



Barriers to Educational Technology Integration in Higher Education Institutions: Perspectives from College Teachers in Nepal

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Abstract

The integration of educational technology in higher education has become indispensable for enhancing instructional quality and fostering modern, student-centered learning environments. However, in developing countries such as Nepal, the effective incorporation of digital technologies into everyday teaching practices remains significantly constrained by a complex set of interrelated barriers. While prior studies have extensively explored technology adoption frameworks and faculty readiness indicators, comparatively limited scholarly attention has been directed toward the concrete and specific challenges that hinder actual technology integration from the practical perspective of teaching professionals operating in resource-constrained settings.

This study systematically examines the barriers affecting educational technology integration in higher education institutions in Nepal, drawing upon survey data collected from 68 college teaching professionals distributed across multiple districts and institutional types. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, the study identifies and analyses four primary categories of barriers: institutional barriers including limited training opportunities and weak support structures; technological and infrastructural barriers such as unreliable internet connectivity and inadequate hardware; human and skill-related barriers encompassing digital competency gaps and confidence deficits; and external and contextual barriers including policy implementation gaps and socio-economic constraints.

The findings reveal that institutional barriers, particularly the absence of structured professional development programs and insufficient administrative support, represent the most significant impediments to effective technology integration, closely followed by technological infrastructure challenges. Human factors, while moderately significant, indicate that attitudinal resistance is less acute than structural constraints. External factors related to national policy frameworks further shape the adoption environment. The study underscores that technology integration cannot be achieved through resource provision alone but demands a coordinated, multi-level institutional response involving infrastructure investment, targeted faculty training, clear ICT policies, and sustained leadership commitment. The findings offer empirically grounded, actionable recommendations for college administrators, policymakers, and teaching professionals engaged in advancing meaningful digital integration in Nepal's higher education sector.

Keywords: Educational Technology Integration, Barriers, Higher Education, Institutional Support, Digital Competency, Nepal, Technology Adoption, ICT in Education

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in higher education has profoundly transformed teaching and learning practices across the globe. Educational technologies -encompassing learning management systems (LMS), digital communication platforms, multimedia content creation tools, and internet-based academic resources -have enabled more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered educational environments (Bond *et al.*, 2021) ^[2]. As a result, the effective integration

of technology has emerged as a central institutional priority for higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide.

In Nepal, higher education institutions have progressively adopted digital tools in response to national digitalization initiatives, improved internet connectivity, and heightened awareness of the pedagogical potential of technology. The COVID-19 pandemic further catalyzed this process, compelling teaching professionals to transition to online and hybrid instruction at unprecedented speed (Dhawan, 2020)^[4]. However, the sustainability and depth of this transition have been highly uneven across institutions, reflecting underlying structural, infrastructural, and individual-level disparities.

1.2. Motivation and Problem Statement

Despite increased governmental and institutional investment in educational technology, many Nepalese HEIs continue to face persistent challenges in effectively integrating digital tools into routine instructional practice. A critical gap exists between the availability of technological resources and their meaningful, pedagogically transformative use in teaching activities.

This gap is substantially driven by multiple overlapping barriers -including inadequate ICT infrastructure, inconsistent internet connectivity, limited institutional support, insufficient training and professional development, and individual competency gaps -that collectively suppress technology integration outcomes. Without a clear, systematic understanding of these barriers from the ground-level perspective of teaching professionals, institutional and policy interventions risk remaining superficial and ineffective.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the barriers to educational technology integration in higher education institutions in Nepal. The specific objectives are:

- To identify key barriers affecting educational technology integration among teaching professionals in Nepalese colleges.
- To assess the relative significance of institutional and infrastructural constraints on technology integration.
- To examine challenges related to digital competency, training, and human readiness.
- To analyze external and contextual factors influencing technology integration practices.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for reducing barriers and promoting effective digital integration in higher education.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research contributes empirical evidence on technology integration barriers in Nepal's higher education sector -a domain that remains underrepresented in the global literature. The findings are directly relevant to college administrators, faculty development coordinators, and national education policymakers seeking to design effective, context-sensitive interventions. The study further advances theoretical understanding by applying an integrated barrier-focused analytical framework grounded in multiple domains: institutional, technological, human, and environmental.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Educational Technology Integration in Higher Education

The integration of educational technology in higher education is a complex, multidimensional process shaped by intersecting individual, institutional, and environmental factors. While theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989)^[3] and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003)^[16] have historically emphasized adoption intentions and perceived utility, recent empirical scholarship increasingly foregrounds the practical barriers that constrain actual technology use in teaching practice (Bond *et al.*, 2021; Feng *et al.*, 2025)^[2, 5].

