



# **AN ASSESSMENT OF POSTGRADUATE THESIS WRITING AND ITS EFFECT ON COMPLETION RATE IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA**

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## **Abstract**

*Research undertaking is one of postgraduate students' paramount scholarly endeavour. The theorem worth and secured experience are majorly influenced by supervision. Therefore, successful and timely completion of thesis by postgraduate students is gaining importance for both students, supervisors as well as universities and funding agencies. Previous enquiries highlight the significance of factors contributing towards postgraduate thesis by students, which may be relationship factors, the supervision set-up or the research structure. Nevertheless, the pertinent value of definite determinants for each analysis can shift considerably among several surveys. In the acknowledgement of this reality, this study endeavours to examine the determinants influencing the accomplishment of postgraduate thesis by students, a study of selected universities in Eldoret Town from students and the departments' point of view. In the realization of this goal, the study sought to determine relationship among supervision related factors and completion of postgraduate thesis by students. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study used both primary and secondary data. Data collection methods included both questionnaires and document analysis. The researcher conducted a pilot study in*

one university. The research instrument was subjected to content validity while reliability was determined through Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7. The target population comprised of 1,225 respondents who were selected from the universities in Eldoret Town. A sample size of 190 respondents was selected through random sampling technique. Descriptive statistics, frequency tables, bar graphs and percentages were used to present the data. The inferential statistics such as correlation analysis, analysis of variance and multiple regressions established relationship among the variables. The findings revealed thesis writing completion rate is influenced by several factors: supervision related factors ( $\beta = 0.265$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This study recommends that students should be motivated, organized and have a personal drive to work hard in order to complete their thesis project in time. Students should further consult their supervisors as scheduled by their universities.

*Keywords: Postgraduate students, Completion, Supervision, Organizational Performance, Postgraduate thesis*

## INTRODUCTION

Post graduate thesis and dissertation writing requires high levels of expertise than that which is required for undergraduate theses. However, many post graduate students may not be well versed in the pre-requisite research skills, so they seek assistance from their supervisors. Depending on supervisory level and quality of engagement, a post graduate research study can either be a fulfilling and intellectually stimulating academic exercise, or it may otherwise be a nightmare (Rodwell & Neumann, 2007).

Issues related to thesis writing completion and the ones identified with completion of postgraduate degree were broadly examined (Olorunnisola, 2011). A number of authors confirmed that a majority of postgraduate students are faced with attribution based on difficulties of thesis writing completion. In China's experience, Ho, Wong and Wong (2010) discovered that diversions from research, for example, recreational exercises, life occasions, family, kids, companions, pregnancy, conceiving and looking after a child could prompt to defer in thesis completion. Moreover Ho, Wong and Wong identified factors like deficient grasp of information associated procedures, absence of assimilation of thesis composition procedure and the supervisor-student individual characteristics as main obstacle to thesis accomplishment were also other impediments faced by postgraduate students.

In the USA, Azad and Seyyed (2007) noted that the qualities of good supervisors fall inside the boundaries of being receptive, steady, inspirational state of mind, broad-mindedness, prepared to recognize mistake, composed, exhaustive, fortifying, and conveyance of eagerness

for research. In such manner, great supervisors will consequently play his/her part as an executive, facilitator, consultant, educator, direct, commentator, supporter, companion, and an administrator.

In Finland Pyhalto and Keskinen (2012) found no significant association in the students feeling of social organization between resources. Social organization alludes to student's ability to work with others keeping in mind to the end goal to mastery react in a multifaceted analysis aspects. This is apparent in social organizations where a research assembly standing is felt. The students that did their thesis writing as a portion of an examination, view themselves as dynamic social operators. This recommends a feeling of dynamic social organization every now and again happening in gathering based-settings.

