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Towards Minimizing the Delay/Non-completion Rate of Research Master's Degree in Ghana: ESL Students' Perspective of the Challenges of Thesis Work

Rebecca Arthur⁽¹⁾, Daniel Arkoh Fenyi^{(2)*}

⁽¹⁾ Department of English Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

⁽²⁾ Department of Communication Studies, University of Professional Studies- Accra, Ghana

* fenyigh@gmail.com

Abstract

Extant literature confirms that the delay and non-completion of the thesis component of postgraduate studies remain a bane of postgraduate education. With the current spate of interest and enrolment into postgraduate studies in Ghana, and globally, it has become imperative to investigate the phenomenon and spotlight the contributing factors to the delay and non-completion of thesis so that students, supervisors, postgraduate faculties and departments, and all relevant stakeholders could pull efforts together to mitigate it. Through the purposive sampling method, the study recruited ten postgraduate students who have had varied experiences with thesis writing and are at different stages of completion. The data collection instrument was semi-structured interview. The conceptual framework adopted for the study was the Jiranck Dissertation Research Completion model (2010) and the data were analysed using the thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that three factors contribute to the delay and non-completion of thesis. These are; student-related factors, supervisor-related factors and institution-related factors. Based on the findings, it was recommended that postgraduate research institutions should design and develop plans and strategies to help their students complete the thesis within the stipulated period.

Keywords

non-completion rate, research master's degree, thesis work

Introduction

Similar to most university practices globally, the master's degree programme with research component in Ghanaian higher institutions of learning take a minimum duration of two years. It consists of a coursework component, done in the first year of the programme and a thesis work, which is done in the second year. During the coursework component of the programme, students are expected to be taught and learn a number of prescribed courses approved by the university and the National Accreditation Board, write examinations either through a sit down mode or a take-home term paper, and pass a number of units, and then proceed to the second year, which is the research phase of the programme. In this phase, the student is expected to generate a topic, search existing literature to situate the topic in context, establish the methods to collect data, go to the field and collect data, critically examine and write a report on the data, and present the findings orally before a panel of experts for final assessment. Abdul-Rauf (2016) summarises the entire process stating that postgraduate degree programmes that have a research component go through five major stages including;

1. course work
2. finding a topic and writing a research proposal on it
3. assigning a supervisor to guide the process
4. undertaking the research; and
5. writing a report (thesis)

Research postgraduate studies require that students write and submit thesis as a core component and partial fulfillment of the academic requirements for the award of the degree and it is expected to be a purely academic exercise which must be the original idea of the research student (Akpaprep et al., 2017; Chidi & Sylvia, 2020). In many universities, the postgraduate student is first expected to select a researchable topic with the guidance of the supervisor and develop a proposal from it which is presented to a panel of experts to correct, amend, restructure, endorse and recommend that the student could proceed to undertake the actual study (Ugwu et al., 2015). Santi et al. (2020) underline that the complexity and rigorousness of the process of writing the thesis enable the students to develop scientific skills in problem solving and also present them with the opportunity to learn independently, elaborate new ideas, write academically and correctly, and develop communication skills.

The worldwide phenomenon of a low completion rate and high rate of attrition among postgraduate research students arising from the challenges of research and thesis writing has become a major issue of concern (Botha, 2016). Akpaprep et al. (2017) assert that the problem is a serious cause for worry not only for the continuing students, the supervisors and the institutions but also, for the prospective applicants, who are apathetic towards enrolling on the programme for fear of abandoning it, or not graduating in record time. Brandsma-Dieters (2013) registers that the drop-out rates of students from the postgraduate programme have consistently lingered around 30% for about two decades and Raul (2016: 113) is able to confirm that, "many postgraduate students dropped out or delayed their graduation because of thesis non-completion".

Ghana is not an exception to this global phenomenon encountered by research postgraduate students. Available data reveal that only about 30% of research master's candidates are able to complete the programme exactly within the stipulated two-year period, and about 60% are generally able to complete the programme. This implies that, about 40% of students who enroll into the Master of Philosophy (research master's degree) programmes in Ghana are never able to complete. It is also found that majority of the 40% who never get to complete are not able to complete because of the challenges they face with the thesis component. Only a few of them drop-out during the coursework. These findings are consistent with the findings of Brauer and Hei (2020), Bocsi et al. (2019), Essuman (2020) and Santelli et al., (2020). For instance, Armstrong (2004) reveals that the rate of non/late completion of the research programme in the United Kingdom is between 40% and 50% while Krauss and Ismail (2010) also report that the rate of non-completion in the United States of America is 50%. In Africa, Terence (2011) reports that the completion rate is 60%, 55% and 49% in life science, social science and humanities respectively in Egypt. Essuman (2020) is also emphatic that the completion rate lingers around 45-50%. In fact, at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, the problem of thesis work has resulted in the introduction of a "step-down policy" since the 2013/2014 academic year, where students who struggle with their thesis work up to four years are compelled to step down and are awarded a Master of Arts degree (MA), consisting only of the coursework.

