constructing research methodology	35.5%
	g)	Data collection and analysis	42.8%
	h)	Discussion	20%
4		Would you say you have a clear idea about how to construct a survey questionnaire that is focused and relevant to your research topic?	
	a)	Yes	42.8%
	b)	No	21.6%
	c)	Not sure	35.6%
5		Do you think citing sources according to a referencing style (i.e. APA/MLA) is difficult?	
	a)	Yes	30.8%
	b)	No	40.5%
	c)	Maybe	28.7%
6		Do you think it gets tricky to find relevant sources for the literature review section?	
	a)	Yes	47.7%
	b)	No	10.8%
	c)	Sometimes	41.6%
7		Would you say you have a clear idea regarding how to conduct thematic analysis?	
	a)	Yes	18.6%
	b)	No	48.9%
	c)	Not sure	32.5%
8		Do you think not receiving any funding interferes with your research as a student, for example- cost of traveling for data collection, cost of printing necessary documents, etc.?	
	a)	Yes	67.3%
	b)	No	11.3%
	c)	Maybe	21.4%
9		Do you receive useful feedback from your course instructor while conducting research and/or writing your research paper?	
	a)	Strongly agree	24.4%
	b)	Agree	22.3%
	c)	Neutral	33.8%
	d)	Disagree	11.9%
	e)	Strongly disagree	7.7%
10		Do you get demotivated while conducting research?	
	a)	Yes, frequently	30.6%
	b)	No, never	13.6%
	c)	Sometimes	55.8%
11		Do you struggle with a lack of resources during your research?	
	a)	Yes	74.5%
	b)	No	12.8%
	c)	Not sure	12.7%
12		How do you personally write the “discussion” segment of your research paper? (Select all that apply)	
	a)	I simply discuss the findings	42.7%
	b)	I try to link the qualitative findings with the quantitative ones	46.9%
	c)	I connect and make comparisons between my findings and the findings from pre-existing literature	54.1%
13		Would you say you have a clear understanding of what makes a research paper publishable?	
	a)	Yes	32.8%
	b)	No	46.1%
	c)	Not sure	21.1%
14		After completion of your research paper or grading, have you received any encouragement/motivation from your instructors about publishing your paper?	
	a)	Yes	34.5%
	b)	No	35.9%
	c)	Not sure	29.5%
15		What challenges have you faced while trying to publish your research paper(s)?	
	a)	I have not taken the initiative to publish my paper	50%
	b)	I have had problems choosing the right journal	11.4%
	c)	I have had difficulty understanding the author guidelines	11.4%
	d)	Article Publication Charge (APC) is too high	9.1%
	e)	I have not had time to publish my paper(s) due to pressurizing coursework	18.1%

Table 1 has been used to present a summary of the collected quantitative data based on the online survey.

#### 4.1 1<sup>st</sup> Research Question Findings

The first research question attempts to investigate the problem areas for student researchers when it comes to conducting and writing research. The findings, in this regard, have been segregated in three different sections: 1) difficulties related to conducting research, 2)

challenges related to the system, and 3) drawbacks related to student researchers.

#### 4.1.1 Difficulties Related to Conducting Research

The findings revealed that students face difficulties with topic selection, research gaps, review of literature, research proposal, data analysis, methodology, research instrument, data collection, academic writing, and critical thinking. Some of the significant findings from this section have been discussed below in greater detail-

##### 4.1.1.1 Topic Selection Perceived as the Most Difficult

It was found based on the quantitative survey that 55.8% student researchers believed coming up with a research-worthy topic is relatively more difficult than dealing with research methodology (35.5%), literature review (40.8%), research proposal (34.1%), research problems/questions (32.8%), data collection and analysis (42.8%), and research gap (43.1%). The least difficult areas included writing discussion (20%), maintaining grammar (25%), and following mechanics of writing (23%). In the same way, Mali (2023) commented that topic selection was the most challenging undertaking for the student researchers while writing a research paper. Mali's (2023) study was conducted on Indonesian student researchers and the current investigation has been conducted on Bangladesh students. Hence, student researchers' difficulty with choosing an apt topic is found to be universal regardless of the difference in context. Furthermore, the SPs recounted in the open-ended section of the online survey that finding an interesting and budget-friendly research topic was the most troublesome for them given that instructors or supervisors would advise against working on a topic which required a significant budget. With regard to that, institutional funding for student research might be able to help mitigate the issue of ambitious topics being declined solely due to budgetary concerns.