Studies confirm that surface-level technology adoption -defined as basic device usage and digital communication -has increased substantially in recent years, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, pedagogically transformative integration, characterized by student-centered, collaborative, and formative technology applications, remains limited across many institutional contexts (Scherer *et al.*, 2020; Basilotta-Gomez-Pablos *et al.*, 2022)^[1, 14].

2.2. Institutional Barriers

Institutional factors consistently emerge as primary determinants of technology integration outcomes. The absence of clear ICT policies, weak administrative leadership, insufficient training programs, and limited financial investment create systemic barriers that undermine faculty motivation and capacity (Bond *et al.*, 2021; Fernandez-Batanero *et al.*, 2021)^[2, 6]. Research by Feng *et al.* (2025)^[5] identified institutional infrastructure, management encouragement, and professional development as the three highest-impact institutional variables across diverse HEI contexts.

A critical finding in the literature is the gap between institutional intent and operational delivery: institutions that express rhetorical support for digital teaching frequently fail to invest in the structured professional development programs necessary to sustain meaningful technology integration (Revuelta-Dominguez *et al.*, 2022; Howard, 2023)^[12, 7]. Without structured and contextually relevant training, initial adoption gains regress to prior instructional patterns.

2.3. Technological and Infrastructure Barriers

Infrastructure-related constraints -including unreliable electricity supply, inadequate internet bandwidth, limited hardware access, and insufficient technical support -represent the most commonly reported barriers in developing-country HEI contexts (Mishra *et al.*, 2021; UNESCO, 2023)^[9, 15]. These structural deficits create persistent inequalities in technology adoption across urban and rural institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of digital infrastructure in resource-constrained environments, where emergency remote teaching requirements frequently outpaced available technical capacity (Dhawan, 2020; Konig *et al.*, 2022)^[4]. Even when motivated to integrate technology, faculty in infrastructure-limited environments face fundamental physical barriers to consistent practice.

2.4. Human and Skill-Related Barriers

Faculty digital competence and self-efficacy are critical individual-level determinants of technology integration depth. Systematic reviews by Fernandez-Batanero *et al.* (2021)^[6] and Basilotta-Gomez-Pablos *et al.* (2022)^[1] identify limited digital skill, low confidence, and resistance to pedagogical change as primary human barriers. These challenges are particularly pronounced among senior faculty with longer teaching experience and limited exposure to digital pedagogical training during their pre-service education.

Scherer *et al.* (2019)^[13] demonstrated through meta-analytic structural equation modeling that perceived ease of use -a proxy for technical self-efficacy -significantly mediates adoption intentions, highlighting the central role of faculty digital readiness in determining integration outcomes.

2.5. External and Contextual Barriers

National policy frameworks, socioeconomic conditions, and professional norms further shape technology integration in HEIs. While government digital education policies can provide legitimacy and directional guidance, UNESCO (2023)^[15] and OECD (2021)^[11] consistently document implementation deficits that limit the practical impact of policy intent at the institutional level. In developing educational systems, policy frameworks frequently lack the accountability mechanisms and ring-fenced funding allocations necessary for effective implementation.

2.6. Research Gap and Theoretical Framework

Existing scholarship has extensively examined technology adoption intentions and digital readiness but has given comparatively limited attention to the specific, practical barriers that impede integration in teaching practice - particularly from faculty perspectives in developing-country HEI contexts (Bond *et al.*, 2021; Feng *et al.*, 2025)^[2, 5]. This study addresses this gap by systematically analysing multiple categories of barriers within a unified empirical framework informed by TAM and UTAUT constructs, providing actionable insights grounded in the lived experiences of Nepalese teaching professionals.