In the Ghanaian context, the known studies that explored the phenomenon are Baafi-Frimpong (1998), Amehoe (2013), Akparep et al. (2017) and Essuman (2020). Baafi-Frimpong's (1998) study found that while only 11.4% of the research postgraduate students who were admitted in the 1993/94 academic year took three to four years (delayed though) to complete their thesis and graduate, the remaining majority of 88.6% could not complete at all. This was the University of Cape Coast (UCC). After about two decades of this finding, the problem still persisted resulting in the introduction of the "step down policy" in the 2013/2014 academic year. Akparep, Jengre and Abaamah (2017) also did a similar study at the University of Development Studies (UDS), Tamale and reported a similar challenge of the low rate of completion of thesis writing in postgraduate research studies. Both studies were quantitative and both of them confirmed that while institutional structures contributed to the problem, students' personal problems also contributed to the canker. Again, Amehoe (2013) committed his doctoral thesis to investigating the phenomenon at the University of Ghana, Legon, adopting the mixed methods approach. He found that student-supervisor relationship was the major cause of the problem. Recently, Essuman (2020) adopted the qualitative approach to investigate the phenomenon at the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration and the School of Development Studies both of UCC. He found that the problem of delayed thesis has not minimized despite the measures put in place by the university and recommended that the management of the school should intensify strategies to speed up the rate of thesis completion. This study attempts to adduce substantial evidence to determine the factors that contribute to the challenges of writing theses among postgraduate students, using MPhil in English students in Ghana as the case. It addresses the research question; *what do MPhil in English candidates in Ghana perceive as the barriers to the completion of their thesis work?*

To situate the study in the appropriate perspective and attempt the research question comprehensively, the study adopts Jiranck's Dissertation Research Completion model (2010) shown in figure 1.1 below as the conceptual framework. The model is considered the most appropriate for the study because it focuses primarily on the research component of postgraduate studies.

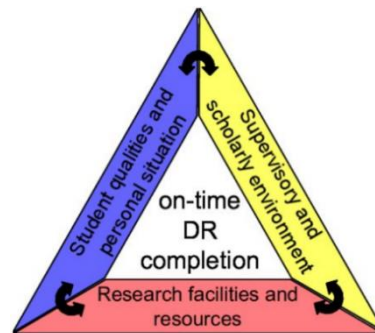


Figure 1. *Jiranck's Dissertation Research Completion model*

Emphasis must be made that the model was developed based on extensive studies conducted in the UK and Australia to determine the times of thesis completion by scholars such as Yew, Maclachlan and Karmel (1999), Spear (2000), Wright and Cochrane (2000), Wright (2003), Kearns, Gardiner and Marshall (2008) and Jiranek (2010). The thrust of the model is that, in the determination of the factors that contribute to the delay in thesis completion, three parameters must be set. These are;

1. *Student qualities and personal situation:* This refers to challenges in the thesis work attributable to the candidate such as the lack of good writing and communication skills, financing of the programme, laziness, among others.
2. *Supervisory and scholarly environment:* This is supervisor-related challenges that delay the thesis work which could include unfriendly supervisor, lack of technical competence of the supervisor, among others.
3. *Research facilities and resources:* This relates to the institution-sponsored delays of the thesis work such as the lack of adequate research materials, facilities and expertise.

Adapting the Jiranck's Dissertation Research Completion model, the study is set within the parameters projected in the model with respect to the collection, presentation and analysis of the data. The next section outlines the methods of data collection and analysis.

Method

The study is qualitative. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) contend that qualitative researchers aim to understand the meaning people construct from their realities, how they make sense of their experiences and how they make meaning from their world. Consistent with the above assertion, the study's prime focus was to explore and understand the

phenomenon of the non-completion of thesis work in detail. The design is a case study. The case study design helped the researchers to obtain in-depth opinions from the participants.

