

Collaboration Strategy of Lecturers and Students in Improving Research Quality in the Accounting Department

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Abstract. This study aims to explore collaboration strategies between lecturers and students that can be designed and implemented to improve the quality of research. Using a qualitative approach, this study was conducted in the Accounting Department, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Medan where data collection was carried out through interviews and document observation. The results of the study indicate that the forms of collaboration that occur in the Accounting Department include collaboration in lecturer research projects, theses based on lecturer research themes, student involvement in lecturer academic seminars and forums, and joint writing of scientific articles. Strategies to strengthen collaboration include the implementation of course-based research programs, the formation of permanent research teams between lecturers and students, the regular holding of methodology and scientific writing workshops, the integration of research activities into the student academic assessment system, and the provision of incentives to students involved in research collaborations.

Keywords: Research Collaboration, Lecturers, Students, Accounting Department.

1 Introduction

As a key component in enhancing a university's academic reputation, research is also a key indicator in the accreditation process and in the assessment of lecturer performance. Improving research quality cannot be achieved individually but requires a structured, collaborative approach. In the context of higher education, where research topics are increasingly complex and require methodological rigor, the involvement of multiple parties is essential.[1] Students in an academic environment should not only be positioned as objects of learning, but also as research partners.[2] who can collaborate to develop ideas and produce findings relevant to scientific developments. Meanwhile, lecturers, as academic supervisors, have the responsibility to foster and guide students in a systematic scientific thinking process.[3].

Seeing the challenges faced in conducting research in an academic environment, a strategic approach is needed that is able to systematically address these various obstacles.[4], [5] One approach that needs attention is collaboration between lecturers and students, which is not only technical but also pedagogical and strategic. [6] This approach is considered relevant because it

is able to optimize the potential of human resources available on campus through complementary collaboration.[7]Lecturers, as those with experience, methodology, and access to academic networks, can act as facilitators, encouraging students to actively engage in scientific research. Conversely, students with an exploratory spirit and sensitivity to contemporary issues can provide fresh perspectives in research. Collaboration between the two not only accelerates research completion but also broadens the scope and depth of the resulting scientific content.[3], [8].

Lecturer-student research collaboration has significant potential to improve the quality of scientific publications and develop the competencies of young researchers.[9]However, although the importance of this collaboration has been widely recognized, its implementation still faces various challenges.[10], ranging from the digital competency gap to the lack of a structured mentorship model[11]Collaboration between lecturers as supervisors and students as junior researchers opens up opportunities to enhance students' research capacity while simultaneously expanding lecturers' scientific productivity. In developing this capacity, students receive direct guidance and active involvement in research projects, while lecturers can expand their research horizons through mentoring and co-authorship. Studies show that student involvement in academic research has been shown to strengthen their problem-solving, analytical, and scientific writing skills.[12], [13]More broadly, this kind of collaboration supports a more inclusive and productive culture of science, in line with the academic quality management literature.

In recent decades, collaboration between lecturers and students in research activities has become an important highlight in developing the quality of higher education.[9], [14], [15]Universities are not only required to produce competent graduates but also to act as centers of innovation and producers of quality knowledge. In this context, research collaboration between faculty and students is seen as an effective strategy for improving the quality of scientific publications while simultaneously developing students' research competencies as future researchers.[16]Through this collaboration, students not only gain real-world experience conducting research but also engage directly in the knowledge production process, which has a broad impact, both academically and practically.

The importance of this collaboration becomes even more apparent when looking at the international trend in increasing academic productivity involving students as co-authors in scientific publications.[7].[11]emphasized that research collaboration between lecturers and students in small teams has been proven to produce articles with higher academic impact than research conducted by students or lecturers alone. This means that such collaboration is not only pedagogical but also strategic in the context of competition for scientific publications at the national and global levels.

Furthermore, research collaboration also plays an important role in shaping students' character and competencies.[17]. Study[18]shows that when students are actively involved in lecturer research projects, especially over a period of more than one year, they not only experience an increased understanding of methodology, but also show significant growth in critical thinking, data analysis, and scientific writing skills.[11], [17]In many cases, this experience serves as a starting point that encourages students to pursue careers in academics or professional research.[19].