##### 4.1.1.2 Participants' Lack of Enthusiasm During Data Collection

Both the SPs and the TPs mentioned data collection to be a challenging task while conducting research. TP4 claimed that when students approach potential participants, specifically teachers "they say no straightforwardly... they don't respond. Bangladeshis particularly are not very helpful in these things." The SPs explained that this problem stems from three factors: 1) participation in a student-research is voluntary, 2) it does not include any incentives or other benefits, and 3) reading the questionnaire carefully is time consuming. In the same way, Synn et al. (2023) have commented that participants' lack of interest in partaking in a research study is associated with the amount of time invested in research while they do not even receive any monetary incentives.

##### 4.1.1.3 Language Barrier and Psychological Aspects Impacting Interviews

With regard to conducting interviews, SPs stated that most students struggle due to: 1) student researchers' lack of experience with interviews, 2) participants' preference of mother tongue, i.e., Bangla, over English, 3) preference of writing over speaking, 4) shyness stemming from unfamiliar research topics, 5) apprehension with being recorded, and 6) student researchers feeling intimidated if the participant is a teacher. With regard to novice researchers, Gönen (2025) stated, "Conducting qualitative research is an arduous task" (p. 213). Additionally, SP1 reported that one of their interviewees gave "the interview in 'Banglish' [as in] Bangla and English mixed. So, it was tough" for them to transcribe the data given the extent of code mixing. This reticence of speaking in English as a foreign language in an EFL setting has been noted by other researchers, which they attributed to a lack of language competency (Murad & Jalambo, 2019).

Furthermore, SPs called attention to the problem of social ostracism giving birth to difficulties in data collection. One of the SPs stated, "I prefer doing qualitative research but because of my fear of social ostracization (due to my gender identity), I often feel discouraged from reaching out to research subjects." In the same manner, Waldeck, Tyndall, and Chmiel (2015) have addressed the issue of social ostracism leading to social anxiety and causing problems for the socially ostracized person while interacting with others.

##### 4.1.1.4 Confusion Regarding Data Analysis

One of the most challenging segments of a research paper was found to be data analysis, as reported by 148 out of 640 students (23.1%) in the open-ended section of the online survey. Students' lack of understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods and data analysis tools, for instance- SPSS, Power BI, and PLS, make this process harder, which they are rarely taught academically. Regarding this one SP stated, "I find it difficult to present my findings clearly." Similarly, Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) conducted a study in the Libyan context where he commented on the complex nature of data analysis. Furthermore, Kumar and Rao (2018) performed a study on international journal standards, in which they addressed the complexity of data analysis as well, adding validity to the global nature of this issue, which student researchers across the board have to face. In this regard, recent studies have advocated the use of AI to help analyze data; however, they also emphasized that the analysis would be led by humans where AI would be used as an assistance tool only (Cohn et al., 2025). Moreover, SPs expressed that many participants do not provide honest feedback making data analysis all the more problematic for them. This finding is in consonance with Sarkar's (2014) study on conducting educational research in Bangladesh as a student researcher, where the researcher found participants trying to portray what is desirable rather than what is honest and giving answers that they think would be "correct" than authentic.

##### 4.1.1.5 Evidence of a Knowledge Gap with Discussion Writing

SPs were seen to underestimate the complexity of writing discussion in both the close-ended (20%) and open-ended (8.9%) sections of the online survey. Whereas, Sitompul and Anditasari (2022) reported that students found the discussion to be the most challenging section of research writing. This contrast can be explained by previous studies where a gap had been detected between the understandings of the

student researchers regarding their difficulties vs. the understanding of the experts (Cheung, 2013). Furthermore, some studies found students overestimating their abilities (Tarchi & Ledesma, 2024) similar to the findings of the current study, where students were seen to overestimate their discussion writing ability. In that sense, students might often be wrong in detecting where their weakness lies. Consequently, further data from the online survey indicated a knowledge gap in students' discussion writing practices given that 42.7% of SPs admitted to simply stating their findings in the discussion without making comparisons between their own findings and findings from preexistent literature. This finding aligns with other studies in the EFL context conducted on master's level Malang students (Sitompul & Anditasari, 2022) and post-graduate level Indonesian students (Wardhana et al. 2019), where regardless of the dissimilarity in their country of origin and study level, similar results were found.