According to Onuka and Onabamiro (2010), supervisors do not seem to be concerned about the research work of students they are meant to monitor. The authors claim that this is as a result of a large allocation of students that each lecturer is assigned for supervision, which means that they are weighed down by the workload. The authors go further to call for an overhaul of the post graduate research assessment system so as to ensure more effective monitoring.

As indicated by Blackmore and Nesbitt (2008), various issues traverse the figuring and business trains in PhD consummation. The reason that overseeing weakening proportion and finishing duration of advanced degree examine understudies are indicators for the universities. Consistent with Wamala et. Al (2012), universities and colleges require to avail strong therapeutic projects equipped at tending to scholarly ineptness of new understudies particularly those in proposal based program. It is useful to hopefuls when the organization conducts workshops on overview outline, information gathering, information investigation and scholarly written work. Off grounds support and directing occasions that give roads to systems administration with other research understudies and college inquire about focuses will likewise help understudies all through their candidature (Grebennikov and Shah, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is apparent that prosperous accomplishment of thesis composition is merely a responsibility of the knowledge and discipline of student as well as the proficiency and contribution of supervisor. For quality work, there should be bright, committed and very much prepared student and successful superintendence (Hockey, 2004:294).Barliet and Mercer (2001:2) express that no manual on postgraduate monitoring "...incorporate or at least envision an assortment of conceivable circumstances which can emerge among supervisors and students." On the basis of the foregoing, it can be affirmed that two players must at least interact

in postgraduate undertakings i.e. understudy and supervisor. Lessing and Schulz (2001), in a past research, determined the perceptions of advanced degree students at an online learning university on monitoring that they received. Based on the outcomes, postgraduate students' desires were not entirely met with respect to some supervisory perspectives. Consequently, according to Rotich (2014) (15.4%) of postgraduate students enrolled in Kenyatta University completed their thesis and graduated, (19.2%) enrolled at Moi University completed their thesis and graduated (10%) from Catholic University of Eastern Africa completed their thesis and graduated, (15%) enrolled at University of Nairobi completed and graduated and (11.7%) enrolled at Kisii University completed their thesis and graduated. This information showed that in all the 5 universities including; Moi, Catholic and Kisii University, completion rate was low and therefore presented the failure to graduate among students. A collection of factors contributed to failure by students to complete their thesis as stipulated.

Previous studies for example, Rauf (2016) examined the challenges of Thesis Work: Towards Minimizing the Non-Completion Rate in the Postgraduate Degree Program In Sri Lanka, Naori, Larsson and Mohammed (2019) did a study on identifying factors for master thesis completion and non-completion through learning analytics and machine learning. Rooj, Fokkens-Bruinsma & Jansen (2019) did a study on the factors that influence PhD candidates' success: the importance of PhD project characteristics, Lastly, Rong'uno (2016) investigated the institutional and student related factors and doctoral studies completion rates in education at selected public universities in Kenya. Although studies have been conducted pertaining to thesis writing and completion rate; the findings obtained have been inconclusive. The effect that thesis writing on completion rate has not been well established, as both positive and negative relationships have been obtained between the. Additionally, there is scarcity of studies conducted in Kenya therefore leaving gaps which this study sought to fill by assessing the effects of postgraduate thesis writing on completion rate in selected universities in Uasin Gishu in Kenya.

### **Research Objective**

To determine relationship between supervision related factors and thesis completion by postgraduate students.

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub><sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant statistical relationship between supervision related factors and completion of post graduate thesis.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study was anchored on expectancy theory that was propounded by Vroom in 1964. This theory expresses that individuals are inspired to work if they expect a motivational factor in return (intrinsic or extrinsic rewards). The theory used the relationship between motivation, performance and outcomes to explain industrial psychologists' inability to create speculations in regards to existing connections between capacity tests and performance criteria

This was further upheld by Vroom's (1964) motivational constrain model and the expectancy models of performance, in which he observed that 'each major intellectual motivational scholar incorporates the expectation of objective accomplishment within the factors of activity' (p. 555). The components of expectancy theory are Exertion Performance anticipation, Performance-Outcome hope and Valence. Exertion execution anticipation (EP) clarifies how people dissect their ability and the adequacy of ecological elements like asset openness (Bateman and Zeithaml, 2016).

