

FACTORS INFLUENCING RESEARCH PROGRESS AMONG MPhil SCHOLARS IN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITIES IN QUETTA.

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Abstract

The study investigate the challenges faced by MPhil scholars in education department in public and private universities of Quetta. The study used explanatory sequential mix method. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire used to collect quantitative data from MPhil scholars. Using a simple random sampling technique data collected from 50 scholars in three universities of Quetta. Pilot testing conducted with collected data from 20 scholars. A Cronbach Alpha reliability test run in SPSS the coefficient value .936. Qualitative data collected from six supervisors of the three universities conducted semi-structured interviews. Descriptive analysis computed in SPSS for frequency, mean and standard deviation. For inferential analysis regression analysis run in SPSS.

Semi -structured interview data coded though thematic analysis. Findings revealed that institutional support and software for analysis were weak area. Supervisor support and research skills were satisfactory factors.

Findings will help universities fostering better support mechanism for postgraduates, students in fulfillment of their thesis for degree awarding from HEC.

INTRODUCTION

In higher education of Pakistan, completing of thesis and doing research is necessary for master of philosophy degree in any discipline. The scholars not only complete course work but also conduct research to contribute in highlighting various problems related to their subjects. Students apply methods critical thinking and analytical skills (Smith & Krathwohl, 2005).

The process develop cognitive development and develop the competency of problem solving in scholars. Students identify research problems investigate it set objectives collect data and analyze it find the root cause of the problem. This scholarly work integrate student personal values with academic work (Khan et al., 2022).

Thesis work in Pakistan starts after the completion of course work and passing the

examination of two semester. In this stage student, select research topic under the supervision of university faculty. Student select data from reachable population

The research phase is confronting multiple challenges it include selecting an appropriate topic, the authority of selecting a good supervisor, selection of suitable methodologies, availability of and knowledge of statistical software's and writing the chapters in a rational layout of writing Ali et el., (2021).

Problem statement

A postgraduate research is very important for higher education, but many MPhil students struggle to finish their thesis on time. There are many factors, which slow down the progress of thesis completion as supported by previous studies. They include supervisory support, research skill, administrative- support. These factors have not studied in public and private universities of Quetta. The current study explores the challenges influencing the progress of research.

Significance of the Study

This study is important it highlight the factors and challenges faced by MPhil scholar causes that slow the progress of research. Post- graduate students, researcher, supervisors and university administration can get benefit from this study. The study contributes to the narrow existed literature especially in context of Quetta.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the factors influencing the research progress in MPhil scholars
2. To examine the perception of MPhil scholars about supervisory support, research skills, institutional support and research progress.
3. To explore supervisor perception regarding the support mechanism affecting the research progress of MPhil scholars.

Research questions

1. What factors influence research progress among MPhil scholars?

2. What are the perception of MPhil scholars regarding supervisory support, research skills, institutional support and research progress?
3. What challenges and support mechanism do supervisor identify as affecting research progress of MPHIL scholars?

Literature review

While completing an MPhil research thesis is a necessary milestone for degree. Students face many challenges to during this phase. There are several factors, which hinders the thesis writing and completion procedures. These challenges highlighted by different national and international studies .Often urge the need to providences of supervisory support, research education and assistance to students Ali et al. (2021).

MPhil scholars face many problems highlighted by different studies and Pakistan educational system have urge more attention to this problem. The challenges include inadequate funding's, lack of academic support and infrastructure Rehman & Akhtar (2021).

Higher education plays an important role in socio economic development of countries like Pakistan. This institution helps students in research funding providing technologies and research based facilities (Ahmed, 2019). There are other challenges highlighted in researches like cultural and operational, management of time and financial barriers, psychological factors (Rehman & Hussain, 2022). According the research conducted by Khan & Ahmed, (2022) research education, workshop and lab visits are necessary for improvement in research progress. Student need sufficient instruction in this regard.

According to Hassan et el. (2021) insufficient research facilities, inadequate administrative support and lack of structural supervision are barriers in research progress. In a research, the findings reveal that poor communication with supervisor. Online supervisory, limited feedback and extra burden on student also slow down the research progress (Ahmed & Latif, 2020). Furthermore, the educational environment in

Pakistan is not so much suitable in terms of resources, and technical support. According to recent studies, modern and equipped labs and research facilities are necessary for a quality research (Zai et al., 2021).