However, although the potential for collaborative research between lecturers and students is enormous, there are still challenges that need to be overcome, especially regarding experience gaps, time constraints, and institutional structures that do not yet fully support such collaborative practices systematically.[4], [5]. In his studies on cognitive and neuroscience[10] suggest that academic structures and cultures that support formal collaboration can help students overcome psychological and technical barriers in the publication process.[18], [20]In other words, higher education institutions need to provide mechanisms that encourage long-term and mutualistic collaboration between lecturers and students.[4].

Given this reality, research on collaborative research between lecturers and students is crucial. It serves not only as an academic study but also as a tangible contribution to building an inclusive and sustainable research ecosystem. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the forms, challenges, and impacts of collaborative research between lecturers and students, thus providing a basis for policymaking in research development in higher education.

2 Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of collaborative strategies between lecturers and students in research activities at the Accounting Department, Faculty of Economics, State University of Medan. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences of informants regarding the dynamics of academic collaboration that occur within the context of higher education institutions. This research is descriptive and exploratory, with a primary focus on uncovering interaction patterns, barriers, and strategies for strengthening research collaboration within the academic environment.

Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus. The informants consisted of:

- Five permanent lecturers in the Accounting Department actively supervise theses or involve students in research projects.
- Five final year students (semesters 7–8) who have experience in research activities, either as thesis writers, PKM participants, or lecturer research assistants.
- One structural official of the department (head of department or secretary of department) as a key informant who provides policy information and research facilitation at the department level.

Data is collected through three main techniques:

- In-depth interviews with semi-structured guidelines, to explore informants' perceptions, experiences, obstacles, and expectations regarding research collaboration.
- Limited participatory observation was conducted on academic activities such as proposal seminars, thesis guidance, and PKM presentations to observe the form of collaborative interaction directly.

- Documentation studies, used to analyze supporting documents such as research reports, joint publications, PKM programs, and thesis guidance guidelines.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various informants and using different data collection techniques (interviews, observations, documentation). Data validation was also strengthened through member checking, which involved clarifying interview results with the informant to ensure the researcher's interpretation aligns with the informant's intent.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was carried out in the following stages:

1. Transcription and data reduction
All interviews were recorded (with the informants' consent) and transcribed verbatim. The data were then reduced to identify those relevant to the research focus.
2. Coding
Each meaningful data segment was assigned an initial code. For example, statements about the benefits of collaboration would be coded as positive perceptions, strengthening research skills, or increasing academic motivation. Coding was conducted openly and developed into subthemes.
3. Categorization and theme formation
The initial codes were grouped into categories with similar meanings. From these categories, the researchers developed main themes reflecting the analysis results, such as: "Forms of lecturer-student collaboration," "Barriers to collaboration," "Factors supporting collaboration," and "Models of collaboration strengthening strategies."
4. Data interpretation
The resulting themes were interpreted contextually and theoretically to address the research questions. The interpretation took into account local dynamics, institutional policies, and relevant literature supporting the findings.
5. Drawing conclusions
Conclusions are drawn up based on the dominant thematic patterns that emerge, and are explained in a scientific narrative that includes direct quotes from informants to support the validity of the findings.

Through this method, the research is expected to be able to produce a complete and in-depth picture of the practice of research collaboration between lecturers and students, as well as contribute to the development of institutional strategies to improve the quality of research in higher education, especially in the accounting department.

The data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method developed by [21], with the following steps:

1. Transcription and familiarization: All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher then reread them to gain a comprehensive understanding.
2. Initial coding: creating initial codes based on themes that emerge from the data.
3. Identify themes: grouping codes into themes.
4. Review and refinement of themes: identified themes were reviewed to ensure coherence and relevance.

5. Interpretation and drawing conclusions: interpreting findings using an Islamic normative approach and linking them to the theory of accountability in education.