3.4. Variables of the Study

Table 1: Variables of the Study

Variable Type	Variable Name	Description
Dependent Variable	Technology Integration	Extent to which teachers effectively integrate digital tools into teaching practices
Independent Variable	Institutional Barriers	Lack of support, policies, funding, and training opportunities
Independent Variable	Technological Barriers	Issues related to infrastructure, internet connectivity, and technical resources
Independent Variable	Human Barriers	Limited digital skills, low confidence, and resistance to change
Independent Variable	External Barriers	Policy implementation gaps and contextual/socio-economic constraints

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data were exported from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel and subsequently analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistical methods -including frequency distributions, percentage analyses, mean score computations, and standard deviations -were employed to characterize respondent profiles and identify the relative significance of different barrier categories. Composite construct scores were calculated to enable inter-category

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to systematically examine barriers to educational technology integration in Nepalese HEIs. A quantitative approach is appropriate for this research because it enables structured measurement of teaching professionals' perceptions, identification of barrier patterns across demographic and institutional subgroups, and generation of statistically analyzable, comparable data. The cross-sectional design provides an efficient contemporaneous snapshot of integration challenges without requiring longitudinal follow-up.

3.2. Population, Sampling, and Ethical Considerations

The target population comprised teaching professionals employed in higher education institutions across Nepal. Given practical accessibility constraints, a convenience sampling strategy was employed. A total of 68 valid responses were collected from faculty members spanning public, private, and community colleges distributed across metropolitan, semi-urban, and rural administrative locations. Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the study. Participation was entirely voluntary; all respondents were fully informed of the academic purpose of the research and provided explicit informed consent prior to completing the questionnaire. Strict confidentiality was maintained, and no personally identifiable information was retained in the analytical dataset.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a purpose-designed structured questionnaire administered electronically via Google Forms in both English and Nepali. The instrument comprised five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree) organized into five sections: general demographic information; technological and infrastructure barriers; institutional barriers; human and skill-related barriers; and external and contextual barriers. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs achieving acceptable reliability coefficients (alpha > 0.70).

comparisons and to rank barriers by severity.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 68 teaching professionals participated in this study. The figures below present key demographic distributions across gender, age group, teaching experience, and institutional type, providing contextual grounding for the subsequent barrier analysis.