#### 4.1.2 Challenges Related to the System

Several challenges related to the system were revealed during the study, such as issues related to research methodology teaching, lack of funding, lack of resources, lack of information literacy among students, and time constraint. Some of the notable findings from this section have been given below-

##### 4.1.2.1 Issues Related to Research Methodology Teaching

SPs reported that instructors often gave an emphasis on outdated or irrelevant aspects of research instead of staying current on journal publishers' expectations. One of the SPs stated "The shortcomings of teachers in guiding students through research are glaring and detrimental to the academic progress of those who are seeking to publish in international journals." Coinciding with this is Mathur's (2019) study where it was found that research methodology trainers are at times oblivious to the contemporary advances in the pertinent pedagogical field, impacting their teaching negatively. Several researchers, over the years and across the globe, have explored the issues of lack of expertise of supervisors as a dominant challenge relating to EFL student research (Awofeso et al., 2020; Elmabruk & Bishti, 2020). Researchers have advocated allocation of experts to teach research methodology courses (Rahman et al., 2020), suggested additional teacher training (Perines, 2021), and found that students reported improved comprehension of complex concepts when training programs are directed by experts (Cevik & Abu-Zidan, 2024).

##### 4.1.2.1 Lack of Funding Interfering with Research

In terms of systemic obstacles, the lack of funding emerged as a significant issue for student researchers based on the finding of both the statistical part of the survey and the open-ended section. Ewaoche, Ozuma, Marta, and Atanda (2025) confirmed lack of budget leading to a deteriorating standard in terms of research training. Interestingly, a quantitative study was undertaken by Kumar et al. (2019) on 687 university students from Pakistan, and the study reported that 83.26% of students believed scarcity of finance was an obstacle for their research. In like manner, Assar et al. (2022) conducted a study on graduates from Algeria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and Sudan where the researchers stated that financing or a lack of it was identified as a barrier as well, which was reported by 62% of the student population. Based on the survey results for our particular study, which is set in Bangladesh, it was found that 67.3% of the SPs reported a lack of funding to be a problem for them, which coincided more with Assar et al.'s (2022) study. In case of Kumar et al.'s (2019) study, it sampled students from both public and private universities; however, for the current investigation, students from only private universities were sampled, which could account for the difference in the percentages between these two studies.

#### 4.1.3 Drawbacks Related to Student Researchers

##### 4.1.3.1 The Issue of Plagiarism in Student Papers

One prominent problem related to student-generated research papers came up while interviewing TPs is the issue of plagiarism. Interestingly, the SPs shed a different light on the issue. SPs explained that considering literature review section is created based on information accumulated from other sources, there remains a high chance of plagiarism being detected. According to one of the SPs, "Sometimes different software like Turnitin or Mendeley shows plagiarism even if in-text citation or reference is provided." Interestingly, quantitative data revealed that SPs believed they knew how to cite sources; however, it was still being flagged as plagiarized. This could point toward the conclusion that, perhaps, the student researchers did not realize that there might be a gap in their knowledge regarding proper citation practices, leading to a high percentage of flagged passages. Moreover, these findings were reinforced by that of recent studies which pointed out that knowledge deficiency regarding citation conventions (Du Du et al., 2025; Erysyad & Cahyono, 2025) leading to their inappropriate use coupled with students' tendency to be overly dependent on direct quotations were likely causing a high quantity of passages being marked as flagged in their papers (Altikriti, 2022).

##### 4.1.3.2 Students' Demand for Universal Rules

SPs, during the FGD, were of the opinion that there should be a set of universal rules, which are to be followed collectively by all the journals. However, the TPs maintained that it was not pragmatic to propose rules which would be considered universal given that journals have a standard of their own. Regarding this TP5 stated, "each and every journal, it has some sort of a standard. So it's not possible to suggest you have one size fits all... [which is] going to be universally publishable." Hence, as an alternative to universal rules, a suggestion made by Paltridge (2017) regarding training student researchers on the peer-review process might be useful, which can serve as a guide for students to better understand the differences in journal requirements. Likewise, Stupacher (2025) pointed out the paucity of peer-review training in the tertiary level education and advocated its implementation accordingly.