The purposive sampling method was used to select the participants for the study. Through the purposive sampling method, participants who are considered to possess a considerable amount of information and experience necessary to make the data rich enough to explore the phenomenon under investigation are selected. Cresswell (2012) intimates that for a qualitative case study research, a relatively small number of participants are needed to enable the researcher conduct a thorough investigation and gather the right and detailed amount of information from them, which the quantitative research, which has interest in large numbers, may not be able to gather. This study therefore selected a sample size of ten (10) participants with varied experiences on the thesis; two (2) completed in exactly the two year stipulated period; three (3) completed after the two years (took more than two years); two (2) have not completed but are still within the two year period and three (3) have not completed after the two years. There were six (6) females and four (4) males. These participants were selected from two universities in Ghana. The variations of the participants help to build complexity for the study and present different perspectives, views and experiences to make the data comprehensive.

Semi-structured interview was the instrument for the data collection. Essuman (2020) argues that an interview is a research instrument which involves data collection through a direct verbal interaction between the participants and the researcher. Consistent with Essuman, the participants were asked to share their experiences with the thesis writing through an oral interview interaction with the researchers. Each interview session lasted a period between 20-30 minutes. The responses of the participants were recorded through note taking, after which they were asked to read through to confirm if their opinions have been captured as appropriately as they were shared.

The data were analysed through thematic analysis. The researchers begun by reading through the original data multiple times and scrutinized them to be able to find configurations in the data that shared similar characteristics. The pieces of information in the data that had similar characteristics were then grouped into themes, such as would respond appropriately to the research question. The themes were then analysed and interpreted within the context of the existing literature.

Research ethics remain paramount to any credible study. The researchers ensured that ethics and values were upheld in the process of conducting the study. They ensured that, firstly, none of the participants was forced, coerced or made to participate against their will. Participation was completely voluntary. And secondly, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, the names and institutions of the participants were withheld. This made them confident enough to share their hearts out without any fear of future victimisations from persons and institutions.

Results and Discussion

The data revealed that the factors that contributed to the delayed or non-completion of the thesis component of the MPhil programme could be put into three themes; *student-related factors, supervisor-related factors and institution-related factors*. These three themes are explored in this session supported with relevant extracts from the interview sessions.

Student-Related Factors

It was found in the data that some of the factors that contribute to the delayed and non-completion of thesis are student-initiated/related. This implies that, the delay is caused by certain actions and inactions of the students themselves. The participants, all of whom are/were research master's degree students, admitted that, from their personal experiences with the thesis work, they face a lot of hindrances that inhibit their progress in the thesis work. The personal hindrances the participants elaborated are thematised and discussed in the sub-sections below.

Financial constraints

Almost all the participants recounted a money-related challenge that stood in their way during the thesis work. The general admission was that, a comprehensive research is cost-intensive. A researcher needs to travel to places, engage different sets of people (who might be located at different places), ensure security and proper storage of data through purchasing of recorders, laptops, and other technological devices. All these are cost-intensive. The participants also recounted the cost of printing questionnaires and other documents in the research process and the fact that one needed to sometimes pay some monies to access certain places and obtain certain documents. A participant confirmed how money has become his major challenge in the thesis work.

For me, money has become my biggest challenge. My research focus demands that I travel to certain places, and even stay with the people for about a month or two to observe and engage them. But money to travel and pay for accommodation is my biggest headache. It's been two years and I've not been able to raise funds for it. Now, I am in my third year of the thesis work.

Another participant who faces financial problems shared her story;

The cost of research in Ghana keeps increasing by the day. You know, the rise in the cost of living in the country has a direct impact on all sectors of life, including the research life of postgraduate students. I have not been able to afford a laptop. I always depend on people to be stored and typeset my work. Because of this, work that could take me just about a day to do if I had my own laptop now takes me over a week. I have spent four years on the thesis.

The excerpts above show clearly that money is a factor that contribute to the delay in the research work. Apart from the excerpts above, other money-related issues were raised. Some of the participants shared stories of how the cost of printing questionnaire and the cost of transportation for traveling long distances to distribute them to their research participants constrain them from conducting their study.