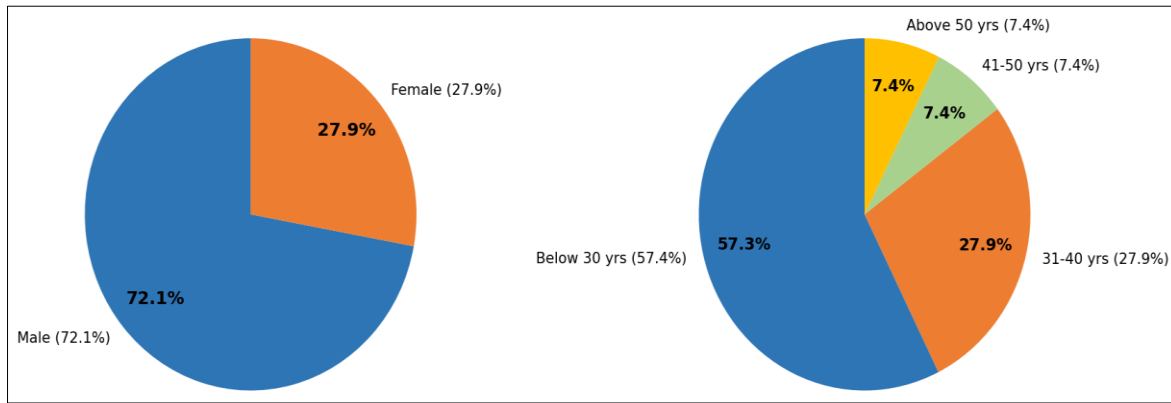


Fig 1 & 2: Gender Distribution and Age Group Distribution of Respondents

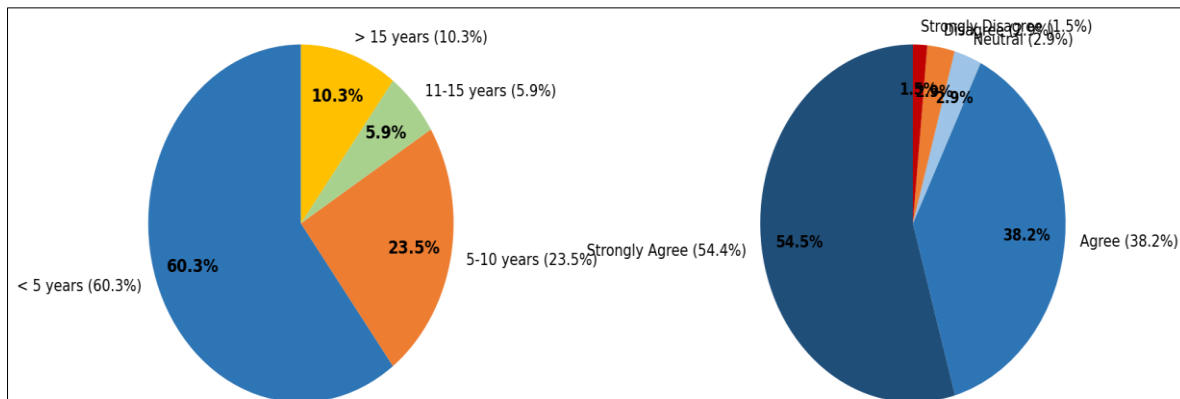


Fig 3 & 4: Teaching Experience Distribution and Digital Device Adoption Responses

The sample was predominantly male (72.1%) and early-career, with 57.4% of respondents below 30 years of age and 60.3% reporting fewer than five years of teaching experience. Private colleges accounted for 66.2% of respondents, and 50.0% were located in metropolitan areas. These

demographic characteristics -particularly the young, early-career profile -have significant implications for interpreting digital readiness and barrier perceptions, as younger educators typically exhibit greater baseline digital fluency.

Table 2: Summary Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Category	Group	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	49	72.1%
Gender	Female	19	27.9%
Age Group	Below 30 years	39	57.4%
Age Group	31–40 years	19	27.9%
Age Group	41–50 years	5	7.4%
Age Group	Above 50 years	5	7.4%
Teaching Experience	< 5 years	41	60.3%
Teaching Experience	5–10 years	16	23.5%
Teaching Experience	> 10 years	11	16.2%
College Type	Private	45	66.2%
College Type	Public/Government	17	25.0%
College Type	Community	6	8.8%

4.2. Technological and Infrastructure Barriers

Technological barriers emerged as highly significant impediments to effective technology integration. Unreliable internet connectivity received the highest mean score within this category (M = 4.12), indicating widespread agreement

that connectivity issues directly constrain faculty ability to use digital tools consistently. Insufficient technical support (M = 4.05) and limited access to adequate devices (M = 3.85) further compound infrastructure-related challenges.

Table 3: Technological and Infrastructure Barriers

Barrier Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Internet connectivity is unreliable for teaching activities	4.12	High Barrier
Technical support is insufficient when problems arise	4.05	High Barrier
Access to adequate digital devices is limited	3.85	Moderate-High Barrier

4.3. Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers represented the most dominant category overall. Limited availability of structured training programs received the highest mean score across all items (M = 4.18), suggesting that the absence of professional development

opportunities is the single most pressing constraint identified by respondents. Lack of institutional support (M = 4.10) and absence of clear ICT policies (M = 3.95) further indicate systemic gaps between institutional intent and operational delivery.

Table 4: Institutional Barriers

Barrier Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Limited training and professional development opportunities	4.18	High Barrier
Lack of institutional support for technology integration	4.10	High Barrier
Absence of clear ICT policies and guidelines	3.95	Moderate-High Barrier

4.4. Human and Skill-Related Barriers

Human-related barriers were moderately significant. Limited digital skills (M = 3.92) and lack of confidence in using technology during teaching activities (M = 3.78) represent meaningful yet less severe constraints compared to

institutional and technological factors. Resistance to changing established teaching methods (M = 3.65) was the least acute barrier within this category, suggesting that attitudinal resistance is not a primary constraint for this predominantly early-career sample.