##### 4.1.3.3 Student Researchers' Lack of Initiative in Publishing

The online survey revealed that more than two-third (68.1%) of SPs never attempted to publish their papers, which aligned FGD findings as well. Furthermore, SPs reported a lack of resources at the university and inadequate guidance from instructors discouraging them from attempting to publish their papers. This finding aligned with Elkut (2025) as well as Elmabruk and Bishti's (2020) findings. Of note, although Elmabruk and Bishti's (2020) study was set in the Libyan EFL context and the current study was conducted in the Bangladesh EFL context, the challenges that they had to encounter remained constant indicating a systemic issue. According to the TPs, the students at the graduate level were intellectually well-equipped to go for publication; however, students' misconception regarding publication being undertaken only by extraordinary people led to a lack of confidence. TP3 commented, "they [students] think that publication is done by people who are super smart and super educated and all of that. It's not." Regarding this, past literature suggested that factors, such as peer pressure and social comparisons, have a role to play in creating this psychological barrier, considering when students witness their peers having achievement in publication, they assume that only extraordinary people can have this success, further contributing to this misconception by forming an endless cycle of feelings of inadequacy (Pioneer Academics, 2022).

#### 4.2 2nd Research Question Findings

The second research question deals with improving the quality of student-generated research papers in order to make them more publishable internationally, and the findings relevant to this have been discussed below-

##### 4.2.1 Qualities of a Publishable Research Paper

It was observed that 46.1% SPs denied being explicitly aware of the qualities that a research paper should have to be deliberated as publishable by international journals. During the teacher interviews, the experienced researchers specified certain characteristics in this regard. Firstly, TPs alluded to the importance of a paper having originality and a unique perspective, which produces newer findings. Similarly, TP2 discussed, "Even if you are choosing a topic that's common and you're researching it from a different perspective in your context, then it can get published." This finding is mirrored in the work of Edmans (2023) who concluded that if the findings of a research paper did not bring anything new to the table and were just a repetition of preexistent work in that field, the editors of journals were not likely to accept that paper for publication. Secondly, the TPs laid emphasis on the language of the research paper or the writing style of the author. In line with this is Ganji and Derakhshan's (2020) study, in which the scholars claimed that the journal editors can be effectively swayed by the researchers considering that the content of the research paper is illustrated in an accurate, immaculate, and structured language. Moreover, preexistent literature identified the most common reasons for a research paper getting rejected, including the writing style of the researcher being unintelligible (Kumar & Rao, 2018). Other researchers have pointed out the lack of writing literacy to be common among tertiary level students (Mudau, Cekiso, & Mandende, 2025) as well as their ineptitude in explaining their ideas (Marsevani, Yeo, & Nurlaily, 2025).

Thirdly, TPs stated that student researchers need to have a more focused area of research, considering vagueness of research area and research objectives is found frequently in student-generated papers. Consequently, TP3 opined, "A well-researched research paper is situated in a well-researched area." This perfectly aligned with Ganji and Derakhshan's (2020) findings where the scholars identified explicit objectives and research problems among the features that a research paper should contain. According to Almusaed, Almssad, and Yitmen (2025), "Formulating specific and unambiguous research questions and goals is not just a formality; it is a vital component of ensuring that research makes a meaningful and successful contribution to knowledge advancement in various fields" (p.99). Finally, it was the TPs' suggestion to format the paper according to the author-guidelines of a specific journal as well as to select a journal the aims and scope of which match that of their own papers. In a similar manner, Kumar and Rao (2018) found that most of the times a research paper was declined given that the objective of the journal and the outcomes of the research might not attach any further merit to that specific journal.

##### 4.2.2 Self-Enhancement of Students as Researchers

Several steps related to the students' self-enhancement as researchers were identified in the study, such as practicing persistence and perseverance, seeking help from a mentor, taking submission preparations, and treating rejection as a learning curve. Some of the notable findings from this section have been given below-

###### 4.2.2.1 Practicing Persistence and Perseverance

The experienced researchers or TPs, during the in-person interviews, stressed the importance of recognizing the fact that enhancement in research competence was something that was attained gradually, instead of instantaneously, and recommended one to practice persistence and perseverance in this regard. TP1 conveyed, "Research is tedious task...that is why it is something prestigious. A researcher should give...adequate time and labor." Recent studies have directly associated students' success in learning with perseverance (Zhao & Tu, 2024). Keeping with this, Langum and Sullivan (2020) claimed that mastering the art of research and belief in oneself as a researcher is brought about with persistence and practice. Due to this, a great deal of self-independence and a sense of aptitude to welcome obligation has become a necessity on the part of the student researchers.