Combining job and studies

It was explicit in the data that combining work and the research study has not been an easy task for the students. The demands of work for many of the students is a big constraint on their time to engage in the research. It is not disputable that research is a rigorous process and demands a lot of time and attention. Ideally, it is supposed to be full time enterprise. However, many of the students are engaged in full time work which equally takes most of their time and attention. It could be inferred then that most of the students are engaged in two full time enterprises, that is, the research work and their profession, which is definitely not an ideal thing to do. A participant said;

I report to work at 8 am and close at 5pm daily, from Monday to Saturday. In the week, I have only Sunday to myself which I use to engage in social activities like church, etc. Meanwhile, I am supposed to be conducting research as well. My work does not permit me to carry on with the study, and I cannot quit the work since myself and my family survive on it.

A participant who completed the thesis on time shared his experience with relation to work.

Fortunately for me, I completed my MPhil programme in exactly two years and this is what I did. I knew that my work would stand in the way of my study so I quitted it. At the time, I had worked for close to eight years and had saved enough capital to see me through the programme. But for quitting, I wouldn't have completed the research work on time. I am not encouraging anyone to quit their job since everyone's situation is different but people must understand that sometimes, big sacrifices must be made in order to climb higher levels.

The above evidences indicate that combining a full time job and a research work is a risky and tiring venture. Definitely, if extreme caution is not taken, one of them may be sacrificed in the process. And from the data gathered, it is clear that, mostly, research work is sacrificed.

Laziness and lack of commitment

Some of the participants were candid to reveal that the delay and non-completion of the thesis work is due to their own laziness and lack of commitment to the research process. Research is rigorous process. It involves a lot of brain work and a lot of emotional and physical commitment. Until one is mentally, psychologically and physically ready to commit themselves wholly to the task ahead, it is difficult to complete. Two of the participants revealed;

The research thing is not easy at all. I think I underestimated it at the beginning but now, I have seen that it saps more energy than I initially imagined. Even though I am still within the two year stipulated period, I can project that I cannot complete within the two years. So far, I have spent months just typing 5 pages, meanwhile, I need about 120 pages. How can I complete with such pace?

Honestly, I have not shown enough commitment towards the [research] work. I have been lazy. I go for about a month without doing anything about the thesis. In fact, as we speak now, I don't remember the last time I touched the work. I have dumped it somewhere. I have already spent three years on it but the motivation to work is still not there. I need to be more serious with it.

As has been asserted in the excerpts, laziness and lack of commitment cannot win the research battle. Research is a daunting engagement, hence, any student who is not able to live up to the task cannot expect to complete within the ideal period.

Combining family life and research

Generally, an MPhil programme in Ghana is pursued by persons who have already obtained a first degree, which implies that they are 'mature' persons- an average of 25 years of age. In fact, specifically, the researchers found that 90% of the participants are between 26 and 40 years, with 80% between 30 and 40 years. The researchers, through their interactions with the students, also found that 70% of the students are parents, husbands and wives. The task of raising and taking care of kids coupled with the task of serving as a husband and a wife appear too involving for many of the students. They are therefore not able to combine the family roles with the research work. A participant cited her situation as a point in case. She got pregnant during the period of conducting her research studies. The pregnancy developed some complications which could not allow her to continue with the research. She described;

I got pregnant in the second year of the MPhil programme, that was when I had started the thesis work. Along the line, the pregnancy developed some complications so I had to pause the research work and focus on the pregnancy. It got a bit life-threatening so I needed to undergo some medical processes. I believe it is part of the reasons I have stayed on this thesis for four years now.

Another parent, a husband, described his ordeal with family life which inhibited his progress on the thesis work:

My first son developed some strange sickness which got him hospitalized for almost a year. Throughout the period, I was just not myself. I was so mentally destabilized that there was no way I could engage in any rigorous academic and research activity. Even after he was discharged, he still needed some more attention. I would say that situation has had a good impact on my academic work and life generally.

Indeed, family life can be a complex phenomenon. As could be seen from the evidences shared above, some family-related circumstances can develop suddenly which may impact and affect the trajectory of a person's life, including their academic and research exploits.

On the student-related factors, it was found that the (in)actions of the students themselves contribute to the delay in the thesis work (Akpaprep et al, 2017) even including natural inherent factors such as their age and sex (Vladimir, 2010). The participants were candid in their thoughts that the delay in the completion of the thesis is partly caused by them. The study found four sub-thematic areas that emerged from the student-related factors. These are; financial constraints, combining job and studies, laziness and lack of commitment and combining family life and research. These findings corroborate the findings of Chidi & Sylvia (2020) and Mohammad & Mohammad (2017).