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3 Results and Discussion

In general, the results of this study reveal a number of important dimensions, starting from the forms of collaboration, supporting and inhibiting factors, perceptions of the parties regarding the benefits of collaboration, to strategies that have been implemented or have the potential to be developed so that in the end they can answer the formulation of the basic problem of this study.

The results of the study indicate that the forms of collaboration that occur in the Accounting Department include: (1) collaboration in lecturer research projects, (2) theses based on lecturer research themes, (3) student involvement in lecturer seminars and academic forums, and (4) joint writing of scientific articles. The level of student involvement varies, from simply being a data collection assistant to being the main author in a joint publication. Lecturers' motivation for collaboration is the encouragement of implementing the Tri Dharma of higher education, achieving performance targets, and efforts to develop a generation of young researchers. Students are motivated by direct experience, publication opportunities, and self-capacity improvement.

Collaboration between lecturers and students occurs at various levels and formats. At the most basic level, students are involved as research assistants, assisting primarily with technical processes such as questionnaire data collection, statistical processing with software, or reference searches. However, in some more advanced cases, students are involved from the problem formulation stage alongside lecturers, even being given space to write certain sections of the article, such as the literature review or discussion. Co-authorship between lecturers and students also occurs, although in relatively small numbers. Several successfully published research titles demonstrate that collaboration involving students from the beginning of the research process provides a greater sense of ownership and enriches the analytical approach.

Students reported that, during many thesis guidance sessions, lecturers frequently engaged them in open discussions, extending to the research methodology level. This collaboration helped students develop more systematic and critical research thinking. Furthermore, lecturers noted that by involving students as discussion partners, they could broaden their perspectives in developing conceptual frameworks or provide fresh ideas from a young perspective.

Furthermore, several supporting factors were identified based on the results of in-depth interviews and observations. The primary factor is the lecturer's commitment to allocating time and space for collaboration, for example, by scheduling regular mentoring sessions and providing constructive feedback. Lecturers who are able to adapt their mentoring approach to student characteristics will be more successful in building productive relationships. This capability encompasses not only technical aspects, such as mastery of methodology or theory, but also interpersonal aspects, such as patience, openness, and constructive communication.

Good mentoring contributes to increased student confidence in conducting research and encourages them to participate more actively in academic discussions and the publication process. Successful collaboration between lecturers and students is also facilitated by faculty policies that integrate collaborative research findings into students' final assignments and encourage joint publication. These policies not only provide motivation but also ensure the sustainability of research programs within the academic environment.

Another supporting factor is the shared research interests between lecturers and students. When a student's research topic aligns with the lecturer's expertise and interests, academic interactions become more intense and meaningful. Similarities in research topics and fields encourage emotional and intellectual engagement in the mentoring process, thereby accelerating the achievement of research goals and improving research quality. This also allows students to access the lecturer's academic network, whether in the form of external collaborators, scientific journals, or scientific forums.

Furthermore, mastery of research methodology and digital literacy are also crucial supporting factors. In today's digital era, successful research collaborations are also supported by the ability to use statistical software, reference management applications, and the ability to search literature from international databases. Lecturers who teach these skills directly to students can accelerate the research process and improve the quality of research results. Students' ability to access and manage information sources digitally is a crucial asset in boosting research productivity.

Despite the positive potential, this research also identified several major obstacles. The first obstacle is limited time. Lecturers are often burdened with administrative duties, teaching, and academic services, making it difficult to find time for collaborative research with students. Similarly, students, who are busy completing courses and facing non-academic demands, sometimes struggle to participate optimally. This time gap leads to ad hoc collaboration processes that lack sustainability.

The second factor is the difference in commitment. While lecturers are motivated to publish, not all students are interested in further research. Some students stated that without concrete incentives like certificates or scholarship opportunities, they tend to focus solely on completing their theses. This demonstrates the need to develop clear non-academic and academic incentives to consistently increase student engagement.

Supporting resources also pose a challenge. Facilities such as access to representative primary data, dedicated research reading rooms, or data collection funding are quite limited. Several informants described having to raise funds privately or enter proposal competitions to conduct field monitoring. This results in longer research timelines and limited data quality.