###### 4.2.2.2 Submission Preparations

TPs stated that the work is not done after students submit a paper for a course, given that a greater amount of labor, time, and energy is required on the students' part to take it to publication level. TPs strongly recommended selecting an apt journal and formatting the paper according to their author-guidelines for it is easier to have a paper published when it is structured properly. In this regard, TP3 claimed

that “research is structured work... How knowledgeable you are, that doesn’t matter. What matters is how you put your knowledge in a structured fashion.” Similarly, Ersyad and Cahyono (2025) found that comprehending the research structure is a significant challenge for student researchers. In the online survey, a total of 31.9% of SPs reported to have taken the initiative to publish their papers, out of which one-third reported problems choosing the right journals and one-third mentioned difficulty understanding journal scopes. This finding falls in line with past studies where researchers explored the complexities researchers in general faced with choosing apt journals (Remya et al., 2024) and formatting their papers for publication. Altikriti (2022) attributed these difficulties to lack of knowledge regarding different formatting styles causing researchers to go through a state of chaos or dishevelment.

#### 4.2.2.3 Treating Rejection as a Learning Curve

TPs laid stress on the fact that rejection was a natural part of the publication process. With regard to this, TP3 commented, “rejection is the name of the game.” Correspondingly, TPs explained that getting rejected upfront did not necessarily mean that the researcher’s work was not good enough. Rather the case might be that the work did not fit in the journal at that particular time or there might have been a high competition or some unknown circumstances causing rejection regardless of the paper’s quality. This statement aligned perfectly with Prathap et al.’s (2019) study, which found that it was not uncommon that journal publishers end up rejecting a manuscript, albeit it being of superior standard, merely due to space limitations or some other reason. Interestingly, the student researchers from the FGD further added that the reviewers’/editorial boards’ feedback was valuable for refining the rejected articles, which could be used in perfecting their upcoming papers. This line of thought appertains to the findings of Andersson et al. (2022) and Wu et al. (2024), where graduate students recognized the value of such feedback.

#### 4.2.3 Systemic Enhancement at a Broader Level

##### 4.2.3.1 Need for Proper Training

Both the TPs and the SPs strongly advocated the need for explicit academic training for the novice student researchers on the process of research publication. With reference to this, SP10 argued that “no course include[s] anything about research publication process training.” With regard to this, scholars stated, “despite their importance, formal training in peer review skills in higher education is scarce” (Stupacher, 2025, p.211). Flowerdew (2022) claimed that it is indispensable that student researchers be facilitated with optimal directions to precipitate the process both in terms of the phases of composition and publication preparations. With regard to the conundrum of diverse journal guidelines/preferences, SPs suggested being trained on different journals (i.e., the aims, scopes, and rules) as a part of their research methodology course as well as receiving additional workshops, which align with Wali’s (2024) study.

##### 4.2.3.2 Fostering Research Culture in Bangladesh

The experienced researchers surmised that, in Bangladesh, students basically have no acquaintanceship with research before coming to the universities, which was a significant downside. Thus, the TPs advocated a need for fostering research culture in the country. Regarding this, TP5 contended that “in our country, still...research culture is not that much promoted.” Multiple efforts have been made to bring changes and revise the curriculum; however, due to hurdles associated with a lack of research-focused pedagogy and inadequate teacher training, learners’ research exposure have remained rather dissatisfactory (Kibria & Hasan, 2024).

Furthermore, TPs described that the students in Bangladesh are unaware regarding the benefits of research at a personal as well as communal level. Additionally, qualitative data revealed that students only undertake research as an obligatory academic burden. One of the SPs stated, “I don’t like to write research paper[s], I prefer to give exams.” Regarding Bangladesh students’ reluctance and resistance towards conducting research, Mithila (2024) discussed that students are found to be simply following a prescribed academic path, and as a result, they feel disconnected from the purpose of research. This stands in stark contrast to studies performed on tertiary level students from other parts of the globe, for instance- Truong et al.’s (2023) research on Vietnamese students, Perines’ study (2021) on Chilean students, and Knight et al.’ research (2021) on American students – all of which showed that the learners were very much aware of the significance of conducting research at the tertiary level and due to this had a welcoming outlook towards contributing as student researchers in this field. Moreover, Jama (2026) reported that a lack of research culture and research infrastructure work as an obstacle when it comes to research and publication. Additionally, Perines (2021) suggested that in promoting a positive research culture the need for a research infrastructure, which is supportive, can play a key role.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