Table 5: Human and Skill-Related Barriers

Barrier Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Limited digital skills for instructional use	3.92	Moderate-High Barrier
Lack of confidence in using technology for teaching	3.78	Moderate Barrier
Resistance to changing traditional teaching methods	3.65	Moderate Barrier

4.5. External and Contextual Barriers

External barriers also contributed meaningfully to technology integration challenges. Policy implementation gaps (M = 3.95) indicate that national digital education policies are not consistently translated into practical institutional support.

Broader socio-economic constraints (M = 3.82) and limited government-level support (M = 3.88) further shape the operating environment for technology integration across institutions.

Table 6: External and Contextual Barriers

Barrier Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Policy implementation gaps limit ICT adoption	3.95	Moderate-High Barrier
Limited government-level support and funding	3.88	Moderate-High Barrier
Socio-economic constraints restrict technology access	3.82	Moderate Barrier

4.6. Overall Barrier Analysis and Comparative Summary

The composite mean scores for each barrier category reveal a clear hierarchy of constraint severity. Institutional barriers are the most significant (M = 4.08), followed closely by technological barriers (M = 4.01), external barriers (M =

3.88), and human barriers (M = 3.78). This ranking indicates that structural and systemic factors -rather than individual attitudes -represent the primary obstacles to effective technology integration in Nepalese colleges.

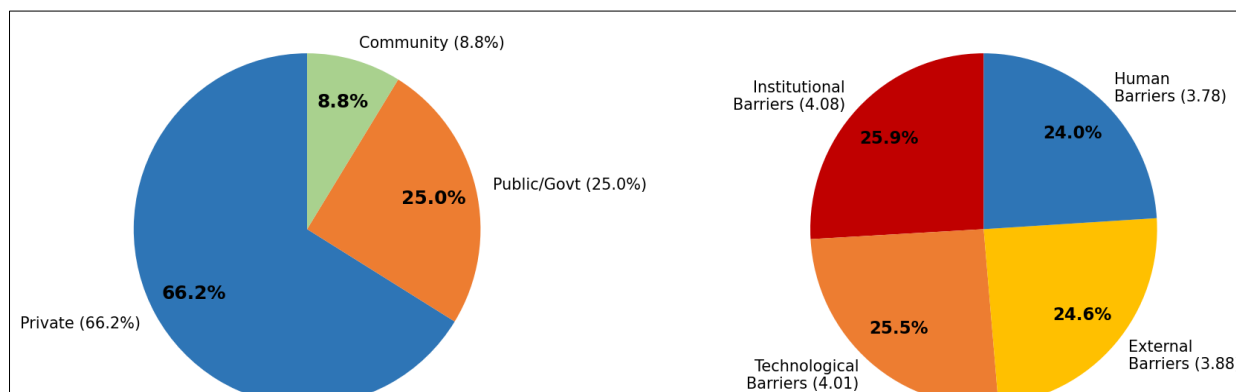


Fig 5 & 6: College Type Distribution and Proportional Representation of Barrier Categories (Based on Mean Scores)

Table 7: Summary of Barrier Categories by Mean Score

Barrier Category	Composite Mean Score	Rank	Severity Level
Institutional Barriers	4.08	1st	High
Technological Barriers	4.01	2nd	High
External Barriers	3.88	3rd	Moderate-High
Human Barriers	3.78	4th	Moderate

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Results

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence that technology integration in Nepalese higher education is constrained by multiple interacting barriers, with institutional and technological factors emerging as the most critical systemic impediments. The dominance of institutional barriers -particularly training deficits and weak support structures -aligns strongly with existing literature emphasizing that professional development and organizational commitment are foundational prerequisites for effective technology integration (Fernandez-Batanero *et al.*, 2021; Feng *et al.*, 2025; Howard, 2023) ^[6, 5, 7].

The prominence of limited training opportunities as the single highest-rated barrier across the entire dataset is particularly noteworthy. It reflects a well-documented pattern in developing-country HEI contexts where management-level enthusiasm for digital education frequently outpaces the development of operational support structures needed to sustain faculty integration capacity (Revuelta-Dominguez *et al.*, 2022) ^[12]. Without sustained, contextually relevant professional development, initial technology adoption gains are unlikely to deepen into pedagogically transformative practices (Scherer *et al.*, 2020) ^[14].