Similarly Singh and Mishra (2021) claim that internal dynamics develop a culture in universities rivalry between faculty members or between staff and administration, which hinder the research progress. In international study Ekpog, (2016) argued that in Nigeria MPhil students often face delay issues in thesis submission procedures. Many students are professionals and carried out their jobs along with studies causes them stress and anxiety leading delay in progress and submission Bazrafkan & Yamani, 2015).

Studies from Bangladesh also highlight the facts that causes delay in research progress Jubair et al. (2025) from many universities revealed that students confront lack of research experience and motivation and guidance. Supervisors already burdened under heavy workload from universities

and in the end students have to face extra load of work and institutions rarely support students in mentorship and funding from research.

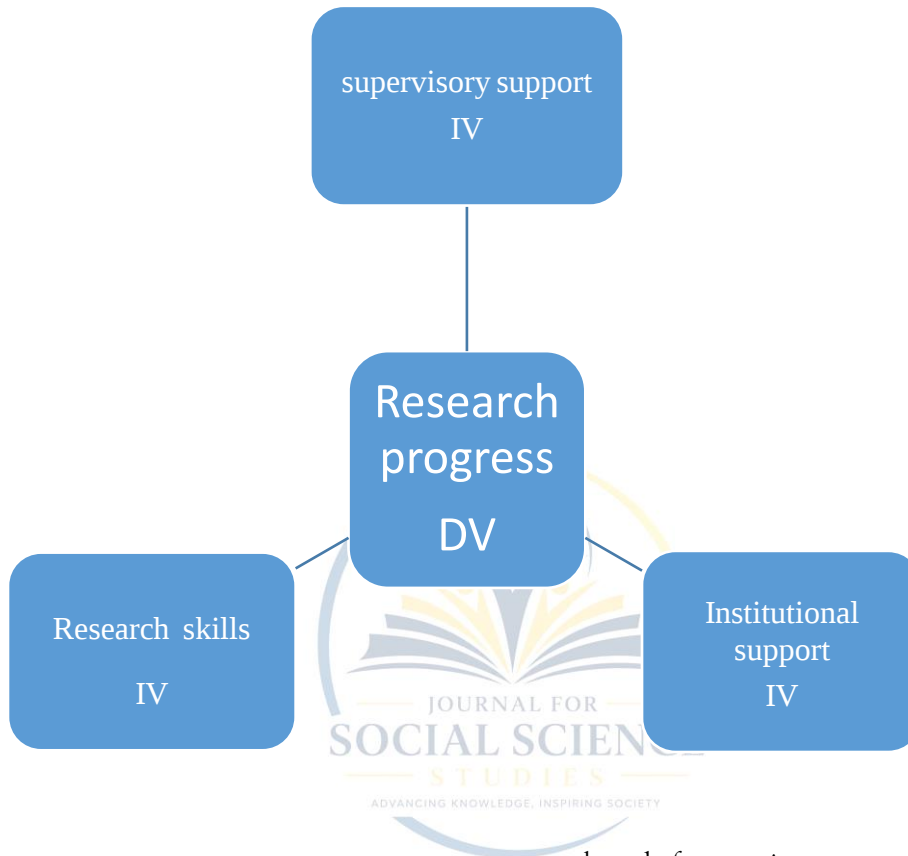
In spite of the research, growing body institution of Pakistan there is still lack of experience in students to fulfill the thesis on time. Since HEC requires correct submission of thesis on time for degree award. Understanding all these basic challenges Higher Education Commission requires submission of thesis with in time line (HEC, 2020). In fact, most of the students do not complete their thesis on time due to unresolved problems (Ekpoh, 2016). This study address the problems faced by male, female, public and private university MPhil students, factors in their research progress. The current study seeks to fill this gap with highlighting the main challenges faced MPhil scholars of education department in universities of Quetta. The findings might give insightful information to supervisors, administration and students.



Conceptual framework

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of dependent and independent variable of research progress among MPhil scholars.



Method

Research design

The study employed an explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data collected and analyzed in first step. Qualitative data collected in second phase through semi-structured interview questions. The design selected because it provides a broad understanding of factors effecting the research progress of MPhil students in universities of Quetta.

Sample and sampling techniques

The respondents of the study comprised of two groups. Fifty MPhil scholars of education department from public and private universities Involve actively in research selected using simple random sampling. Experienced supervisors

selected for semi- structured interviews using purposive sampling technique. The sample size of the supervisors is six.

Data collection tools

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire used to collect data from MPhil scholars of education department in universities of Quetta. This questionnaire included demographic information like male, female and whether public or private university in Quetta. The questionnaire consisted of four scales with 20 total items. The scales are supervisor support, research skills, institutional support and research progress. For qualitative data semi-structured interview questions comprises of 10 questions emerge from quantitative data.