Supervisor-Related Factors

The data also revealed that some of the factors that delay the completion of the thesis could emanate from the supervisor. It must be emphasised that the norm is that, research and thesis are not conducted only by the student. The student does it in collaboration with an expert, often a faculty member in the department, who serves as a guide and consultant. The supervisor is expected to be an integral part of the research process, guiding and helping the student at almost every point in the process. When the student encounters any difficulty, the supervisor becomes the first point of call. However, the researchers found that, from the perspectives of the students, the supervisors sometimes contribute to the delay and non-completion of the thesis. Two major themes emanated in this section.

Supervisory style and competence

People generally, including thesis supervisors, have their unique styles, inclinations and sets of skills. These peculiar biases are not always helpful to the research process. It was found that there have been instances where students put in all maximum efforts to make progress in their thesis but the biases, styles and competence of their supervisors constrain them. A participant narrated;

My supervisor's style of supervision caused my delay. He asked me to conduct the entire study and write all the five chapters on my own, after which I should send the complete work to him to scrutinize. It took me a year to complete the process as expected but when I sent the completed work to him, he cancelled almost 80% of it claiming I got them wrongly. He asked that I re-start the entire work. And this has been the major reason I've stayed on this course for 3 years. I believe if he had involved in each chapter of the work, correcting me along the way, all this delay would have been avoided.

A participant also had reservations about the competence of her supervisor and perceived the delay of the theses as a product of the incompetence of the supervisors. She indicated that the supervisor is skilled in qualitative research but her study adopts the quantitative methodology. So, even though the English sub-field she is researching is in line with the supervisor's research area, their methodologies differ, hence, the supervisor struggles to interpret and understand her work.

Obviously, my supervisor has expertise in qualitative research methodology. He has several research publications but all of them are qualitative. However, the methodology I have adopted is quantitative and he finds it difficult to interpret and make sense of the numerical and statistical configurations of my work. He almost always has nothing significant to contribute to my work and that is making it difficult for me to make progress.

The above assertions point to the fact that the supervisory style and competence of the supervisor can affect the progress of the thesis.

Supervisor-supervisee working relationship

It is explicit in the data that the kind of relationship that exist between a supervisor and the supervisee greatly affects the thesis work. A hostile, unfriendly and awkward

relationship is able to delay the work while a friendly, welcoming and fraternal relations between the two fosters a smooth and productive steps towards completion. A participant recounts how her relationship with her supervisor affects/ed her work.

My supervisor wouldn't pick my calls nor respond to text and WhatsApp messages. He is very unwelcoming and unwieldy. His behavior dampens my spirit and discourages me from continuing the work. I am already in the fifth year and contemplating on quitting.

One of the study participants, a lady, shared how her supervisor, a man, wanted to exploit her sexually. He would only supervise the work only when he has had his way sexually with her. However, she resisted him and their relationship deteriorated resulting in her delayed thesis.

My supervisor made sexual advances at me and when I resisted, he became cold towards me. He has since refused to work with me. I can see that he is taking a revenge on me using the thesis.

The study found that supervisor-related factors contribute to the delay in the thesis (Rooij, Fokkens-Bruinsma & Jansen, 2019). The actions and inactions of supervisors affect the progress of a thesis work. While good supervisory practices help the students to make positive strides in the work, a bad one inhibits them. Ndayambaje (2018) asserts that a supervisor is expected to be a good listener, understandable, patient, accessible, counsellor, respectful, open-minded, share information and eager to interact with the student. Delany (2013) adds that a good supervisor is friendly, stimulating, approachable, thorough, organised, have positive attitude, and importantly, prepared to acknowledge their limitations, weaknesses and errors. These qualities as intimated by Ndayambaje (2018) and Delany (2013) make a good supervisor. If a supervisor has these qualities, he or she will be able to help the students achieve their full research potential (Abiddin, Hassan & Ahmad, 2009). The findings of these earlier studies are consistent with the findings of the current study.

Institution-Related Factors

The factors that cause delay or non-completion of the thesis work as a result of deficiencies associated with the institution of study are known as institution-related factors. It is imperative to stress that, from the perspectives of the students, the institution-related factors are minimal. Many of them believe that the completion of the thesis, and on time, greatly depends on the students themselves and/or the supervisors. To them, the institution has minimal role to play in the completion process. Two themes emerged in this sub-section; *staff-student ratio*, and *student-support service*.