With regard to the first research question, it can be concluded that Bangladesh tertiary EFL students find it the most difficult to choose a research-worthy topic, detect a research gap, write literature review, collect and analyze data, and construct methodology; on the other hand, they find it least difficult to write discussion, conclusion, and follow grammar and mechanics. The challenges students face is seen to stem from 2 primary sources in this regard: 1) challenges related to the system and 2) drawbacks related to student researchers. Moreover, students’ lack of attempt in publishing is connected to students’ publication knowledge gap, for which two recommendations can be offered: 1) inclusion of training on different journals and 2) novice student researchers familiarizing themselves with the research process by reading diverse kinds of journal articles. With reference to the second research question, the result shows a multifold recommendation offered by the experts on the qualities of a publishable research paper. The experienced researchers recommended that the paper have originality and unique perspective, effective language, a focused research area, and to aptly select journals for publication.

Subsequently, the results indicate that tertiary EFL students can take certain steps towards self-enhancement as researchers, such as

practicing persistence and perseverance, seeking help from a mentor, taking submission preparations, and treating rejection as a learning curve. In addition, steps towards systemic enhancement have been identified in this study to produce more polished and internationally publishable student-generated papers. Firstly, there is a dire need for proper training, including redesigning research methodology courses and providing additional institutional support (e.g., structured mentorship programs and workshops). Secondly, a need for fostering research culture in Bangladesh to help introduce students beforehand and the society, in general, to the significance of research. As discussed in Bangladesh's National Education Policy (NEP, 2010), emphasis has been given on research skill development in tertiary education to ensure ability to compete globally in the field of education and generating knowledge. Considering research culture is promoted and different stakeholders in the country are introduced to the numerous benefits of research, it can potentially help generate more research funding, which should, in turn, assist in mitigating funding and resource issues.

The limitations of the study lie in the fact that data collection has been limited to only private university and urban areas; hence, the results may not be broadly generalized. Furthermore, biases may occur due to self-report inventories. Thus, if merged with neutral review, this might enhance the precision of the study. Additionally, for a deeper understanding, further studies can be conducted on public university students and rural areas.

The results reveal that students struggle with plagiarism being detected in literature review even though in-text citation or reference is provided. Thus, further research is needed to assess whether plagiarism is being detected inaccurately or due to student researchers not following proper citation practices. Moreover, it is astounding to see students' perception of the discussion segment as one of the least difficult areas of a research paper being contradicted by their gap of knowledge in proper discussion writing practices. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address students' knowledge gap with regard to the discussion segment to figure out any new insights into this problem.

The role of research is, perhaps, incontrovertible when it comes to producing and engendering authentic knowledge in any discipline of higher education. Academic implications based on the findings, including expert insights regarding increasing publishability of student-generated research papers at an international level, are anticipated to be of benefit to both students and instructors involved in research globally as well as curriculum/instructional designers on a wider scope to further enhance pedagogical practices. Thus, this "research on research" has the prospective for enhancing research writing, research practices, and research teaching in general.

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#### **Authors' contributions**

Micelia Mabin were responsible for conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, visualization, writing original draft, review and editing. Dr. Sukanto Roy was responsible for supervision, project administration, resources, review, and editing. Khadiza Naznin Huda was responsible for review, proofreading, and editing. Mimosa Mabin was responsible for investigation, resources, review, and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. Dr. Sukanto Roy, Khadiza Naznin Huda, and Mimosa Mabin contributed equally as the second authors to the study.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

#### **Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Focus Group Discussion Questions**

1. Could you explain why getting enough participants for data collection is often challenging for student researchers?
2. Why do you think students struggle while conducting in-person interviews as well as while analyzing the qualitative data thematically?
3. What do you think about the level of support you get from your course instructor/supervisor while conducting research? In a reasonable way, how could they help you even more? (will add follow-up questions if feasible)
4. How well do you believe students are trained on the research publication process?
5. What kind of difficulties did you face while trying to publish your research paper? (i.e., did you understand the author guidelines, did you receive any feedback, did you understand the feedback, etc.)

## **Appendix B**

### **Teacher In-Person Interview Questions**

1. Could you please name some of the journals you have published with?
2. According to you, what are the challenges students face when it comes to conducting research?
3. What are the solutions to overcome these challenges? (will add follow-up questions if feasible)
4. In general, what qualities do you think a research paper should have to make it more publishable in international journals?
5. What are the barriers of publishing a student-generated research paper? How can students overcome these barriers? (will add follow-up questions if feasible)