Validity and reliability

Five experts from education department of university reviewed the questionnaire for content Validity, several made in questionnaire after the expert review. For reliability, test a pilot study Conducted and data collected from 20 respondents. A Cronbach alpha reliability test conducted in SPSS the reliability coefficient value found $\alpha = .934$ indicating excellent internal consistency.

Data collection procedure

Quantitative data collected through questionnaire from MPhil education department of public and private universities. The researcher firstly got permission from head of department of university. Qualitative data collected from supervisors conducting semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis

For quantitative data analysis data entered in IBM SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics. In

descriptive statistics frequency, mean and standard deviation computed. The qualitative data interview analyzed thematically. Codes generated from recorded interviews converted in written transcript. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative results combined in interpretation to provide, a deep understanding of the factors influencing the research progress.

Ethical Consideration

Consent letter prepared by researcher for head of departments of universities to collect quantitative data, from MPhil scholars in public and private universities. Supervisors were informed and permission granted for interviews.

Results and findings

In SPSS, the collected data run for descriptive analysis in which frequency, mean and standard deviation computed.

Table 1

Supervisory support

Statement	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
I have selected my research topic willingly.	5.0	5.0	2.5	47.5	40.0	4.13	1.042
My consent was included in supervisor selection.	15.0	2.5	10.0	57.5	15.0	3.55	1.239
My supervisor provide constructive feedback on my thesis.	7.5	2.5	10.0	52.5	27.5	3.90	1.081
My supervisor provide feedback on time.	7.5	5.0	7.5	50.0	37.5	4.05	1.131
I receive sufficient guidance from my supervisor regarding research.	10.0	1.25	10.0	32.5	35.0	3.70	1.091

Note: SD = strongly agree, D = dis agree, SWA = some what agree, A = agree, SD = standard deviation.

The results shows that respondents showed overwhelming positive response to supervisory support. Indicating in table 1 the high level of agreement perceived in scholars that they had the authority to select research topic 47.5% agree and 40% strongly agree. The respondent agreement about timely feedback of supervisors were 87.5%, while 80% respondents perceived that their

supervisor provide constructive feedback. Although, for supervisor selection, authority students showed less agreement with 72% agreeing and strongly agreeing. The findings reveal that respondents agree with the providences of supervisory support particularly in topic selection authority and timely feedback.

Table 2

Research skills

Statement	SD%	D%	Neutral%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
I have good understanding of research methodology.	2.5	5.0	5.0	60.0	27.5	4.05	.876
I can conduct an effective literature review.	7.5	7.5	10.0	57.5	17.5	3.70	1.091
I am confident in selecting appropriate research methods.	5.0	2.5	5.0	67.5	25.0	4.05	.904
I can analyze research data effectively.	5.0	2.5	12.5	57.5	22.5	3.90	.955
I have good academic writing skills.	5.0	2.5	10.0	52.5	20.0	3.70	1.091

Note: SD = strongly agree, D = dis agree, SWA = some what agree, A = agree, SD = standard deviation.

The findings revealed a positive agreement about the research skills. About 60% respondents showed agreement and 27% strongly agree with first item of understanding of research methodology. Moreover, 92% respondents agreed or strongly agreed in selecting appropriate methods for research. Respondents showed positive perception about the skills of analyzing

the data the table showed 80% respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Respondents agreed with the item about having academic writing skills with 52% agree and 20% strongly agree. The findings reveal that students believe that they possess good skills in search particularly in research method selection and analyzing the data for results.

, Table 3

Institutional support

Statement	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
My university provide sufficient research workshops and training.	17.5	27.5	10.0	30.0	15.0	2.98	1.387
Library resources are sufficient for my research.	10.0	32.5	17.5	32.5	7.5	2.95	1.176
My university provide me access to online paid journals.	20.0	32.5	17.5	22.5	7.5	2.65	1.252
My university provide necessary software for analysis and research facilities.	20.0	27.5	17.5	20.0	15.0	2.83	1.375
Administrative support related to research is sufficient.	12.5	25.0	15.0	35.0	12.5	3.10	1.277

Note: SD = strongly agree, D = dis agree, SWA = some what agree, A = agree, SD = standard deviation.

The table 3 data reveal that overall 45% (agree and strongly agree) respondents believe that universities do not provide research workshop and training. About 45% respondents perceive that they receive workshop and training regarding research skills from universities. For library resources 40% respondents showed agreement

with the statement while access to online paid journals respondents showed only 30% agreement (agree and strongly agree). Overall, the findings about this scale reveal that institutional support perceived as major area of weakness, especially in areas of access to paid journals, software for analyzing data and facilities.