Staff-student ratio

It is asserted that the universities are sometimes not mindful of the number of students they assign to a supervisor. The data reveal that the supervisors are sometimes overwhelmed with the number of works they are required to supervise, hence, they are not able to effectively guide and supervise the students. A participant shared his experience of how his supervisor had about 15 students to supervise at a time. This was

a supervisor was combining the supervisory work with teaching, research and publications and other personal commitments. He insinuated;

My supervisor has been assigned 15 students, and each of them is at different stages of the thesis work. This is a man who lectures for about 16 hours weekly coupled with other commitment. The students would send their work to him and sometimes, it takes about 6 months to receive a response from him. I am currently in my 4th year of the programme. I believe the university should be considerate of the student-supervisor ratio.

This other participant completed his work within the exact duration and could attest that student-supervisor ratio contributed to it. At the time, his supervisor was supervising only him. He says;

I was lucky that during my time, I was the only student my supervisor was supervising. Therefore, I enjoyed his full commitment and attention to my work. He had no other research students to worry about. I think the solo supervision helped a lot.

Clearly, student-supervisor ratio is one of the major causes of the delay of the thesis. When a supervisor is assigned an overwhelming number of students by the university, they are not able to effectively supervise the thesis.

Student-support service

There is a consensual call for the need for universities to institutionalize the Research Assistant portfolio. The duty would be to guide and help research students. The Research Assistant could act as a 'quasi supervisor' who will be directly involved in the day-to-day activities of the thesis work. Before the work gets to the supervisor, the Research Assistant would have gone through it, edited, proofread, corrected and streamlined a lot of things so that the supervisor's work would be easier. In the context where student-supervisor ratio is a problem, the Research Assistant could act as the 'middleman' who would make sure the supervisor's burden is lessened. Some of the participants shared;

The universities should employ Research Assistants (RAs) to support the supervisors. Since the supervisors are usually busy and absent, the RAs will become the direct points of call when the students face any difficulties.

I think the universities should develop a support service system, where students can go to for support. One of such support is the establishment of the RA portfolio. Some of the persons who have graduated from the department and have shown mastery and credibility in research should be recruited to assist the supervisors. This can speed up the research process.

The lack of a student support system, especially in the form of a Research Assistant portfolio, is considered a contributory factor to the delay and non-completion of the thesis work. The evidences adduced support the fact universities and postgraduate institutions should not just leave the composite supervisory work to the supervisors alone. A conscious effort must be made to engage the services of RAs who can be involved in the day-to-day conducting of the research and writing of the thesis by offering guidance and support to students.

Consistent with the study, Mugimu et al. (2009) and Bland et al. (2006) affirm that institutions could have administrative arrangements that could mar the research process, hence, research faculties should design and develop research-friendly administrative processes to help their postgraduate students.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study is an attempt to qualitatively explore the phenomenon of thesis delay and non-completion in research master's degree programmes in the Ghanaian context. The specific objective was to determine the factors that contribute to the delay in the research, writing and completion of the thesis from the perspective of the postgraduate students.

The study engaged ten postgraduate students, who have had varying experiences with the writing of thesis. These varying backgrounds gave a holistic view to the phenomenon and made it possible to describe the phenomenon from different perspectives in an attempt to answer the research question. The data collection instrument was semi-structured interview and the data was analysed through thematic analysis.

The outcome of the study confirms the findings of earlier studies that the delay and non-completion of the thesis cannot be attributed to only one factor (Akpaprep et al., 2017; Chidi & Sylvia, 2020; Christie et al., 2004; Glogowska et al., 2007; Abdul-Rauf, 2016; Santi et al., 2020). Three factors were revealed in the data as the cause for the delay; student-related factors, supervisor-related factors and institution-related factors.

The study is not without limitations. One of the limitations is that as a qualitative study, it is difficult to generalize the findings. It is difficult to claim that the number of participants recruited for the study is comprehensively representative of the population of the research postgraduate students in the country. For a study that is to become one of the pioneer works in the field, engaging a large sample would have been ideal. However, the study takes respite in the transferability potential of the results. Another limitation is that, the study engaged only the postgraduate students, hence, the results is limited to only the perspective of the students.

It is therefore recommended that, a future study would engage the lecturers, supervisors and the institutions to determine their perspectives as well. A comparative analysis would even be preferable. Again, future studies could employ other research approaches such as the quantitative and mixed method approaches to enhance the generalizability potential of the outcome. Lastly, it is recommended that postgraduate research institutions should design and develop plans and strategies to help their students complete their thesis, and on time.

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