5.2. Technological Barriers in Context

Unreliable internet connectivity and insufficient technical support emerged as the most acute technological barriers, findings consistent with infrastructure challenges broadly documented in developing-country educational systems (Mishra *et al.*, 2021; UNESCO, 2023) ^[9, 15]. These constraints are particularly significant because they impose physical limits on technology integration even when faculty motivation and skills are adequate. The COVID-19 pandemic made these infrastructure deficits highly visible, as the sudden shift to remote teaching exposed the fragility of digital infrastructure across many institutions (Dhawan, 2020; Konig *et al.*, 2022) ^[4].

5.3. Human Factors: A Positive Outlier

A notable finding is that human and skill-related barriers, while present, were rated as less severe than structural constraints. The predominantly young and early-career respondent profile partially explains this relative positivity, as younger faculty typically possess greater digital fluency from informal socialization and pre-service digital experiences (Mishra *et al.*, 2021; Yusuf *et al.*, 2022) ^[9, 17]. This suggests that in the Nepalese college context, the primary leverage point for improving technology integration lies in structural interventions rather than attitudinal change campaigns.

5.4. External Factors and Policy Implementation

External barriers -particularly policy implementation gaps -reinforce findings from international literature indicating that national ICT education policies frequently fail to produce ground-level institutional impact without dedicated funding

mechanisms and accountability structures (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2021) ^[15, 11]. In Nepal, as in many developing HEI systems, the translation of policy intent into concrete institutional resources remains inconsistent, creating a structural gap that suppresses technology integration potential.

5.5. Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings collectively challenge single-factor models of technology adoption by demonstrating that barriers operate as an interconnected system rather than as independent variables. Addressing institutional barriers without simultaneously resolving infrastructure constraints, or improving faculty training without ensuring reliable connectivity, is unlikely to produce meaningful improvements in integration outcomes. This supports calls in the literature for integrated, multi-level intervention frameworks that simultaneously target individual, institutional, and environmental dimensions of technology adoption (Feng *et al.*, 2025; Bond *et al.*, 2021) ^[2, 5].

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Summary of Findings

This study examined the barriers to educational technology integration in higher education institutions in Nepal through a quantitative survey of 68 teaching professionals. The analysis reveals that technology integration is impeded by a complex hierarchy of barriers: institutional constraints (particularly training deficits and support gaps) are most severe, followed by technological infrastructure challenges, external policy implementation gaps, and human skill-related factors.

6.2. Recommendations for College Management

- Develop and implement formal institutional digital education strategies with specific, time-bound milestones, dedicated budget allocations, and accountability mechanisms.
- Prioritize investment in reliable, high-bandwidth internet infrastructure as an immediate operational prerequisite for sustainable technology integration.
- Establish structured, ongoing professional development programs for digital pedagogy -moving beyond one-time technical orientations toward sustained, contextually relevant faculty training.
- Introduce institutional incentives recognizing and rewarding technology-integrated teaching in performance evaluations and promotion criteria.

6.3. Recommendations for Teaching Professionals

- Engage in continuous self-directed digital professional development through online courses, peer learning communities, and discipline-specific technology workshops.
- Leverage collaborative technology use and peer mentorship to develop higher-order digital teaching competencies beyond basic tool proficiency.

6.4. Recommendations for Policymakers

- Ensure national digital education policy frameworks are accompanied by ring-fenced funding streams for institutional infrastructure development and faculty training, with particular attention to equity across public, private, and community college sectors.
- Develop robust accountability mechanisms to monitor the translation of policy intent into institutional implementation, and establish national digital competency standards for HEI faculty supported by recognized certification pathways.

6.5. Future Research Directions

Future research should address the limitations of this study by employing longitudinal designs to track barrier evolution over time; incorporating mixed-methods approaches to provide richer contextual insights; and extending participant populations to include students, administrators, and policymakers. Studies specifically targeting rural and community college contexts would address representational gaps in the current evidence base, and comparative cross-national studies across South Asian developing-country HEI systems would contribute to the broader theoretical understanding of technology integration barriers in resource-constrained educational environments.

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