Table 4

Research progress

Statement	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	Mean	SD
My research is progressing according to the planned timeline.	5.0	15.0	12.5	60.0	7.5	3.50	1.013
I will complete research task according to schedule.	5.0	10.0	10.0	57.5	17.5	3.73	1.037
I am satisfied with my current research progress.	2.5	15.0	5.0	60.0	17.5	3.75	1.006
I am confident that I will complete my thesis on time.	5.0	10.0	7.5	57.5	20.0	3.78	1.050
Over all I have made satisfactory progress in my research.	2.5	7.5	12.5	60.0	17.5	3.83	.903

Note: SD = strongly agree, D = dis agree, SWA = some what agree, A = agree, SD = standard deviation.

The results of table 4 showed that 77.5% respondents showed agreement to the statement that their research is progressing according to schedule. In the same way, 67.5 respondents showed satisfaction level with their current research progress. This the statement with lower

mean value. Overall, the findings reveal that respondents believe their research progress satisfactory although the completion of thesis according to planned time line seems to be less satisfactory.

Table 5

Thematic findings

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Explanation of Findings
Supervisory support	Constructive and timely feedback.	Supervisors reported timely and productive feedback is essential for scholars but some time supervisors delayed in reply due to other busyness at university.
Research skills and competencies.	Research methodology knowledge. Literature review writing. Academic writing and data analysis skills.	Supervisors identified that some students suffered in writing literature review chapter and selecting suitable methodologies.
Institutional research support.	Research training and workshop conduction. Availability of research resources.	Participants emphasized institutional support. Workshops should conducted in universities.
Administrative and institutional challenges.		Supervisors stated that prolonged procedures, delay in approvals, lack of coordination and insufficient support hinders the progress of research.
Improvement strategies.	Strengthening supervision and administrative support.	Supervisors suggested that timely feedback and meetings have a good impact on research progress. Supervisor should reply the student on time.

Note: Thematic findings based on interviews from MPhil scholars.

Table 5 shows that constructive and timely feedback can accelerate the research progress. Research methodology and academic writing skills help in early submission of thesis. Research labs availability and providences of analysis software's at university is necessary. Supervisors suggested strong administrative support for MPhil scholars.

Discussion

The study examines the factors affecting research progress among MPhil scholars. The findings reveal that important factors like supervisor support, administrative and institutional support has impact on research progress. The qualitative data support the survey findings that research skills, academic support and facilities of research in universities effect thesis completion and submission.

The factor of supervisor assistance showed that 87.5% agreed or showed strong agreement that supervisor provide them timely and constructive feedback. These findings supported by Ali et al.(2021), He urge and highlight the importance of supervisor support but supervisors confess that feedback may delayed due to other responsibilities in universities.

Research and academic skills also reported positive as 92.5% agreed or strongly agree. The scholars perceived that they have the ability to select appropriate research methodologies. Supervisor believe that some students faced difficulty in writing, evaluating and synthesis literature review. These findings attribute to Khan and Ahmed (2022) they indicated the importance of research skills and conducting special classes and workshop.

Research support from institution findings proved as weak area. It shows lowest mean for access to online paid journal with (M= 2.65) and analysis software facilities provided by universities (M=2.98). Supervisors stressed on research training these findings supported by Rehaman and Akhter (2021) and Hassan et al. (2021), who highlight insufficient research facilities slow down research progress.

Qualitative findings highlight administrative problems including long procedures delays in thesis approval are steady with Ekpoh (2016), who stated delays in MPhil thesis submission.

Research progress scale provide findings satisfactory, overall satisfaction (M=3.83) following with completion on time (M= 3.78) and current progress with (M= 3.75) completion according to time line showed (M= 3.50) shows that work according to timeline is a big challenge. In integration of finding, it revealed that supervisors also urge on timely feedback and regular meetings. Overall MPhil thesis progress depend upon scholar level research competencies and supervisors expertise.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there are multiple factors involved in MPhil research progress. The quantitative findings shows supervisory support, research skills and institutional support effect research progress. However, for supervisor support and research skills appeared as weak areas.

While supervisor support and research skills were satisfactory factors. Qualitative interviews revealed that supervisors responses, literature review writing, methodology selection and administrative delays I procedures are important challenges. The study concludes that timely feedback, meetings with supervisor and sufficient support of institution can speed up the research progress. Scholars should have opportunities to learn and provide regular feedback from supervisors. So research will complete on time.

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