Despite these challenges, lecturers' and students' perceptions of research collaboration are generally positive. Lecturers see collaboration as a way to accelerate the publication process, boost team morale, and strengthen academic networks. They noted that co-authorship with students can generate research involving a wider age range and more dynamic thinking than if conducted solely individually. One lecturer stated that "with students, I am trained to explain technical matters simply, which improves the quality of my scientific communication."

Students reported that collaborative research experiences provided hands-on learning skills such as data analysis, time management, and academic writing. One student said, "I learned that journal writing isn't just about the data, but how to create a well-structured, logical argument." They also acknowledged that engaging in research early on better prepared them for master's

degrees or future research careers. Collaboration also enhanced the sophistication of research methodology. Professors with access to software packages like SPSS, Smart PLS, or NVivo helped students understand appropriate quantitative and qualitative analysis. This enabled students' research to be not only descriptive, but also analytical and comparative—something that has long been a requirement for journal quality.

Based on the patterns and perceptions above, this study formulated several strategies that have been and could be developed. The first strategy is the formation of thematic research groups, for example, research groups on auditing, taxation, Islamic financial accounting, and others. With a smaller membership, these groups are easier to manage, accommodate student involvement, and provide structured role allocation. Second, the design of a collaborative research training module for students. This module covers the stages of problem identification, method selection, article writing, and publication ethics. Third, incentives are provided in the form of official recognition (certificates, co-authorship), a small publication allowance (publication fund), and awards for lecturers who pioneer successful collaborations leading to journal publications. Within the faculty, this reward model encourages a culture of healthy competition and does not rely solely on intrinsic motivation. Lecturers and students stated that these awards spur their insights to be more productive and high-quality.

Research collaboration between lecturers and students holds various strategic opportunities that have not been fully utilized optimally.[22]Among these opportunities lies the development of human resources in research from an early age. Students involved in research activities with lecturers not only gain a deeper theoretical understanding but also hone practical skills such as methodology design, data collection and analysis, and scientific writing.[3]This is an important foundation for creating a generation of young researchers who are independent and globally competitive. Another opportunity lies in increasing the quantity and quality of scientific publications.[22]In an era of increasingly fierce academic competition, collaboration with students can expand the capacity of lecturers to produce more research output, while also providing space for students to participate in reputable publications.[11].

In addition, this collaboration also opens up opportunities for creating an interdisciplinary approach in research.[23], [24]Students from diverse academic backgrounds often bring fresh, innovative perspectives to a research problem. When faculty are willing to open up spaces for discussion and collaborative experimentation, a synergy of thought can be created that can produce more creative and relevant findings to address the challenges of the times.[25]. The next opportunity is to increase the competitiveness of institutions[8]Universities that systematically encourage lecturer-student research collaboration will have advantages in various aspects, from accreditation and obtaining research grants to national and international academic reputation.[19]Students who are active in research also tend to have a strong portfolio when they continue their studies to a higher level or enter the innovation-based workforce.[26].

Finally, this collaboration has the potential to create a healthy and participatory academic culture.[25]. Through involvement in research, students feel like they are part of a scientific community, not just passive recipients of knowledge in the classroom.[27]This will build their academic confidence and foster a sustainable scientific ethos. With these opportunities, collaborative research between lecturers and students is truly a long-term investment that can provide significant benefits, not only for the individuals involved, but also for the institution and the advancement of science in general.[5].

4 Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that faculty-student collaboration in research is not merely an option, but a strategic necessity for universities seeking to improve the quality of publications and academic reputation in the modern era. While barriers such as limited time and incentives persist, thematic collaboration strategies, multi-layered mentoring, training modules, and reward systems have proven effective in fostering an inclusive and productive research culture.

As a recommendation, this study suggests that departments and faculties integrate this collaborative model into academic policies, provide dedicated research development funds for collaboration, and provide regular training for lecturers and students to foster a thriving research climate. For further research, large-scale quantitative analyses are recommended to measure the long-term impact on the number and quality of publications, as well as the publication rate in national and international journals.

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