For desires to be lifted, people ought to guarantee they have some level of summon over sensible result. On the other hand, when people see that the result is past their capacity, their inspiration is low. Additionally, when destinations are set at exclusive requirements, it might be difficult to gain ground which prompts low discernment. Execution result hope (PO) alludes to the likelihood of a finished execution prompting particular results. Possible outcomes fuses up and coming remunerations for instance incidental pay or an assessment achievement (intrinsic reward), furthermore, fuse negative outcomes, for instance loss of diversion time (Bartol et al., 2016).

Valence is a person's assessment of expected estimation of different results or rewards (Bartol et al., 2016). Individuals may see the possibility of an uncommon pay like emphatically or may append great esteem to inherent prizes bringing about advancement of an inventive new venture. These three components can be consolidated (Staw, 1984) by including  $EP + PO + Valence = Motivation$ .

To centrality of this theory to the current study lies on the view that if postgraduate students poses profound Valence, Effort-Performance Expectancy and Performance-Outcome expectancy they will be exceptionally energetic and thus will have the capacity to finish their thesis projects in time. Vroom (1964) pointed out that people will be aroused in the event that they meet three stipulated criteria. To start with, they should acknowledge the importance of valence results. Second, they should trust that the longing conduct is instrumental in accomplishing the valent result. Lastly they should be equipped for playing out the conduct that is instrumental to accomplish the set result. This theory is important in this study because it measures the quality of the thesis relative to the level of response the student expects as a

result of effort and time put into the research. The theory is similarly important as it explains why a student maintains perfect contact with the supervisor and undertakes research that produces high quality work.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

In Australia, Heath (2012) recounted differences in monitoring measures which 32 percent of three hundred fifty five respondents said they possessed one monitor while the remainder reported to have at least one associate monitors. Those unsatisfied with supervision were about 6%. At Oxford University, the commission of enquiry stated that the degree of monitoring was a critical source of demotivation for a majority of respondents, even though there existed many others who were really happy with their supervisors (Commission of Enquiry, 1997: 492). Some of the respondents made suggestions that included having formal guidelines about supervisors' obligations that included a minimum time allocation and also a more formal system for appointing a second supervisor. Furthermore, the complexion and kind of monitoring, encompassing frequency of sessions, assistance from other students and enquiry comrades is also deemed critical in dissertation completion (Kearns et al., 2008).

Ivankova and stick (2007) in their investigation of elements adding to understudies industriousness at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, watched that the components affecting proposal fruition rates can be comprehensively gathered into outer and inward factors. The outer variables incorporate the idea of program, understudy bolster administrations and the staff while the interior elements incorporate understudy self-inspiration and nature of scholarly experience. The impact of these components to proposition consummation can be sure or negative contingent upon how the understudy experiences and communicates with them. An investigation led by Gudo, Olele and Oanda (2011) to decide the effect of University in Kenya on nature of training, discovered that by and large, Kenyan colleges are understaffed. It doesn't just influence the nature of training yet it likewise hinders postulation finish rates. The report noticed that on account of the poor workforce pay rates, advantages, and showing conditions numerous senior teachers have moved over to remotely and moderately well and all the more adaptably supported, venture arranged, investigate foundations. This implies limiting their instructing exercises. Others become involved with well paying venture advancements or assessment consultancies for national and worldwide benefactors, organizations, and NGOs working locally or somewhere else.

Ngolovoi (2006) take note of that mind-boggling workload and absence of ability among a few teachers could influence the nature of instruction in Kenyan colleges in this way somewhat adding to low and deferred culminations in graduate examinations. Odero (2010) in

Gudo, Olel and Oando (2011) noticed that keeping in mind the end goal to survive the substantial work stack, resources ought to consider receiving survival systems. In a four-crease survival instrument prominently: allotting instructional exercise colleagues full time showing duties with the end goal that they educate both junior and senior classes, allocating instructional exercise colleagues understudies' counseling obligations incorporating appraisal of understudies in the field, doling out junior employees to direct, and delegating administrators from different controls. While these proposals may be a speedy alleviation to the test of insufficient number of bosses, the inquiry is instructional exercise individual's capable convey quality educating and supervisory obligations to senior classes. The nature of training may be traded off

It is clear that successful thesis completion is basically a concern of aptitude and discipline of the student, as the skill of the supervisor. Outstanding performance entails impressive, dedicated and enough preparation in understudies and in addition supervisory adequacy (Hinckey, 2004). Wamala et. Al (2012), universities and colleges require to avail strong therapeutic projects equipped at tending to scholarly ineptness of new understudies particularly those in proposal based program. It is useful to hopefuls when the organization conducts workshops on overview outline, information gathering, information investigation and scholarly written work. Smith et. al (2003:58) assert that "a fruitful exposition encounter happens just through huge endeavours by both the supervisor and the understudy". In the same way, Bartlet and Mercer (2012) express that no handbook on postgraduate monitoring ".....considers or even imagines an assortment of conceivable conditions could emerge between and administrator and a competitor."

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This enquiry embraced the descriptive survey research design to assess factors hampering completion of post graduate thesis by students in three selected universities in Eldoret, Kenya. This study design has been found to be robust for effects of relationship studies (Saunders, et al., 2007). Descriptive survey was considered in this exploration in light of the thought of the relationship between autonomous factors and the needy variable. The conceivable relationship of autonomous factors by and large on the needy factors was examined.

### **Target Population**

Mugenda *et al.* (2003) defined target population as the group of individuals or respondents who are equivalent in one or more ways establishes the center of enquiry in a

specific study. Therefore the population in this research comprised of Head of Departments, supervisors, Postgraduate coordinators and students from the three selected Universities in Eldoret Town. In general, three selected Universities in Eldoret town were viewed as representative of Universities in the country.

### Sample Size and Sampling procedure

Sampling is a procedure of choosing a section of the people on which an enquiry will be undertaken, in order to guarantee that decisions from the study can be generalized to the whole populace (Frankel, 2008). The most critical contention in sampling is to establish the most appropriate sampling magnitude. While obtaining sample range, there are certain components that should be taken into account such as the kind of research design, techniques for information analysis and scope of the attainable population. The sample sizes were considered adequate based on (Neuman, 2000) assertion that if the research group is homogenous, the large sample size is unnecessary as in one or two people could provide information as five hundred (500). The coefficient of variation adopted by Nassiuma (2000) was used to obtain the sample size:

$$= Nc^2 / c^2 + (N - 1)e^2 = 1225(0.3)^2 / 0.3^2 + (1225 - 1)0.02^2$$

n= 190

Where,

n=Sample size, N=Population (N=1225), c=covariance (c=0.3), e=standard error (e=0.02)

Moreover the study purposively chose 1 postgraduate coordinator from each university to take part in the study. The study used stratified random technique, this is because stratified random sampling guarantees that all the specimen companions are represented fully or else would be excluded fully by alternative sampling methods due to the low count in the population. Neyman allocation formula was used to select respondents from the three universities (stratus). The rationale of the technique was to enhance survey exactness given a stable sample scope.

$$n_h = \left( \frac{N_h}{N} \right) n$$

Where,

$n_h$  is the sample size for stratum h,

n is total sample size,  $N_h$  is the population size for stratum h,

N is the total population.



Table 1 Sampling

Name of Institution	<u>Sample Distribution</u>		
	Heads of departments	Students	Supervisors
Kisii University	1	47	14
Catholic University	1	18	11
Moi university	2	80	16
Total	4	145	41

Total Sample size (n)= 190

### Research Instruments

The study data were generated from primary and secondary documents. Primary facts were obtained through administration of self designed questionnaires. Secondary sources included internet, textbooks, government publications, journals, libraries, archives and government offices among others. The three following instruments were designed to generate data.

### Data Processing and Analysis

The study used both descriptive as well as inferential analytical techniques to analyze the data collected. Descriptive statistics employed frequencies and percentages as well as measure of Central tendency which includes mode and mean and standard deviation (Kothari, 2009). Under inferential statistics, the association between variables was measured by bivariate correlation. The hypothesis of the study was tested using correlation analysis and regression.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Supervision related factors and completion of post graduate thesis by students

This enquiry attempted to establish effects of supervision related factors on completion of postgraduate thesis by students. The descriptive statistics pertaining to this enquiry is illustrated in the table 2.

Table 2 Supervision related factors and completion of post graduate thesis by students

<b>Supervision related factors</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Not gratified with supervisor's response in connection to the research activity	4.56	.753
Deficient noesis of the pertinent area of study	4.44	.789
Alteration of supervisors owing to shift to other establishments	4.37	.835
The supervisors' additional assignments, permitting candidates to continue with research undertaking with improper counselling in research methods	4.30	.678
Supervision is a critical element, which contributes towards fruitful and prompt accomplishment of research undertakings	4.43	.685
Inexperience in supervisory practices	2.73	1.260
Inability of supervisors availing an opportunity for monitoring and handle the candidate as a colleague and as an associate	4.31	.954
My monitor(s) forges an authentic attempt to comprehend challenges faced by me	3.37	1.353
Inspection of research is handy whenever I need it	3.46	1.337
I get adequate advice in picking of topic and its improvement	3.61	1.265
I obtained adequate counselling in review of literature	3.81	1.328

On the findings regarding the effects of supervision related factors on the completion of post graduate thesis by students majority of the respondents agreed. On the extent to which the students are dissatisfied with supervisors' feedback in relation to research work, respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 4.56 spread at a standard deviation of 0.753. Insufficient knowledge of the relevant field had a mean of 4.44 with a standard deviation of 0.789, Change of supervisors due to transfers to other institutions had a mean of 4.37 spread at a standard deviation of 0.835. Supervisor's other work load, leaving students to proceed with research without proper guidance in methodology was supported by a mean of 4.30 spread at a standard deviation of 0.678. Supervision being a critical element, contributing to the successful and timely completion of research projects was supported by a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation 0.685, Inexperience in supervisory practices had a mean of 2.73 and a standard deviation of 1.260, Inability of supervisors availing time and treating the student as a peer and an equal was supported by a mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 0.954. Further, on whether supervisor(s) make(s) an effort(s) to understand difficulties and are available when needed, the respondents agreed at a mean of 3.37 spread at a standard deviation of 1.353. On whether research supervision is available when needed, the respondents agreed

at a mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 1.265. Additionally on whether students are given good guidance in topic selection and refinement, the respondents agreed at a mean of 3.81 spread at standard deviation of 1.328 and students are satisfied with supervisors feedback in relation to their research work was supported by a mean of 4.34 spread at standard deviation of 0.966.

These results are consistent to that of Mouton, (2001) who expressed that supervision is a basic component, which contributes enormously to the effective and auspicious proposal culmination. A chief informs the understudy in administration with respect to the proposal (quality control), manages the understudy through the exploration procedure (direction), and gives the required passionate and mental help when required.

### Bivariate Correlation Analysis

The table below shows significant correlation between different variables influencing thesis writing completion by most postgraduate students. The correlation between Students' grasp of thesis writing process and time frame allocated for thesis writing is 0.543 which indicates a moderate linear relationship between the two variables. This means that the responses provided by the respondents for the two factors had a close relationship. This implies that the respondents believe that grasp of thesis writing guidelines and time frame allocated impacts thesis writing completion rate by post-graduate students in time.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

		<i>Students' grasp of thesis writing process</i>
<i>Supervision related factors</i>	Pearson Correlation	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Regression analysis

Under this enquiry, multiple regression analysis was carried out to examine the impact among predictor variables of this study. The three null hypotheses were examined using multi-regression model. For every hypothesis, regression expressions were firstly acquired with the use of B coefficients on line of best fit. The cardinal rule is that whenever p-value is lower than the established 0.05, the null hypothesis is not accepted and when it is above the conventional value of the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
	.793	.652	.000	1.696

The table 4 illustrates a summary of multi-linear regression model and the overall fit statistics, adjusted R square is the variance which informs us about the variations in the dependent variables of the study attributable to change in the independent variables, the results shown in table 4 indicate that the values of adjusted R square amounted to 0.652, which suggests that there was a variability of 65.2% on postgraduate students thesis completion attributable to *Supervision related factors*. This show that 65.2% changes in students thesis completion rates could be accounted for by time allocated, student related factors, supervisor related factors and environmental factors. R square is the coefficient of correlation that indicates the relationship among the variables of study, therefore this study indicated that there existed a positive, strong linear relationship between the supervisor related factors and students thesis completion rates in selected universities in Uasin Gishu County as illustrated by 0.793

Table 5 Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.428	2.002		.713	.477
<i>Supervision related factors</i>	.265	.026	.175	2.483	.004

The Coefficients table provides the necessary information required give a prediction of Students' grasp of thesis writing process from supervision related factors, and also to ascertain whether the independent variables contributions are statistically significant to this model.

From the regression model of this study, the p value of 0.00 is lower than the conventional 0.05, which implies that, on overall, the multiple regression model is statistically significant and therefore can predict the outcome variable. In other words, it is a good fit for the above data.

The three independent variables *Supervision related factors* have p value less than 0.05 implying that they are all significant in the regression model fitted. The regression equation for this study's is as follows;

$$\text{Completion of post graduate thesis} = 1.428 + 0.265^* \text{Supervision related}$$

Based on the regression model fitted above; the hypothesis that There is no significant statistical relationship between supervision related factors and the completion of post graduate thesis by students is rejected since the  $p$  value of its coefficient is 0.004 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence the study fails to reject the null hypothesis that there is evidence of statistical significance in relationship between supervision related factors and the completion of post graduate thesis by students.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the effect of supervision related factors on the completion of post graduate thesis by students., it was concluded that students are dissatisfied with supervisor's feedback in connection to their investigation, there is inadequate know-how of the pertinent study area, replacement of supervisors due to transfers to other universities burdens student rates, supervisors' other work responsibilities, allowing students to continue with research assignments without proper counsel in research methodology. Supervision is a critical element, which contributes immensely to the fruitful and prompt accomplishment of research, inexperience in supervisory practices and inability of supervisors availing time for supervision.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that students should be motivated, organized and have a personal drive to work hard in order to complete their thesis project in time. They have to ensure that they consult with their supervisors accordingly when they are available. A recommendation provided by experienced supervisors on time frame was that data collection and analysis should be allocated adequate time. This implies that students need to start planning in early enough on how to carry out the process. While supervision was among the key factors identified to hinder completion of thesis writing for some postgraduate students, the respective universities have the responsibility of ensuring that supervisor's work load is minimized and that they have experienced lecturers to supervise their students. This will help in providing good guidance on the whole process of thesis writing by students hence increasing thesis writing completion rate. Finally, this study identifies the need of institutions of higher learning to provide a supportive environment for the postgraduate students.

## SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study focused on thesis writing completion by candidates pursuing postgraduate degree programs in selected universities within Eldoret Town, Kenya. Therefore it is recommended that, there is a need for further research geared towards "the effects of both the

students and lecturers attitudes towards research and examine efficiency in research supervision and management”.

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